

PRESENT

Members of the Committee

Councillor Sam Mackover (Chairman)
Councillor Judith Blakeman
Councillor Matthew Palmer
Councillor Monica Press
Councillor Linda Wade

Others in Attendance

Councillor Kim Taylor-Smith (Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Grenfell Recovery, Housing and Property)
Richard Egan (Director for Corporate Property)
Doug Goldring (Director of Housing Management)
Steve Mellor (Group Finance Manager)
Emma Peters (Consultant)
Martyn Carver (Governance Manager)

A1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Allison, Condon-Simmonds and Nicholls.

A2. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Press declared that she was a TMO leaseholder and had a pecuniary interest in part of the HRA budget. Cllr Wade declared an interest as a shareholder in Notting Hill Housing Association.

Declarations under S106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992

None.

A3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 DECEMBER 2017

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman, subject to adding under 74 Golborne Road on page 7 that "Cllrs Press and Blakeman had noted that

the CAB had to move out of Westway Information Centre and had shown an interest in moving to the North Kensington Law Centre.”

Matters arising:

In relation to A7, health risks of telephone masts, the Committee noted a comment by Mr Egan that the Council was not currently looking at Pond House as a location for such masts.

In relation to A12, on Elm Park Gardens, Cllr Taylor-Smith advised that £9.4m of works was required to the Elm Park Gardens basements and net receipts of £2.9m were still unallocated. Funding was therefore still available.

A4. TMO UPDATE

Mr Goldring introduced the report. The Committee noted that there was a Housing Health and Safety Compliance Board which had been meeting fortnightly since last October. The Chairman asked for a summary of its meetings to be reported to the Scrutiny Committee.

Action by: Mr Goldring

Members welcomed the comment in paragraph 2.8 that the Council had an open mind about future management models and would listen and respond to residents' views. Members also referred to paragraph 3.7 about the hand-back of housing management services being an 'interim' measure. Mr Goldring replied that the Modular Management Agreement (MMA) only allowed an interim hand-over. However, any future change away from Council management would have to be because residents wanted something different. The Council needed to introduce additional measures to allow residents to scrutinise the service as at present only the Tenants' Consultative Committee was in place.

Mr Goldring spoke about improved consultation and engagement which would ensure every voice was heard. Cllr Palmer asked to see the questions to be included in the consultation before they were published.

Action by: Mr Goldring

On paragraph 3.3 Mr Goldring said it would be difficult to meet the 31 January timescale for the hand-back of services. He considered the end of February might be more realistic. Cllr Press said it was important that the TMO was unable to send letters on its own headed paper after this date.

With reference to paragraph 4.10, the Committee asked to see the Key Performance Indicators and to get benchmarking data to allow comparisons.

Action by: Mr Goldring

Noted that going forward the service would be under the Council's management so reporting could be tailored to what the Council wanted.

The Committee was not satisfied that a 'suitable and sufficient' level of fire safety compliance had been achieved. Mr Goldring commented that the audit had been conducted into the fire risk assessment process, not necessarily the works undertaken. The Council was now catching up on those works. The Chairman expressed concern that the Committee had been told previously that every tenant's door had been fire-proofed. Cllr Blakeman added that the TMO Board had been told only one door was non-compliant.

In respect of paragraphs 4.2 to 4.4 on fire safety compliance, the Committee asked to see a copy of the external audit report.

Action by: Mr Goldring

Members also expressed concern at the widespread lack of evacuation chairs on stairwells for residents with mobility problems. They noted that residents with such difficulties were entitled to a personal escape plan. Mr Goldring undertook to check progress on this issue with the TMO.

Action by: Mr Goldring

Following a question about health and safety training for Council staff, Mr Goldring was of the view that the Council's Corporate health and safety team had the necessary skills to take on this work.

