Notes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 24th March 2009 in the Fairfield Room, Fairfield Halls, Park Lane, Croydon.


Councillors:- Councillor Jane Avis, Councillor Sherwan Chowdrey, Councillor Tony Harris and Councillor Dudley Mead.

Observers:- B Ghata-Aura, Phyllis Kirrage and Winston Phillips.

Apologies were received from:- Cyril Cooper, Dave Cotter, Valerie Davis, Hannah Miller, Councillor Michael Neal, David Sutherland and Sheila Taylor.

Declarations of Interest:
There were no declarations of Interest.

Welcome and Introductions
The Chair welcomed all to the meeting especially those attending for the first time.

Notes of the Meeting held on 20th January 2009.
The Notes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 20th January 2009 were agreed as a true record of the proceedings.

Matters Arising
There were no matters arising.

Home Safety Visits – London Fire Brigade
The Panel received a verbal presentation from Kevin Smith, Station Manager, Norbury Fire Station.
- initiative to have visit from Fire Officers (maximum three) to check on fire safety
- advice only no obligation to follow advice
- verbal not written
- check for overloading of electrical sockets
- look at escape plans
- priority post codes to be door-knocked.
- Specific day visits can be arranged for blocks of flats.
Q. Resident – “I live on the 16th floor, together with a minimum of 32 others if the smoke alarm goes off what should we do.”
A. Kevin Smith – “We are aware of your situation; our advice is stay in your room with the door shut. The doors are guaranteed to give a minimum of 30 minutes protection.”

Q. Resident – “I have an involvement with refugees and immigrants; is the leaflet available in other languages?”
A. Kevin Smith – “Yes, can we talk after the meeting to ascertain your requirements.”

Q. Resident – “The increase in domestic appliances puts a strain on the number of electric sockets in properties and leads to people overloading sockets; do you have any advice on this.”
A. Kevin Smith – “The general advice is that it is fine as long as it is properly fused; if there is an overload the fuse will blow. Most domestic appliances use three amp fuses as long as you do not use too great a fuse all will be well. We would recommend switching off and unplugging at night.”

Q. Resident – “Do you consider a trip switch to be safer?”
A. Kevin Smith – “Yes, there is a faster reaction.”

Q. Resident – “I have problems with mobility what should I do if my house caught fire?”
A. Kevin Smith – “The advice is to shut the door and put pillows close to door to stop smoke; any domestic door will last 20 minutes; the longest wait for a response in London is 6 minutes. I would advise all to keep two things in the bedroom, a torch and a mobile phone. Having secured the door go to the window and keep shouting.”

Q. Resident – “We all have smoke alarms; what about carbon monoxide?”
A. Kevin Smith – “Currently not in our remit but we do have equipment to check. Most modern boilers do not require them any possible concerns ring the Council’s repairs office. I’ll leave you with this thought; ‘Smoke Alarms wont stop fires, advice will.”

The Chair thanked Kevin Smith for his contribution.

Well London Project – refurbishment of Handcroft Road Tenants’ Resource Centre.
The Panel received an update on this project from Winston and ‘Pins’, outlining the programme for refurbishing the Handcroft Road Resource Centre.
- Currently Monday-Friday 6.00p.m.-9.00p.m. being used as a Youth Centre.
- Last four weeks consultation evenings, final meeting 25/3/09.
- Concentrating on Design, Activity and Function
- 6/04/09 – commence ‘strip down’ get decoration team in
- 13/04/09 – commence design work
- 20/04/09 – commence installation of equipment
- 27/04/09 – final touches
- 23/05/09 – official opening launch party 3.00-6.00p.m.
Q. Resident – “Who had the idea for the fish tank and how will it be maintained?”
A. Pins – “It was a majority decision. There will one person responsible Monday – Friday.”
Q. Resident – “Will they be tropical or cold water fish?”
A. Pins – “We are in the process of taking advice from Aquazoo.”
Q. Resident – “Are you looking to put in a more efficient heating system.”
A. Winston – “The current system appears to be working well.”
Q. Resident – “With all the proposed new equipment is the current security adequate?”
A. Winston – “There is only one potential security concern which is being addressed, the fire door. We may also consider re-programming the key-fobs. The intention is to lock all valuable equipment away every night.”
Q. Resident – “The WC is disgraceful.”
A. Pins – “It is in hand.”
Q. Resident – “Will the pillars be taken away?”
A. Pins – “The pillars are structural; the scheme will be using colour to create the illusion of space.”
Q. Resident – “What sort of flooring will you be using?”
A. Winston – “The budget will not allow new flooring. The floor will be stripped and polished, the secret is to ensure it is regularly maintained.”
Q. Resident – “What will happen to the current equipment on site?”
A. Winston – “We are working with Playspace with regard to re-cycling equipment to other groups.”
Q. Resident – “Plants; are you taking advice as to which to have?”
A. Pins – “We are taking advice from a colleague who works for Groundworks.”
The Chair thanked Winston and Pins for their presentation and wished them good fortune with the project.

Councillor Dudley Mead, Cabinet Member for Housing
The Chair invited Councillor Dudley Mead to address the Panel.
The government increased the Council rents by 6.1% which was too much and they have since reviewed the position. On 27th February this year 14,100 notices were sent out to Council tenants informing them of the proposed rent increase; on 6th March the government reconsidered and announced that the rent increase would be 3.1%, still too high but a lot better.
The Council is expecting to get some detail later this week. The Council is bound to give tenants a month’s notice of any change; assuming that the Council will not receive final notice until probably the 1st July but the Council has to charge rents from 1st April so all tenants will have overpaid. This could be refunded in a lump sum say at Christmas or be spread over the remaining 39 weeks.
Rest assured we will keep tenants in the loop.
Q. Resident – “Does the reduction cover garage rents as well?”
A. Councillor Dudley Mead – “No, just basic rent.”
Q. Councillor Jane Avis – “The government are to be congratulated for listening; what we want is the best for Croydon.”
A. Councillor Dudley Mead – “Croydon is subsidising other councils; in 1991 the government was taking about £100,000 now it is 27p in the £1. Camden receives what we pay out!”

Q. Resident – “The government keep £296 million; the next fiscal year might be less.”

Q. Resident – “Gas and electricity prices are going down can the Council check its billing?”

A. Councillor Dudley Mead – “The Council has a contract with the supplier; if we can negotiate a cheaper rate in December we will pass it on. We don’t make a profit.”

The Chair thanked Councillor Mead for his presentation.

Repair and Improvement Budget 2009/10

The Panel received a presentation from Judy Pevan, Stock Investment Manager.

The 2009/10 Repair and Improvement programme aims to tackle a number of key priorities for investment in Council housing and ensure that the Council continues on track and all homes to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010/11.

- Kitchen and Bathroom Refurbishment – to ensure the Council meets the Decent Homes Standard a minimum budget of £16 million has been identified as required from 2009/10 – 2010/11.
- Security - £540,000 for a programme of security door installation and other security works.
- External Painting – budget £1 million for 2009/10
- Window Replacement – budget £950,000 for 2009/10
- Fire Safety – budget £500,000 for 2009/10 to include fire safety risk assessments and remedial works.
- Creating Larger Homes – bid for further funding submitted yet to be confirmed.
- Stock Condition Surveys – continue to be delivered through a rolling programme.

Q. Resident – “Mears Group recently declared a profit of £22.2 million, how much of this came from Croydon?”

A. Judy Pevan – “They are a major UK company details are available on their web-site; I would have to take legal advice as to whether we could ask such questions.”

Q. Resident – “How long does it take to renovate a void property?”

A. Judy Pevan – “From becoming vacant to re-housing on average 26 days.”

Q. Resident – “I know of a property that has been vacant for several months!”

A. Judy Pevan – “Give me the address and I will investigate.”
Q. Resident – “I should like to register a complaint with regard to the nomination process for membership of the Stock Investment Working Group; never have all 15 members attended, there are some who have not attended a single meeting.”
A. Judy Pevan – “It would have been useful to have raised this some 6 months ago. We should perhaps operate, a three strikes and out policy, can we talk about this after the meeting please.”
A. Chris Stock – “The Resident Working Group meet with officers to discuss and resolve problems.”
Q. Councillor Jane Avis – “South Norwood Residents particularly those in Grosvenor House suffered from a loss of water over last week-end. The problems arose when residents attempted to discover the reason for this; they could not find anyone who could speak English! There was no one able to communicate.”
A. Judy Pevan – “As far as I understand it there is a commitment to have an English speaker on each site.”
Q. Resident – “Security Door Systems will it be happening this year? I understand extra monies have been set aside.”
A. Judy Pevan – “There is additional funding of £95,000 available; but it is a case of larger blocks first. A programme is currently being drawn up.”
Q. Resident – “The kitchen and bathroom installers make mistakes, who pays to put it right?”
A. Judy Pevan – “I would need to know specific details.”
The Chair thanked Judy Pevan for her presentation.

