

PRESENT

Members of the Committee

Councillor Quentin Marshall (Chairman)
Councillor Tony Holt (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Emma Dent Coad, MA
Councillor Robert Mingay
Councillor Will Pascall
Councillor Linda Wade

Others in Attendance

Councillor Rock Feilding-Mellen (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, Property and Regeneration)
Councillor Judith Blakeman (Labour Group Leader)
Nick Austin (Director for Environmental Health)
Robert Black (Chief Executive, TMO)
Sasha Jevans (Exec Director of Operations, TMO)
Yvonne Birch (Director of People and Performance, TMO)
Richard Buckley (Bi-borough Head of Environmental Health)
Jacqui Hird (Scrutiny Manager)
Laura Johnson (Director of Housing)
Roger Keane (General Needs Commissioner)
Peter Maddison (Director of Assets and Regeneration, TMO)
Steve Mellor (Group Finance Manager)
Anthony Parkes (Director of Financial Services, TMO)
Wendy Thomas (Senior Housing Policy Officer)
Gillian Tobin (Senior Housing Policy Officer)
Jerome Treherne (Governance Services)

A1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been submitted from Councillors Neal, Mackover, Read and Rutherford. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member submitted apologies on behalf of the Director of Corporate Property.

A2 MEMBERS' DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Pascall declared that he was a governor of Marlborough Primary School.

A3 MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS ON 15 AND 22 MAY 2013

The Minutes of the Meetings of 15 and 22 May 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

As a matter arising related to A5 Clearings and New Marlborough Primary School Development, Councillor Pascall reported that the planning application was now to be heard in September not July, but Mr Bore had

assured him the new premises would be ready in time for the start of September 2014 term.

Councillor Dent Coad confirmed she had joined the Stock Condition Survey Sub-Group.

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

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member introduced the report. In response to questions on the Pembroke Road Options Appraisal, he assured the committee a wide range of options were being explored and issues of viability would be critical. At this stage he was unable to confirm how leaseholders would be compensated were a scheme to be brought forward but tenants in council flats would be re-housed in a proposed new development where possible should this become necessary.

Councillor Pascall cited an example from the Silchester Estate redevelopment where a group of residents had been offered improved accommodation and hoped this could be the outcome for residents affected by the Pembroke Road scheme.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member reassured the Committee that under the new Tri-borough Facilities Management contract, service level standards would be maintained. The Chairman asked Councillor Mingay to email him any points on TUPE matters he wanted covered in the TFM report to September's committee meeting.

Action: Cllr Mingay/Chairman/Mr Clark

A5. GRENFELL TOWER UPDATE

Mr Maddison summarised the TMO's work on the regeneration plans and said more work on costs was needed. He detailed the TMO's engagement with residents which was to continue.

He reported that the causes of power surges in May were uncertain but an arced cable had been discovered and cabling to all parts of the block had now been replaced. He confirmed that the block's electrical wiring was checked every 5 years under the existing maintenance contract.

He reported power surge protection for the block was now in place and there had been no reoccurrence of power surges and monitoring would continue. Mr Maddison confirmed that Grenfell Tower's mains cabling was separate from the Kensington Academy and Leisure Centre cabling.

In response to questions from the Committee on insurance and damage to residents' possessions, Mr Maddison reported a log of all damaged electrical equipment was kept up to date. Some 40 properties had experienced some damage. Loss adjusters acting for the insurers were still to confirm the amount of compensation required and to advise on settlement of payments.

Mr Maddison reported that the smoke emitted from one flat had, on investigation proved to be steam and this problem had been resolved. Before May's power surge, the block had been assessed for fire risk and deemed to have full fire protection. In relation to the risk of smoke released into common parts, Ms Johnson reminded the Committee that all leaseholder doors had been fire risk assessed and leaseholders advised on the level of compliance to fire protection standards. She stated that her officers were seeking further advice on liability for fire risk.

Councillor Blakeman was invited to speak. She submitted a petition from the Grenfell Leaseholders' Association to the committee clerk. She was concerned that the TMO would find it difficult to regain trust because many residents believed the impact of the power surge had not been taken seriously enough and compensation for damaged electrical items had been delayed. She was surprised that those affected had been asked if the Council or TMO should be held to account.

Mr Black assured the Committee the TMO had taken this incident and the resulted damage to tenants' property seriously. The TMO he said took health and safety matters seriously. He noted some of the claims linked to the incident had been factually inaccurate. He highlighted the scale of the regeneration project and said that any delay to it was in order to ensure agreement on the best scheme possible that was within budget. He drew attention to the engagement activities with the residents which included a meeting to be attended by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member on 19 July.

In response to Councillors Blakeman and Dent Coads' concerns over the removal of the canopy, Ms Johnson emphasised the Planning Department understood there needed to be some protection from falling debris. Mr Black noted that one alternative could be modified windows that prevented debris falling out of them.

Mr Maddison reported on consultation over regeneration plans and agreed to ensure all ward councillors received any newsletters sent to Trelick Tower residents.

Action: Mr Maddison

In response to concerns from the Chairman over value for money, Ms Johnson referred to the Cabinet's decision last year to allocate funding to regenerate the block. She pointed out the range of improvements that were not linked to the existing housing assets and included the provision of eight new hidden homes flats which would generate an income for the Housing Revenue Account. Councillor Blakeman noted the defective heating system once replaced would reduce utility costs for residents and Councillor Dent Coad encouraged officers to check how LBHF had successfully used various funding streams for the Edward Woods Estate improvements.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member in conclusion, said he understood residents' impatience with progress on regenerating the Tower but it was a significant investment and it was vital a high quality design resulted to

improve the block and its appearance to residents in the surrounding area. He had recently discussed the proposals with the architect and TMO and believed residents would have good reason to regain any lost trust in the TMO soon.

