

February Housing Improvement Board Meeting Minutes

20th February 2024, 18:00- 20:00
HYBRID

Attendees

Martin Wheatley– **(MW)**
Cllr Lynne Hale– **(LH)** (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Homes)

Ishia Beckford– **(IB)** (tenant representative)
Yaw Boateng– **(YB)** (tenant representative, TLP chair) **(Chair)**
Dave Mundy– **(DM)** (Leasehold representative)
Les Parry– **(LP)** (tenant representative)

Pamela Leonce (PL) (Improvement and Assurance Panel representative)
Mayor Jason Perry– **(JP)** (Executive Mayor)

Lisa McFadden– **(LM)** (Executive Officer) (Minutes)
Mary Larbie– **(ML)** (Director of Tenancy)
Susmita Sen– **(SS)** (Corporate Director for Housing)
Susan Hanlon– **(SH)** (Interim Director of Housing Assets and Repairs)

Apologies

Piali Das Gupta (London Councils)
Lara Ashley– **(LA)** (Executive Culture & Change Advisor)
Cllr Chrishni Reshekaron– **(CR)**

Welcome and Apologies	
1. YB welcomed all to the meeting noting that he would be chairing for Martin Wheatley who was unable to attend the meeting in person.	
Minutes from Previous Meeting and Matters Arising	
2. The minutes were agreed as an accurate account of the meeting held on the 20 November 2023, with one minor amendment to the date of the meeting.	
Performance and Risk Update	
3.0 SS presented asking the board to reflect on the closed session held 6 months ago and the significant changes to the service in the last six months with mobilising a new repairs contract, new IT system and undertaken a restructure in the housing needs area.	
3.1 SS would like to propose a reset of the targets which at house mark median, and board did put the challenge forward that we do not set ourselves up to fail. It would be good to have a reset moment taking all this into consideration and the challenges the service is facing.	

<p>3.2 MJP offered assurances that the service has taken stock and ownership, and an action plan is in place to improve the services, working with residents. MJP thanked officers for all the hard work to get the service to what the council wants it to be.</p> <p>Questions and comments from the Board</p> <p>3.4 JT noted that the regulator will not be expecting organisations to receive more than C3 and asked if the stock condition data is being used intelligently to get where you need to be, and assurances given the level of data that is currently available. SS responded that by the end of March 40% of stock condition surveys should be completed which will give a much better picture.</p> <p>3.5 LP asked if rent letters that will be generated by NEC have the same formatting as letters previously to avoid complication for residents. DM responded that they would be with slight modification. t</p> <p>3.6 LP asked if there would be a need to borrow to meet housing targets. SS responded that there was no additional borrowing required at this time and that the HRA budget will continue to be closely monitored and reviewed especially around repairs spend.</p> <p>3.7 EMc noted that TSM are going to become increasingly important, these will need to be more identifiable when presented and asked if there a disposal plan for things like high-cost voids whereby the revenue could be used elsewhere. SS responded that we need to be mindful when thinking about disposals due to our homeless numbers as could extra spend could prevent additional costs of expensive EA/TA costs. Needs more review as a broader part of work on voids.</p> <p>3.8 LP asked if RTB is increasing or levelling off?</p> <p>Action: ML will share the figures with LP, this revenue is ringfenced/capped.</p> <p>3.9 YB asked what the process was to recover former tenant arrears or write of debts?</p> <p>Action: SS will feedback to the board on the broader corporate project on former debt.</p> <p>3.10 LP asked how many agency staff are in the call centre and when will they cease, has the new staffing planned for peaks and troughs? There is also no reporting on other repairs reporting methods which are a concern to residents. LP noted improvements to the repairs s but there are still issues with standards of works, and asked if there is an inspection regime and is there enough inspector resource for voids and repairs?</p> <p>3.11 DM committed that the communal areas are perception as we are relying on other areas of the business such as Veolia which is lowering that percentage.</p> <p>3.12 MW asked for clarity around the level WiP and if it was growing or shrinking. If WiP is growing a fundamental revisit would be required. SH responded that the level of WIP increased, and she is awaiting a report from Echleon who are carrying out a data validation exercise, followed by a t cleansing exercise prior to revisiting targets. Once we have “good” data we can then look at the level of jobs. SS added that the stock condition data and 10 years of under investment, has contributed to this spike in repairs demand.</p> <p>MW felt that it would be better to have a closed session once the data cleansing is finished and we have another month of data. SS agreed that we would combine this with the asset management.</p>	<p>ML</p> <p>SS</p>
---	---------------------