Referring to the table on page 8 of the report on complaints, Members said that the figures were inaccurate and should be treated with caution. Cllr Blakeman commented that her complaints had been classed as 'enquiries' by the TMO and had not been registered as complaints. Letters from 27 Trellick Tower leaseholders had been treated as one complaint.

The Committee noted paragraph 4.15 which referred to a backlog of 3,500 repairs and considered this was a high number given the number of properties was around 9,000.

Cllr Blakeman expressed concern that TMO Board members had been nominated to the Residents' Panel and spoke of a lack of credibility. Nominations should be via Residents' Associations. Mr Goldring undertook to bear these comments in mind at tomorrow's meeting.

The Chairman then welcomed comments from members of the public attending the meeting.

Mr Gordon Futter referred to paragraph 3.10 about TUPE and asked what measures could be put in place to stop the TMO culture being transferred across with the staff. Mr Goldring said that there were examples of good and bad attitudes to residents within the TMO. Mr Goldring, would with resident input, be setting management standards to which all staff would be required to adhere. It was noted that any queries relating to TMO staff pay should be directed to the TMO as they could not be answered by the Council.

Mr Steven McKenzie spoke about fire safety compliance and asked if the Council's fire safety and civil contingency and emergency plans were robust. He said that additional meetings needed to be held with the Fire Brigade to address shortfalls. Mr Goldring said that these issues were being addressed and the Council was working hard to improve the housing stock.

Mr Edward Daffarn criticised the TMO and the Committee for the lack of action prior to the Grenfell fire, despite residents' concerns being raised. Cllr Taylor-Smith said that housing management would be more accountable in future and residents would be able to have recourse to Freedom of Information requests, should they need to.

The Chairman thanked Councillors and members of the public for their views.

A5. LEAD MEMBER UPDATE – ORAL REPORT

Cllr Taylor-Smith undertook to submit a written report in future to bring members up to date on issues such as Barlby/Treverton, Edenham, new staff, the Housing Growth and Development Board etc.

Following a question by Cllr Wade, Cllr Taylor-Smith undertook to give feedback on why people were turning down housing offers.

Action by: Cllr Taylor-Smith

A6. UPDATE ON WORKS TO KENSINGTON TOWN HALL – ORAL REPORT

Mr Egan advised the Committee that key decisions in the Forward Plan relating to Kensington Town Hall were only concerned with essential maintenance work and that any plans to improve the building had been stopped.

A7. HOUSING AND PLACE – ORAL REPORT

Emma Peters attended the meeting for this item. She advised that she had been employed until the end of March to carry out a desktop review of opportunities for housing-led development across the Borough. This was

focusing on 12 Council-owned sites. Intensive work with local communities would be undertaken to work up proposals and lever in support.

Cllr Blakeman criticised the plan which she saw as another Council attempt at 'regeneration'. Cllr Taylor-Smith denied this and called for alarmist messages to be avoided. At present, base information was being collated so that plans co-designed with the community could be brought forward.

It was noted that closer co-operation would be needed with other agencies, like the GLA and Homes England, in order to access funding.

The Committee asked for an update report to its next meeting, possibly as part of the Lead Member report.

Action by: Emma Peters

A8. CANALSIDE HOUSE – RELOCATION TO UNIT 12, LATIMER ROAD INDUSTRIAL ESTATE (KD05051)

Mr Egan said that he had discussed with the planners the suggestion made at the previous meeting that Option 3 be approved and social housing be provided on top. He replied that officer advice was that this was not practical as the building would have to be demolished and rebuilt. Members asked to see the specific advice about this.

Action by: Mr Egan

Cllr Palmer said that he had visited the building with Cllrs Blakeman and Press and it was clear that the building needed to change; it was not fit for purpose. Cllr Press said it needed to be upgraded. She added that such sites, where the Council owned the freehold, should be used for social housing. Mr Egan said that the plans involved the loss of part of the building to allow 4,500 social homes to be built nearby. Cllr Blakeman commented that this would depend on the building of a Crossrail Station at Kensal.

