

Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Commission

Thursday 13 July 2023

7.00 pm

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

Membership

Councillor Ellie Cumbo (Chair)
Councillor Emily Tester (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Barrie Hargrove
Councillor Jane Salmon
Councillor Esme Hicks
Councillor Sam Foster
Councillor Kimberly McIntosh
Basseyy Basseyy (Co-opted member)
Cris Claridge (Co-opted member)
Ina Negoita (Co-opted member)

Reserves

Councillor Portia Mwangangye
Councillor Hamish McCallum
Councillor Sam Dalton
Councillor Adam Hood
Councillor Joseph Vambe
Councillor Ketzia Harper
Councillor Cleo Soanes

INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Access to information

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Contact

Amit Alva on email: amit.alva@southwark.gov.uk

Members of the committee are summoned to attend this meeting

Althea Loderick

Chief Executive

Date: 5 July 2023



Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Commission

Thursday 13 July 2023

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	
	To receive any apologies for absence.	
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 - 8
	To approve as a correct record the minutes of meeting held on 13 April 2023.	
5.	HOUSING ALLOCATIONS AND LETTINGS POLICY FOR COUNCIL HOMES AND HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS.	
	To receive a report/briefing from Deputy Cabinet Member Councillor Leo Pollak on the council's housing allocations and letting policy for council homes and housing associations. (<i>report to follow</i>)	

Item No.	Title	Page No.
6.	PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME 2023-2024	9 - 14

To consider the proposed work programme for the 2023-2024 year.

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

Date: 5 July 2023



Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Commission

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Commission held on Thursday 13 April 2023 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Ellie Cumbo (Chair)
Councillor Jane Salmon (Vice- Chair)
Councillor Sam Foster
Councillor Barrie Hargrove
Councillor Esme Hicks
Councillor Portia Mwangangye
Councillor Emily Tester
Cris Claridge (Co-opted member)

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillor Darren Merrill

OFFICER SUPPORT:

Amit Alva, Scrutiny Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Ina Negoita (Co-opted member).

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

There were no items of business which the Chair deemed urgent.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS.

There were no disclosure of interests and dispensations.

4. MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2023 were approved as a correct record.

5. COUNCIL SUPPORT FOR RESIDENT-LED HOUSING MEETINGS- PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

The commission first heard from Councillor Darren Merrill and Cheryl Russell on the lessons learnt from the recent resident-led housing meeting

- High number of residents were in attendance; Cabinet member and officers are working with Chairs of forums to identify issues and setting agenda suitably, given the size of the meetings; Council's role to facilitate and provide officer support whilst giving the freedom to the Chairs to guide the meeting through the process.
- Upcoming rent setting meeting to be managed thoroughly to ensure residents can provide their input in a methodical way.
- Senior officers, Directors and Cabinet member attending agenda planning meetings with Chair to help inform the agenda setting; Ideal location and style of meetings needs some thought.
- On interaction with residents, officers made a note and responded to all individual case work from identified residents except anonymous ones.
- Planning and preparation of rent setting meetings scheduled in the diary to be carefully managed without any predetermination of issues and questions.
- Subsequent resident meetings held in early April 2023 were successful in terms of engagement, dialogue and officer support and presentations.

The commission then asked questions around the following points

- Council's plans to ensure the focus of these meetings is not only on repairs and other items on the agenda are also discussed.
- Chairmanship and proper representation; revisiting the structure of resident engagement meetings.
- Leaseholders and tenants that attended the meeting focused mainly on repairs and rent setting was not properly discussed.
- Updates on the resident engagement strategy from the Environment and Community Engagement Scrutiny commission
- Reengaging residents that were dissatisfied at the last resident-led meeting

Councillor Merrill explained to the commission that Chairs' would be guided in legislative matters with the running of the meetings especially in terms of proper and fair representation from area forums, with the hope of bringing in more strategic items on the agenda. The commission also heard from Councillor Merrill that it is important that we review the structure with focus on feedback from grass roots level upwards to ensure fair and proper representation from residents.

Cheryl informed the commission that officers are working on identifying issues that would ensure more engagement and participation across the borough. Different areas and their local issues need to be considered when planning any engagement as some areas might require quick action as opposed to others.

Councillor Merrill informed the commission that residents being unable to get more help from the council on repairs issues has been a source of frustration. On reviewing the engagement strategy, the commission learnt that the Environment and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission is working on recommendations which would take into account any future updates to the strategy.

