

**Kensington & Chelsea Local Scrutiny Panel Meeting**

**Minutes of meeting held on 10 May 2017**

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Present:

**Chair:**

SJ

**Residents:**

MB, GD, JF, PK, SM, HM, JN, RS, LS

**Staff Members:**

CS	- Directory of Strategy & Investment
LD	- PA to Director of NH Home Ownership
HG	- Housing Operations Manager ATB1
JT	- Head of Business Improvement
LJ	- Leasehold Manager
LG	- Housing Operations Manager
AC	- Regional Head of Housing
SF	- Senior Building Surveyor, PAM

**Apologies:**

Staff:

Residents LC, SE, TA.

<b>1.</b>	<b>Chair's welcome &amp; opening remarks</b>
1.1	SJ welcomed the panel to the meeting and apologised on behalf of those that couldn't attend.
1.2	SJ advised he will now request receipts to emails he sends to the panel as he wants to confirm they are being received.
1.3	Minutes agreed as accurate.
1.4	Re: point 3.4 - MB's understanding is that NHH are waiting for the general election to pass and will do an update nearer the time. MB commented that the last time he asked, NHH had used a lobbyist and asked if NHH are not using anymore. <b>SJ said he will make enquiries if anything is happening this year.</b>
1.5	Re: point 5b.5 - to be answered in PRH report.
1.6	Re: point 5b.8 - to be answered in PRH report.
<b>2.</b>	<b>Cyclical presentation</b>
2.1	CS advised that NHH have had a framework in place set up in 2014 and we are now in

	<p>year three. We were originally looking to select preferred partners, and give them more work over time. In January we issued a repricing request from preferred partners and a report was sent to EB, which EB have now approved. CS advised that Wates' increase in pricing has meant NHH have chosen to go with another supplier, Axis.</p>
2.2	<p>It's been agreed that Wates can continue repairs in certain areas but NHH are yet to confirm Mears in repairs contract areas for the west.</p>
2.3	<p>With regards to planned works, we have managed to secure better rates than in previous years. Wates have been terminated, but are still on site whilst they complete snagging. We've discussed future plans with them, and they do see us as a long term partner. These works will continue until end of May. Axis will start on site from the end of May and hope to be finished before the end of the year which will be a big improvement on experience with Wates in previous years.</p>
2.4	<p>The biggest issues faced are windows and window replacements, particularly in Hammersmith &amp; Fulham and Kensington &amp; Chelsea, as we've had issues with planning permission. We have been piloting sensors in units to gauge heating and show temperature and humidity levels in various homes to show issues with condensation or heat loss. Using this data, we can also start advising customers how to minimise this. We are hoping to get permission to install UPVC windows following the sensor test results which, if successful, can be rolled out into the wider programme.</p>
2.5	<p>PK asked if RBKC are resistant to these proposals. JN added what are they resistant to. CS answered they are largely resistant for aesthetic reasons. LS commented that the windows look like the right styling. CS explained that we have spent a lot of time looking for a product that fits the right aesthetics. SF added that they are resisting because they want timber double glazing. CS added that we have a lot of properties that need new windows, and Westminster local authority are more progressive.</p>
2.6	<p>JF asked if the sensor devices can only be used at certain times of the year. CS explained that they have been in from September last year and monitored the winter period. The devices are still in now.</p>
2.7	<p>JF asked how we decide who needs the windows. CS explained that during the month of May, we will look at the list of properties stored in the system that's due. These properties will then be visited by Upshot who will take high quality photos to check windows and confirm if they need to be done in the next programme.</p>
2.8	<p>SM commented on the quality of the plastic and asked if we were looking at different materials altogether that last much longer. CS advised that historically the windows approved by RBKC weren't pretty and weren't installed properly. The idea is that this product is new and used in multi million pound properties. They have a very high specification. Technology has also moved on and they will be installed by the manufacturers.</p>
2.9	<p>MB commented that he'd previously had UPVC and had issues with them, such as damage from rain and sea water. He expressed concerns that they weren't a good product and can understand why councils are knocking it back.</p>
2.10	<p>SJ commented that if the windows can be replaced, it would be wonderful as he knows</p>

