

**LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS**

**MINUTES OF THE HOUSING & REGENERATION SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE**

**HELD AT 6.30 P.M. ON THURSDAY, 27 APRIL 2023**

**COMMITTEE ROOM - TOWER HAMLETS TOWN HALL, 160 WHITECHAPEL  
ROAD, LONDON E1 1BJ**

**Members Present:**

Councillor Abdul Mannan (Chair)  
Councillor Musthak Ahmed  
Councillor Faroque Ahmed  
Councillor Nathalie Bienfait  
Councillor Marc Francis  
Councillor Asma Islam

**Co-opted Members Present:**

Mahbub Anam (Tenant representative)  
Susanna Kow (Leaseholder representative)

**Other Councillors Present:**

Councillor Ahmodul Kabir

**Officers Present:**

Karen Swift – (Divisional Director, Housing and  
Regeneration)  
Mark Slowikowski – (Strategy, Policy and Performance Manager)  
Justina Bridgeman – Democratic Services Officer (Committee)

**1. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests.

**2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING(S)**

The minutes of the sub committee meeting held on 16 February 2023 were approved and signed as a correct record of proceedings.

**3. OPEN ACTIONS**

An update on compensation for residents who incurred additional heating and water costs to be brought to the sub committee for 27 April meeting

(12 January 2023 meeting). Councillors raised concerns regarding Clarion's response; particularly for vulnerable residents who are required to wait a week before any compensation claims be made. This was deemed inappropriate.

3. Details on the definitive set of RP's TSM's to be brought to the sub-committee once published (12 January 2023 meeting). Details of the new TSMs were included in the briefing paper circulated outside of this meeting in April 2023 to the committee entitled 'Update on the Social Housing Regulation Bill'.

4.1. Swan Housing Presentation 360 Feedback Report, resident's response and KPI's to be brought back to the sub committee once completed in April 2023 (16 February 2023 meeting).Details will be circulated to the sub-committee prior to the first meeting of the municipal year 2023/24.

4.2. A comprehensive report on the THH major works programme to be brought back to the sub committee for 27 April 2023 meeting (16 February 2023 meeting). The report will be included in the 2023/24 HRSSC work programme, as part of an ongoing progress report to bring THH back in-house.

4.3. A written update on the councils discharge of homelessness duty to PRS be brought to the sub committee for review at the next meeting in April 2023. (16 February 2023 meeting). Sub-Committee members were informed that a briefing note is awaiting sign-off and will be circulated once approved.

4.4 Developing a new local plan regular update request (16 February 2023 meeting).Updates will be included in the 2023/24 HRSSC work programme.

#### **4. REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION**

##### **4.1 Social Housing Landlords Performance Report QTR3**

Shalim Uddin, Partnerships Officer, Strategy and Policy, introduced the consultation reports for quarter 3 for Registered Providers (RPs). This included a summary of the key strengths, challenges and general updates reflected in the report.

Further to questions by the sub-committee, Shalim Uddin;

- Explained that information sharing on mould and condensation includes; the mould and condensation working group, council and RP's updating websites with guidance to mitigate environmental effects within the home. Asset Management subgroups are also sharing information, specifically with older architectural properties.
- Clarified that the Southern Housing Group have recently merged with Optivo and KPI data on repair appointments made and kept will be submitted retrospectively over the next few months.

- Explained that specific details of Member Enquiries (ME's) involving mould are not included in KPI's, although information will be brought back to the sub-committee for scrutiny.
- Conceded that further work with the eight RP's unable to provide data to establish their performance levels is required. Some RP's do hold stock outside the borough, which means data may be manipulated to produce details for Tower Hamlets. The forthcoming Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM's) should create more accurate details.
- Explained that RP's have been requested to complete a survey and specify what information will be provided to the council for the next 12 months and at what frequency as well as location.
- Confirmed that Clarion will provide data for the next quarters report, as they are still dealing with issues related to the cyber-attack.
- Clarified that all RP's use the technical guidance issued by the Regulator of Social Housing to determine how data is collated.

[Clerk's Note - the guidance referenced is available here: [Annex 4: Tenant Satisfaction Measures - Technical requirements \(accessible\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114444/Annex_4_Tenant_Satisfaction_Measures_-_Technical_requirements_accessible.pdf) ]

Following comments from Officers and invitees, the sub-committee;

- Noted concern that mobilisation of new repairs contracts are still accounting for increases in complaints and ME's and requested a brief from THH to outline contractor response times and general performance.
- Expressed concern that Clarion are still experiencing issues related to a cyber-attack that took place in May 2022 and cannot provide KPI details for April 2023.
- Requested that an extra column is created within the KPI's to denote repeat ME's for the same enquiry, to understand the responses given and also specific categories that the most common ME's fall under to establish if these queries relate to emergencies.

#### **RESOLVED that**

1. THH to submit a brief outlining contractor response times and general performance to the sub-committee for the first meeting of the municipal year 2023/24.
2. The report be noted.

## 4.2 Changes to Social Housing Regulation

Karen Swift, Director of Housing and Regeneration and Una Bedford, Strategy and Policy Officer, introduced a report reviewing the changes within the new regulatory regime for social housing to the sub-committee. This included the three key aims of the bill, the benefits to residents, the timescales and possible impacts for Tower Hamlets Council.

