

Item No. 83.1	Classification: Open	Date: 30.4.03	Meeting Name Council Assembly
Report title:		Deputation Requests : Aylesbury Estate Tenants and Residents Association.	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		Faraday	
From:		Chief Executive (Borough Solicitor & Secretary)	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council Assembly decide whether or not to receive the deputation and should it agree to do so, at which meeting it should be received.

BACKGROUND

2. A request for a deputation has been received from the Aylesbury Estate tenants and Residents Association.
3. The deputation request states:-

“Tenants and residents on the Aylesbury estate – and specifically but not exclusively within our own tenants and residents association – have faced erratic heating and hot water throughout the winter months. There have been a number of incidents of loss of both heating and hot water across the estate which have resulted in distress, anxiety and anger amongst tenants and residents who pay their rent to the Council.

As part of the rent agreement with London Borough of Southwark, tenants and residents are entitled to good quality constant heating and hot water. Any consistent failure to provide this should result in compensation being paid to all tenants and residents on affected blocks and dwellings.

Tenants and residents on the estate accept that incidences of loss of heating and hot water do occur, but when they do, strenuous efforts to communicate the problem to residents should be made by the local housing office – in our opinion, Southwark Housing department is failing to do this effectively.

Aylesbury Tenants and Residents Association asks Council Assembly to note the recent petition signed by residents of Hambledon and Gayhurst on the Aylesbury estate, and further asks Council Assembly to note the virtually unanimous feeling among tenants and residents that the situation at present is unacceptable.

Council Assembly is asked to investigate:-

- i) What immediate remedial action is to be taken to resolve the present problems with the heating and hot water shortfall on parts of the Aylesbury Estate?
- ii) What compensation will be given to all residents of recently affected properties, in terms of the London Borough of Southwark’s failure to provide

- heating and hot water in line with the terms and conditions of our rent agreement?
- iii) What long-term strategy does the London Borough of Southwark have for ensuring a more reliable water and heating utility in the future?"

A petition containing 120 signatures was attached to the deputation request.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

4. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.7 (3) the request that a deputation be received stands referred to Council Assembly to decide whether or not it wishes to receive the deputation.

Council Procedure Rule 3.7 (9) sets out the procedures to be observed at Council Assembly meetings:-

Standing Order 24 (5) sets out the procedures to be observed at Council Assembly meetings:-

Composition of Deputations

The Deputation shall consist of no more than six persons, including its spokesperson.

Speech on Behalf of the Deputation

Only one member of the deputation shall be allowed to address the Council Assembly, her or his speech being limited to 5 minutes.

Questions

Members of the Council Assembly may ask questions of the deputation which shall be answered by their spokesperson or any member of the deputation nominated by her or him, for up to 5 minutes at the conclusion of the spokesperson's address.

Debate

At the conclusion of the questions, the deputation may remain (subject to any resolution excluding attendance of the public) but shall take no further part in the proceedings.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

5. Comments of the Strategic Director of Housing

A petition was received from residents from two blocks, Gayhurst and Hambledon on the 21st March 2003 addressed to the Taplow Neighbourhood which raised concerns about the service that was being provided. This petition forms the framework for the deputation to Council Assembly. The neighbourhood has provided an initial response to the petition and has undertaken to provide a detailed reply to residents. In advance of that process

the comments below summarise the position against the specific issues raised :

i) **Question: What immediate remedial action is to be taken to resolve the present problems with the heating and hot water shortfalls on parts of the Aylesbury Estate.**

There have been a number of short breaks in the heating and hot water service during this Winter period (from September 2002 onwards). The vast majority of the faults were remedied within a couple of hours.