<p>JT asked if CRM is talking to NEC – Dm noted that we are looking at implementing CRM but needs to be aligned with the corporate CRM.</p>	
<p>Transformation Update</p>	
<p>4.0 The chair asked for questions from the board.</p> <p>4.1 JT asked what is happening with the cultural change piece and professionalisation what are we doing with the new conduct and competency standard – making sure the correct things are in place.</p> <p>4.3 EMc noted that self-assessments will be a thing of the day – complaints handling code comes in from April, there should be a lead member for the complaints handling code.</p> <p>4.4 JT asked if the council's stock of LPS blocks had been looked at? SH updated that 16 blocks across the portfolio 3 of which are RR estate (type A and B) and an assessment has been taken on these blocks and desk top assessments have been done on the remainder of the blocks. We are tendering for structural engineers to undertake surveys on the remaining 12 blocks (type C and D). We will continue to develop a comms strategy for residents. We will focus on vacant properties where possible.</p> <p>4.5 LP governance information management principle could be expanded in some areas for example in allocations, simplifying information that residents have available, do residents know what a tenancy officers' job is, use of videos and visual aid would be great for some residents.</p> <p>4.6 LP raised the quality of complaints response and asked if a housing complaints system needed so that we are complaint.</p> <p>4.7 SS thanked the board for the feedback, culture change is not one thing what we are doing is a whole range of things. We have developed a competency model and rolling this out with all the teams and the work is underway. We are also bringing to life managing our policies and processes and skilling up the workforce. We are trying to break down the siloes, but still need to look at our structure and ensure that the new structure is very clear where the resident sits within it. Creating a leadership team that behaves like a leadership team, will talk to residents on what the new structure looks like. LP noted that shadowing would be good as part of the staff induction to make things real. SS agreed we want our staff to do this and do something real for residents. ML agreed that the opportunity is here to reshape the induction and shape what we want to do, we want people to build careers in Croydon and this is beneficial to our residents.</p> <p>4.8 YB raised the issue of co-dependency with other services in the council and how you get the buy in.</p>	
<p>Damp and Mould Update</p>	
<p>5.0 SH presented the paper and out it to the board for questions.</p> <p>5.1 LP asked if the staffing levels where sufficient to meet the standards – SH we have lost some staff and are recruiting to those roles, we have looked at resourcing and will be bringing in additional admin staff and interim survey for additional capacity. I have weekly updates from staff and regular monthly meeting. We do move inspectors around and will continue to do so.</p>	

<p>5.2 SH noted that the service was preparing a response to the government consultation on Damp and Mould and targets that are due to hit some time this year and we are producing a response to the consultation.</p>	
<p>Maladministration</p>	
<p>6.0 PD talked briefly to the slides explaining that the determinations where from May to April 22/23. 4 serious maladministration determinations were received by croydon for the period of 2021/2022, which were in relation to ASB, complaints handling, mutual exchange handling and adaptations. Complex case forum for complaints so that there are clear actions that are monitored around these.</p> <p>6.1 YB noted that there is a lack of pause and reflect with complaint cases.</p> <p>6.2 EMc noted the siloed working given the subject matter of the 4 cases involves working across the department. Congratulations that you are learning from these and taking the learning on board.</p> <p>6.3 LP added that there is an opening by using the tenancy officer surgeries to get these conversations going around ASB.</p>	
<p>HIB Governance Paper</p>	
<p>PD noted that the paper was to ensure the meetings are affective and ran smoothly and something that the board holds us as officers accountable for.</p> <p>PD asked for approval for the paper – the paper was approved with the request that the terms of reference are refreshed and reviewed at the next meeting.</p> <p>The chair noted that what was missing transparency and felt it would be better to have it with the other council meetings.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">AOB</p>	
<p>The next meeting is a closed session on the 11th March, it was agreed that this session would be extended to incorporate the above points raised on repairs performance.</p>	