

PRESENT

Members of the Committee

Councillor Quentin Marshall (Chairman)
Councillor Tony Holt (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Emma Dent Coad, MA
Councillor Matthew Neal
Councillor Will Pascall
Councillor Jonathon Read
Councillor Elizabeth Rutherford
Councillor Linda Wade

Others in Attendance

Councillor Rock Feilding-Mellen (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing,
Property and Regeneration)
Steven Bell (Head of Asset Management & Capital Projects)
Yvonne Birch (Director of People and Performance, TMO)
Mark Chetwynd (Chief Transport Policy Officer)
Michael Clark (Director for Corporate Property)
Laura Johnson (Director of Housing)
Peter Maddison (Director of Assets and Regeneration, TMO)
Steve Mellor (Group Finance Manager)
Wendy Thomas (Senior Housing Policy Officer)
Gillian Tobin (Senior Housing Policy Officer)
Jonathan Wade (Policy Team Leader Forward Planning)
Jerome Treherne (Governance Services)

A1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been submitted from Councillors Mackover and Mingay.

A2 MEMBERS' DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None.

A3 MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS ON 16 JULY 2013

In paragraph three of A5 of the minutes Trellick Tower should read Grenfell Tower. With this amendment the Minutes of the 16 July 2013 meeting were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

As a matter arising related to A5, Mr Maddison reassured the Vice Chairman that expertise from qualified electrical engineers had been used from the outset in establishing the cause of the Grenfell Tower power surge. The officers' view remained that it had been caused by an arced incoming mains cable.

Mr Maddison reported that Zurich Insurance, the company used by the TMO, had reviewed all claims for damage and had confirmed that the TMO

had taken appropriate steps to ensure the power supply infrastructure was in a reasonable state and the TMO therefore, had not been negligent and was not liable for loss or damage to tenants' equipment.

TMO officers had met residents and advised them by letter to claim for damage via their own home contents insurance. As a token of goodwill and in compensation for disruption, a payment of £200 had been made to each tenant. Mr Maddison said the TMO recognised this might not cover the cost of lost equipment.

Ms Johnson updated the Committee on fire risk assessments of leaseholder's doors; 68 doors could be defective and officers needed to gain access to properties to verify this. The aim was to ensure no defective doors remained in the housing stock and replacing doors would be at leaseholders' expense. The Chairman agreed the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member's report to the next Committee should include an update on this issue.

Action: Ms Johnson

A4. REPORT BY THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING, PROPERTY AND REGENERATION

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member introduced the report. He highlighted the likely impact of the recent DCLG's announcement of making it more difficult to meet target rents. He had asked officers to consider how rents as near as possible to the target rent could be achieved by 2015. Mr Mellor advised that consultation with tenants over rent increases was good practice and could take two or three months.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member reported that officers were considering as an option proposals to charge higher rents to social tenant households on higher incomes but would want to ensure any change would not create undue disincentives for those progressing onto higher salaries.

Mr Clark advised that the Kensington Central Library Renovation Project would enable separate electricity metering for each tenant and he would confirm to the Vice Chairman if the energy supply to the library was to be separated from the Town Hall supply.

Action: Mr Clark

In response to Councillor Wade's question on savings in commissioning supported people housing, Ms Johnson said savings achieved had not been due to changes in eligibility criteria but through the re-tendering of services.

Mr Clark reported that the current investments in Parkwood Hall School were necessary to meet minimum standards. Other boroughs that used the facility had been requested to increase their contribution to the school's maintenance. The outcome of Family and Children's Services (FCS) Business Group review of the Special Educational Needs services and options for the school would be submitted to the Leader's Group for discussion at the end of the year. The Chairman asked that the Committee be kept informed on proposals for the school.

Action: Mr Clark

A5. TOTAL FACILITIES MANAGEMENT OUTSOURCING UPDATE

Mr Clark described the wide range of services included in the contract which excluded sports centres but included nurseries, museums and galleries. Schools he noted could opt into these contracted services.