There were however two significant failures in service over the two weekends in February 2003 which were of a major nature. These faults related to unforeseen defects. One of these failures was directly attributable to a power failure within the Aylesbury Estate area. This power failure, the responsibility of the electricity supplier, resulted in the main boiler house disconnecting services as an automatic safety requirement. Whilst the majority of the estate was reconnected within a few hours the Gayhurst/Hambledon area remained without a heating service because of defects to a circulating pump. The defects could not be remedied without the need to undertake extensive repairs and this resulted in delays in restoring the services. The other major failure related to a component failure on a heating pump.

It should be noted that there have been isolated problems throughout the North of the borough with heating pumps automatically stopping as a result of disruption to electrical services. This is linked to issues of mains supply difficulties provided by 24/7, the electrical supplier for London. These disruptions again could not be foreseen and resulted in temporary loss of service. Given the seriousness of the Council's concerns the Leader of the Council, Executive Member for Housing and Strategic Director of Housing recently held discussions with representatives of 24/7 to insist that they address the adverse impact loss of electrical services is having on residents.

ii) **Question: What compensation will be given to all residents of recently affected properties, in terms of the London Borough of Southwark's failure to provide heating and hot water in line with the terms and conditions of our rent agreement**

The Council has in place a policy which automatically compensates residents that suffer a loss of service. In the event of a district heating/hot water failure causing absolute loss of heating and/or hot water, affected tenants/leaseholders paying a district heating charge are entitled to compensation from the Council for the period that the service has been out of action.

There is a minimum qualifying period in the event of the above failure which is at least 24 hours of loss of service. The calculation of the compensation is based on the following formulae:

- For loss of heating, compensation is the amount of the daily charge multiplied by the time out of service
- For loss of hot water, compensation is one-third of the daily charge multiplied by the time out of service.

The amount of compensation will be credited to the tenants/leaseholders rent/service charge account once it has been calculated. Calculations for the last heating season are currently being finalised and discussions will be taking place with residents on this issue imminently.

iii) Question: What long term strategy does the London Borough of Southwark have for ensuring a more reliable water and heating utility in the future.

A feasibility study has been undertaken within the Taplow and Rodney Neighbourhoods to evaluate a number of the district heating systems. The study has considered the current condition of the services and will be setting out a series of proposals which will aim to improve the efficiency and quality of the service to residents. On the basis of the study the Council will examine the options available for bringing the required level of capital investment to provide a sustainable high quality heating service into the future.

iv) Communication

In addition to the above specific questions the deputation has identified a concern about the quality of communication available during the period of the disruption. In the event that a service is disrupted during the normal working day neighbourhood resources are put into place to keep residents informed of the action the Council is taking to minimise inconvenience and restore services. Outside of such times the Council has available an emergency service. It is recognised that there have been some deficiencies in communication on heating issues over the winter period .Since the problems described above, and particularly in February 2003 a number of initiatives have been put in place to improve matters.

- A free telephone emergency service has commenced which eliminates concerns from residents about the cost of reporting defects and any unforeseen delays in speaking directly to officers (one of the Council's "six-to-fix" initiatives).
- A message facility has been developed and is now in place, which will summarise any district heating defects or other general faults. This will allow residents to listen to messages about current defects and what action is being taken to remedy such problems without the need to wait to speak to the officers of the out of hours service.
- Ward councillors will be e-mailed to advise of particular problems in their area.
- The new integrated cleaning contract is now operating throughout Saturday and Sunday . The staff on duty will be used, where necessary in emergency situations, to deliver letters to residents giving information where there is a significant problem.

It is anticipated that the above initiatives will go some way to improve communication in the event of a problem outside of the Councils normal working hours.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Deputation Request File	Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB	Lesley John 020 7525 7228

APPENDIX A

Audit Trail

Lead Officer	Ian Millichap, Constitutional Support Manager (Executive)	
Report Author	Lesley John, Constitutional Support Officer	
Version	Final awaiting Strategic Director of Housing's comments	
Dated	16.4.03	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Strategic Director of Housing	Yes	Yes
Borough Solicitor & Secretary	Yes	No
Executive Member	Yes	
Date final report sent to Constitutional Support Services		