



SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE A

MINUTES of the meeting of Scrutiny Sub-Committee A held on Wednesday February 10 2010 at 7.00 pm at Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

PRESENT: Councillor John Friary (Chair)
Councillor Bob Skelly
Councillor Sandra Rhule

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Michael Adebmi - SGTO
Simon Burr – Journalism Student
Marie Burrows - Journalism Student
Sheila Hayman - Brenchley Gardens
Beth Hopper - Journalism Student
Dennis Katungi - SGTO
Lauren Matthews - Journalism Student
Mr A Munu - Rockingham Estate
Lesley Wertheimer - Northfield House

OFFICER SUPPORT: Fitzroy Williams – Scrutiny Project Assistant.

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Robin Crookshank Hilton and Martin Seaton.

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

2.1 There were none.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

3.1 There were none.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 30 November 2009 be agreed as an accurate record, subject to the following amendments:-

Page 3, paragraph 6.8 after £100 insert "which was for 2 late appointments".

Page 3, paragraph 6.10 add at the end of paragraph "some jobs were signed off as if it completed, when they were not".

5. HOUSING REPAIRS REVIEW - DRAFT

5.1 The chair invited Tenant Associations (TA) representatives to address the sub-committee. Members were informed of the following concerns:-

- Repair jobs raised – duplication/cancellations
- Standard of properties – flooding/heating/hot water
- The need to have repairs monitored and checked on completion
- Satisfaction figures should be included in reports
- Exactly what questions are asked by call centre workers?
- Feedback from the Arbitration Services should be included in reports

5.2 The chair reported that the Arbitration Unit was unique to this borough and had attracted the attention of other local authorities who have since visited and looked at the system currently in place.

5.3 The sub-committee were informed that when people were waiting for repairs and hear that their case is going to arbitration unit, the repair was quickly undertaken, which could mean better joined up working is required to provide a better service. The chair reported that tenants should still continue with their case to the arbitration unit as they could still be entitled to compensation.

5.4 Members discussed the call centre and were concerned at the lack of knowledge that some operators showed and would be interested to know what training is provided to staff. One of the main points brought to the attention of the sub-committee was, do operators understand the tenants handbook which also highlights certain priorities such as lighting, flooding and heating which were of a high priority, which require immediate attention?

5.5 Another point discussed was that contractors did not always keep appointments with tenants, and the sub-committee suggested contractors should be able to contact tenants via mobile communication.

5.6 The chair reported that the contract had now been in place since June 2009 and since then the repairs team were undergoing restructuring, but this report will highlight some concerns of the tenants and the sub-committee.

- 5.7 Tenants expressed their concerns that housing officers did not seem to have any responsibilities for housing repairs, when repairs jobs are delayed the housing department should be a point of contact. It was felt that housing should be chasing up and inspecting repairs.
- 5.8 It was also felt that the repairs team should be placed locally so that they would be able to monitor repair jobs. Tenants also reported that when they have received calls regarding repairs jobs and the response was negative the caller would end the call.
- 5.9 Members wished to inquire how repair jobs were dealt with for vulnerable groups such as the elderly and people with disabilities.
- 5.10 Tenants reported that the council did not seem to be doing enough preventative work with regards to flooding and this needed to be included in repairs work. A tenant informed the sub-committee that he had been flooded many times and the issues had never been resolved and wondered what the cost would be to the council.
- 5.11 The sub-committee recommends that the council develop a policy for flooding situations for council properties as some contractors are reluctant to force doors to resolve this problem. This should also be included in the list of repairs that surrounding properties should be checked.
- 5.12 Members discussed the number of complaints regarding repairs should be monitored and this would signal any real problems with a particular flat, it appears that the present system is not good enough. The contractor needs to be held responsible for any jobs they undertake and they need to be prioritised as minor, medium or major tasks.

RESOLVED:

1. That the sub-committee request an update report on "Housing repairs in the last 8 months" be circulated to members as soon as it is available.
2. That officers contact the arbitration services for feedback on housing repairs.
3. That the report with draft recommendations be presented to the next meeting of the sub-committee for approval.

The meeting ended at 8.40pm.