The commission then learnt from Nat Stevens that out of the approximately 400 residents that attended the meeting, 41 did not provide any contact details, 7 residents are in the process of engagement and 5 residents having outstanding issues haven't received a complete response yet due to the complex nature of their repair issues. Hybrid meetings do create issues with getting contact details for residents with specific issues due to different user names that don't reflect their correct names etc. however, all the residents that attended had been invited to attend through the Council's resident contact database.

6. HOUSING REPAIRS SERVICE OVERALL STRATEGY REVIEW INCLUDING CONTACT CENTRE REPEATED CALLS (MULTIPLE FAILURES)

The commission then heard from Dave Hodgson, Ade Aderemi and Marc Cook on the following topics

- Repairs Improvement Plan looking granularly at issues within the repairs process along with resident engagement and feedback to come up with a Repairs Action Plan
- Uniqueness of Southwark's housing stock with 85% of homes in flats which is 50,000 homes; 70% of repair issues are water related such as floor ingress, roof leaks, heating leak, bath overflows etc. making it quite complex to diagnose
- Scope of plans have been broadened to include leaseholders who are affected by issues from resident homes and other communal repairs
- Housing Quality Network (HQN) independently selected organisation who are reviewing the repairs service in detail; implementing their findings in the

HQN report into the wider repairs improvement plan.

- Repairs improvement workload grown substantially due to influx of the government led complaints service on damp and mould.
- Need for resources that are qualified to carry out repairs, Council funding issues.
- Resident Board meetings which includes tenant forums dealing with issues on the repairs agenda
- Recruitment of multi-trade operatives as 85% of operatives are single trade and residents are frustrated due to multiple visits require to repair a complex case; Dedicated teams for mould and damp.
- Update to Housing data and work management systems and IT Systems throughout the service; Leaflets with QR codes leading to the repairs website, reporting repairs by taking pictures through the website, text messaging for repair scheduling
- Using Power Business Intelligence (BI) for smart monitoring of asset management data through extrapolating data on homes, buildings and estates to identify common issues.
- Estate action days based on resident feedback, supplying residents with hydrometers for damp and mould measurements
- 200% rise in repairs cases from November 2022 onwards
- Repairs service working together with Asset Management in developing a pro-active and preventive approach to repairs by bringing the service, engagement and feedback mechanisms to residents, Tenants and Residents Association (TRAs).
- Covid backlog of repairs has been now completed

The commission then asked question on the following themes

- Multiple failures as a part of the repairs improvement plan
- Repairs improvement plan, first time fixes metrics, HQN report time lines
- Damp and mould team successes, supply change and liaison council contact for managing estate agents
- Issues with recruitment policies, pay scale and resourcing
- Working mechanism between Asset Management and Repairs, proactive maintenance or preventive maintenance

Dave informed the commission that multiple failures or calls are a result of single trade operatives having to visit the same home due to the complex nature of the

repair and variety of skills required, such repairs often lead to frustration for the resident as repairs might only be half way through to completion in the first visit. Telematics on operative vehicles is due to be introduced to track operatives in real time and match operatives to repair jobs in the community based on their location. Operatives are being continuously trained in variety of issues faced such as pest control issues during repairs, operatives have to contact their supervisors to report the reasons for not completing a job, residents are then notified by text and phone calls.

Dave explained to the commission that first time fixes are at 70-75% with a target of 90-95%, improvement expected when more multi trade operatives are employed. On HQN the commission learnt that the final report is expected in the next few days and will be made public including Southwark's response to recommendations in the report with target dates for implementation.

On Damp and Mould team the commission heard from Marc Cook, Customer Journey Lead that inspection visits are carried out within 5 days and followed up within 30 days. There is a backup supply chain bringing in damp and mould surveyors from the market. Liaison council officers do contact estate agents in managing properties.

Dave explained to the commission that the corporate elements such as policies, resourcing and pay scales have to be discussed with HR and unions to protect existing staff force as well as hiring new staff, IT systems are a cause for frustration with the technological advancements planned in the repairs service. Asset management is working with repairs to analyse estates in a holistic way with regards to its needs and issues. There are also plan to have an Area Repairs Manager working with TRA's and resident managers. Data led approach such as stock condition surveys of housing stock and appropriate funding measures which would be important steps in reaching a stage where proactive and preventive maintenance can be carried out.

Dave informed the commission that there is a need to lobby government to have greater access to grants and funding, considering Southwark's unique position and the lack of a funding structure.

