

## November Housing Improvement Board Meeting Minutes

**24<sup>th</sup> January 2023, 18:00- 20:00**  
**HYBRID**

**Attendees**

Martin Wheatley– **(MW)** **(Chair)**  
Mayor Jason Perry– **(JP)** (Executive Mayor)  
Cllr Lynne Hale– **(LH)** (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Homes)

Ishia Beckford– **(IB)** (tenant representative)  
Yaw Boateng– **(YB)** (tenant representative, TLP chair)  
Dave Mundy– **(DM)** (tenant representative)  
Les Parry– **(LP)** (tenant representative)

Elly Shepherd– **(ES)** (London Councils representative)  
Phil Brookes– **(PB)** (Improvement and Assurance Panel representative)

Lara Ashley– **(LA)** (Executive Culture & Change Advisor)  
Velvet Dibley– **(VD)** (Senior Strategy Officer)  
Mostafa El-Dien– **(MED)** (Executive Officer) (Minutes)  
Orlagh Guarnori–**(OG)** (Finance Manager)  
Mary Larbie– **(ML)** (Director of Tenancy)  
Susmita Sen– **(SS)** (Corporate Director for Housing)  
Stephen Tate– **(ST)** (Director of Estates & Improvement)

Cllr Leila Ben-Hassel– **(LBH)** *Part A only*  
Cllr Joseph Lee– **(JL)** *Part A only*  
Cllr Chrishni Reshekaron– **(CR)** *Part A only*

**Apologies**

Councillor Darren Rodwell– (DR) (LGA representative)

Minutes of the Meeting	Lead
<p><b>Welcome &amp; Introduction from the Chair</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies for absence were noted from Cllr Rodwell.</li> <li>• The Board welcomed Dave Mundy as a new member. The Chair noted that Abigail Ashford has resigned because she has moved to a new role outside the borough.</li> <li>• The Minutes of the meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022 were reviewed and agreed as an accurate record and the agenda for this meeting was adopted without any further modifications.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Housing Transformation Programme</b></p>	

- SS introduced the item and highlighted her contentment for the progress made to date, following a Cabinet discussion on the transformation programme in December. The meeting noted that we have over 30 projects and SS advised that we are working at pace acknowledging that there is a huge amount to do and reminded members that this will involve 3-5 years of transformation.

### **Repairs Re-Procurement**

- The Board took the paper as read. ST provided members of the board with a summary of the Housing Repairs, Voids and Heating contracts presentation, providing an overview of progress to date pertaining to the re-procurement for the replacement repairs and heating contracts.
- Board Members were asked to note the key dates for which this item will travel through the council's governance processes. The paper will be presented at two Scrutiny Homes Sub-Committees on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February and again on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February before being presented to a special Cabinet on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> March.
- ST provided more details on the procurement process including the evaluation where it was highlighted that the procurement is being carried out using the Competitive Procedure with Negotiation Route (CPN) where following a pre-qualification and shortlisting process initial tenders are submitted and evaluated.
- ST pointed out that the Heating Servicing Repair & Replacement Contract is a single contract covering the whole Borough that comprises replacement, repairs and servicing of domestic boilers and servicing and repairs of communal boilers. The procurement is being carried out using the Restricted Procedure where tenders are submitted and evaluated following a Pre-Qualification process and the successful Bidder is appointed.

### **Comments and Questions**

- YB remarked that he enjoyed the process of being part of the panel though did caution that we cannot be sure that we have succeeded until the results of these efforts have been examined.
- LP concurred and queried if there are any plans to advance any part of the contract bringing the contact centre in house. ST advised that there are plans to in-source the contact centre before 1<sup>st</sup> August when the contract commences. He added that the service is currently reviewing these plans which can be discussed at a future Board meeting once finalised.
- LP inquired whether the current bidders have an IT infrastructure in place that is compatible with what already exists. In response ST confirmed that this is the case, and this was addressed during the evaluation and scoring process. Board members agreed that the link between the two systems should be customer focused.
- PB wanted to understand what has been built in the contract to address inflation given the duration of the contract. The meeting noted that there will be a CBI increase on an annual basis which is similar to how it works currently. He assured PB and the Board that there are also opportunities to negotiate and adjust this during the annual and review points.
- MW welcomed the progress made to date and commended the involvement of residents. However, he wanted to understand further about the communication plan, if any, with tenants once a decision is made. MW observed that the period between contract award and takeover of the new contract is brief and wanted assurance that there is a risk plan around this transition.
- ST reported that in relation to communication, there is a workstream within the mobilisation plan which is yet to be finalised and need to wait until we get to the decision. In terms of the mobilisation period, ST informed members that 12-13 weeks is a standard time, any shorter than that, it can be done but does pose some risks.
- The Board commended the Service on the progress and plans.

### Voids Transformation

- The paper was taken as read.

