

Tenant Council - Draft

Minutes of the meeting held 13 July 2009
at Southwark Town Hall

Present

Delegates:

Mary O'Brien	MOBr	Bermondsey West
Lionel Wright	LWr	Borough & Bankside
Al-Issa Munu	AIM	Borough & Bankside
Steve Hedger	SH	Camberwell East
Val Fenn	VF	Camberwell East
Kim Jones	KJ	Camberwell West
Cris Claridge	CC	Nunhead & Peckham Rye
Sheila Hayman	SH	Nunhead & Peckham Rye
William Newman	WN	Dulwich
Bassey Bassey	BB	Peckham
Kiri Pieri	KP	Rotherhithe
Val Raddcawl	VR	Rotherhithe
Anthony Mbanugu	WC	Walworth Central
Colin Harrison	CH	Walworth West
Henry Mott	HM	Walworth West

Deputies:

Lesley Wertheimer	LW	Peckham
Mary Wood	MW	Walworth East

Delegates with speaking rights:

Ina Norton	IN	SGTO (deputy)
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Councillors:

Cllr Althea Smith	AS	Nunhead
Cllr Sandra Rhule	SR	Brunswick Park
Cllr Alison McGovern	AMcG	Brunswick Park

Ward:

Observers:

John McGrath	JMcG	SGTO Vice-chair
Stephen Govier	SG	East Dulwich Estate TRA

Officers:

Margaret O'Brien	MOB	Head of Housing Management
Hazel Flynn	HF	Borough Housing Management Co-ordinator
Israel Ofolughe	IO	Area Housing Manager
Jo Wilson	JW	Resident Involvement Manager
Vivienne Thomson	VT	Veolia
Jane Patterson	JP	Garage Project Manager
Dan Hollas	DH	Estates and Property Manager
David Lewis	DL	Investment Manager

1 Apologies

Cllr Humphreys Melvin Kanu Bernie Saunders
Cllr Wingfield

- 1.1 The meeting started with one minute's silence in memory of the victims of the Lakanal, Sceaux Gardens Estate, fire on Friday 3 July 2009.

Margaret (MOB) then gave a brief verbal report on the fire and the assurance that Southwark Council is fully supporting the work of the Police and Fire Brigade, to understand how the fire started and spread. Pending the outcome of the investigation the council is not able to answer many questions but it extends its deepest sympathy to those affected by the tragic event, and it continues to support those who are bereaved or have lost their homes.

Steve (SH) thanked all those who had pulled together at this difficult time to provide support, and he advised delegates that donations to support the residents can be made by cheque to Sceaux Gardens TRA. He added that, whilst the investigation proceeded, it was important not to speculate but he requested that the next Tenant Council meeting receives **a full report on the circumstances and full details of the emergency plan**; which he feels identified some gaps in support. He also requested **details of the Council's insurance cover**, which is available for both tenants and leaseholders.

Action

Action

Steve (SH) then asked that delegates stand again, for a further minute of silence in memory of Pat Topley, the Chair of Tenant Council, who had died the previous Wednesday. Pat had battled her illness for some time but last week her condition had rapidly deteriorated.

Steve (SH), Ina (IN), Munu (AIM) and Councillor Smith (AS) all recounted their personal memories of working alongside Pat and gave thanks for her tireless work for the residents in Southwark, including all through the period of her illness.

Margaret (MOB) followed with further words of thanks and remembrance for Pat.

2. Presentation by Vangent

- 2.1 This item was removed from the agenda and is to be re-scheduled.

Action

3. Cause for Concern

- 3.1 Margaret (MOB) introduced the item. This project is at an early stage. Its objective is for housing officers to identify tenants who may be vulnerable, by looking for trigger signs, such as: not paying their rent, nor allowing contractors to access the property. If the identified tenants seem to be having difficulties, they can then be signposted to receive additional help from health and social care services. Officers are seeking the views of Tenant Council on the value of the project.
- 3.2 Cris (CC) asked how officers will present themselves to people they are concerned about: will they be signposted with their permission, and what training will be carried out for this area of work? Margaret confirmed that tenants will not be forced, they will be approached informally and offered help should they wish it. Officers receive training already on how to work with vulnerable clients.
- 3.3 Lionel (LW) said that perhaps TRAs could also help with this project and asked whether vulnerable residents could receive additional help, when reporting emergency repairs for example.
- 3.4 Kim (KJ) asked about data protection considerations. Margaret said that the council are in contact with other local authorities to see how they share similar information.
- 3.5 Munu (AIM) noted that the report identifies almost 4000 known cases of vulnerable tenants. He asked what the health and safety compliance levels were in their properties. Margaret explained that while some vulnerable tenants do live in H&S compliant hostels and sheltered units, this project relates to all tenants.
- 3.6 Basse (BB) questioned whether housing officers had the capacity to take on this extra project. Margaret (MOB) responded that they currently should spend 3 days a week out on the estate and managers believe there is capacity.

