



SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE A

MINUTES of the Scrutiny Sub-Committee A held on Monday November 30 2009 at 7.00 pm at Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

PRESENT: Councillor John Friary (Chair)
Councillor Wilma Nelson
Councillor Martin Seaton
Councillor Althea Smith

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Sandra Rhule (Reserve)
Mrs Sylvia Marsh – Bonamy Bramcote TA (Secretary)
Mrs Pat Hickson - Bonamy Bramcote TA (Chair)

OFFICER SUPPORT: Fitzroy Williams – Scrutiny Project Assistant

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Denise Capstick, Robin Crookshank Hilton and Lesley Wertheimer (Tenant Representative for Peckham) as a special meeting of Tenants Council was called for this evening.

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 Wednesday 14th October 2009 were agreed as an accurate record of the

meeting.

5. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT

- 5.1 The Chair informed the sub-committee that a special meeting of the Tenants Council had been called for today to discuss the new tenancy agreement. This would in turn affect the number of tenant representatives available to attend this meeting, but arrangements will be made to hear from representatives at the next meeting of this sub-committee which is scheduled for Wednesday 10th February 2010.

6. HOUSING REPAIRS REVIEW

- 6.1 The Chair reported that in terms of progressing this item of business, it may be worth writing to the housing forums for written comments or invite them to attend the next meeting to hear of tenants experiences with regards to housing repairs.
- 6.2 The sub-committee then heard from representatives of the Bonamy-Bramcote Tenants Association and expressed that they were not happy with some housing repair jobs that had been undertaken on their estate.
- 6.3 One of the examples given were that of a young mother of three children all under 8 years old, the young family had no lighting in the property for 6 weeks, the mother was having to bath the children by candle light, which raised health and safety issues. A call to the centre had been made but the job took 6 weeks, the scaffolding had also been put up on the wrong side of the building.
- 6.4 One of the points that concerned the tenant representative was that as a street leader for her estate she seemed to be able to get jobs done more so than the housing officer. Her point being that she undertook the role of street leader on a voluntary basis and it would seem to be taking on more responsibilities. The housing officer is paid a salary and she did not know what the officer's responsibilities were? The tenant representative felt that she got repair jobs done a lot faster than housing officers.
- 6.5 Members were also informed that repairs are getting worse, tenants were having to put up with poor flooring, holes in walls, boiler and radiators hanging off walls and standards were not getting any better.
- 6.6 It was also reported that tenants had a deep sense of apathy and indeed were now ageing, these people are now fed up with the council poor performance of repairs. These same tenants

remember when they first moved into their homes, the flats were decorated well, radiators and boilers were fixed to walls and working.

- 6.7 Recently the tenant representative had visited a vacant flat on her estate, 3 or 4 people had viewed the property there was no radiator in the bathroom, the toilet needed to be replaced, pipes were hanging from the wall, the taps were dirty and not working and the kitchen was in a appalling state. How can the council be letting these properties in such poor conditions, the flat had been empty for 2 to 3 months. Housing officers now say to tenants that they should take it as it is, the council has changed a lot and it is not for the better the role of the housing officer is diminishing as time goes on.
- 6.8 A member of the sub-committee reported that she had dealt with a case of a couple (brother and sister) who had lived in a property without lights for 4 weeks, the sister was wheelchair bound and the brother suffered a heart attack, the couple received compensation of £100.
- 6.9 The chair reported that the tenancy agreement included lighting as a high priority, the call centre needs to understand the terms tenancy agreement.
- 6.10 The tenant representatives pointed out that contacting the call centre was not a problem, but the people receiving the calls generally do not have a feel for the jobs being requested, yet they do raise job numbers. The second point of contention was that workmen who turn up to do the job do not come prepared i.e. tools needed to do the job, they then leave and do not return to the job. It can take 6-8 weeks to complete a job by another workman. The third point was some workmen do not seek to find the source of the problem i.e. leaking pipes from other flats. The last point that concerned the representatives was that repairs appointments were often not kept and tenants often had to take time off work for these appointments.
- 6.11 The sub-committee were informed of the window seals needing to be replaced in many of the flats on the estate this would include the seals around the french doors, the window seals were all replaced but the workmen did not complete the job on the doors which in turn delayed the decorating of the rooms concerned. In one particular case the plastic window frames required repair, a carpenter was sent to do the job, this job took 7 months to complete.
- 6.12 The tenant representatives stated they would like to return back to the old system, where housing officers were responsible for repairs and contractors should be available for estate inspections. This would mean the housing officer sending repair request to call

centre and the jobs being filtered down to the contractor.

- 6.13 The sub-committee asked the tenant representatives if they agreed with the target and overall performance percentages contained in the August key performance indicators, both representatives stated that they thought the percentage figure were far too high.
- 6.14 The chair stated that the process needed to be looked into as it was not possible to check every repair job undertaken.
- 6.15 The tenant representative reported that the estate they lived on was built 14 years ago and the following works and repairs have had to be undertaken, new pipes, cracks in walls leading to new walls, stairways repairs and subsidence. It was stated that new builds are not up to scratch, older estates on the Old Kent Road did not suffer from these problems.
- 6.16 The tenant representative gave an example of a problem with the tap in the kitchen, she went on to inform members that a contractor informed her that she would need a whole new system, but when a plumber came around to do the job he informed her that it was a simple job and completed the repair by replacing a switch. Her concern was who was auditing these contractors and are the proper processes in place.
- 6.17 A member of the sub-committee raised his concern that a number of job numbers could be raised for the same job and would expect these job numbers to be matched to one job so that the council is not making multiply payments for the same job.
- 6.18 Another member reported an incident with a leaking pipe and was surprised that she was charged 5 times for the same job.
- 6.19 The tenant representatives felt that the following points would help make a clear way forward in dealing with repairs and maintenance:-
- Housing Officers – to report repairs
 - Housing Officers – responsibilities decreased in the number of properties they manage
 - Caretakers on estates – required for minors works (getting rid of these people must surely cost more in the cost of repairs and maintenance to the council).
 - Lighting on estates – post numbers are presently taken by TA representatives, this should be undertaken by the light team for evening/night work.

RESOLVED: That tenant representatives from the Tenant Council and Housing Forums be invited to submit written comments regarding housing repairs and/or invited to attend the next meeting of this sub-committee on Wednesday 10th February 2010.

The meeting ended at 8.30 p.m.

CHAIR:

DATED:

[EXEC ONLY]

DEADLINE FOR NOTIFICATION OF CALL-IN UNDER SECTION 18 OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES IS MIDNIGHT, [DATE].

THE ABOVE DECISIONS WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTABLE UNTIL AFTER THAT DATE. SHOULD A DECISION OF THE EXECUTIVE BE CALLED-IN FOR SCRUTINY, THEN THE RELEVANT DECISION WILL BE HELD IN ABEYANCE PENDING THE OUTCOME OF SCRUTINY CONSIDERATION.