	residents have a lot of issues with their current windows, particularly for those living alone and older residents.
2.11	MB commented that all shutters have been ripped out and asked if reinstalling them help with energy costs, and could provide a lower cost alternative. HG advised that they are still on some properties.
2.12	RS commented that the figures shown on the number of houses completed is quite encouraging and asked if we receive reports on the quality of completed works. RS commented that he's been let down by NHH in the past and doesn't believe the works have been good value for money. RS asked if contractors pay penalties for bad work. CS advised her that there haven't been any reports of failure except for 5 properties from Wates, which suggests that RS's experience, whilst unfortunate, is not reflective of the service provided overall. The costs are what we tend to have issues with. Wates have rushed units and tried to get works done quickly due to the unusual and specific circumstances we've had recently, and so due to the volume of units being completed at once, snagging didn't take place when it should. This may explain part of RS's experience. RS responded that his impression is the quality of works is lessened due to us being a housing association and added that he has several examples of bad quality works. CS expressed that she has not had the same experience of reports of disrepair. <b>To be discussed further outside of the meeting.</b>
2.13	SJ stated that he feels there's been huge progress in this area but we have to make sure there is a system in place to deal with complaints and improve communication e.g. not waiting endlessly for someone to get back to you. SF added that we have had a lot of positive comments on the works completed.
2.14	SM commented that NHH should have been planning in January to have scaffolding up by carnival. SJ advised that they did agree timescales at a meeting yesterday with SF. SF advised that the scaffolding timetable has been planned so that it's not up around Christmas nor Carnival time, and they plan to have scaffolding down by July.
2.15	PK advised that on Ledbury Road, they didn't have team snagging as the scaffolding was coming down so NHH should expect complaints.
2.16	RS commented that he'd seen scaffolding went up end of November and was up for 5 months. CS advised that the previous financial year is an unusual circumstance because Wates started so late on site due to the issues with cost approval. Once the costs were agreed, the works had to be done in much less time which did mean in this instance working during this period, however this is not the norm.
2.17	SM asked what the guarantee lifespan of windows are. CS responded that they have a lifetime guarantee provided they've been installed correctly.
2.18	LS commented that when PK had trouble with delays and he had spoken with contractors, did he also contact NHH. PK advised that he had spoken to them a few times, but PAM had felt unapproachable for a while, so it is nice to see them at the meeting today. LS commented that it feels frustrating when your Housing Officer doesn't feel like action is being taken. HG added that the communication is there and SF will respond to the actions listed by HOs but perhaps the message doesn't get through to residents enough.

2.19	MB asked if one issue is with our system being too paper driven. And suggested that if we had a digitised system in place and our systems were linked with contractors, risks would be reduced.
2.20	RS asked if NHH are aware that a number of Wates staff don't speak good English. CS advised that this would no longer be an issue as we are no longer using Wates.
<b>3.</b>	<b>Performance Report – Leasehold</b>
3.1	LJ advised that everything is generally looking good and customer satisfaction is steadily improving. We've achieved 100% for estate management which is also positive.
3.2	<b>SJ requested the quarter as well as the month be included on the reports as it wasn't clear.</b>
3.3	LJ advised that arrears are decreasing. SJ congratulated LJ for the best performing team for customer satisfaction.
3.4	JN asked if the two outstanding accounts with large contributions to the arrears could be put to one side as they tend to distort day to day reflection. LJ explained that this wouldn't then be reflective of the overall cash owing, however we can show them in commentary instead.
3.5	JN asked if we expect these amounts to be recovered. LJ said hopefully! They are service charge amount disputes that are ongoing. It could be that they are credited for some of it, but equally we may be able to recover other parts. Until it's settled, we won't know how much we can collect.
3.6	LS asked how it could go on over such a long time. LJ advised that they only disputed three years ago and then it took some time to work through what the individual issues were, of which there were many. We are hoping by next quarter we can come to some conclusions. We are now meeting with residents to resolve it, but communication has been difficult so we may have to go through mediation.
3.7	LS asked if they are looking for a solution or delaying the process on purpose by adding more issues. LJ explained that the arrears come from 5 dissatisfied leaseholders. It would depend on their financial situations. It could be beneficial for some of them for this dispute to continue.
3.8.	JN commented that he feels like a lot of resources are going into this and asked if a settlement agreement be more cost effective. LJ explained that we don't feel that residents would be comfortable with that as they want exact results.
3.9	JF asked who would provide mediation. LJ advised that we apply to First Tier Property Tribunal who provides a low cost service which we can use. Alternatively, we can use a body called the lease Advisory Service, but this needs engagement from leaseholder. We can ask for a determination from them. We provide a statement, then we would get determination from them and if goes to tribunal this would give a lot of weight.
3.10	LJ highlighted that repairs completed on time has increased. SJ commented that it's a big jump. LJ advised that as we use the purchasing order system to raise repairs, we are

