

Tenant Council

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2016

Present:

Delegates and Deputies

Forum	Delegates	Deputies
Aylesbury	Carol Vincent	
Aylesbury	Florence Essien	
Bermondsey East	Bill Wardell	Michael Facey
Bermondsey East	Hazel Bruce	
Bermondsey West	Mary O'Brien	
Camberwell East	Steve Hedger	
Dulwich	Bill Newman	
Dulwich	Jennifer Bevan	
Nunhead & Peckham Rye	Ian Ritchie	
Nunhead & Peckham Rye	Sheila Hayman	
Peckham		Temitayo Ladele
Rotherhithe	Kiri Pieri	Jackie Wardle
Walworth East	Shaun O'Regan	
Walworth East	Tanya Murat	
Walworth West	Colin Harrison	
SGTO	Cris Claridge	

Observer(s):

Mary Philip

Officers

Officer	Job Title
Stephen Douglass	Director of Communities
Lee Page	Resident Involvement Manager
Brian O'Neill	Tenant & Resident Organisation Co-Ordinator
Zoe Bulmer	Customer Resolution Manager
Catherine Barfield	Investigations Manager
Sean Conway	Contact Centre Operations Manager
Benta Wambui Njururi	Support Officer

Councillors

Councillor	Ward	Responsibilities
Richard Livingstone	Livesey	Cabinet Member for Housing
Sunny Lambe	South Bermondsey	

Apologies:

Delegates

Delegates	Area Housing Forum
Val Fenn	Camberwell East
Jeanette Mason	Peckham
Carol Vincent	Aylesbury

Officers

Officer	Job Title
Gerri Scott	Strategic Director of Housing and Modernisation
Langa Ncayiyana	Client and Service Improvement Manager

Councillors

Councillor	Ward	Responsibilities
Cllr Damian O'Brien	Grange	
Cllr David Hubber		
Cllr Catherine Dale	South Bermondsey	
Cllr Andy Simmons	College	
Cllr Fiona Colley	Nunhead	Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation and Performance
Cllr Leo Pollak		
Cllr Stephanie Cryan	Rotherhithe	Cabinet Member for Adult Care and Financial Inclusion
Cllr Bill Williams	Rotherhithe	Chair of Bermondsey and Rotherhithe Community Council
Cllr Lucas Green	Grange Ward	
Cllr Kath Whittam	Rotherhithe Ward	
Cllr Evelyn Akoto	Livesey Ward	
Cllr James Barber	East Dulwich Ward	

Item	Title of Report	Action
1.	Constitution and Standing Orders	
	Noted	
2.	Delegates and deputies	
	Agreed	
3.	Apologies	
	As Above	
4.	Declarations of Interest	
	None	
5.	Attendance Monitor	
	Agreed	
6.	Minutes of 25 January 2016	
	Agreed with corrections as follows: Add the following in 7.3: 1, That the legal powers of this new company be clarified 2, If there are any cost implications to the housing revenue account 3, If there is a shortfall in the new company's income – How will this be made up. 4, That where reports that impact on leaseholders and tenants it shall have a	

	<p>report by officers of who was consulted and how they were consulted. Written response will be sent to TC.</p> <p>Add apologies from Cllr Sunny Lambe.</p>	
6.1	Matters arising from minutes of 25 January 2016	
	None	
7.	Reports	
7.1	The Tenants Arbitration Service	
	<p>Zoe Bulmer, Customer Resolution Manager, presented the report:</p> <p>The council is proposing an introduction of a complaints stage into the Arbitration process. At the moment tenants are not required to use the complaints process prior to going to arbitration, despite both processes covering very similar issues (mainly heating and hot water, leaks and pest issues).</p> <p>Arbitration panel does deal with some very significant disputes and for complex and intractable disputes it is very useful form of alternative dispute resolution. However using arbitration process for simple cases is time consuming as it generally takes 6 to 8 weeks for a matter to progress to a panel, whereas a complaint is generally answered in 3 weeks. A high number of simple cases being heard at the panel often means that genuine, complex disputes which should be before the panel are having to wait for a hearing date.</p> <p>The arbitration panel is intended to resolve disputes between tenants and the council. A significant number of applications are not real disputes, in that the council is clearly liable for the repairs, the repairs required are apparent and the council is not disputing it. These cases could as easily be resolved via the complaints process, which is both quicker and significantly cheaper.</p> <p>Michael Facey: The concern I have is the complaint will be closed without resolving the problem. I have had this experience where I have called repairs and they have closed the case without telling me the outcome.</p> <p>Zoe Bulmer: We need to differentiate between repair and an official complaint. If you do not tell the call centre you want to raise a stage one complaint. They will raise it as repair issue.</p> <p>Steve Hedger: I have had experiences similar to Michael. We were informed that staff at the call centre should be able to take a stage one complaint but they never do.</p> <p>Sean Conway: Maybe you should raise it online. It is something you should look at.</p> <p>Kiri Pieri: You should know that there many people who can not do it online.</p> <p>Sunny Lambe: People go to arbitration because they are not getting the service they need. If complaint raised take too long to be resolved then people will prefer to go to arbitration.</p> <p>Zoe Bulmer: We do not always get everything right. We raise half a million repairs in a year and something will go wrong but we always fix the problem when we get it wrong.</p> <p>Catherine Barfield: The arbitration panel is well trained and they can advise people when a case is more suited to go through the complaint process.</p> <p>Kiri Pieri: Are people open to this advice?</p> <p>Catherine Barfield: People are interested in having their issues resolved and are open to the best way and quickest way to have their issues resolved.</p>	

	<p>Ian Ritchie: If the issues is to go to stage one complaint and a considerable amount of compensation was agreed would complaints consider that.</p> <p>Zoe Bulmer: Yes.</p> <p>Ian Ritchie: I suggest we agree the report and ask for regular update on how the process is working.</p> <p>Report unanimously agreed with a review report to come back in six months</p>	
7.2	Environment Services 'on-line'	
	<p>Sean Conway presented the report:</p> <p>The waste and recycling services will be more widely available via the Southwark Council website from March 2016. Customer will complete simple online forms that will be sent directly to a dedicated team. People will be able to raise enquires such as, reporting a missed bin collection, request a recycling blue bin/box, request additional clear recycling bags among others.</p> <p>Telephoning the contact centre will no longer be the default option. However, no one will be excluded from council services due to lack of digital access. There is support available for customers such as using Southwark library PC facilities free of charge, service points provide free self-service facilities and assistance and some area housing forums offer classes.</p> <p>The cost of using web site cost 15p compared to £5 for a telephone call and £10 for face to face transaction. The use of online services will save costs and the money saved can be used to support other front-line services.</p> <p>Kiri Pieri: Where did you get the £5?</p> <p>Sean Conway: We have included all the costs including the staff cost.</p> <p>Bill Newman: 131,000 people have signed on my Southwark but only 7,000 are tenants or leaseholders. This shows not many Tenant and leaseholders are using website to access the services.</p> <p>Ian Ritchie: We need to realise that there people who will never use online services and we need to make sure there is support for them.</p> <p>Tanya Murat: I ordered clear recycling bag online but they never arrived for 12 weeks. There maybe people out there having the same problem.</p> <p>Sean Conway: We work with contractors and we will use that information to feedback to them to get their house in order.</p> <p>Tenant Council noted the report and requested updates.</p>	
7.3	Housing & Planning Bill	
	<p>Tanya talked about the work she has been doing on the kill the housing bill campaign:</p> <p>Tanya Murat: The kill the Housing Bill Campaign has already organised protests, lobbies and meeting to oppose the bill. The house of lords has put 300 amendments to the bill which is unusual and this shows there are problems with the bill.</p> <p>Ian Ritchie: Tenant council calls on Southwark Council to refuse to implements the Housing Bill.</p> <p>Cllr Richard Livingstone: We want to look at the legality of everything. When we send the rent statement we will send information out to inform people what is happening.</p>	

<p>The following motion was proposed Ian Ritchie and seconded Tanya Murat then passed unanimously:</p> <p>This Tenant Council notes: The Government's Housing and Planning Bill means higher rents, less security and less chance of a home you can afford.</p> <p>The Bill:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">. Makes councils sell off existing council homes. Removes secure tenancies. Introduces a "pay to stay" scheme for social housing tenants if two household members' income is more than £30k (£40k in London). Means increased rents and longer waiting lists. Reduces travellers' rights. Makes councils provide unaffordable "Starter Homes" instead of affordable housing for rent <p>The Kill the Housing Bill Campaign has already organised protests, lobbies and meetings aimed at bringing the Bill down, or making it unworkable. Walworth East Area Forum has already voted to oppose the Housing Bill and urge Southwark Council to do the same.</p> <p>This Tenant Council believes:</p> <p>The Housing and Planning Bill will not solve the housing crisis. It will make it worse. It will force people from their homes, families and communities, into insecure private renting.</p> <p>This Tenant Council calls on Southwark Council to refuse to implement the Housing Bill and in particular to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">. Not collect data on the incomes of tenants. Not introduce higher rents for some tenants as part of the government's pay to stay scheme, or any local variant involving a taper system. Continue to issue secure tenancies to all new tenants. Not sell off "high value council homes" and refuse to pay the levy imposed by the government to fund Right to Buy to housing association tenants. Call on the Council Trade Unions to support non co-operation with the Housing Bill and resist any attempt by council chief officers or Government appointees to force through implementation. Call on TRAs, Area Forums and SGTO to support the Council's position of non-co-operation with the Housing Bill. Propose a joint campaign of non-co-operation with other Councils opposed to the Bill	
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	<p>This Tenant Council resolves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . To add its name to the Kill the Housing Bill Campaign . To urge the delegates of Tenants Council to publicise the Kill the Housing Bill Campaign and send representatives to the organising meetings . To urge tenants to support the national demonstration on 13th March 2016 . To urge Area Forums and TRAs and SGTO to adopt this motion and organise local activities against the Bill. 	
7.4	Tenant Fund Budget 2016/2017	
	<p>Brian O'Neill Tenant & Resident Organisation Co-ordinator presented the 2016/2017 Tenant Fund Budget:</p> <p>The proposed 2016/2017 budget has been set on the basis of the previous year's budget for the main budget elements. These are for the TRA grants, the grant to SGTO and officer resources to provide training and support to TRAs. In addition there are a number of developmental projects for which budget provision is made. These support tenant and resident community participation. They include a small grants programme, a digital inclusion programme and additional external training provision.</p> <p>Steve Hedger: In K (Home Owners Levy) the figure has not changed?</p> <p>Kiri Pieri: SGTO, Why 6%?</p> <p>Bill Newman: The increase was made because we took an outreach worker and there has been a small wage increase.</p> <p>Ian Ritchie: Thanks to Andrew Matheson for producing the report.</p> <p>The report was agreed unanimously.</p>	AM
7.5	RELEASE project update (INFO ONLY)	
	Noted	
7.6	Camberwell district heating boiler houses in North contract (INFO ONLY)	
	Noted	
7.7	Future Steering Board membership and homeowner council complaint (INFO ONLY)	
	Noted	
8.	Any other Business	
	No other business	
9.	Next Meeting	
	4 April 2016	
10.	Appendices	
	Working Party and Task & Finish Group	