Mr Egan undertook to reply to Cllr Press about the reasons why option 3 was chosen over option 2.

Action by: Mr Egan

Cllr Press said that she would like to see on the site an accessible community centre with increased usage. Cllr Taylor-Smith said that he would, therefore, look at the option of refurbishing the existing building and the consequent dropping of the Latimer Road plan.

Action by: Cllr Taylor-Smith/Mr Egan

A9. HRA BUDGET REPORT

The Committee noted that social rents would again reduce by 1% in April. Cllr Blakeman referred to the reduced HRA balance as a result of spending

on previous aborted regeneration projects. It was noted that capital receipts of £2.5m arising from the sale of Elm Park Gardens basements were available for HRA expenditure, also a request had been made to DCLG for an increase in the borrowing headroom. Cllr Press referred to paragraph 5.1 and suggested that a more definitive legal view should be sought.

Cllr Wade spoke of the garages under Grenfell walk and whether these could be used as rentable space. Cllr Taylor-Smith undertook to ensure that any future plans would be discussed through with the local management arrangements.

Action by: Cllr Taylor-Smith

Cllr Press spoke about insurance policies for leaseholders and commented that leaseholders could not choose their insurance providers. She asked for a paper on insurance cover. Mr Goldring commented it would be useful to invite the insurance section to give the background on leaseholder policy.

Action by: Governance Services

A10. HOUSING GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2018-19

The Committee asked for an update on the Homelessness Reduction Act to come to its next meeting, as part of the Lead Member update paper.

Action by: Cllr Taylor-Smith/Mr Goldring

The Committee noted that the Council was no longer buying housing outside of the Borough, but was still placing people in temporary accommodation outside of the Borough. Cllr Taylor-Smith undertook to lobby DCLG about further discretionary housing payments.

Action by: Cllr Taylor-Smith

A11. CORPORATE PROPERTY REVENUE BUDGET

The Committee discussed whether, given more in-house management of residential property, there might be an opportunity for savings. Mr Egan commented that those managing commercial stock had different skills from those managing the housing stock.

In respect of paragraph 2.4, the Committee noted that the proposal was for two additional posts – a development surveyor and a commercial property manager.

A12. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Rota visits

Cllrs Blakeman, Press and Palmer undertook to visit 12 Latimer Road. Noted that an officer in Corporate Property would arrange this if Cllrs could provide a date when they were available.

Action by: Mr Egan

Noted that Cllr Blakeman had visited a TA property so this could be deleted from the rota. Agreed also to delete Cllr Taylor-Smith from the rota as he had undertaken many visits as Lead Member.

Action by: Governance Services

Action tracker

Trellick Tower - Cllr Press brought the Committee up to date with progress of the Trellick Tower Working Group which would meet next on 12 February. It aimed to submit its final report around April.

Buildings insurance – this was discussed earlier in the meeting. Mr Chitty was asked to email a response to members about the level of insurance cover and audit.

Belvedere Restaurant – Mr Egan undertook to respond.

Advertising hoarding in Acklam Road – noted that the Council had refused consent but it had been allowed on appeal.

Elm Park Gardens – noted that a response had been given under Matters Arising from the Minutes above.

Correspondence log

The Chairman explained that the log was intended to show recurring issues brought to Members' attention where there might be a systemic failure, rather than individual cases. It was not intended to be a log of complaints which would be dealt with via the formal complaints process.

Forward Plan

The Committee noted the Forward Plan.

A13. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING:

RESOLVED – to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the following specific items of business on the grounds that they may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act, as amended:

B1. CANALSIDE HOUSE – RELOCATION TO UNIT 12, LATIMER ROAD INDUSTRIAL ESTATE (KD05051)

The Committee noted the confidential information in the report. The discussion is summarised under Report A8 above.

There were no other matters requiring the exclusion of the press and public from the meeting.

The meeting ended at 10.25pm

Chairman