In response to the Committee's concerns over maintaining standards under the new contract, he advised that the service specification and quality standards would be held at their current levels and he expected standards to improve when compared to current levels over time. Amey had thoroughly appraised a fully comprehensive service specification for all buildings and Tri-borough cabinets had approved a contingency sum of £2.5 million across the three boroughs which could be held back each year if service standards or quality fell.

He reported that officers had formed strong relations with Amey and the Operations Board met each week. He said issues of any reduced quality or service levels would be escalated to Strategic Board level to be resolved. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member commented that changes to service levels and standards in the future would require Member agreement first.

The Committee expressed some confusion over how savings of 20 per cent were to be achieved. Councillor Read suggested part of these savings could be ascribed to previous inefficiencies and quantifying savings once the contract was operating could be informative. The Chairman asked for a paper to come to the Committee which set out how efficiency savings were to be achieved.

Action: Mr Clark

The Committee noted A5A Addendum Report on the new contractor's obligations under the TUPE regulations.

A6. HOLLAND PARK SCHOOL UPDATE ON REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Mr Clark expressed regret for the £3.76 million overspend which represented a 4.7 per cent increase in the overall budget. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member reported on lengthy Cabinet discussions of paper A6 which had concluded that controls over this capital project had not been sufficiently rigorous before June 2011. Since then the Corporate Property Department had been centralised and control mechanisms put in place for this and all capital projects. The Committee was advised that the Executive Director of FCS Business Group had been in charge of the project up to June 2011 as the FCS Business Group had led on the project. One result of this arrangement had been direct access between the school and design team which had not been sufficiently controlled or managed. Responsibility for the overspend therefore lay with FCS and inadequate cost control procedures in relation to this project. Mr Clark assured the Committee the changes to the management of large projects arising from the creation of a dedicated property team would prevent any reoccurrence of such problems in the future.

Mr Clark reassured the Committee that all other construction projects were on schedule and on budget.

In response to Councillor Dent Coad's suggestion that the school had proved costly and its design insufficiently robust the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member expressed his belief that it was an impressive new facility of which the borough should be proud.

Mr Bell advised that Corporate Property's approach was to deal with financial, programme and procurement matters proactively throughout the whole of a project's lifespan. He said all capital budget projects were on or below budget and if any were running late because of contractor delays, the contractor would be charged damages in accordance with the contract terms. The Chairman asked for Mr Clark's forthcoming Leader's Group paper on Capital Programme Management to come to the Committee as well.

Action: Mr Clark

A7. HEATING AND HOT WATER CHARGES

Mr Mellor introduced the report and noted it showed an overall reduction in charges however, for a few estates, charges had increased and this reflected consumption levels.

Councillor Dent Coad was concerned that the significant increase in costs for Adair Tower residents could cause genuine hardship. She also queried the reference to Whistable House, Mr Mellor agreed to clarify this reference in the appendix.

Action: Mr Mellor

A8. MAXIMISING USAGE OF THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT CAR PARKING ASSETS

Ms Birch introduced the report and advised that the TMO had explored ways to increase use of parking bays and especially derelict areas on estates. She agreed with Councillor Neal that proper consultation with residents should precede any new use of these spaces and residents had been kept informed of reviews. She noted they seemed to favour more use of car parks in particular for electric cars.

Ms Birch reported improvements on the operation for letting spaces assisted by better use of IT in mapping vacant car parking spaces and more reliable processing of parking bay applications.

Ms Birch in response to the Chairman's concern that maximum use of this asset for the benefit of the HRA was being frustrated by transport and planning policies, had discussed with planning officers various alternative uses. Mr Chetwynd referred to the overall transport objective in the Core Strategy that strongly favoured other modes of transport over car use. He recognised that TMO parking spaces were under-used but the Council's transport policies were consistent with pan London policies that aimed to discourage car use in order to minimise traffic congestion. He expected that if some residents moved their cars from on-street residents' bays to TMO parking spaces, the on-street bays would soon be filled again by the existing latent demand, with a net increase in car trips.