Further to questions by the sub committee, Karen Swift and Una Bedford;

- Clarified that since 1 October 2022, residents having difficulty reporting an issue or who are dissatisfied with the service they have received in response by the council or a registered provider can approach the Housing Ombudsman Service directly (rather than wait 8 weeks at the end of social landlords complaints process to approach the Housing Ombudsman or during those 8 weeks approach a designated person (MP, councillor) to take on their complaint.

The Housing Ombudsman Service can help the resident and their social landlord resolve the issue. If a resident thinks their complaint is not being dealt with correctly, for example if a resident receives a delayed or no response, the Ombudsman can help to ensure the complaint is responded to by the social landlord.

- Confirmed that the Housing Ombudsman is currently recruiting and hosting nationwide roadshows to update residents on their rights. They have updated the website to share information on how to complain.
- Explained that the Government has also recently launched a [Social Housing Complaints – If you're unhappy with the service from your social housing provider, make it right](#) programme and the website [Guidance for social housing residents - Four Million Homes](#) which provides guidance on social housing rights, including free webinars and training events. The Council is currently updating the website to empower residents with information and speed up the complaints process.

Following comments from Officers and invitees, the sub-committee;

- Suggested that proposed Health and Safety leads and 'Responsible Persons' appointed, report to the sub-committee to ensure the requirements for landlords and the six new consumer standards are enforced.
- Requested that consideration be made on resourcing costs to treat damp and mould for older properties within the borough.

- Suggested that consideration be made to existing tenants and leaseholders throughout the borough, to support them holding their RP's to account in anticipation of the Social Housing Regulation Bill.

**RESOLVED that**

1. The presentation be noted.

**4.3 ASB on Housing Estates**

Nick Spenceley, Head of Environmental Services Tower Hamlets Homes (THH), Savannah Lloyd, Area Community Safety Lead at Peabody Housing Trust, Lee Canter and Lee Andrews, Community Safety Team Officer and Community Safety Team Manager at One Housing respectively; introduced the presentation which reviewed the housing estates and learning from best practice in tackling anti-social behaviour.

Details on the types of complaints made and investigation methods used were provided to the sub-committee, including details on Operation Elkhart; a joint taskforce with police, council Enforcement Teams and THH to crack down on high level drug dealing within the estate.

Further to questions by the sub committee, Nick Spenceley;

- Confirmed that data from park guards who patrol the Boundary Estate is submitted by ASB Officers at the Weavers Ward Safer Neighbourhoods Board meetings.
- Clarified that Police, the council and THH's have various separate reporting lines but a partnership approach to information sharing occurs. A targeted strategy is taken due to the resources available.
- Explained that THH has a small number of CCTVs used for evidence gathering for investigations. Installation is dependent on proportionality assessments based on resident feedback and patrol staff data. This allows staff to engage not just with the residents but those congregating in areas where a perceived threat is taking place. Discussions of this nature can often defuse tensions.
- Confirmed that block specific patrolling takes place alongside communicating with residents and partnership work with other agencies, using a holistic approach in tackling suspicious activity to combat criminality.
- Explained that the highest sanction RP's can take for serious ASB offenses is eviction; although this may include a criminal investigation to establish if there has been breaches of tenancy or lease agreements, followed by a court order seeking possession. A less severe sanction is a 'Premises Closure Order' to exclude

someone from a property or particular block. A revised THH tenancy agreement will be implemented in June 2023 which sets out stringent conditions.

- Conceded that current laws allow residents who have received 'Possession Orders' the right of appeal, which slows down the eviction process in some serious cases.
- Noted that The TSM measures include 'ASB cases relative to the size of the landlord'. Although some residents no longer report complaints, as they are dissatisfied with the RP's previous response. For this reason details received may not be true representations of lower or higher performance rates in specific wards.

Following comments from Officers and invitees, the sub-committee;

- Requested an ASB Summer Action Plan be submitted to the sub-committee for an overview of patrols around the estates.
- Suggested that a more integrated approach is needed to combat anti-social behaviour, as Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers (THEOs) and park guards have different remits which currently prevents THEOS from entering estates managed by RPs.
- Noted that a wider workstream is required to identify crime and the lack of youth provision. Updates on approaches should be brought back to the sub-committee for further scrutiny at the first sub-committee for municipal year 2023/24..
- Suggested further details on ASB complaints from RP's in each ward, to establish where the majority of issues stem from at the first sub-committee for municipal year 2023/24.

#### **RESOLVED that**

1. An ASB Summer Action Plan be submitted to the sub-committee for municipal year 2023/24.
2. The presentation be noted

#### **5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- Councillor Nathalie Bienfait requested the Maddox House investigation be added to the sub-committee agenda once concluded for municipal year 2023/24.

- Councillor Nathalie Bienfait also requested an update on the Homelessness backlog to be brought to the sub-committee for municipal year 2023/24.
- Lastly, Councillor Nathalie Bienfait requested The Chair take a vote on increasing sub-committee meetings from five to nine for municipal year 2023/24. This was seconded by Councillor Marc Francis. On a vote of 5 for, 0 against and 1 abstention, the sub-committee agreed a formal note be submitted to the Chief Executive to increase the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee meetings from five to nine.

As this was the last meeting of municipal year 2022/23; the Chair thanked all sub-committee members, officers and invitees for their assistance and gave a special thanks to Mark Slowikowski who will be leaving the sub-committee as Senior Strategy and Policy Officer.

The meeting ended at 8.45 p.m.

Chair, Councillor Abdul Mannan

Housing & Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee