

South Local Housing Forum



Tuesday 15th June 2021 Highlights Report



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New Homes



Bassano Street (Garages), Henslowe Road (Garages) Underhill Road have been tendered delivering a total of 10 new council homes and will start on site in 2021.

Other schemes at earlier stages in the programme include: Seavington House and Garages, Lordship Lane Estate, Woodland Road Estate, 93 Herne Hill (hostels) and 17-19 Wood Vale.

Asset Management



In line with government guidance, the Repairs Services is moving towards the resumption of a full service in a phased manner and hopes to be fully operational again from 21 June, subject to the progress of the pandemic and available resources.

Communal / Emergency Lighting Installations are complete at Denesmead, Appleshaw House, Playfield Crescent, Crawthrew Grove and York House.

Communal / Emergency Lighting Installations are progressing at Melbourne Grove, Hollydale Rd and Gatefield Ct.

Lift refurbishments at Cross Ct, Mayhew Ct and Leconsfield House:

Leconsfield House: Lift works completed and lift returned to service.

Cross Ct: The lift works are due to commence on 7th January 21

Mayhew Ct: The lift works are due to commence on 7th January 21

Asset Management



Regarding Kingswood, designs are now complete and costs for external works to the pitched roof blocks have been agreed and Section 20 notices have been issued. Section 20 observation period was closed on 5 May 2021. Consultation regarding Roof Top Homes (RTH), proposals are ongoing to the 8 flat roof blocks, illustrative drawings have been produced of what the RTH blocks may look like and have been issued in an update newsletter to the RTH blocks.

Structural engineers have been appointed to undertake a feasibility on the RTH proposals to determine whether the blocks can structurally accommodate additional floors, feasibility due by end of May 2021. Surveys are currently underway for the internal works to the agreed 20 pilot properties to finalise initial specifications before commencing works to the internal pilot properties, which is expected to commence in early July 2021.

Lordship lane Estate & 524 Lordship Lane QHIP works – Currently reviewing feasibilities ahead of main design and costs being produced

Resident Services



Resident Services Officers continue to contact all vulnerable residents on our estates for welfare checks. They carry out welfare checks and signpost residents to supporting agencies.

The Albrighton Centre and the tenants hall at Rye Hill Park estate have played a vital role during the pandemic as food has been delivered from these centres to vulnerable residents by mostly volunteers.

Officers also conduct weekly estate visual audits and monthly estate inspections to ensure the estate remain a clean and safe place for residents.

We have signs in the lift lobby and communal areas to remind residents to follow government guidelines on social distancing, use of masks, washing of hands etc.

Resident Services



Although the government has started easing lockdown, most of our residents still spend more time at home and this is generating increased low level nuisance and anti social behaviour complaints on some of the estates . Most of the complaints involve domestic noise nuisance including loud footsteps, people talking etc, we are asking residents to be more considerate of neighbours and keep noise however caused to a minimum.

Officers are working with partners including social services, Police, surrounding Schools, Anti-Social Behaviour Unit etc to resolve the issues.

The Police are carrying out robust patrols on estates such as Rye Hill Park estate etc. There are regular meetings with residents to reassure and update the community.

CCTV cameras have been installed on the Kingswood Estate and discussions to install cameras on Rye Hill Park estate are ongoing.

Resident Services



Cleaning - The cleaning team have resumed normal cleaning service on our estates and their managers are monitoring the effect of this on their staff.

The Resident Services Officers will continue to monitor and pick up any issue during their weekly visual audits and monthly estate inspections and liaise with the cleaning accordingly.

There has been a reduction in the number of Rough sleepers found on our estates. Residents are encouraged to continue to use STREETLINK to connect people sleeping rough with local services that can support them. The outreach team also carry out frequent patrols to provide drug and alcohol support where needed.

Great Estates – The Children’s play area at the junction of Seeley Drive and Bowen Drive near Telfer House has been refurbished.

Carmen McFarlane has temporarily taken over from Paul Ecookit as the Resident Services Officer for Lordship Lane estate.

Communities



Work continues implementing the new Resident Participation structure. Since March, this has included: developing the forward plan for resident participation (the business to be addressed by residents and the council); refining the new strategic bodies (Tenant Forum, Homeowner Forum and Joint Tenant and Homeowner Forum); and consulting with residents and other stakeholders in respect of independent advice contracts for residents (currently provided by the Southwark Group of Tenants organisations and the Citizens' Advice Bureau).

Approval has been given for a project to commence looking at the council's support offer to residents, in the light of financial challenges imposed by the Covi-19 pandemic. The council will be convening a working party of residents who – supported by officers from Exchequer Services, and serviced by the Smith Institute – will produce a report later in the year on ways in which the council can best support residents in relation to council income recovery measures.

Communities



Following successful completion of a Digital Innovation Fund project on the use of digital tools to engage younger and harder-to-reach residents, the council has consented to the Tenant and Homeowner Involvement team commissioning a project in the current financial year aimed at developing some specific tools in this regard. The aim of the project is to ensure that those residents who want to utilise digital technology for the purposes of making their voices heard can do so.

Anti social behaviour, grounds maintenance



Grounds Maintenance:

We are currently working in conjunction with area housing office/police services on the Kingwood Est SE22 reducing hedgerows and shrub beds. This will give residents improved all-round visibility throughout the estate, which will also make it easier/safer for our police services searching for hidden/discarded weapons etc.

Working alongside residents/TRA & leaseholders on Sydenham Hill Estate SE19.
Introducing wild flower areas.

Introducing wild flower areas on Pelican Estate SE15.

Introducing wild flower areas on Princess & Crystal Court SE19 embankments.

Anti social behaviour, grounds maintenance



Grounds Maintenance (cont):

Planting up new flower beds on central reservations and verges along Dulwich Wood Park SE19.

Extensive meetings with TRA on Croxted Rd Estate SE19, new wild flower areas proposed.

Up and coming works for additional planting on Dog Kennel Hill central reservations & Goose green Roundabout.

2020/21 - Gradual introduction of battery operated mowers/grass strimmer's/hedge trimmers.

Anti social behaviour, grounds maintenance



ASB:

We saw significant demands on our service from the year of April 2020 to the end of March 2021. COVID was a main factor of this especially in relation to lockdowns during the year.

SASBU continued to manage increased levels of legal cases and across the borough we obtained, closure orders, injunctions, served Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and warning letters. We also issued Notices of Possession for the most serious of tenancy breaches when the law allowed us to do so given changes in legislation, again in respect of COVID.

Anti social behaviour, grounds maintenance



ASB cont:

We also saw an increase in Community Trigger requests. The Trigger is an application within the Anti-social behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 which enables an applicant to call a review on their reports to the partnership over a six month period.

Another key area for us was the Halloween and Bonfire period of which we saw an increase in disorder within the SE16 area. Working with communities and partners, we were able to identify those who were committing ASB with regards to firework misuse and all those identified were visited at their homes and appropriate actions and interventions were taken by the unit.

Anti social behaviour, grounds maintenance



ASB cont:

14 Notices of Possession

21 Injunctions

3 Court Undertakings against persons

19 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts

30 Community Triggers

31 Premises closed due to significant and serious behaviour

Exchequer Services



Homeowners

Leasehold building insurance contract – the council has extended the current contract with Zurich for a further twelve months from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. After assessing current insurance market conditions and a benchmarking exercise carried out with other local authorities, the Council decided to recommend a twelve-month extension with Zurich rather than procuring a new contract. Zurich offered to fix premiums at their 2021/22 rates and only apply the normal 4% uplift relating to building cost inflation (not including any changes to Insurance Premium Tax currently 12%). We think this is good news for homeowners. The proposal was put to the Leasehold Task and Finish group who supported the council's recommendation.

New Homeowner Loans Policy – the council has changed its discretionary loans policy for homeowners to bring it up-to-date with advances in technology and to allow more flexibility in the range of products available. It also allows for a regular review of the interest rates charged. The new policy also includes a new loan product for non-resident homeowners. The full report and decision can be found here

<https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=7301>

Exchequer Services



Homeowners continued

Improving Section 20 Notices - Many day-to-day repairs requiring section 20 consultation cannot be properly costed until the scaffolding is erected and an inspection carried out. This often leads to leaseholders receiving multiple section 20 notices for the same job. Homeownership Services will shortly begin trial issuing *a single notice* describing the work that is believed to be necessary with a budget estimate. The actual costs will be billed as part of the actual service charge as usual. We are interested to hear from homeowners participating in the trial about what they think about this change

Exchequer Services



Tenants

Paying Rent During COVID Although rent collection remained challenging during the pandemic, tenants had paid 97.58% of rent due for 2020/21 by the end of the year. We thank all those who paid their rent in what we know were difficult circumstances for many. But despite the efforts of tenants and the teams who collect rent, total council tenant rent arrears increased, rising by £3.8m to £16.8m by the end of the year.

Help to Claim Universal Credit Many more tenants claimed *Universal Credit* to help pay their rent during the pandemic. If you need to claim *Universal Credit* but face difficulties in doing so for whatever reason the Citizen Advice *Help to Claim* service can support you with your claim.

www.citizenadvicesouthwark.org.uk/helptoclaim

Exchequer Services



Tenants continued

New Rent Payment Options One positive change in a very difficult year was that many more tenants paid their rent by direct debit. About six thousand more tenants switched to direct debit - the easiest, least costly, and, during the pandemic, *safest* way to pay. From April we've added bar codes to rent letters – offering another simple and convenient option to pay rent.

A Supportive Landlord If you're a tenant and need help with paying your rent or are affected by COVID-19 please visit our website: www.southwark.gov.uk/coronavirus where you will find further information about how we can help you.

Modernise



Digital inclusion is about making sure our residents and community can take advantage of the opportunities the internet affords and we are working to ensure that “Nobody Is Left Offline”. As part of this programme, we are recruiting volunteer digital champions to support residents with their digital skills. Digital Champions will receive accredited training, support and more as part of this programme and can apply for the opportunity below:

https://forms.southwark.gov.uk/ShowForm.asp?fm_fid=1864

For any further queries please contact
Digital.Inclusion@southwark.gov.uk

Customer Experience



MySouthwark Homeowners Service

Residents told us they wanted more information on how your estates are managed so we have set up a new webpage on how we manage your estates which gives you a range of information from our cleaning schedules to how to join an estate inspection. You will find it at <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/home-owners-services/how-we-look-after-your-blocks-and-estates>

Our office at the Blue in Market Place still remains closed but we are now providing face to face verification meetings with tenants going through the right to buy process at our Service Point in Peckham.