The Committee was highly sceptical of this line of argument, which seemed inconsistent with other areas of policy, for example residents' parking, and was an incorrect reading of the Council's Transport Policy which sought to encourage the use of multiple modes of transport. Furthermore it lacked credibility to suggest that allowing cars to park in spaces built for that purpose would have any material effect on traffic or car ownership across the Borough given the number of spaces involved.

Mr Wade referred to the Strategic Objective for 'Better Travel Choices' chapter from the Core Strategy (adopted December 2010). He advised that this was an overarching policy and quoted the relevant clauses; "Our strategic objective for better travel choices is for walking, cycling and public transport to be safe, easy, attractive and inclusive for all and preferred by residents and visitors to private car ownership and use".

He advised that if this policy was interpreted more flexibly, it would nevertheless need to be consistent with application of other council policies. He agreed with the suggestion that if parking spaces were used by local residents it would not attract into the borough car users from elsewhere. The Vice Chairman pointed out that if maximum use of the TMO's parking spaces was achieved this would only represent a small proportion of resident parking bays across the borough. The Committee noted there were few, if any, other large unused car parks in the borough. The Chairman commented that the Council had more effective means of reducing car use at its disposal should this be a serious intent of policy (which he noted it was not).

Councillor Pascall drew a distinction between deciding not to grant extra parking bays for new housing with encouraging the use of parking bays that had been granted permission and specifically built for this use already. He highlighted the extra driving taking place for those searching for scarce parking spaces and listed some common examples when use of a car was more sensible than alternative modes of transport.

The Committee concluded the supposed impediments to the use of HRA owe spaces appeared flimsy at best and deprived the HRA of valuable income unnecessarily. Members did not recognise the policy objectives as interpreted in this context.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member in response to the Committee's concerns said he would discuss with the TMO and the relevant Cabinet Member alternative ways of maximising use of these assets and especially the leeway within existing policies that would enable their better use.

Action: Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member

A9. ALLOCATIONS POLICY FOR INTERMEDIATE PROPERTIES

Ms Johnson introduced the report and agreed to send Councillor Dent Coad more information on the definition on intermediate housing. It was noted each intermediate housing scheme had its own eligibility criteria.

Action: Ms Johnson

A10. INVESTING IN OUR HOUSING STOCK

Ms Johnson advised that a Council owned regeneration company was one option Savills was considering as a means of delivering regeneration that allowed the Council to retain beneficial ownership of its existing land portfolios. She confirmed there would be no need to pursue stock transfer in whole or part to the TMO or a housing association.

A paper on disposals and acquisitions would be submitted to the Committee for its January meeting. **Action:** Ms Johnson

A11. TRELICK TOWER REPORT BACK FROM 19 JUNE TOUR

The Chairman highlighted that the report was written to reflect his and Councillor Rutherford's views exclusively, did not include Councillor Dent Coad's views. He had found the tour valuable as a way to get a clearer idea of the issues at firsthand. Councillor Dent Coad agreed a holistic approach to the future of the property was needed. She suggested that problematic spaces could be leased to tenants in return for their refurbishing the space.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member welcomed comments and said he had toured the building recently and would be interested in viewing some of the flats from the inside.

A12. MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

IN DEPTH REVIEWS

SUB-GROUP ON THE STOCK CONDITION SURVEY

Councillor Pascall reported that Mr Maddison was to present more information to the first meeting of the working party next week and this would be followed up by site visits.

ROTA VISITS

The Chairman would agree the new rota for Member site visit with Mr Clark and Ms Johnson at the end of September. **Action:** Mr Treherne

A13. ANY OTHER ORAL OR WRITTEN ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There were none.

The meeting finished at 8.45pm.

Chairman