### **Comments and Questions**

- LP queried slide two of the presentation where 36 key failings we identified and asked that the Board be advised before the next meeting as to what these failings are. Similarly, he observed that on slide 3 on the service plan where it stated, 'overall project improvement 64 percent complete, 48/98 actions complete', he wanted to know what those actions were. ML agreed to provide a response before the next Board meeting.
- PB noted that the resident feedback survey is going live in January 2023 and wanted to know what the scope of the survey will be. ML advised that this will be sent to new tenants taking over a property.
- ES remarked that pertaining to the void figures, it was helpful to see these and suggested that it would be welcomed to have an update on any new voids. She added that it may be useful for teams to undertake a pre-void inspection and take pictures.
- MB also expressed his interest in the distinction between the historic backlog of voids and newly arising ones.
- The Board **AGREED** that future meetings to include an update demonstrating progress on all new newly arising voids and what has been done to clear away the backlog.
- A brief discussion was had on the historic delay in Croydon in dealing with voids and MW wanted assurance that every tenant will be moving into a property ready for habitation at the point the key is handed over. LH concurred and reinforced that we must not lose sight of quality in our haste to improve the figures.

### Estate inspections and walkabouts

- ML introduced the presentation which was taken as read. It was noted that the walkabout put in place across 60 estates will provide residents with an opportunity to:
  - Report issues
  - Monitor cleaning, ground maintenance and repairs.
  - Put forward improvement and improve environment.
- Tenant representatives expressed concern that they are not being listened to and estate inspections were not routine.
- MW queried training for staff members participating in these activities. He emphasised that clear messages from leadership that the default should be to listen to residents. ML added that as part of the transformation programme there is a customer service training component. Furthermore, ML explained that we need robust SLAs to be agreed with Veolia and will be raising standards internally within the team including reviewing the number of caretakers. SS concurred and further advised that we are looking at the recharges to the HRA, noting that what has become apparent is that SLAs are lacking. She remarked that our starting point is to create a fit for purpose SLAs with that system of escalation. This is not just a housing improvement project, but rather this is council wide, and discussions are being had.
- PB queried the proportion of Croydon's Housing Stock that these 60 estates represent. ML to send accurate percentage following the meeting.
- Mayor Perry made the point that this will take time to embed and will take time for residents to see the results. He requested that we refer to the resident voice and this piece of work should raise standards permanently and not to be a one off.
- MW noted that once this becomes business as usual, it will be much more effective and powerful. He advised that we need to ensure that Ward Councillors are co-opted in the process and are engaging in the walk abouts.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ACTION: ML to circulate dates and locations to Board members who wish to join.</b></li> <li>• <b>ACTION: SS to liaise with Katherine and YB as Chair of the TLP to ensure that representatives are getting formal recognition.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>ML</b> <b>SS</b></p>
<p><b>Part B</b></p> <p><i>The matters discussed in Part B are financially and commercially sensitive and non-Board members were asked to leave.</i></p> <p><b>David Mynors joined the meeting.</b></p> <p><b>NEC Housing Implementation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SS introduced this item and provided the board with a background.</li> <li>• LP asked officers to consider whether Board HIB members and TLP members can take up workshops to familiarise themselves with the system. It was confirmed that this is being considered and is being looked into.</li> <li>• PB questioned the cost apportionment between with the HRA and General Fund and whether this is going to acceptable to external auditors. OG assured the meeting that we do have a full audit trail having clearly defined the elements that were involved within the NEC.</li> <li>• ES suggested that it would be beneficial to Board members if officers can outline what the NEC is and the overall goal of the project.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>HRA Business Plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OG went through her presentation which was taken as read.</li> <li>• LP wanted to know what more about the forecast increase for the new repair’s maintenance. In response, OG reported that they have included an allocation for the increase in the repairs contract as part of the budget setting but won’t be set out until the tendering process is completed.</li> <li>• On the Discretionary fund, LP queried the amount that has been allocated and SS advise that this is still being worked on to determine a reasonable sum.</li> <li>• LP observed that the final 23/24 budget is going to Cabinet on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February, highlighted that there is a TLP meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> February and wanted to know if OG can share the forecast budget on that date. To this OF advised that she can bring a draft budget to the TLP on the 7<sup>th</sup> February until approved by Cabinet.</li> <li>• Finally, PB queried the absence of comprehensive asset condition data, and wanted to know how we allocated the £34.476 million Capital Programme and how are we are spending where the need is greater. SS advised that following completion of 5% surveys by Savills in November 2022 it was decided to accelerate the programme &amp; aim for 45% completed surveys by end June 2023 which will then support HRA Business plan and future capital investment programs.</li> <li>• MW reminded members of the importance of providing feedback and comments on the HRA Business Plan before it is presented to the Mayor and Cabinet on 22nd February. He proposed that a workshop be organised on the HRA for members to scrutinise the details. Any interested member will need to advise VD of their willingness to participate.</li> </ul>	<p><b>VD</b></p>
<p><b>Forward Plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>RESOLVED</b> that the board will meet four times a year, on a quarterly basis. The next meeting of the Board will be scheduled for late April.</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>ACTION: MW to liaise with SS and VD about topics the Board should cover between now and late April, ensuring there is a staggered programme of events until then.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>MW/SS/ VD</b></p>
<p><b>AOB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>ACTION: Repairs KPI date that is usually shared with the Regulator to be included in future Board meetings, with an informal meeting ahead of the next meeting to look at a shared core indicator set for the landlord service.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>VD</b></p>