

Housing & Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Monday 25 January 2016

7.00 pm

Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Membership

Councillor Tom Flynn (Chair)
Councillor Ben Johnson (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Karl Eastham
Councillor Eleanor Kerlake
Councillor Vijay Luthra
Councillor Damian O'Brien
Councillor Martin Seaton
Cris Claridge
John Nosworthy
Michael Orey

Reserves

Councillor James Barber
Councillor Catherine Dale
Councillor Gavin Edwards
Councillor Sandra Rhule
Councillor Johnson Situ

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Access to information

You have the right to request to inspect copies of minutes and reports on this agenda as well as the background documents used in the preparation of these reports.

Babysitting/Carers allowances

If you are a resident of the borough and have paid someone to look after your children, an elderly dependant or a dependant with disabilities so that you could attend this meeting, you may claim an allowance from the council. Please collect a claim form at the meeting.

Access

The council is committed to making its meetings accessible. Further details on building access, translation, provision of signers etc for this meeting are on the council's web site: www.southwark.gov.uk or please contact the person below.

Contact Fitzroy Williams on 020 7525 7102 or email: fitzroy.williams@southwark.gov.uk

Members of the committee are summoned to attend this meeting

Eleanor Kelly

Chief Executive

Date: 15 January 2016



Housing & Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Monday 25 January 2016
7.00 pm

Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

Order of Business

Item No.	Title	Page No.
	PART A - OPEN BUSINESS	
1.	APOLOGIES	
2.	NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT	
	In special circumstances, an item of business may be added to an agenda within five clear working days of the meeting.	
3.	DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS	
	Members to declare any interests and dispensations in respect of any item of business to be considered at this meeting.	
4.	MINUTES	1 - 3
	To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the open section of the meeting held on Monday 23 rd November 2015.	
5.	WOMEN'S SAFETY CHARTER - UPDATE	
	Councillor Michael Situ Cabinet Member for Communities and Safety and Eva Gomez (Safer Communities Team Manager) to give sub-committee update.	
6.	EMPTY HOMES	4 - 11
	Trefor Henman (Principal Strategy Officer) to present the report to the sub-committee.	
7.	RESIDENT LED LOCAL DELIVERY SERVICES	12 - 22

Item No.

Title

Page No.

Members briefing from Lee Page (Resident Involvement Manager) on the pilots schemes in Peckham, Camberwell East and Camberwell West.

DISCUSSION OF ANY OTHER OPEN ITEMS AS NOTIFIED AT THE START OF THE MEETING.

PART B - CLOSED BUSINESS

DISCUSSION OF ANY CLOSED ITEMS AS NOTIFIED AT THE START OF THE MEETING AND ACCEPTED BY THE CHAIR AS URGENT.

Date: 15 January 2016

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The following motion should be moved, seconded and approved if the sub-committee wishes to exclude the press and public to deal with reports revealing exempt information:

“That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1-7, Access to Information Procedure rules of the Constitution.”

HOUSING & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the Housing & Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Monday 23 November 2015 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Tom Flynn (Chair)
Councillor Karl Eastham
Councillor Eleanor Kerslake
Councillor Vijay Luthra
Councillor Damian O'Brien
Councillor Martin Seaton
Cris Claridge

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Michael Situ

OFFICER SUPPORT: Deborah Collins - Strategic Director, Environment & Leisure
Debbi Gooch - Head of Litigation
Shelley Burke – Head of Overview & Scrutiny
Fitzroy Williams – Scrutiny Project Assistant

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ben Johnson.

2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT

2.1 The chair stated that the sub-committee would need to discuss TMO's , Update of Right to Buy and Themes for Fire Commander's Interview at the end of the meeting.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2015 be agreed as a correct record.

VIDEO OF THE OPENING OF THE MEETING

<https://bambuser.com/v/5942794>

5. INTERVIEW - POLICE BOROUGH COMMANDER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY INTERVIEW - COUNCILLOR M SITU

5.1 The chair with the agreement of the sub-committee interviewed the Borough Commander Zander Gibson and the Cabinet Member for Community Safety Councillor Michael Situ together. He then explained that members would ask questions of both for an hour, then have a 10 minute break and resume the questions for the final hour.

5.2 At the end of the questions the chair thanked the Borough Commander and the Cabinet Member for Community Safety for attending the meeting and answering members questions.

VIDEO OF THE INTERVIEW OF THE BOROUGH COMMANDER & CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SAFETY

<https://bambuser.com/v/5942795>

<https://bambuser.com/v/5942870>

<https://bambuser.com/v/5942907>

6. MATTERS ARISING

Members of the sub-committee discussed Housing repairs and in particular residential pilot schemes which were going to be introduced in the near future. The chair also discussed that a couple of TMO's could still be interviewed by the sub-committee.

Fire Commander Interview

Members were requested to provide their themes for the interview to the scrutiny officer.

- Local services figures
- Local response times

Right to Buy Report

Draft report to be circulated to members of this sub-committee and members were informed that the report was to be discussed at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 30.11.2015.

VIDEO - MATTERS ARISING

<https://bambuser.com/v/5942964>

Meeting ended at 9.32 pm

CHAIR:

DATED:

Agenda Item 6

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 25 January 2016	Meeting Name: Housing & Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Report title:		Empty homes	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Housing and Modernisation	

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. The committee is asked to note the efforts being made by the council to minimise the number of empty council homes and tackle empty homes in the private sector.
2. The committee is also asked to note the recent performance improvements achieved by the council in reducing the time taken to re-let council homes and in improving the levels of customer satisfaction with this process.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. At a time when demand for housing is extremely high across London, minimising the number of empty homes in the borough is a key priority for the council in order to ensure that Southwark residents have access to the maximum number of homes possible. As well as helping to address a high level of housing need, minimising the amount of time that council homes are empty is a more efficient use of the housing stock and maximises the rental income available to the council.
4. Empty homes that are neglected can cause issues for neighbours; depressing the value of adjacent homes and potentially attracting antisocial behaviour such as nuisance, squatting and criminal activity. This can all represent an additional burden on local authorities and emergency services, and the expectation from central Government is that tackling empty homes is best achieved through locally led interventions.
5. As well as prioritising the management of empty council homes, the council has a range of tools at its disposal to tackle empty homes in the private sector. This report sets out the council's recent performance in relation to empty council homes and the progress made in tackling empty private sector homes in the borough.