The commission then heard from Ade Aderemi on the contact centre and customer operations around the following points.

- 50% of all calls are repairs issues; repeat calling mainly due to Covid and subsequent avoidable contact, chasing existing jobs from backlogs
- Contact centre staff carry out a basic diagnosis, code it appropriately on the system and pass it on to the fulfilment team, they do not control the repair contractors or operatives
- Contact centre agents sometimes spend 40 minutes on a call with repeat callers to chase contractors on the second line to get an update on their repair work, majority of repeat calls are a result of the repair works that

could not be carried out during Covid and have now resulted in multiple repairs

- Repair contractors are inundated with repair jobs over the winter months; from the third week of March a tenant liaison team has been setup in the contact centre to record details of repair issues and calling back customers with resolutions thus freeing up the lines for new repairs and other calls. This has brought the average waiting time down from 20mins to 2mins and 14s.
- Call Answer rate is at 89% and corporately target for Service Level Agreement (SLA) is 75%, however SLA Levels are at 77%; 94.5% of 2,269 calls for chasing repair works have been fulfilled by the repairs team.
- Call monitoring process has indicated that complaints are always unrelated to call handling. Currently repeat callers account for 42% and a potential target would be to reduce this further in the repairs improvement plan.

The commission then asked questions on the following themes

- IT System- Fit for purpose
- Clear communication and sign posting to residents from contact centre agents
- Omni channel

Ade explained to the commission there is much needed improvement to the IT service which is shared with two other Local Authorities and there is a need for the contact centre IT services and its issues to be prioritised.

Marc and Ade explained to the commission that in quarterly meetings clear procedures and signposting details are shared with contact centre agents for the benefit of customers and also that the Interactive Voice Recognition (IVR) System informs the customer of quicker ways to report issues and queries online whilst waiting on a call.

Ade informed the commission that Omni channel is used to understand and customise the delivery of services for the customer, this is achieved by tracking the customer journey through different channels such as face to face, online, telephone and web chat. Omni channel is based on the fundamental of 'digital by design and accessible by choice' where customer is tracked through a unique identifier on the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform. Omni channel is part of the new repairs service strategy where it looks at all channels of resident communication including the elderly and disabled people who often use the voice channel.

7. FINALISING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

The commission then discussed the following draft recommendations circulated in writing at the meeting

Housing

- 1) That the Cabinet set a clear target for the housing repairs contact centre to reduce multiple failures which lead to repeat calls by the end of the year 2023-2024 and collect data on causes and recurring themes.
- 2) That the Cabinet update the Repairs Improvement Plan to include a commitment to pro-active maintenance as a part of its *new Asset Management Strategy* and also that repairs improvement targets are reviewed quarterly.
- 3) *That the Cabinet review the funding for resources in the repairs service to ensure the right levels of staffing and also endeavour to provide fit for purpose IT systems such as the integrated Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform to fulfil the aspirations in the new Asset Management Strategy and the Repairs Improvement Plan. (New recommendation derived from discussions at the meeting, subject to review by the Chair and commission members)*
- 4) That the Cabinet ensure that there is clear and transparent communication with Council leaseholders on decisions to undertake repair works, including value for money, and also set out a clear process for Council leaseholders to challenge estimations and requirements of major works through complaint and escalation procedures; *and also ensure that this process is widely understood and publicised through all resident communication channels.*
- 5) That the Cabinet commit to ensuring that all service charges statements and specifications of works will be written in plain English by the end of the year 2023-24, and that appropriate training of officers is in place to support this.
- 6) That the Cabinet ensure that appropriate residents' organisations have the access to audit major repair works and that this is a key component of the repairs review processes.
- 7) That the Cabinet carry out quarterly reviews and assessments of major repair works, especially with regards to competency, quality, value for money, timely

completion and resident feedback, and make this information available to ward councillors and residents' associations.

- 8) That the Cabinet include empty homes on the agendas for meetings held with housing associations with more than 1000 units from the start of the year 2023-24.

Community Safety

- 1) That the Cabinet prioritise the delivery of the Women's Safety Centre, aiming to launch a consultation with relevant voluntary sector organisations in the borough within the year 2023-24.
- 2) That the Cabinet Member for Community Safety work with the Metropolitan Police, Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and the voluntary sector to establish enhanced collection of data on sex-related hate crime and non-hate crime incidents, including how this intersects with the other protected characteristics in the borough of Southwark and that the data from these reports is reviewed annually.
- 3) That the Cabinet Member for Community Safety liaise with the Metropolitan Police, Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime and the voluntary sector to ensure that feedback is routinely collected from victims of domestic and sexual violence and child abuse about their experience of the police, in line with the findings of The Baroness Casey Review.