3.11	<p>relying on a manual process where information is correct on completion date and so have to chase up individual contractors for this data, but if it's not updated properly it affects our results. This is being looked at in a repairs project group to improve the process and provide more information to residents on cost of repairs, value for money and increasing customer satisfaction.</p> <p><b>SJ proposed that the panel look at leasehold repairs in more detail to give a more balanced perspective.</b></p>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Performance Reports – PRH</b>
4.1	HG highlighted that customer satisfaction is an area where we still have a lot of work to do. Estate inspections results are very inconsistent, and we need to get these up to 100%.
4.2	HG highlighted we are performing well in arrears. MB commented that NHH's overall arrears have gone up slightly. HG explained that this is due to the direct debit week falling out of sync with housing benefit payments. MB suggested that this could also be due to universal credit also rolling out wider.
4.3	LS came across her statement that when she paid with debit card, she had paid the same rate as a credit card, and had successfully received a rebate for this. LS wanted to highlight this to panel in case they weren't aware. HG also suggested panel members to set up a direct debit to avoid any fees.
4.4	MB commented that the website is not useful and functionality is limited. HG advised that there are improvements on the way.
4.5	HG advised that K&C's best team for lettings performance. SJ congratulated staff.
4.6	HG advised that PRH are happy to do a morning session with the panel on welfare reform outside of this meeting to go through data and more info in much more detail.
4.7	<b>SJ requested that the graphs for welfare reform are broken down to LSP level in future papers.</b>
4.8	<b>The panel also requested that ongoing as well as new subletting cases were presented in the papers, and that subletting is put on the agenda as a future discussion item.</b>
4.9	JF mentioned the end of February repairs open evening and asked if many people knew about it and who was invited. LG explained that it wasn't repairs, it was a drop-in surgery. A sample of residents were invited to control the number of people came, and just over 50 people turned up that morning. We intend on doing it again and more regularly and found that people came for a variety of reasons.
<b>5.</b>	<b>Resident Repair Reps</b>

5.1	SM & SJ will now be meeting on quarterly basis and attending a weekly performance review meeting which has been enhanced, and cyclical repairs will now be included. The meeting had discussed cyclical first, and they spoke with a Mears representative and had a general discussion. This new structure will improve knowledge sharing going forwards.
5.2	SJ advised that SF will be booking a meeting and arranging site visits to a void property, and would like to possibly book a field trip with LSP members. SF reminded the panel that it's important they communicate with each other and NHH, and need to respect confidentiality.
5.3	SM advised that the performance review meeting would take place monthly until the new year and then go back to quarterly. The meeting yesterday was with Axis and SF on cyclical operations. It was a very productive meeting and they had committed to removing scaffolding, waste and rubbish.
<b>6.</b>	<b>ATB Committee &amp; Resident Involvement</b>
6.1	SJ advised that last ATB will be end of May.
6.2	JT advised that earlier this year NHH's Board reviewed the governance structure. The feedback from all committee members showed that generally the Board was working well as were the committees. However, the People's Committee and ATB Committee no longer had a clear purpose. It was recommended big projects required oversight, such as customer strategy and transformation, key strategic issues and looking at digital monetary commitments. Therefore, the ATB and People's Committee have been disbanded and a new committee to cover the above will take their place. Members from previous committee can reapply and NHH will advertise places as normal.
6.3	The review had identified a skills gap around IT, transformation etc. We needed to consider where reporting from LSPs fit in so it was proposed and accepted that we have a series of scrutiny review meetings that will be held with EB members AMF and MV with LSP chairs every quarter, just after each round of LSP meetings. This is an opportunity for Chairs to talk about the feedback from LSPs. There is now a dedicated space for issues to be raised and fed back to LSPs, with a more 'You said, we did' structure and a clear audit trail.
6.4	A formal review will be built into the new structure next December to see how the new arrangements are working, which begins June 2017. <b>A briefing note will be emailed to all panel members after the meeting.</b>
6.5	SM asked how many chairs there are currently. JT said 5 or 6.
6.6	SM asked if you can still take Housing Associations to Ombudsman. JT confirmed you can.
6.7	JT advised that CH has a new job and OL has been recruited into her position and will come to the next meeting. SJ asked JT to pass gratitude from the panel to CH for her hard work.
6.8	JT advised that letters to recommit to the LSP will be coming out shortly and the end of year evaluation has been put back until September. A review of the terms of reference

6.9	<p>will also take place in September.</p> <p><b>The panel were asked to put themselves forward for Vice Chair if they were interested in the position.</b></p>
<b>7.</b>	<b>AOB</b>
7.1	SJ will be discussing the Notting Hill Carnival arrangements to AMF as part of the feedback.
7.2	SJ reminded people to submit questions if they had any that couldn't be answered in the meeting, and they will be answered in the six week update.
7.3	MEETING CLOSED