EMPTY COUNCIL HOMES

6. Overall responsibility for the voids and lettings process in relation to council homes rests with the repairs and maintenance team within the asset management division of the housing and modernisation department.

The number of empty council homes¹

	March 2013	March 2014	March 2015	Nov 2015
Total LBS housing stock	35,889	34,872	34,135	33,603
Number of Minor voids at period end	65	125	31	51
Number of Major voids at period end	80	193	97	108
Total number of Minor and Major voids at period end	145	318	128	159
<i>Voids as a percentage of LBS housing stock</i>	<i>0.4%</i>	<i>0.91%</i>	<i>0.37%</i>	<i>0.47%</i>

7. Major voids are usually large-scale works that either extend or improve the life of a building. A Major void is classed as such if an existing tenant would have had to be decanted in order for the works to take place. This definition is also applied to any void property subject to major works, not just those in major works programmes, and could include:

- Structural works, including floors, walls, roofs, or window and door replacements
- Site works to remedy the safety and security of tenants, such as asbestos removal
- Works to address timber and pest issues, such as bed bugs, fleas and cockroaches
- Consequential works as a result of major works
- Damage caused to buildings by a peril or major event such as fire, flood, subsidence or ground heave will normally fall under the council's buildings insurance policy. In these circumstances residents would most likely be decanted from their home, and the property will fall within the major voids programme, so that a longer-term determination can be made about the cost benefit of any major works investment.

Long-term empty council homes^{1 2}

	March 2013	March 2014	March 2015	Nov 2015
Total LBS housing stock	35,889	34,872	34,135	33,603
Number not for re-let at period end	245	251	314	360
<i>Voids as a percentage of LBS housing stock</i>	<i>0.7%</i>	<i>0.72%</i>	<i>0.92%</i>	<i>1.07%</i>

8. There has been an increase in the number of long-term council voids in recent years. 82 per cent of long term voids in the borough at present are as a result of planned major regeneration work in the borough, made up of decants from the Aylesbury Estate, Elmington Estate, Maydew House and Lakanal House. The majority of these empty homes are currently being utilised as temporary accommodation for homeless households as an alternative to costly nightly paid temporary accommodation, particularly on the Aylesbury Estate and in Maydew House.

9. The remainder of the council's long-term voids consist of properties being renovated through

¹ The number of empty homes is subject to in-year fluctuation. The figures presented represent the level of void properties at the end of each relevant period and do not include tenant managed (TMO) properties.

² Long-term voids are known as 'Non-active voids'; and are properties identified for demolition, disposal or not for re-let in the short term

the council's major voids programme, properties being adapted for disabled use, and properties due to be sold or being refurbished for sale.

Average re-let times for council homes³

	Financial year 2012/13	Financial year 2013/14	Financial year 2014/15	Year to date (Nov 2015)
Number of minor re-lets	1,112	705	477	289
Average days void to let ⁴	29.6	35.4	43.6	32.24
Number of major re-lets ⁵	617	716	927	446
Average days ready to let	9.64	12.52	13.16	10.07
Total number of minor and major re-lets	1,729	1,421	1,404	735
Average days ready to let	22.46	23.87	23.51	18.79

10. The council's performance on the average number of days taken to let a property has seen a significant improvement in 2015/16 compared to previous years, achieving year to date performance of 18.79 days against a performance target of 22 days.
11. Limited HouseMark⁶ benchmarking data is available in relation to void re-let times, further details of which can be found in the appendix of this paper on page eight.
12. A total of **1,194** council re-lets are anticipated in 2015/16, which is lower than in previous years. The main factor in this reduction of available lets is the re-housing of decanted tenants from Wendover and homeless applicants from the Elmington Estate. In addition, **478** homes have been sold under right to buy in the last 20 months, there have been fewer mutual exchanges, and some properties are being utilised as temporary accommodation.

Tenant satisfaction with the voids and letting process

	Financial year 2012/13	Financial year 2013/14	Financial year 2014/15	Year to date (Nov 2015)
Satisfaction with the allocations & lettings process	90%	91%	90%	94%
Satisfaction with the condition of the property	72%	90%	92%	96%

13. Customer satisfaction with the allocations and lettings process, as well as the condition of let properties has improved significantly in recent years. The main reason for this

³ The figures presented here do not include tenant managed (TMO) properties.

⁴ The minor void period is calculated in calendar days from the day after a tenancy is terminated up to the date when a new tenancy agreement starts.

⁵ The major void period shown here is calculated in calendar days from when the dwelling is handed back to the organisation up to the date when a new tenancy agreement starts. This excludes any period during which major works refurbishment is underway, when the property is squatted, when a property is due to be handed over to or in use by the police, and where the Home Office takes over a property to use for asylum seekers.

⁶ HouseMark is a housing membership-based organisation with over 950 subscribers, and is a source of cross-sector performance and benchmarking data

improvement was the introduction of a higher specification void standard that included full decoration in all properties. In order to main the void standard and improve customer satisfaction, the council also now ensures that there is working electricity and gas in properties where possible, and that boilers are serviced and operational so new tenants are able to move in immediately. Prospective tenants are also offered two opportunities to view a property before they commit to signing the tenancy agreement, ensuring that they are satisfied with their new home and increasing the likelihood of a successfully sustained tenancy in the longer term.

The number of empty tenant management organisation (TMO) properties

	Financial year 2013/14	Financial year 2014/15	Year to date (Apr-Sep 2015)
Cumulative total number of void properties over financial year	94	91	34
Average days ready to let	18.7	29.2	74

14. Information about void tenant management organisation (TMO) properties is recorded separately to other council homes and reported in a different way. Rather than showing the number of void properties at a particular point in time, the above data shows the cumulative number of TMO properties that became void over a financial year. The overall number of void properties has remained relatively stable in recent years, however the average time taken to let void TMO properties has increased; which in some instances relates to major voids being handed back to the council for re-servicing and can increase the turnaround time.

Illegal sub-letting

15. As well as reducing the number of council homes available for those with a genuine housing need, illegal subletting of council homes costs the local authority thousands of pounds every year in recovery costs.
16. Southwark is at the forefront in tackling tenancy fraud, and is in the top quartile for the number of properties recovered (in excess of **1,000** since 2012), as well as the recovery rate as a percentage of total housing stock. The council has been recognised nationally as a leader in this area of work and received several awards as a result.

Council properties recovered as a result of tenancy fraud

Financial year	SIT team			Resident officers	Total properties recovered
	Tenants	TMOs	RSLs		
2015/16 (year to date)	48	2	4	96	150
2014/15	87	11	18	133	249
2013/14	170	4	54	151	379
2012/13	162	3	19	138	322

17. Wherever possible, the council adopts a proactive approach to tenancy fraud as it is less costly and time consuming to tackle fraud before it takes place. This approach also

minimises the likelihood that vulnerable prospective tenants will be exploited.

18. An example of this proactive approach is the recent launch of the ILATCH web based anti-fraud tool. Members of the public and estate agents can use ILATCH to check if a property is part of the council's housing stock and being illegally sublet, which in turn alerts the council that a property may be advertised as available to rent. The council is then able to respond quickly to avoid deposits being exchanged and illegal subletting from taking place.
19. The housing and modernisation department has a number of other tools in place to tackle social housing fraud, including:
 - **Fraud & validation officers** based in the housing solutions team prevent fraud from entering the system at the point of entry to the housing department.
 - Resident service officers carry out a **two-year tenancy check programme**; 26,076 checks had been carried out as of September 2015.
 - The **special investigations team (SIT)** carry out complex investigations resulting in defended trials and have identified two suitable cases for prosecution under the legislation making illegal subletting a criminal offence.
 - All **right to buy (RTB) applications are checked** and visited where necessary as this has been identified as an emerging fraud risk. The number of RTB applications has increased as a result of the increased discount offered by central Government, and this area of work is prioritised due to the potential permanent loss of council housing stock.
 - Successful cases are **publicised in the media**.
 - A bi-annual **National Fraud Initiative (NFI)** data-matching exercise is conducted.

PRIVATE SECTOR EMPTY HOMES

20. It was estimated in October 2014 that there were approximately **2,050** empty private sector homes in the borough, equating to 2.9 per cent of all private sector housing stock. Empty homes are distributed throughout the borough, although a greater concentration lies within central areas of Southwark. Properties may remain empty for a range of reasons, although very few are ever fully abandoned. Many homes are empty as a result of the inertia of the owners, or due to family disagreements over what to do with inherited properties. Other common reasons include the ill health of owner, or a lack of funding for some owners to repair and refurbish their empty properties.
21. Southwark council established a dedicated service to coordinate and lead a corporate approach to dealing with private sector empty properties in 1996, complementing the work already being done to manage empty council homes. The empty homes team uses incentive and enforcement solutions to bring properties back into use as homes and since April 2013, 250 properties have been brought back into use; in turn creating an additional 35 new homes.
22. Empty homes brought back into use qualify for the **New Homes Bonus**. This scheme enables central Government to match fund the council tax on long-term empty properties brought back into use for six years, using the national average in each band, with an

additional amount being provided for those brought back into use as new affordable homes. The New Homes Bonus was introduced in April 2011 and one of its aims was to encourage more local authorities to tackle empty homes. Since the inception of the New Homes Bonus, the team's work on bringing empty homes into use has contributed to this tangible financial receipt for the council.

23. The tools available to help bring properties back into use are broadly divided into three areas:

Advice options: Owners are helped to overcome any obstacles stopping them from bringing their property back into use. This can range from helping owners to navigate planning rules and offering design advice, to providing support through the construction process where owners undertake repair projects themselves. The council website has a portal dedicated to providing online advice and guidance on empty residential properties.⁷

Funded options: Incentive loans and grants are available to proactive owners of empty homes as a contribution towards the refurbishment or conversion costs of residential or commercial property into housing. Funding comes from corporate resources and other external sources. Empty properties can also be refurbished and leased by a social enterprise or housing charities who in turn take a nomination from the council.

Nominations / social housing renting options: These options are available to owners who wish to rent their property either by self managing tenants nominated by the council, or leasing to the council or our partners. These properties are then used to provide temporary accommodation for residents until the council can offer or find a more permanent home.

24. Where all efforts to work in cooperation with an owner fail, the empty homes team will use enforcement powers to bring about a property's reuse. The general powers used for empty homes are Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs) and Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO):

- **EDMOs** enable the council to take over the temporary management of an empty property for up to seven years, and all costs incurred by the authority to do this must be recouped within this time frame.
- **CPOs** offer local authorities the power to take over land, houses or other properties to increase the number of houses available or improve the quality of the housing stock. The main use of this power is to get land for housing, and includes bringing empty properties back into use as homes, and improving substandard ones.

25. Southwark council generally favours the use of CPOs over EDMOs as the repair costs incurred through EDMOs are often higher than those of other boroughs due to the older housing stock present in the borough.⁸

26. Southwark has successfully used CPO powers to bring problematic and very long term

⁷ http://www.southwark.gov.uk/a_to_z/service/731/housing_-_empty_residential_properties

⁸ The average repair and refurbishment costs incurred in Southwark equate to £35,000. In comparison, the average costs in the London Borough of Bexley are approximately £15,000.

empty properties back into use to ensure reoccupation and a transfer to more responsible new owners. Over the last six years the empty homes team has obtained five confirmed CPO's, which had collectively been empty for 88 years. These homes were successfully brought back into use, including the successful acquisition of 549 Lordship Lane; London's first concrete house.⁹ This award winning property now provides five homes to residents on a shared-ownership basis.