8. WORK PROGRAMME 2022-2023

The Work Programme 2022-2023 was noted by the commission.

Meeting ended at 9:16 pm

CHAIR:

DATED:

Item No. 6	Classification: Open	Date: 13 July 2023	Meeting Name: Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Commission
Report title:		Work Programme 2023-24	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		N/a	
From:		Scrutiny Officer	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the housing and community safety scrutiny commission note the work programme as at 13 July 2023 attached as Appendix 1.
2. That the housing and community safety scrutiny commission consider the addition of new items or allocation of previously identified items to specific meeting dates of the commission.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The general terms of reference of the scrutiny commissions are set out in the council's constitution (overview and scrutiny procedure rules - paragraph 5). The constitution states that:

Within their terms of reference, all scrutiny committees/commissions will:

- a) review and scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the council's functions
- b) review and scrutinise the decisions made by and performance of the cabinet and council officers both in relation to individual decisions and over time in areas covered by its terms of reference
- c) review and scrutinise the performance of the council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas
- d) question members of the cabinet and officers about their decisions and performance, whether generally in comparison with service plans and targets over a period of time, or in relation to particular decisions,

initiatives or projects and about their views on issues and proposals affecting the area

- e) assist council assembly and the cabinet in the development of its budget and policy framework by in-depth analysis of policy issues
 - f) make reports and recommendations to the cabinet and or council assembly arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process
 - g) consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants
 - h) liaise with other external organisations operating in the area, whether national, regional or local, to ensure that the interests of local people are enhanced by collaborative working
 - i) review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies in the area and invite reports from them by requesting them to address the scrutiny committee and local people about their activities and performance
 - j) conduct research and consultation on the analysis of policy issues and possible options
 - k) question and gather evidence from any other person (with their consent)
 - l) consider and implement mechanisms to encourage and enhance community participation in the scrutiny process and in the development of policy options
 - m) conclude inquiries promptly and normally within six months
4. The work programme document lists those items which have been or are to be considered in line with the committee's terms of reference.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

5. The Housing service areas that fall within the scope of the Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Commission are:
- Resident Services (which includes area management, strategy and business support, strategic business and support housing services).
 - Customer Experience Division (which includes the Contact Centre; Customer Resolution and Specialist Services, My Southwark Home Owners and the Housing Solutions Services).
 - Asset Management Division (which includes New Homes; Investment, Repairs & Maintenance and Engineering).

6. As of 20 May 2023 the commission also now has within in its remit the cabinet portfolio elements listed below:

Council Homes (Councillor Darren Merrill)

- **Management of the council's homes** – including council homes, sheltered and extra care homes, council owned temporary accommodation, high needs hostels and homes and sites for Gypsy, Roma and traveller communities
- **Residents involvement and services** – including services and advice for council tenants, leaseholders and freeholders and support for Tenants and Resident Associations and Tenant Management Organisations
- **Housing maintenance** – including repairs and major works; heat networks; communal repairs; gas and electrical safety and refurbishment of voids
- **Fire safety** – ensuring council homes meet fire safety standards and leading the council's work on fire safety, cladding and remediation for private sector and housing association residential buildings
- **Housing allocations** – oversight of the council's Housing Solutions Service and the allocation of council homes, housing association, social rent and key worker homes to Southwark residents
- **Renewal of the Aylesbury, Tustin, Ledbury and Abbeyfield estates** – working with residents to deliver new and improved homes and estates (working with the Cabinet Member for New Homes and Sustainable Development)
- **Tenants and residents' halls** – including their maintenance, ongoing improvement and ensuring they are the best possible facilities for residents of our estates and broader community.

Community Safety (Councillor Dora Dixon-Fyle)

- **Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour** – including community wardens, antisocial behaviour team, noise service, CCTV, public spaces protection orders, preventing hate crime, tackling modern day slavery
- **Violence reduction** – working to end misogyny and violence against women and girls; and youth violence and the criminal exploitation of young people
- **Domestic abuse** – support for people who have experienced domestic abuse, Women's Safety Centre and safe spaces
- **Improving policing** – promoting equitable policing and strengthening community relations with the police
- **Licencing** – of premises serving alcohol or late night refreshment and of gambling
- **Environmental health** – including trading standards, food safety and environmental protection

- **Private rented housing** – increasing protections for private renters licencing and advice services for private sector renters.

