

Kensington & Chelsea Local Scrutiny Panel Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 26 October 2016

Present:

Chair:

SJ

Residents:

SM, GD, JF, SE, LC, PK, HM, JN

Staff Members:

LJ - Leasehold Manager

NC - PA to Group Director of Housing

LG - Housing Operations Manager ATB1

CH - Resident Involvement Officer

JM - Housing Operations Manager ATB13

Apologies:

HG, RS, MB, TA, LS

1.	Housekeeping, minutes of the last meeting & matters arising
1.1	SJ welcomed JN to the group and thanked LJ for attending and for the quality of the report graphs.
1.2	SJ noted that HM was leaving NHH and wished to relay his thanks to LS for helping with the pre-meet organisation and catering.
1.3	SJ asked the group to think about who they would nominate as vice chair for the LSP as he felt the role would add real value to the panel.
1.4	SJ also noted that resident involvement would now be given a regular slot on the agenda. SJ informed the group that he and SM met with Peter Forsyth to discuss how repairs are reported for Inner West 1 and noted that he agreed to attend the January LSP.
1.5	SJ noted that there would be more of a balance between reporting on PRH and Leasehold for 2017.
1.6	The minutes and matters arising were agreed and noted.



2.	Presentation: Arrears Management
2.1	<p>JM explained that NHH used RentSense to help identify what counts when managing arrears. The system does not just focus on the highest debt but identifies patterns and abnormalities making it easier for housing officers (HOs) to manage the debt early.</p> <p>JM noted that many actions were taken before and throughout legal action to try and assist the resident such as talking to them, trying to establish a payment plan, recommending them to our welfare benefit advisors and signposting them to anything else that may help. JM then went on to outline the legal processes and proceedings that took place should the arrears not improve.</p>
2.2	
2.3	<p>PK asked if a resident could appeal decisions made re. eviction. LG stated that they could.</p>
2.4	<p>LG gave an overview of arrears statistics and the different benefit types within K&C and noted that they were significantly lower than other boroughs. LG also noted that HOs have visited many of the residents affected by benefit changes to see how they can help them going forward and prevent them from going into further arrears.</p>
2.5	<p>LG stated that there were also checks that can be done before a customer becomes a resident such as financial checks, encouraging payment by direct debit and a robust probationary tenancy process. LG also noted that a lot of work is done to identify tenants that will be affected by future benefit changes so that HOs may speak with them and help them plan for what is to come.</p>
2.6	Questions:
2.7	NC to circulate the presentation to LSP members.
2.8	<p>JF asked if the size of bedrooms was considered before bedroom tax was applied as some rooms are quite small. SS noted that if the room was less than 6 square meters then the bedroom can be reclassified.</p>
2.9	<p>SM noted that benefit forms and the advice given for filling them out could vary quite significantly and so stated that it would be good if the HOs could be more consistent in their approach to filling out the forms and the questions that they ask.</p>
2.10	<p>LC suggested that a lot of people did not want to downsize due to the quality/ location of the alternative properties offered. LC noted one case she was aware of where the property offered was in a high crime area and so the resident did not wish to move. SS stated that those situations should be reported to NHH as they can then act on it. SS stated she would speak with HG in regards to ASB issues as Clidesdale.</p>
2.11	<p>JF asked if it was possible to find similar properties for people in their local area. JM stated that this was hard to do in K&C but noted that they do offer incentives to help people move such as help with moving etc. SS stated that 50% of people affected by bedroom tax pay their rent and so</p>



2.12	<p>they are not affected however it is the 50% that cannot afford to stay in their property that must be incentivised.</p> <p>SJ asked if people affected by the bedroom tax are permitted to rent out a room. JM stated that they could if NHH were aware of it. SS also noted that if people do make NHH aware of it the rent they charge is counted as income and so may affect their benefits.</p> <p>SJ asked if NHH always tried to recover the moneys owed even if the resident has vulnerabilities. LG stated that NHH always tried to recover debt but tried to come to an agreement before involving bailiffs. LG noted that NHH could not allow constant failure to recover debt and so eventually a bailiff is necessary though vulnerabilities are considered. SS also noted that NHH do write off debt that cannot be traced/ recovered.</p> <p>PK stated that the rental exchange programme could assist people in getting better credit and help them pay their debt. CH noted that rental exchange does not prompt people to pay and does not affect those not paying but is beneficial to those that do as it aids their credit score.</p> <p>PK asked what documents are needed for the financial assessment at sign up. LG stated that they asked for payslips and bank statements and looked at other income and expenditure. HOs carry out this task and managers sign off the agreement. PK noted that it was a difficult thing to ask HOs to do re. asking about tenants spend etc. SS agreed it was challenging but helped with the assessment.</p>
3.	Performance Reports
3A	<p>SJ noted that the customer satisfaction data was now being collected in a completely different way and so could not be compared to what was reported before. SJ stated that the data would be comparable in January 2017 once the data pool using the new method is large enough.</p> <p>Leasehold:</p> <p>3A.1 LJ stated that NHH now have Q1 and Q2 data using the new method. LJ noted that how the new company survey residents is different as they ask different questions and work off a ten-point scale as opposed to a five-point scale which allows residents to tell NHH what is most important to them.</p> <p>3A.2 LJ advised that not much could be drawn from the stats now however noted this should change in Q3. SJ noted that internal teams seemed to be performing well however external teams were not. LJ stated that the stats encompassed external teams across contract and not just K&C. It was agreed that LJ would speak with SW about improving the layout of the TLF reports so that they may look at K&C in more detail.</p> <p>3A.3 HM stated that how leasehold dealt with repairs (via contractor) lay externally and asked how leasehold maintained control centrally. LJ noted that PRH had a more robust system and outline of expectations however advised that should a contractor not perform for Leasehold they are unlikely to use them again and so this creates accountability for the</p>