27. Other enforcement powers under planning, building control and environmental health legislation are available that compliment empty homes work, which in some cases is enough to prompt an owner to bring their property back into use but can also be used to enhance the effectiveness of further enforcement work. Enforcement will only be used as a very last resort where owners who have been given every opportunity to return their property to use voluntarily, do not do so and where it is in the best interest of the public.

COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS AND EXEMPTIONS

28. In April 2013 central Government introduced technical reform to council tax legislation, which offered local authorities the discretion to amend certain council tax discounts and exemptions. As a result, the council introduced the following amendments to council tax discounts in the borough:

- Properties which have been empty and unfurnished for less than two months receive a council tax discount of 100 per cent; however after this period the full charge becomes payable. In January 2016, Council Assembly will consider a recommendation to remove the two month exemption that is currently in place, which if approved will mean that full council tax would remain payable on an empty, unfurnished home.
 - Any property which has been empty for a period greater than two years will be charged an 'empty home premium' of 50 per cent, so a council tax bill for 150 per cent of the usual charge will be payable
 - Properties which would previously have been entitled to a Class A exemption (undergoing major repairs or structural alterations), are now charged 100 per cent council tax unless they are eligible for the empty property discount (see above)
 - Properties which are unoccupied but furnished and properties that are no-one's 'sole or main residence' (e.g. second homes and unoccupied furnished lets) are now charged 100 per cent council tax.
29. Council tax records from October 2015 show that **3,591** homes in the borough were classified as empty, **527** homes were classified as second homes, and that an 'empty home premium' was being levied against a total of **611** homes.

⁹ http://www.southwark.gov.uk/news/article/1685/concrete_house_conservation_picks_up_prestigious_award

APPENDIX - Benchmarked 2014/15 performance on void re-let times

30. The most recent Housemark benchmarking data in relation to void re-let times is from the financial year 2014/15, and is shown in the table below. The benchmarking data is limited in its scope as it only includes details of 43 housing organisations that were willing to submit evidence of their performance. The data must therefore be considered in context, as there is little incentive for a poorly performing organisation to share their data for this purpose.
31. Despite achieving a significant improvement on minor void re-let performance so far in 2015/16, an average performance of 44.16 days in 2014/15 placed Southwark in the bottom quartile for minor void turnaround times.
32. Out of the contributing organisations, Southwark was in the third quartile for major void re-lets in 2014/15. Southwark's benchmarked performance in relation to Major voids (75.3 days) is higher than the performance reported elsewhere in this report (13.16 days), because the benchmarked performance includes the total period of time that major void properties were empty, including any period of major works refurbishments, any occupation by squatters, and any use by the police or Home Office.

Benchmarking information on void re-let times (2014/15)

	Average minor void re-let time	Average major voids re-let time	Average re-let time for minor and major voids
LB Southwark performance	44.16 days¹⁰ (bottom quartile)	75.3 days (3rd quartile)	64.45 days (bottom quartile)
LB Southwark benchmarked position out of contributing organisations	26 th out of 32	16 th out of 30	24 th out of 31
Average top quartile performance	21.53 days	60.71 days	33.69 days
Average median performance	31.36 days	75.05 days	49.50 days
Average bottom quartile performance	38.63 0064ays	102.61 days	61.58 days
Top five benchmarked organisations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Norwich City Council (12.66 days) Wolverhampton Homes (17 days) Wakefield & District Housing (18 days) Lambeth Living (19.4 days) Ascham Homes (20 days) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wolverhampton Homes (30 days) Norwich City Council (42.1 days) Southern Housing Group (54.2 days) North Tyneside (55.5 days) East Thames Group (55.6 days) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Norwich City Council (16.7 days) Wolverhampton Homes (21 days) Amicus Horizon (26.3 days) Berneslai Homes (28 days) Southern Housing Group (30.1 days)

¹⁰ This figure differs slightly from the performance reported on page three of this paper as HouseMark benchmarking includes re-lets of sheltered accommodation units

Item No. 7	Classification: Open	Date: 25 th January 2016	Meeting Name: Housing & Community Safety Scrutiny Sub- Committee
Report title:		Resident Led Local Service (RELEASE)	
From:		Director of Housing and Modernisation	
Report Author		Lee Page, Resident Involvement Manager	

Recommendations

That the Housing & Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee are asked to:

- Note the progress made on the project to date
- Note the next steps proposed in the paper including the establishment of the pilot boards as sub groups of the 3 Area Housing Forums, and the first task of the sub groups is to look at how to redesign the repairs service to deliver improved satisfaction within the existing budget allocations for these areas.
- Note the forward plan proposed for the development and delivery of these subgroups.
- Note the proposed mechanism for evaluation of the projects over the first year.

Background

1. On 22 October 2013 the Cabinet report Increasing Tenant and Homeowner Participation in the Delivery of Council Housing Services tasked 'officers with exploring the options for increasing tenant and homeowner management of and involvement in council housing services'.
2. In 2014, Tenant Management Initiatives explored how to deliver this commitment and identified 3 pilot areas, Camberwell, Peckham and Walworth. Following discussion at Area Housing Forums Camberwell and Peckham indicated that they were interested in exploring the ideas further although there were reservations about what this meant.
3. On 8 December 2014, SMT agreed a series of actions to improve the quality of customer service:
 - We will change the management arrangements for the repairs service with a local neighbourhood approach, accountable to local resident boards.
 - These boards will include ward councillors and elected resident representatives and will hold the service to account in geographical areas.
 - We will set up estate management boards to give residents more control over the service we deliver in their neighbourhood
 - We will encourage resident scrutiny of service delivery
 - We will advertise the potential for residents to take on responsibility for elements of service delivery

- We will encourage younger people to get involved, and stay involved, through the use of new media

Rationale – innovation and satisfaction

4. The commitment to construct 11,000 new homes over the next thirty years to replace stock loss over that period means that Housing and Community Services has a responsibility to prove that it can deliver landlord services into the future through innovative management which improves the quality of services and the satisfaction of the users of these services.
5. Following these early discussions it was decided to aim to establish at least two pilot projects placing residents in the driving seat of local planning and delivery of their housing services by April 2016.
6. The Resident Led Local Delivery (RELEASE) project aims to demonstrate that the council can adapt its own practices and structures to successfully operate as an efficient social landlord responsive to residents' needs and aspirations.
7. The focus of RELEASE is to raise levels of resident satisfaction with housing services through improving the quality of services, but also by establishing greater customer confidence through strengthening the sense of local ownership and control. The ambition is to build a co-productive approach to the tenant and landlord relationship and deliver significant culture shift moving from adversarial to collaborative dynamics by focusing on joint problem solving.
8. The Star survey of 2013 found a net satisfaction rate for tenants to be only 44%, while for leaseholders it was –15%. The importance of how well repairs are handled in determining satisfaction was also underlined by the survey. For tenants living in directly managed stock, net satisfaction with the repairs service was 40.1%, whilst for TMO tenants the corresponding figure was 71.5%.
9. RELEASE has to emphasise flexibility and adaptability to local needs, wishes and capacity so we cannot present a proscriptive model to residents as a basis for discussion.

Areas

10. The initial discussion with AHF in 2014 identified 3 areas interested in exploring the idea further:
 - Camberwell West
 - Camberwell East
 - Peckham
11. The feedback from these discussions demonstrated a concern about cutting across current AHF boundaries and resident representatives were very clear that any governance structure would have to enable residents to exercise substantive decision-making.
12. Tenant Council expressed concern about how any new structures might cut across or undermine existing consultation structures and a joint homeowner and tenant Task and Finish Group has been established with the following agreed role:
 - To scrutinise any emerging proposals related to developing pilot schemes for resident led service delivery.
 - To provide an independent check of the impact of any proposals on existing housing consultation structures.

- To work with the council to develop a consultation strategy on the pilot projects.
- To scrutinise the impact of the pilot projects a year after implementation.

Project update

13. It is clear that unless residents are keen to work with officers in new ways RELEASE would be unable to deliver the changes anticipated. The primary consideration at this time has been to engage resident activists in the project (both at local and borough-wide level).
14. In order to test the appetite for change and how much local people would be prepared to play an active part in any new initiatives officers organised a series of workshops in June.
15. The process of developing a proposal for one or more areas needs to involve council staff and seek to build partnership between staff and residents. Consequently, staff were also invited to attend separate workshops following the same format as residents.
16. Workshops were organised in Camberwell and Peckham with residents from these areas, Community Engagement and RSO staff, repairs and call centre staff working in the proposed pilot neighbourhoods and there was a short session at the Community Engagement away day.
17. Participants were asked what they valued, what were the issues, to map a user journey, offer solutions to this problem, to identify the benefits of local delivery and greater resident involvement, prioritise services for local delivery, identify roles for residents, and suggest who else might be involved and what would make a good area for a pilot project.
18. The outcomes of the workshops demonstrated considerable similarities between staff and residents and across the two areas. The key conclusions are
 - There is an appetite for the council to do things differently. Residents are particularly interested in having more influence over service delivery and in particular there was real interest in more localised service delivery. Residents were clear that responsibility for services needs to remain with the Council and resident and local knowledge is important but that staff were the experts and paid to make decisions.
 - RSOs have emerged as the key role in service delivery as the 'go to individual', a figure that has developed close relationships with residents, and is trusted. Significantly the RSO group had a number of ideas about how they can deliver services more effectively. This should be built on to improve service satisfaction. Examining how the role can be enhanced or empowered should be considered as a way forward for this project.
 - There were no strong views expressed about the areas that would be most effective for any pilot scheme. In these circumstances it may be best for further work to explore proceeding with areas that are consistent with existing AHF boundaries.
 - There should be a clear relationship between the AHF and whatever emerges from further discussion that allows the AHF to have a key role in guiding, developing and informing the outcomes of the work.
19. The priority services identified in these sessions by all participants accords with the views of senior managers in 2014 about which of the housing services would be most appropriate for RELEASE namely repairs, ground maintenance and estate cleaning. In addition ASB emerged from the workshops as a service that would benefit from a resident led and local approach.

20. Government policy and legislation to encourage active resident involvement and participation in local decisions relates either to improving through scrutiny or devolution to external bodies such as TMOs or other forms of social enterprise, such as a community development trust or a mutual. Given the limited appetite for TMOs, the political sensitivity of perceptions of stock transfer, the outcomes of the workshops, and the concerns of Southwark's tenants and homeowners, consideration has been given to how to adapt existing structures to deliver the changes.
21. During the course of the project to date it has been noted that there is a large degree of commonality with other, on-going, council led projects. Most obviously with
- Modernise
 - Increasing the number of TRAs
 - Digital inclusion
22. The parallel development of RELESE could address the stated resident desire for greater personal contact with officers without the need for the need for a physical base within each area. The development of remote working in residents homes using enhanced IT such as tablet computers will enable services to be delivered swiftly. Working with residents to co-design the delivery of services will ensure that changes are incorporated with the support of residents and will enable officers to promote the modernise agenda through greater promotion of My Southwark.

Proposal

23. Following discussions at Area Housing Forums and the workshops in the summer 2015, in the period October to December 2015 the council went back to the areas under consideration to hold a number of workshops and drop-in session about setting up RELESE project pilot schemes.
24. The consultation involved writing to all residents in the pilot areas (excluding TMO properties); running two feed back workshops for those who participated earlier and various drop in sessions at local libraries; placing posters around estates; attending Community Council meetings, Area Housing Forums and estate action days; and offering some drop ins for TRA members. All those attending were asked to complete a brief questionnaire about the issues that had arisen at earlier workshops to ensure that the council was looking to address the areas of most concern to residents.
25. The results of the consultation were overwhelmingly positive with over 90% supporting the initiative and 85 people volunteering to be involved.
26. The majority of people thought that repairs service should be looked at first.
27. 68% thought the panels should be established as part of the Area Housing Forums. A full breakdown of the responses is attached at Appendix 1 to this report.
28. The early work we have done has established that there is an appetite to develop this project. Reflecting the outcomes from our discussions so far we are proposing that we establish three area panels as sub committees of each of the following area housing forums Camberwell East, Camberwell West and Peckham. The existing constitutions of the area housing forums are sufficiently broad to allow the establishment of sub committees to include people who are not participants in AHF or members of active TRAs, and permits AHF to have influence over service delivery and local budgets.
29. It is anticipated that the work of the sub- group will be intense and focused on the service redesign. In these circumstances it would be unreasonable to expect the AHF to add this to

their own agendas. In addition the sub group will be expected to work in a collaborative and co productive way. AHFs have a key role to play in monitoring the council's performance, advocating on residents' behalf, and contributing to the development of borough wide strategies and policies. Establishing a service design sub committee will ensure that the distinct roles are not blurred.

30. It is proposed that membership of the panel will be two members delegated by the Area Housing Forum and six other residents from the area. The relationship with the AHF is that it will report back its conclusions for final endorsement of any changes proposed. This will ensure that there remains wider democratic input to any of the proposals.
31. Flexibility on membership of the panel is essential to support wider engagement of our residents, in particular the Camberwell workshop included a significant proportion of residents of street properties who are often unable to participate in AHF as access to membership of this body is not clear for individuals who are not in TRAs. We would like to draw on the best talent in our areas, and those who are committed to working with us in a collaborative way on service design which is not the same as managing a TRA and its associated activity. It is imagined that engagement with the panel would vary depending on the focus of the service being redesigned.
32. The exact membership and how these members are selected would be subject to further discussion and feedback from the AHFs in the programme, the T&F group and the residents and staff who have participated so far. It is important that participants have confidence and trust in the pilots and residents in the membership of the sub committees to avoid the process being interpreted as a mechanism to undermine local democracy.
33. In order to remain focused and productive it is proposed that the subcommittees look at one service area at a time. This will ensure there is better scrutiny, understanding and evidence gathering about a service and enable joint problem solving. It is probable that the examination and solution phases will take between 6 months and a year before implementation depending on the service area, outcomes, degree of change required and consequent procurement, staffing and legal issues.
34. RELESE pilots will be iterative and use action learning to develop the structures and work streams. The project will enable the council and residents to benchmark service quality and customer satisfaction against different delivery mechanisms and provide a medium-term agenda for improvement that can be rolled out across the borough and adapted to the needs and capacity of different areas. There will need to be investment in on-going evaluation of the programme to capture the learning and knowledge.
35. In view of the high priority both residents, staff and SMT have placed on rethinking how repairs service is delivered, and that this service is the driver for much of the poor satisfaction rates, it is proposed that the initial task of the sub committees is to redesign our repairs service in these pilot areas based on local need and priorities.
36. The staff membership of the subcommittees while it is looking at repairs should include two representatives of the repairs service, representatives of the RSO's, reps from the call centre and two reps from community engagement to facilitate the group and support residents learning, participation and engagement with residents in the wider area. Staff will not be greater in number than resident participation. Such a distribution would mean even ratio membership reinforcing a partnership approach to RELESE.

37. It would be useful to review the systems thinking project work that has been done in the repairs team and share this with the sub groups to identify how this might improve performance in their areas.
38. Additionally the sub groups should also work with the modernise programme to identify how developments might bring improvements and how to ensure user confidence and accessibility to the work of the modernise team. To enhance this it is proposed that the sub committees also encouraged to become pilots in the digital inclusion programme.
39. To ensure that the pilots offer real learning opportunity the programme should be evaluated using staff or services independent of those that are involved in the direct delivery of the programme.
40. Once delivery of redesigned services begin, consideration should be given to removing the areas from the standard delivery targets to ensure that the redesign is not subject to distorting constraints from measures that are no longer fit for purpose, and potential barriers (based on what we measure) to creative and imaginative solutions are removed. New targets should be developed within each area that reflects the local priorities and new service standards. In this way overall departmental performance is not impacted by the success or failure or difference within RELESE and the pilots are not shackled by the need to deliver targets that are not local priorities.
41. There is no proposal at this stage to devolve decision making. The involvement process suggested above is one of scrutiny and service design. Nonetheless a huge amount of social and political capital will be lost if the service changes that emerge from the sub groups are not implemented. To make the process work well for all participants will necessitate significant culture change from residents and officers. In particular officers/contractors will need to be prepared to work with residents on an equal but different basis. It is important to be able to develop the skills to challenge and receive criticism without aggression or defensiveness.
42. There needs to be a commitment to trial the changes that emerge without knowing what these might be but trusting that the process will develop something that works. Early thought will need to be given to identify any parts of the repairs service that sits outside RELESE to minimise areas of potential conflict e.g. Gas Servicing. Residents will need to be clear about the budgets they will have to deliver the new services.
43. In order to be an active participant in the redesign of services residents will need to be trained and have a good working knowledge of the service delivery and how things work now and why to be able to unpick where from the customer point of view the system serves them poorly, and to understand how change to one part of the service might alter the experience at other points on the user journey. Both parties will need to be committed to seeing the problem from the others perspective.
44. Following the outcomes of the workshops held in early summer it is possible that service redesign will call for changes to staff roles and responsibilities, particularly in respect of RSO's and possibly call centre staff. An indication at this stage that this is possible would be useful.