Youth Provision Budget Update.
Ken Constantine, Community Development Manager, gave a presentation to the Panel.
• to continue to support existing provision where there is an unmet need
• Estate based youth service provision – budget for 2009/10 £60,651.63:- Croftleigh Avenue, Green Lane, Handcroft Road, Longheath Gardens, Regina Road and Tollers Lane.
• Mobility outreach youth services – budget 2009/10 £17,499
• Summer Schemes and Roadshows – Croftleigh Avenue, Grange Park, Green Lane, Handcroft Road, Longheath Gardens, Marlpit Lane, Monks Hill, New Addington, Queens Road, Regina Road, Sanderstead Recreation Ground, Shrublands, Tollers Lane, Tollgate, Waddon and Whitehorse Road.
• Sports and Active Lifestyle sessions – budget for 2009/10 £22,500 :- Duppas Hill, Monks Hill, Regina Road, Shrublands, Timebridge and Windmill Grove.
• Previously supported projects – ‘Crossfire’ provided by London Fire Brigade.
• Discontinuing invitations to communities to submit expressions of interest for new projects
• Selecting new projects on the approval of the YPB Panel.
• Support for play areas inspection scheme.
• Setting aside nominal retentions – a) to target match-funding, b) to
develop youth forums and youth activity groups and c) for re-active
projects.

YPB Panel 2009/10.
• Increase adult membership from 3 to 6.
• One resident per housing district will be selected to join existing YPB
• Applicants to be interviewed to ensure most relevant and appropriate
selection.
• Panel to meet quarterly, timetable agreed.

Monitoring
• Quarterly monitoring reports

Update on YPB 2008/09
• Croydon Community Bus lost some core funding resulting in
increased charges and reduced number of sessions.
• 57 sessions delivered – Shrublands 14, Wingate Crescent 10,
Headley Drive / Frensham / Frimley Close / King Castle Avenue 10,
Tollgate Estate 9, Croftleigh Estate 5, The Waldrons 5, Whitehorse
Road Estate 3 and Regina Road 1.
• Summer Schools covered more areas; Croftleigh Avenue, Grange
Park, Green Lane, Handcroft Road, Longheath Gardens, Marlpit
Lane, Monks Hill, New Addington, Queens Road, Regina Road,
Sanderstead Recreation Ground, Shrublands, Tollers Lane, Tollgate,
Waddon and Whitehorse Road.
• Sports and Active Lifestyle sessions increased to include Duppas Hill,
Monks Hill, Regina Road, Shrublands, Timebridge and Windmill
Grove.
• YPB budget also supported the 5 Big Lottery Fund play schemes and
Department for Children, Schools and Families’ Playbuilder schemes

Q. Resident – “Why is it necessary to vet the three new Panel members
when the existing Panel members did not have to go through this
process; all people should be treated the same?”
A. Ken Constantine – “Last year we actually said that this would be the
method in the future.”
Q. Resident – “You also said that the young people would be making the
selection; did that happen?”
A. Ken Constantine – “The original panel members were recruited from
the HSB. None were interviewed as we were anxious to create the
Panel. The existing members will mentor the new members, the thought
process was that all members were going to be interviewed.”
Q. Resident – “When will you select?”
A. Ken Constantine – “By end of May. We have to get the young people
first. Following our successful bid we have to complete 4 play areas by
the end of April, there is a ‘knock on affect’.”
Q. Resident – “When there are contractors on site is it possible to provide Portaloos? Contractors are currently relieving themselves against garage walls.”
A. Ken Constantine – “There is a Portaloo currently on site at Duppas Hill Play Area and it provides great sport for the local youth, it has been tipped over twice!!! I will take the matter up and come back to you.”
Q. Resident – “I am concerned over the reduction in funding for the Croydon Community Bus. Are the sessions evaluated against providing Youth Club provision and are methods being considered to deploy it in a more economical way. Do you compare notes with a)neighbouring boroughs and b) the Youth Service?”
A. Ken Constantine – “We work very closely with the Youth Service to compliment not duplicate services.”
Q. Resident – “Now there is only one Community Bus will you e advertising where it’s going?
A. Ken Constantine – “Yes, we will have to advertise.”
The Chair thanked Ken Constantine for his paper.

Any Other Business
Q. Ken Coates – “I should like to record my displeasure at the cancellation of the swipe-card facility I object to having to look for a Paypoint.”
A. Chair – “I am in complete agreement perhaps someone from Finance could explain the reasoning.”

ACTION REQUIRED

Q. Resident – “Why when we elect representatives to sit on the various CVA Panels are they never asked for a report?”
A. Chris Stock – “I must take responsibility; I will ensure that these reports are a standard agenda item.

ACTION REQUIRED

There being no further business the meeting closed 9.03 p.m.