Tenant Council agreed that the report should be sent to area housing forums for information and comment

4. Garage Project

- 4.1 Hazel (HF) introduced the report. She reminded delegates that the council undertook to review all assets including garages. She introduced Jane (JP) who has looked at all the policies and procedures in each office, how the rent is collected and garages recovered and she has also carried out an exercise to identify all garages and looked to see how much investment they might need to bring some into use or to dispose of and turn into hidden homes. Hazel (HF) confirmed that this project is still at an early stage and that any proposed changes would be brought back to Tenant Council before decisions are made.
- 4.2 Jane (JP) confirmed that a number of garages across Southwark are in fact empty and a large number are used to store furniture rather than cars.
- 4.3 Kim (KJ) asked about the possibility of using underground garages for storage where they cannot be turned into hidden homes. She felt that these constituted a huge amount of wasted space, which could generate income. Hazel (HF) replied that this could be considered. She said that Jane (JP) was intending to visit each forum with the specific details for their area and that the council would have this type of conversation locally with each one.
- 4.4 Munu (AIM) asked why garages that were part of the Elephant and Castle regeneration sites were not mentioned in this report. He emphasised the need to discuss with local TRAs any suggestion that garages should be sold off. He asked for an explanation for why this project was agreed by the executive on 17 March. Steve (SH) explained that it came out of the decent homes project work. Area forums have been told they will be consulted on any proposed site. He said that tenants had asked for the mapping exercise to take place, because the forums and local TRAs cannot contribute to decisions about sale or development without such information being available.
- 4.5 Ina (IN) asked that action be taken against those tenants who sub-let their garages and make a lot of money through doing so. Jane (JP) confirmed that consideration will be given to matching a particular car with a garage so this practice can be stopped.
- 4.6 Lionel (LW) felt that there is growing support nationally for council housing, so it may not be necessary to sell off garages. He

suggested that the council use stickers, similar to the “repair aware” stickers, to advertise each empty garage. Margaret suggested that this information could result in the squatting of garage however, and it was generally agreed it might not be a good idea.

- 4.7 Colin (CH) asked whether the council is able to maintain its garages. Hazel (HF) replied that some will need investment, and will get it as far as possible, however the impact of this on budgets would be a factor that would need to be taken into consideration.

Tenant Council agreed to refer the item to area housing forums and for them to receive local details for comment and suggestion.

5 End of year performance

- 5.1 Margaret (MOB) introduced the report, which had previously been deferred due to lack of time. She introduced Dan Hollas (DH) and David Lewis (DL).
- 5.2 Margaret (MOB) acknowledged that performance across the areas had been mixed, but on balance said she was pleased with progress and is very committed to continuing to improve. In particular she is pleased with the improvements in the Repairs Service, which won a customer services award and reached 90% satisfaction targets. But she also pointed out that due to the very high number of repairs ordered, the remaining 10% dissatisfied still make a high number of cases, so it is not time to be complacent. She discussed areas such as lift replacement and void turnaround, which both show an increase in works carried out, and the MORI survey, which shows an increase in overall satisfaction but is still one of the lowest levels in London.
- 5.3 Cllr Smith (AS) asked for figures to be given to Tenant Council on the number of repairs where there are missed appointments, and how much has been paid out for missed appointments. Dan (DH) replied that any cost for missed appointment is recharged back to the contractor so there is no effective loss to the housing revenue account.
Steve (SH) asked **whether it was possible to identify cases of a missed appointment where no compensation was paid.** Dan will check and provide if possible.
- 5.4 Munu (AIM) questioned the reliability of the report, in particular the 90% satisfaction figure for repairs. He felt the report didn't cover

Action

areas that were of interest to him, such as complaints to members or arbitration. Margaret (MOB) said that numbers and turnaround time are monitored and that performance on members enquiries is higher than on complaints. But it is intended to log complaints in the same way as members enquiries.

