



## **HOUSING SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the meeting of the HOUSING SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE held on 28<sup>th</sup> JULY 2003 at 7.00 P.M. at the Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

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**PRESENT:** Councillor Anne YATES (Chair)  
Councillor Fiona COLLEY (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors Abdul MOHAMED, Dr Abdur-Rahman OLAYIWOLA and Charlie SMITH

**OFFICER SUPPORT** Celine Arnold - Principal Housing Community Development Officer  
Chris Brown – Acting Head of Housing Management  
Glen Egan – Assistant Borough Solicitor  
Ian Hughes – Head of Corporate Strategy  
Lucas Lundgren – Scrutiny Team  
Marian Nash – Strategic Project Manager [Housing]

**ALSO PRESENT** Yvonne B. Deller – Observer  
Lionel Wright – Tenants' Council Delegate [Leathermarket Gardens]

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were none received.

### **CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS**

The Members listed as being present were confirmed as the Voting Members.

### **NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMED URGENT**

The Chair agreed to accept the following items which were not available for circulation with the main Agenda, i.e.

- Item 3: BVR Housing Management – Support for Resident Involvement & The Tenant Fund – Draft Scrutiny Project Brief
- Item 4: Tenants Fund Budget 2003/04 – Report to Executive 29/07/03
- Item 5: Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee Work Programme 2003/04 – Draft Schedule

### **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

There were no disclosures of interests made nor dispensations notified.

### **RECORDING OF MEMBERS' VOTES**

Council Procedure Rule 1.17(5) allows a Member to record her/his vote in respect of any motions and amendments. Such requests are detailed in the following Minutes. Should a Member's vote be recorded in respect to an amendment, a copy of the amendment may be found in the Minute File and is available for public inspection.

The Sub-Committee considered the items set out on the agenda, a copy of which has been incorporated in the Minute File. Each of the following paragraphs relates to the item bearing the same number on the agenda.

### **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** The Minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2003 were agreed subject to the following amendments to Item 2, paragraph e), i.e.

*“Sharia Law” to be replaced by “Shariah”*

*“a Muslim product” to be replaced by “an Islamic product”*

3. **BEST VALUE REVIEW OF HOUSING MANAGEMENT: SUPPORT FOR RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT & THE TENANT FUND – DRAFT VISION DOCUMENT** (see pages 58-99 & 113-114)

The Acting Head of Housing Management introduced the report and Draft Vision document currently out to consultation with the Neighbourhood Housing Forums, outlined the key findings of the BVR Support for Resident Involvement and the history of the production of the joint vision document. In particular, Member discussion focused on paragraph 1.4 of the report [Agenda pages 95-97], which set out proposed changes to the current arrangements to achieve the vision. A draft scrutiny project brief was circulated.

The Assistant Borough Solicitor confirmed the authority's obligation as landlord to have in place appropriate mechanisms for tenant consultation, and to use the budget for consultation on matters affecting tenants only for that purpose.

Member discussion ensued and the following points were raised:

- Danger of political appointments to any new federation
- Was inclusivity increased by proposals ?
- Concern was expressed about the proposed loss of a dedicated organisation for black and minority ethnic groups under the new structure
- New representation must reflect the tenants involved – to be further addressed in the Implementation Plan [CB]
- How might success be measured in respect of this BVR ?
- How was it intended that Leaseholders contribute to funding ? [voluntary contributions suggested, Members noted a forthcoming item to Leaseholder Council framing the voluntary fund, freeholders not to be excluded, current lack of leaseholder consultation framework was acknowledged]

A representative from Tenant Council asserted that tenants generally felt that Southwark Council did not consult sufficiently and feared that the formation of federation would “neuter” the tenants movement, as he believed was demonstrated in other boroughs.

Concern was expressed in relation to whether the Council – as landlord – should be simultaneously engaging in discussions on proposed new tenant management structures.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That scrutiny of this matter be undertaken over two sessions, the current session and the next meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2003.

**FURTHER  
INFORMATION  
REQUESTED:**

2. Officers were asked to bring back the results of feedback from the consultation event in July 2003 and with Neighbourhood Housing Forums to the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2003 meeting of this Sub-Committee. [MN]
3. Members asked for further clarification of the proposed new Resident Officer roles/posts when available, to assist its inquiry into this matter in relation to point 5(e) below. [MN]
4. Members asked for further clarification of the proposed voluntary contributions from leaseholders. [MN]

**CARRIED  
FORWARD TO  
NEXT MEETING:**

5. That the following points of Member concern in respect of the draft vision be noted for further discussion during the scrutiny, i.e.
  - a) Members were concerned about where and how funding decisions would be taken under the proposed new structures. **Members asked officers to bring back further information on this; [MN]**
  - b) Members were concerned about what mechanisms would be in place for allocation of funding to the various elements of the new structure, i.e. for tenant participation, supporting the federated body and for paid workers;

*Officers confirmed that no final detail had been drawn up in respect of these arrangements and that opportunity for scrutiny input/recommendations to the Executive remained.*

- c) Members noted the comments made in respect of possible disempowerment of the Tenants Movement should the proposals be agreed.

