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| <b>Item No.</b><br>4               | <b>Classification:</b><br>Open | <b>Date:</b><br>October 17 2005                  | <b>Meeting Name:</b><br>Executive |
| <b>Report title:</b>               |                                | Motion referred from Council Assembly – Wooddene |                                   |
| <b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b> |                                | Livesey Ward (Residents of Wooddene)             |                                   |
| <b>From:</b>                       |                                | Chief Executive (Borough Solicitor)              |                                   |

## RECOMMENDATION

1. That the executive consider the motions set out in the appendix attached to this report.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The motions attached as an appendix to this report was referred to the executive by council assembly at its meeting held on Wednesday September 14 2005. The executive subsequently deferred consideration of the item from its agenda of October 11 2005.

## KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

3. In accordance with council assembly procedure rule 3.10 (3), the above motion was referred to the executive, which shall report upon the outcome of their deliberations upon the motion to the next meeting of council assembly.
4. The constitution allocates particular responsibility for functions to council assembly, for approving the budget and policy framework, and to the executive, for developing and implementing the budget and policy framework and overseeing the running of council services on a day-to-day basis
5. Any key issues, policy or funding implications are included in the advice from the relevant chief officer.

## REASONS FOR LATENESS

6. This item was on the executive agenda for October 11 2005 and subsequently deferred to enable additional information to be provided.

## REASONS FOR URGENCY

7. The report is deemed as urgent to enable the council to respond as soon as possible to the concerns raised in the motions.

| Background Papers  | Held At   | Contact   |
|--|---|---|
| Motions submitted in accordance with council assembly procedure rule 3.10 (3). | Town hall,<br>Peckham Road,<br>London.<br>SE5 8UB | Lesley John<br>Constitutional team<br>020 7525 7236 |

## Audit Trail

|   |  |                          |
|---|--|--------------------------|
| <b>Lead Officer</b>   | Ian Millichap, constitutional team manager |                          |
| <b>Report Author</b>  | Everton Roberts, constitutional team       |                          |
| <b>Version</b>  | Final                                      |                          |
| <b>Dated</b>  | 14.10.05                                   |                          |
| <b>Key Decision?</b>  | Yes  |                          |
| <b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER</b> |  |                          |
| <b>Officer Title</b>  | <b>Comments Sought</b>                     | <b>Comments included</b> |
| Strategic Director of Housing   | Yes  | Yes                      |
| Strategic Director of Regeneration  | Yes  | Yes                      |
| <b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Support Services</b>          |  | 14.10.05                 |

**WOODDENE**

Two motions submitted, first motion moved by Councillor Graham Neale and seconded by Councillor Richard Porter. Second motion moved by Councillor Peter John and Seconded by Councillor Tayo Situ:-

**RESOLVED:**

1. Council assembly condemns the tragic murder of Zainab Kalokob in a tenant's hall in Peckham, and offers its sympathy and condolences to her family and friends.
2. Council assembly also notes the regeneration programme for the Wooddene, which is in an advanced stage.
3. Whilst council assembly notes that there is no connection between this tragedy and the regeneration of the area, we believe that action needs to be taken to help reassure local residents and the wider community in Peckham.
4. Council assembly welcomes the housing department's efforts to address residents' concerns, and welcomes the following: -
  1. Security guards to patrol the Wooddene block
  2. The extension of the community wardens to cover the Acorn Estate
  3. Lighting improvements where needed
  4. Mobile CCTV deployment
5. Council Assembly instructs the Strategic Director of Housing to ensure that the decant process for Wooddene is carried out in the shortest possible timeframe, and asks that the Executive Members for Housing Management and Regeneration receive regular updates on the decant process.
6. Council assembly requests the executive to instruct officers to produce a report and action plan to review the current rules which result in leaseholders who lose their homes in regeneration schemes being paid insufficient compensation to allow them to buy equivalent homes in the same area. This current situation is inconsistent with the support for home ownership expressed by all 3 main political parties.