A6. BI-BOROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH (PRIVATE SECTOR) HOUSING SERVICE REVIEW

Mr Austin introduced the report and summarised the scope of the review. He advised that officers used multiple sources of information to assist in identifying unlicensed Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) which could provide additional income. The Chairman suggested the definition of HMO should be circulated to all Members who, during ward visits, could assist in identifying unlicensed HMOs. **Action:** Mr Austin

In response to Councillor Mingay, Mr Austin reported that staff terms and conditions from each borough were broadly similar. He confirmed the take up of funding to combat fuel poverty or from the Green Deal could be improved and officers considered these funding streams for improvements when inspecting premises and dealing with enquiries from residents.

Mr Austin confirmed that in response to complaints about housing associations protocols were in place with housing associations that enabled inspections and action to be taken to rectify serious complaints where necessary.

A7. HOUSING GENERAL FUND OUTTURN REPORT 2012/13

Mr Mellor introduced the report. In regard to the outstanding debt linked to the LetsStart Scheme, he said this scheme had started some years ago and was now closed. The Legal Services Department was assisting in recovering deposits from letting agents. Only £400k was linked to cases where households still occupied the premises.

In response to a question from the Chairman, Ms Johnson advised that the Disabled Facilities Grant budget was underspent due to the high proportion of residents in this borough who could afford to pay for alterations themselves. Mr Mellor advised the smaller budget over the next three years recognised its low take up.

In response to Councillor Mingay's question on the budget increase of 4% for procuring Temporary Accommodation, Mr Mellor advised that it seemed sufficient though the extent to which circumstances could change was difficult to predict.

A8. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT OUTTURN REPORT 2012/13

Mr Mellor introduced the report. He advised the Chairman that the Cabinet decision to allocate £3.7 million to the Grenfell Tower Scheme would be fed into the updated HRA Business Plan which would be submitted to January's Committee meeting.

A9. TMO ANNUAL REVIEW

Ms Johnson introduced the review and reported that, overall, performance continued to improve, that the success of the new repairs service would be a key aspect in the near future and that the TMO had shown itself to be pro-active in engaging with residents over welfare reform.

In regard to the audit review of Health and Safety, Mr Parkes reported that by the end of August all health and safety records included those from the contractor would be kept on one system, thereby meeting the auditor's requirements.

Mr Black reported that the two new welfare reform officers would focus on working with tenants to ensure they did not get into financial difficulty. He confirmed the date for the start of the new repairs service remained 2 September.

In response to Councillor Dent Coad's query, Ms Birch reported officers were intensively monitoring the 397 households affected by under-occupancy funding deductions. She reported that one fifth of these households were in receipt of Discretionary Household Payments but other options were considered. She reported a slight increase in rent arrears. She agreed to circulate a breakdown of the affected households.

Action: Ms Jevans / Mr Treherne

A10. THE IMPACT OF WELFARE REFORM ON HOUSING

Ms Johnson noted a similar report had been submitted to recent FCS and Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committees. She reassured Councillor Wade that Discretionary Housing Payments were decided on a case-by-case basis and were intended to be for six months only. Ms Johnson said the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) was considering varying the amounts of rent paid directly to tenants.

In response to Councillor Mingay's concern over disruption to schooling if households moved, Ms Johnson said that many children attended out-of-borough schools and the borough of residence was obliged to ensure pupils had school places. She advised that those in temporary accommodation had to pay for transport to school out of their own pocket.

A11. ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF THE BENEFITS CAP FOR HOUSEHOLDS IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION (TA)

Mr Mellor drew attention to the reserve set aside to assist in supporting households in TA affected by the Benefits Cap. He said that Cabinet would be asked to agree that these funds could be drawn down to supplement the Discretionary Payments Fund. The budget would need to continue to be monitored closely.

Ms Johnson in response to Councillor Dent Coad, confirmed the wide range of measures in paragraph 4.5 in the report would be explored to increase

TA supply but no specific proposals for private residential investment had been worked up.

A12. MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

IN DEPTH REVIEWS

SUB-GROUP ON THE STOCK CONDITION SURVEY

Councillor Pascall had discussed the scope of the review with officers. His Sub-Group would first examine the existing data on the stock and take into consideration the TMO works since 2010 as well as the Rand Study. Then data from a few individual premises would be assessed and by early autumn these findings would be summarised. He drew attention to the range of standards used in the Rand Study and the need to consolidate these into one target standard. The new standard would include considerations of energy use, CO2 emissions, climate change and welfare implications. The final report would be submitted to the full Committee at its January meeting.

SUB-GROUP ON HOUSING OCCUPANCY

Councillor Mackover was not present to update the Committee.

TRELICK TOWER

The Committee had received the Chairman's notes of the 19 June tour. Councillor Dent Coad agreed to submit her views which would then be combined into one report and circulated to the Committee.

Action: Cllr Dent Coad / Mr Treherne

ROTA VISITS

The Chairman encouraged arrangements to be made for outstanding visits and asked for a new set of sites to be drawn up for September's meeting.

Action: Mr Treherne

FORWARD PLAN

This was noted.

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

There were none.

The meeting finished at 8.25pm.

Chairman