*Members to further discuss whether proposed new structures might need to be fully independent of the Council.*

- d) Members were minded to recommend that the Tenants Fund budget remain ringfenced;
- e) Members were concerned about whether a conflict of interest might arise from the appointment of workers with responsibility for working in tenant community development whilst reporting to Housing Management. **Members asked for further clarification of these proposed new roles/posts when available, to inform discussion on this matter; [MN]**
- f) Members were minded to recommend that Resident Officers should be appointed on a permanent basis, to provide continuity of function for the community development role in particular;

- g) Members were minded to recommend the development of relevant and measurable Performance Indicators to facilitate assessment of the inclusiveness of the new resident involvement structures.

Marian Nash was asked to provide information to the Sub-Committee in respect of alleged counter-publicity to the Council's consultation event held on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2003. [MN]

#### **4. TENANTS FUND BUDGET 2003/04 (see pages 99-107)**

The Principal Housing Community Development Officer took Members through the report for decision at the Executive on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2003 which proposed the adoption of proposals from Tenant Council in respect of the Tenant Fund Budget for 2003/04. Member discussion ensued.

In respect of the Tenant Fund budget, the following points were raised during discussion of this matter, i.e.:

- Training was carried out in-house by two training officers working 20 hrs p.w.
- Equipment in NHOs included p.c. access for tenants. It was necessary to maintain currency of software and facilities
- Equal Opportunities & Youth Involvement grants are now publicised separately from the Tenant Fund
- The Sub-Committee were in support of Tenant Fund funded events that brought tenants together, even indirectly
- The need for advice to tenants & residents associations applying for or receiving funding on the criteria and potential uses of the TF was recognised

During discussion of this item brief reference was made to funding for Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations [SGTO] i.e.:

- SGTO's last submitted audited accounts 2 years ago;
- Changes to the SGTO Executive were anticipated, however no details were available;
- £25,000 for running costs was agreed by the Executive, subject to a proper statement of account being made. SGTO reportedly breached protocol for the employment of staff and funding was subsequently stopped;
- A consultants report on SGTO was made to Tenant Council, but deferred due to a heavy agenda.

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. Members asked officers to provide examples of actual/possible uses to which Tenants and Residents Associations [T&RAs] might put their funds. Members also asked that Community Development Officers make particular efforts to give advice to T&RAs who do not qualify for grants from the Tenants Fund because they have large reserves. [CA]
2. Members noted that the report as presented contained no indication of previous year's expenditure. They also noted that previous reports regarding the 2003-04 Housing Revenue Account budget had not included budget totals. The Sub-Committee requested that all future budget reports provide comparable figures for previous years, giving total

expenditures rather than simply variations and percentage changes – to provide proper budget context for scrutiny.  
[CA]

At 8.50 p.m. it was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED:** That the meeting stand adjourned for ten minutes.

At 9.00 p.m. the meeting reconvened.

5. **SUB-COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2003/04 – DRAFT SCHEDULE** (see pages 108-109)

The Scrutiny Project Manager circulated a draft Work Programme schedule based on the Work Programme items agreed previously and ratified by Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2003.

**RESOLVED:** The draft schedule of work for the Sub-Committee was agreed

6. **CO-OPTION TO HOUSING SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE 2003/04**

The Chair noted the recommendation of Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2003 in respect of co-options to this Sub-Committee. Members acknowledged that the appointment of co-opted non-voting members to the Sub-Committee did not preclude invitation of witnesses and advisers to inquiries on a case-by-case basis, and the importance of ensuring a range of appropriate witnesses to each inquiry.

- RESOLVED:**
1. That Tenant Council be invited to nominate two non-voting co-optees to this Sub-Committee, and two nominated reserves.
  2. That Leaseholder Council be invited to nominate one non-voting co-optee to this Sub-Committee, and a nominated reserve.
  3. That both bodies be advised of the 2003/04 Work Programme schedule for the Sub-Committee and advised that attendance for all open meetings remains open to individuals not co-opted.
  4. That when applicable, tenant, leaseholder and resident members of existing working parties and panels be invited to give evidence to the Sub-Committee.

The meeting ended at 9.35 p.m.

**CHAIR:**

**DATED:**