**FURTHER  
RESOLVED:**

7. The officer's report should include, but should not be limited to, plans to lobby central government to change the rules governing this area of housing and compulsory purchase orders.
1. Council assembly notes the poor handling of the Wooddene decant process. Council assembly believes that the frustration expressed by the tenants is due to the lack of consultation, support and advice. Council assembly is deeply concerned about the following issues that are faced by the Wooddene tenants:
  - The lack of security, their fear and experience of crime.
  - The way that the appalling living conditions affects the quality of the tenants' lives.
  - Inconsistent advice on how the allocations procedures prioritise Wooddene tenants.
  - The lack of decant support and advice for tenants and leaseholders.
  - The poor treatment of tenants and leaseholders by housing officers.
2. Council Assembly notes that the decant project team has not met for 15 months when they should have met every 6 to 8 weeks, and that following a formal complaint from a Wooddene resident the project team has now been re-established. Council assembly further notes that a member of the housing office was invited to attend the tenants and residents meetings on two occasions and failed to turn up.
3. Council assembly calls on the executive to take immediate action to improve the safety of the tenants. This should include:
  - Extensive CCTV coverage across the estate
  - Improved or replaced lighting on the stairs and corridors
  - An increase in police presence and community wardens
4. Council assembly also calls on the executive to undertake an immediate review of the decant and allocation process. Council assembly also calls on the executive to undertake an immediate review of the service offered by the housing office, to ensure that the following is achieved:
  - The decant process happens sectionally and that sections are closed down when they are empty.

- All tenants and residents are provided with a comprehensive summary of the decant and allocation process.
- The council assesses what support can be given to the leaseholders to enable them to buy an equivalent flat in Peckham.
- That the Wooddene tenants do not feel that they would be penalised if they refuse to move in to a property that does not meet the decent homes standard.

## **COMMENTS FROM THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF HOUSING/STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION**

Security and safety are a primary concern for the council in the management of any estate involved in a regeneration programme and this has applied and still applies to Wooddene.

From the outset of the decant process the area housing office has had dedicated project officers and dedicated processes for managing the regeneration programme based upon historic experience on other schemes. Given the potential for squatting and unauthorised occupancy in such schemes from the earliest phases wherever vacant units have been created by decant they have been occupied as temporary accommodation or been physically sealed with services decommissioned. As increasing empties occurred there have been increased cleaning arrangements (particularly for bulk refuse from departing residents), increased area housing office inspections and in recognition that when two-thirds of a scheme become empty traditionally additional security issues and reassurance become necessary. Having reached this level recently the police safer neighbourhood team had agreed to escalate their patrols in the area. The few individual squatting and unauthorised occupancy cases that arose were being pursued through legal avenues. Consideration was also being given to the transfer of security guard patrols from the Peckham Programme area to Wooddene.

Following the events of August 27 a further review of security arrangements has been undertaken to seek to offer further community reassurance on the estate. As a result those security guards previously working on the Gloucester Grove Estate have now been deployed at Wooddene since August 31 and the patrolling area of Peckham community wardens has been extended from Queens Road to include the Wooddene area. Inter-agency and cross-departmental working will continue to develop any enhancements to the security regime for Wooddene and whilst lighting is all working at present additional lighting is to be installed at the corner of Queens Road and Carlton Grove following a recent evening inspection because of the darkening effects of the established trees in that area. These trees have also been trimmed.

The Wooddene redevelopment requires the decanting of properties. The decant priority afforded to Wooddene is already the highest rehousing priority, and the current rate of decant is good by comparison with other previous schemes. To date 196 households have been rehoused. At present there are 79 tenants and 28 properties are occupied by temporary licensees. 9 leaseholders are remaining on the estate and negotiations are under way with all of them to acquire the interests. The remaining residents have had 128 offers between them. However, as with all decant programmes, the rate of progress at the start and in the middle stages may not be

matched later on when a relatively small number of cases, both tenants and leaseholders can prove difficult to resolve due to individual rehousing needs and preferences. At this stage, the council will continue to rehouse tenants and buy out leaseholders as fast as possible. The current practice is to try to concentrate efforts where whole balconies or parts of blocks are being vacated fastest, so that households are not left isolated. This also allows the option of sectioning off parts of the building entirely, in addition to the range of security measures outlined above. Due to the spread of households across the estate with different housing needs it is not considered feasible to decant on a block by block basis and were it possible to do so it would seriously increase overall decant timescales. Regular reports on decant progress will be given to the relevant Executive and Ward Members.

Southwark Homesearch is the Council's new choice based lettings scheme introduced on 22 September 2005. Southwark Homesearch means that properties available for rent, including housing association homes, will be advertised fortnightly in a free magazine and on its own website [www.southwarkhomesearch.org.uk](http://www.southwarkhomesearch.org.uk). Tenants being moved from the Wooddene Estate will be included in Band 1, the highest priority band under the new lettings policy. Under Southwark Homesearch, they will be able to bid for homes of their choice anywhere in the borough and will not be penalised if they refuse a property after viewing. Bids can be made on up to two properties every fortnight and the magazine will publish the results of the previous bidding round.

The very first bidding cycle for Southwark Homesearch closed on Monday 26 September 2005 and it is apparent that a number of Wooddene tenants have been actively participating in the bidding process. 14 bids from Wooddene residents were subsequently converted into "offers" in this first round.

The council policy is to negotiate with leasehold owners based on open market valuation and if it can be demonstrated that on the basis of this value the leaseholder cannot buy an alternative property consideration is given to rehousing. If following negotiation the leaseholder is unwilling to sell, the council may apply for compulsory purchase order (CPO) powers to acquire the property. The sum they receive is the value of their leasehold interest – compensation is not based on what it would cost to buy another property in the area. The council always recommends that leaseholders obtain professional representation, i.e. a chartered surveyor to act on their behalf in CPO matters, which is paid for by the council as part of the compensation package and helps to ensure fairness and equity throughout the acquisition process. If an enhanced compensation package for Wooddene leaseholders to buy a higher value property in Peckham were to be introduced, it would affect the funding generated by the scheme for reinvestment in council homes and would set a precedent for future schemes. The council's duty as an acquiring authority is that it acquires property for the market value as defined in the various Acts relating to CPO. There is a robust mechanism for agreeing the market value and in a CPO situation if terms cannot be agreed then matters are referred to the lands tribunal (part of the court service) who make a binding decision on the value of the property. A detailed report on the issue will be presented to Executive within three months.

At present 39% of the council housing stock is classed as non-decent (March '05 return). The council is currently undertaking an options appraisal into routes for raising the required investment to make all properties decent by 2010. To apply this stipulation that only voids that meet the decent home standard can be offered would significantly reduce the number of properties available to Wooddene tenants and would slow down the current decant programme.

The Acorn Estate tenants and residents association have been actively pursuing the interests of Wooddene residents during the course of the decant scheme and a project team was set up in 2002 as a consultative forum on the regeneration of Wooddene. This team needed to be refreshed as a number of key members had been rehoused. Peckham area office canvassed remaining residents and a well attended project team meeting of 25 residents took place on September 13 with a further meeting to discuss progress to be scheduled for the end of October. Acorn TRA have a general meeting programmed for 18<sup>th</sup> October where the Wooddene decant is an on the agenda and the Area Manager has also agreed to hold a public meeting for remaining residents in late October to address any concerns

In addition the Peckham area housing forum receives regular reports from the area housing manager on progress both with the decant and the redevelopment proposals.

Attached as an appendix is an operational update drafted by the Area Manager distributed to remaining residents and the Acorn TRA on 14<sup>th</sup> October.