	contractor and helps ensure good customer service.
3A.4	JF stated that sometimes communications via the PMO on repairs was poor and asked how they were qualified to analyse a repair. LJ advised that all PMOs have undertaken repairs diagnosis training and noted that the new customer App. would allow for tenants to raise repairs via their smart phone – leasehold is also looking at how they use Dynamics and linking it to the App.
3A.5	LC noted that it was not just communications within Leasehold that failed but stated that contacting PRH was difficult also as often the telephone system failed. SS to look into this further.
3A.6	LJ reviewed the quarterly statistics and SM asked how estate inspections were at 100% over the summer months. LJ noted that the inspections were scheduled quite far in advance and so were carried out by staff when required – this does not mean that all actions needed have been taken but it does ensure all inspections are carried out. LJ to send SM the inspection log for Leasehold.
3B.	PRH:
3B.1	LG noted that PRH would be doing some work to look more closely at comments received from residents though noted there has been very positive feedback on the friendliness of HOs. SS noted that what is expected/a given from a repairs process is not necessarily what tips customer satisfaction. It is the extras such as staff friendliness that increase the stats as high satisfaction is not gained from what residents expect a service to be fundamentally.
3B.2	SJ noted that he hoped a meeting with the housing teams for K&C could be arranged soon as it was a success last year.
3B.3	HM stated that sometimes the communication between HOs and contractors was not efficient and so it may be easier to go directly to the contractor. GD stated that a case study on how repairs are processed via a HO versus doing it directly with the contractor would be beneficial. SS agreed and noted that PRH were also looking at enabling repairs to be ordered directly from the NHH website.
3B.4	LG reviewed the stats for Q2; it was agreed that LG would add a table in the Q3 report that compared eviction numbers across the quarters.
3B.5	JF asked how NHH decided what voids needed proofing works for damp etc. as she felt it was a missed opportunity for NHH to carry out improvement works to sustain the property for longer. SS noted that NHH always undertook works where damp was identified and advised that the properties are inspected by a Voids Supervisor in addition to a Surveyor when needed.
3B.6	LG stated that void performance was currently averaging at a 31-day turnaround (target 30 days). LG noted that managers were working to improve the performance around repairs completed in 28 days.



3B.7	SJ asked if the complaints categories on the report were the top five reported. LG stated that they were but needed review. LG, JM and SJ to work together and revise the complaints report.
3B.8	SM noted that HOs received too much of the customer tension when dealing with roof repairs etc. as due to their time-consuming nature he felt this should be down to the contractor.
3B.9	SJ noted that there was a new ASB case management system and asked that LG, JM and he meet to discuss how it will be reported.
3B.10	It was agreed that SJ and SM would put together a response based on their meeting with PF to inform the group of its outcome.
4.	Resident Involvement Update
4.1	CH outlined the proposed meeting dates for the LSP in 2017 as follows; <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. 25th January 20172. 26th April 20173. 26th of July 2017 (voted for instead of August 2017).4. 25th October 2017 CH to circulate invites for the agreed dates to the LSP.
4.2	CH asked if the group were happy with how the papers were circulated this quarter. LJ stated it was tight getting the customer satisfaction results ready on time but apart from that it went well.
4.3	CH advised that the Resident Involvement team were still calling each LSP member to gather feedback on the meetings and asked that if anyone had not yet received the call to send her a date that suited or wait until the team made contact.
4.4	CH noted that there would be a London Plus Credit Union training session on the 9 th of November at NHH and so ALL were to let her know should they wish to attend.
5.	AOB
5.1	SJ asked the group to ensure they filled out the LSP feedback form attached to the papers or online.
5.2	CH informed the group that the LSP Christmas event would be held at the Canal Museum, King's Cross once again on the 13 th of December (with different caterers). SM asked that KD attend to meet some of the LSP members.
5.3	SJ noted that this was the last LSP meeting of 2016 and so thanked everyone for their participation this year.