Next Steps

45. The period October to December 2015 involved feed back of the sessions to date and engagement with residents in the areas about the proposals. In particular we sought to gather

support for the proposal in the areas, and refine the proposal with the feed back we have received. It has transpired that the overwhelming majority of those who responded to the consultation have agreed that we have correctly captured the concerns of residents in the earlier round of consultation.

46. The period between January and March will focus on developing the role of the sub committee members, the training and work programme in each of the RELESE pilots and recruitment of members to the subcommittees. This will involve preparing job specifications as well as job descriptions and establishing training plans, planning service visits and identifying the initial information requirements to make good decisions.
47. There will be a meeting inviting all those who expressed an interest in being involved to discuss the panels and their work in more detail in early February. Residents will be invited to apply to be panel members. By early March panel members will be selected. Interested residents who are not selected will become part of a group who will act as a sounding board for the work of the panel, meeting twice during the life time of the panel. Panels will begin in April 2016 and conduct their review and make recommendations by April 2017.
48. Once the sub committees have become established it is anticipated that residents, with community engagement support, will act as ambassadors for RELESE and new service delivery. Once the repairs service has been reviewed and delivery has begun work will begin to identify other local service priorities in each of the areas and the groups will identify the next areas for service review, evaluating their continued engagement and the need for a change in personnel to reflect the change in issue. Consideration will be given to the success of the approach and mechanisms for roll out to the remaining areas.

Time table for implementation of Sub groups

	Task	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR
	1. Governance							
1.1	T& F, SMT and CMH agree proposals							
1.2	T& F, SMT and CMH agree proposals							
1.3	Sub committee constitution/terms of reference agreed							
1.4	Members JD and person specification agreed							
1.5	Recruit members of the sub committees							
	2. Feed back and consultation on proposals							
2.1	Feed back session for those who attended in June (staff and residents invited)							
2.2	Email to TRAs							
2.4	Visit TRAs and AHF in areas							
2.5	Organise a series of open days/drop in sessions/piggy back existing events such as CCs, EADs, other estate based events							
2.6	Short questionnaire on the hub							
2.7	Face book promotion							
2.8	Estate based posters							
2.9	Outreach to estates and properties uncovered by TRA							
	Repairs Evidence Collection							
3.1	TRAs and AHF							
3.2	Estate drop ins							

Resident-led housing services: Summary report

This report was created on Monday 04 January 2016 at 11:54.

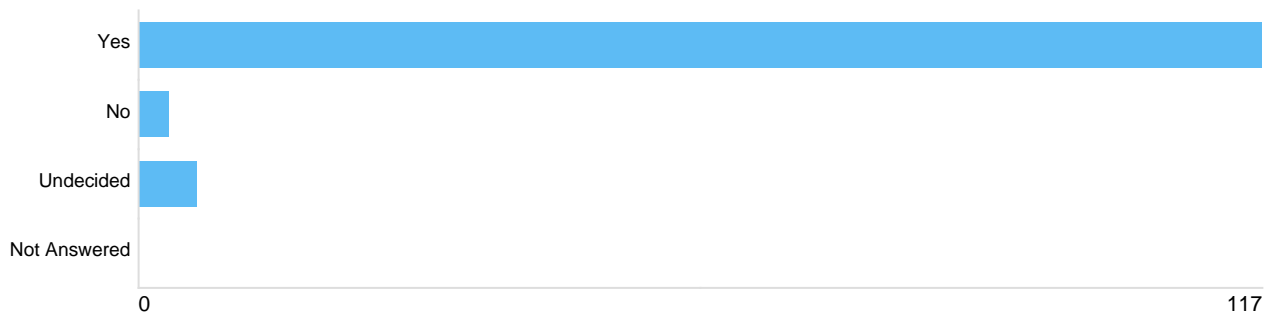
The consultation ran from 22/10/2015 to 31/12/2015.

Contents

Question 1: Do you agree with the proposal to establish resident groups that will work with the council to redesign local housing services?	1
Support groups	1
Group comments	1
Question 2: Do you agree that these groups should look at the day-to-day repairs service first?	2
Agree repairs	2
Repairs comments	2
Question 3: Do you agree that the groups should be part of the existing Area Housing Forums?	2
Agree AHFs	2
AHFs comments	2
Question 4: Do you agree with our proposals for the composition of the groups?	2
Agree composition	2
Composition comments	3
Question 5: What is your postcode?	3
Please tell us in the text box below	3
Question 6: Would you like to be involved in the repairs pilot?	3
Name	3
Email	3
Name other areas	3
Email other areas	3
Other service areas	3

Question 1: Do you agree with the proposal to establish resident groups that will work with the council to redesign local housing services?

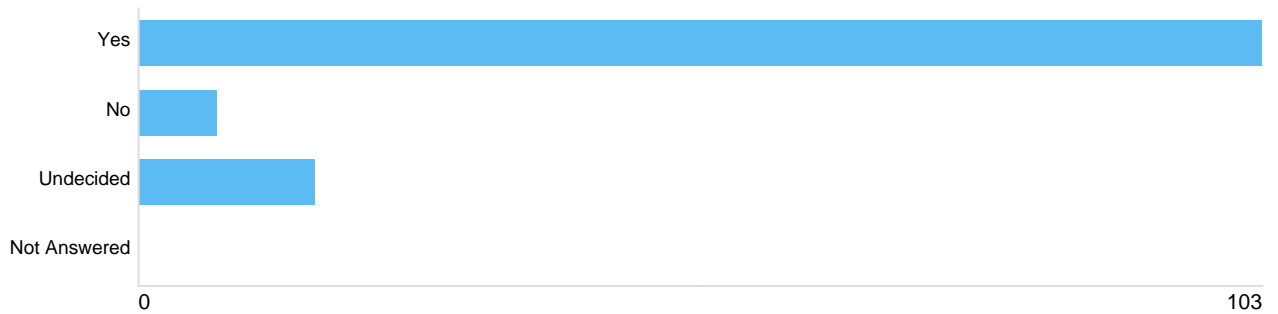
Support groups



Option	Total	Percent
Yes	117	92.86%
No	3	2.38%
Undecided	6	4.76%
Not Answered	0	0%

Group comments

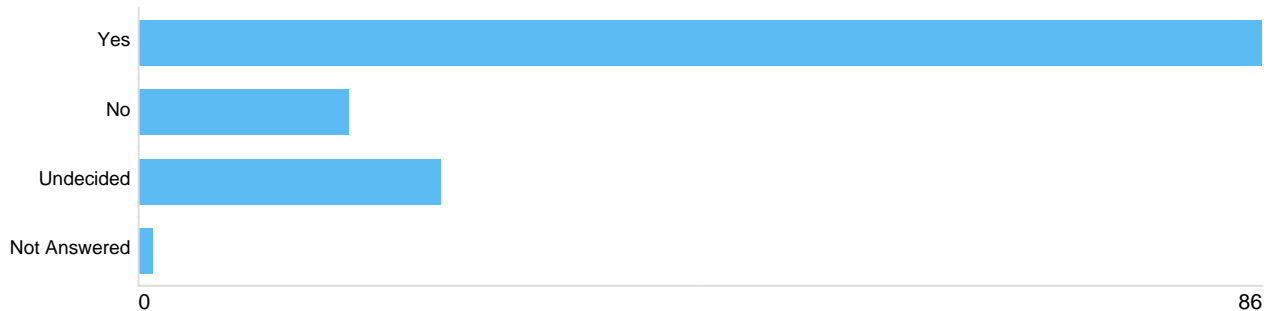
There were **57** responses to this part of the question.

Question 2: Do you agree that these groups should look at the day-to-day repairs service first?
Agree repairs


Option	Total	Percent
Yes	103	81.75%
No	7	5.56%
Undecided	16	12.70%
Not Answered	0	0%

Repairs comments

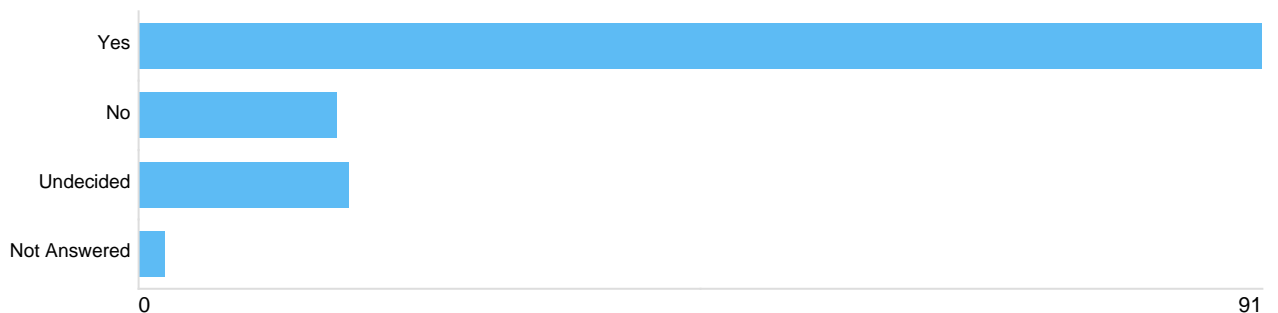
There were **52** responses to this part of the question.

Question 3: Do you agree that the groups should be part of the existing Area Housing Forums?
Agree AHFs


Option	Total	Percent
Yes	86	68.25%
No	16	12.70%
Undecided	23	18.25%
Not Answered	1	0.79%

AHFs comments

There were **38** responses to this part of the question.

Question 4: Do you agree with our proposals for the composition of the groups?
Agree composition


Option	Total	Percent
Yes	91	72.22%
No	16	12.70%
Undecided	17	13.49%
Not Answered	2	1.59%

Composition comments

There were **48** responses to this part of the question.

Question 5: What is your postcode?

Please tell us in the text box below

There were **120** responses to this part of the question.

Question 6: Would you like to be involved in the repairs pilot?

Name

There were **94** responses to this part of the question.

Email

There were **86** responses to this part of the question.

Name other areas

There were **12** responses to this part of the question.

Email other areas

There were **8** responses to this part of the question.

Other service areas

There were **30** responses to this part of the question.

**HOUSING & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE
MUNICIPAL YEAR 2015-16**

AGENDA DISTRIBUTION LIST (OPEN)

NOTE: Original held by Scrutiny Team; all amendments/queries to Fitzroy Williams Tel: 020 7525 7102

Name	No of copies	Name	No of copies
Sub-Committee Members		Council Officers	
Councillor Tom Flynn (Chair)	1	Gerri Scott, Strategic Director of Housing & Community Services	1
Councillor Ben Johnson (Vice-Chair)	1	Deborah Collins, Strategic Director of Environment & Leisure	1
Councillor Eleanor Kerlake	1	Shelley Burke, Head of Overview & Scrutiny	1
Councillor Vijay Luthra	1	Aine Gallagher, Political Assistant	1
Councillor Damian O'Brien	1	Niko Baar, Liberal Democrat Political Assistant	1
Councillor Martin Seaton	1	Justina Sawyer, Executive Assistant	1
Co-Opted Members		Barbara Asaam, Executive Assistant	1
Michael Orey (Homeowners' Council)	1	Debbi Gooch, Head of Litigation	1
John Nosworthy (Homeowners' Council Reserve)	1	Fitzroy Williams, Scrutiny Team SPARES	10
Miriam Facey (Tenants' Council Reserve)	1		
Cris Claridge (Tenants' Council)	1		
Electronic agenda (no hard copy)		External	
Sub-Committee Members		Caroline Vincent	1
Councillor Karl Eastham			
Reserves		Total: 30	
Councillor James Barber		Dated: May 2015	
Councillor Gavin Edwards			
Councillor Catherine Dale			
Councillor Sandra Rhule			
Councillor Johnson Situ			