New Homes & Sustainable Development (Councillor Helen Dennis)

- **New council homes** – the council’s work to build thousands of new council homes; including new council homes for older people; net-zero homes; and working with the Cabinet Member for Council Homes to deliver new council homes on the Aylesbury, Tustin, Ledbury and Abbeyfield estates
- **New affordable homes** – including housing association social rent homes; keyworker homes; community land trusts and housing cooperatives; homes for refugees; and temporary accommodation.
- **Homelessness** – Including support for people who are at risk of being or who become homeless; working to end rough sleeping; securing good quality temporary accommodation; and establishing the council’s Good Lettings Agency
- **Empty homes and short-term lets** – including the council’s Empty Homes Action Plan; and the Good Lettings Agency.

Deputy Cabinet Member for Housing Allocations (Councillor Leo Pollak)

- **New council homes** – the council’s work to build thousands of new council homes; including new council homes for older people; net-zero homes; and working with the Cabinet Member for Council Homes to deliver new council homes on the Aylesbury, Tustin, Ledbury and Abbeyfield estates
 - **New affordable homes** – including housing association social rent homes; keyworker homes; community land trusts and housing cooperatives; homes for refugees; and temporary accommodation.
 - **Homelessness** – Including support for people who are at risk of being or who become homeless; working to end rough sleeping; securing good quality temporary accommodation; and establishing the council’s Good Lettings Agency
 - **Empty homes and short-term lets** – including the council’s Empty Homes Action Plan; and the Good Lettings Agency.
7. Set out in Appendix 1 (Work Programme) are the issues the housing scrutiny commission is due to consider in the 2023-24 municipal year.
 8. The work programme is a standing item on the housing scrutiny commission agenda and enables the commission to consider, monitor and plan issues for consideration at each meeting.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Commission	Southwark Council Website	Amit Alva 020 7525 0496
Link: https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CIId=605&Year=2023		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Work Programme 2023/24

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Amit Alva, Scrutiny Officer	
Report Author	Amit Alva	
Version	Final	
Dated	5 July 2023	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Governance	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Scrutiny Team		5 July 2023

Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Commission Work Programme – 2023/24

Meeting	Agenda items	Comment
13 July 2023	Housing Allocations and Lettings policy for council homes and housing associations.	To receive a report/briefing Deputy Cabinet Member Councillor Leo Pollak on the council's housing allocations and letting policy for council homes and housing associations for Deputy Cabinet Member Councillor Leo Pollack.
Upcoming Meetings	Agenda Items yet to be scheduled	Comment
<p>12 October 2023</p> <p>14 December 2023</p> <p>6 February 2024</p> <p>17 April 2024</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Associations - housing stock, repairs and engagement with Council. • Overview of Southwark's Temporary Accommodation Policy including the current and future budget impact. • Compensation scheme for heating outages. • Oversight of the London Metropolitan Police (Baroness Casey Review). • Interview with Borough Police Commander. • Interview with Borough Fire Commander. 	All Items agenda items to be confirmed

Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Commission

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023-24

AGENDA DISTRIBUTION LIST (OPEN)

NOTE: Original held by Scrutiny Team; all amendments/queries to Amit Alva Tel: 020 7525 0496

Name	No of copies	Name	No of copies
Electronic Copy		Aine Gallagher – Cabinet and Public Affairs Manager	
Members		Joseph Brown- Senior Cabinet Officer	
Councillor Ellie Cumbo (Chair)		Pavle Popovic – Liberal Democrat Group Office	
Councillor Emily Tester (Vice-Chair)		Euan Cadzow-Webb - Liberal Democrat Group Office	
Councillor Jane Salmon			
Councillor Barrie Hargrove			
Councillor Esme Hicks			
Councillor Sam Foster			
Councillor Kim McIntosh			
Reserves Members		External	
Councillor Portia Mwangangye		Caroline Vicent	
Councillor Sam Dalton			
Councillor Joseph Vambe			
Councillor Ketzia Harper			
Councillor Cleo Soanes			
Councillor Hamish McCallum			
Councillor Adam Hood			
Co-Opted Members			
Bassey Bassey (Southwark TMO)			
Cris Claridge (Tenants Forum)			
Ina Negoita (Homeowners Forum)			
		Dated: July 2023	