- 5.5 Dan (DH) said that approx one quarter of a million repairs are raised, a very high number of transactions. The council phones back about 2000 people every month for feedback, however only about 25% of those called answer these calls. This allows the council to gain information about trends, to know for example that roofing has one of the lower satisfaction rates, compared with electrical works, which receive high satisfaction. Dan (DH) explained that **if delegates would like further detail about additional areas, it can be provided.** Action?
- 5.6 Dan (DH) advised delegates that he is planning a workshop to discuss the new contract and this can be explored further then.
- 5.7 Cris (CC) said she would like to compare **how contractor performance varies across Southwark.** Action
- 5.8 Steve (SH) reminded delegates that **each area forum can request areas of performance that it would specifically like to see** as well. Action
- 5.9 Lionel (LW) asked what the situation was with regards to investment. Margaret (MOB) advised she hopes the proposed 5 year programme can go out for consultation towards the end of the summer. She added that any results from the Lakanal investigation would need to be added into the process.
- 5.10 Sheila (SH) suggested that **it might be better to quote numbers rather than percentages.** Reading the report 90% of repairs does not mean as much as a to see a large figure to compare against. Consider

6. Tenant Fund Budget

- 6.1 Chair explained that a complaint had been received that board members of SGTO had been present at TFMC while the budget was discussed. This could have placed pressure on delegates and so he suggested that they step out of this meeting to balance any complaint.
- 6.2 A number of objections were raised by the chair of SGTO who said that she felt it important to hear of any concerns delegates might have.

6.3 The matter was put to the vote:

For SGTO board members to be present for the discussion	6
For SGTO board members to retire for the discussion	5
Abstentions	2

CARRIED that they should remain.

6.4 Hazel Flynn introduced the item. She apologised to Val Fenn, Chair of TFMC, that she had not been able to meet with her prior to tonight's meeting. Hazel explained the need to agree a balanced budget in order for TRAs to receive their funding without delay. Hazel confirmed that this year there is less money available in the fund and for that reason agreement has been reached with SGTO to lower the amount requested.

6.5 Steve added that funds are limited because the leasehold fund contribution has still not been resolved. He reported that Margaret is intending to try and get an agreement between both parties because without this payment the fund will continue to struggle as the number of leaseholders increases and the number of tenants diminishes. Margaret confirmed that she hopes to start a discussion with a view to resolving the differences.

Cris said she felt the leaseholders' preference to have their own fund was divisive, they should work together. She remembered this being the position with TRAs and forums in the past but now on the ground they work closely together. **She asked that Margaret pass on her view.**

Lionel suggested that the Best Value Vision, where a united fund was agreed, was still the default position. He asked whether it was politically advantageous to maintain disagreement between both parties. Margaret refuted this suggestion and reiterated her wish to try and help them find a compromise that moved the matter forward.

6.6 John McGrath pointed out that the cost for the tenant conference had reduced from last year and said that there had been complaints about the cost last year: given the limited number of attendees it was costly in his opinion. Hazel responded that she felt it needed reviewing, including the need to look at standing orders.

A general discussion took place over the venue of the conference with differing views as to the use and cost of Glazier hall.

Action

Recommendation:

Chair moved that Tenant Council agree the Tenant Fund Budget and forward it to area housing forums for information only.

Agreed with one vote against.

6.7	Lionel asked that TFMC ensure they abide by their terms of reference when discussing the budget next year.	Action
7.	Tenant Conference	
7.1	Noted.	
7.2	Agreed to sent report out to area housing forums for information only	Action
8.	Recommendations from forums on resident involvement review	
8.1	Jo confirmed that all forums had now submitted recommendations on the report. These were for information only.	
8.2	Hazel advised that plans were in place to meet with the elected working party on a weekly basis for 4-5 weeks. The matter had been delayed a little because of work commitments following the fire but she hopes this will be up and running very shortly. Steve suggested that the fire must have delayed the process. Hazel agreed that it had, but not by much.	
9.	Attendance list	
9.1	Agreed.	
10	Correspondence	
10.1	Noted.	
11.	Minutes of 1 June 2009	
11.1	Agreed.	
12.	Matters arising from the minutes of 1 June	

- 12.1 (5.15) Lionel asked who will carry out the resident involvement role if housing officers were not going to do it, especially with less resident involvement staff.

Hazel said that when the working party meets she will explain which work-stream would be doing which role. Margaret said that it might be better explained that resident involvement staff will no longer do housing officer tasks.

Kim asked for assurances that no re-structure would take place until after the talks with the working party. Margaret said that there had now been two long discussions on this subject and she had made it clear that there would be no discussion or going back on the structure that the council will put in place. She is happy for there to be a full discussion on the outcomes but not on the structure.

13 Forward Plan

- 13.1 Noted

14 Any other business.

- 14.1 None.

Meeting closed at 9.45pm

JW 30/7/09 (updated RL 7/8/09)