

NOTES OF THE CENTRAL STREET AREA HOUSING PANEL

Wednesday 20th May – Tompion Community Centre – 7pm

Present:

Frances Sullivan (FS)	King Square TRA
Blanche Woodbridge (BW)	King Square TRA
Barbara Coventry (BC)	Popham estate TRA
Irene Francis (IF)	St Luke's TRA
Martin Rutherford (MR)	Popham estate TRA
Josie Pamment (JP)	Lagonier House TRA
Elaine Smalley (ES)	Lagonier House TRA
Francois Smit (FS)	Margery Street TRA
Helen Cagnoni (HC)	Greenwood, Wilmington & Farringdon
David Selo (DSO)	Director of Resources, HFI
David Salenius (DS)	Manager, Central Street Area Housing Office HFI
Miranda Griffith (MG)	Community & Service Development Officer, HFI

1	APOLOGIES	
1.1	Apologies received from: Cllr Jyote Vaja Adrian Hall Shirley Leferve Terry Leferve Una O'Halloran	
2	NOTES OF LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING	
2.1	MG advised that the Service Development Team were in the process of organising a briefing on HRA finance as previously requested. HC and FS to give feedback to developers of course on what they require from it. MG will update at the next meeting.	MG
2.2	DSO commented that a consultation paper from central government on changes to the housing revenue account was expected in the summer; therefore any training provided could only talk about the current situation.	
2.3	HC asked whether solar panels will only be fitted on flat roofed blocks. DS stated that this is a possibility. A proposal for Barnabus House has gone in, and HFI is currently working with contractors. MG to chase AS on further criteria on accessing the Climate Change fund.	MG
2.4	DS advised that Peter Taunton is in charge of the Solar Panel Fund. Mike Rees is currently looking at it but is looking to move jobs soon.	
2.5	ES informed the panel that Cllr Vaja has written a letter on behalf of the tenants requesting insulation for the block. MG to chase AS for response.	MG/AS
2.6	IF reported that communal ventilators are now all in working order on St Luke's estate.	
3.	ELECTIONS	
3.1	DS referred to the paper on elections for a Chair for the Area Housing Panel and	

	explained the process by which it is run. Results were as follows:	
3.2	Chair – Una O’Hallaron nominated and seconded. Majority of panel voted in favour.	
3.3	Vice chair – ES nominated and seconded. Majority of panel voted in favour.	
3.4	1 in 1000 Representative - it was noted that no applications had been received for this post. HC nominated and seconded. Majority of panel voted in favour.	
3.5	Associate director – FS nominated and seconded. Majority of panel voted in favour.	
4	Tenants Compact Annual Review	
4.1	DSO ran through the main points of the distributed paper, pointing out that the main changes are covered in section 4 of the report and there’s also a summary on the tenant compact.	
4.2	FS asked why the Tenant Compact only concentrates on housing.	
4.3	HC stated that there was concern that the same name now refers to fund just for housing which used to be used for everything, which is confusing. HC feels that there is no forum now where issues with other services can be discussed.	
4.4	It was advised that consultation for other services would be the LBI south area committee, the dates of which are advertised on the website.	
4.5	HC commented that this committee is run by Councillors which prevents some people from attending.	
4.6	It was agreed the South Area Committee should be better advertised.	
4.7	FS feels there is a lack of consultation generally, and was concerned that he didn’t even know 3 corners was being built.	
4.8	DSO advised that a report came to panel 2/3 years ago to say the Tenant Compact would be for housing, and the process as laid out in the report is presented to the panel every year. There’s no arrangement at the current time to change it.	
5	Options for Supporting Tenants and Residents Associations	
5.1	DSO presented the option laid out in the paper, explaining they wanted to hear options on building stronger relationships and how to implement the improvements which will come back to the panel in July.	
5.2	BK commented that many TRA’s don’t apply for the administration & publicity grant on offer as it’s difficult to set up bank accounts etc. DSO said that’s why the involvement of credit union is being looked at now.	
5.3	BK suggested putting a photocopier in a small area to make it more user friendly for TRA’s to share to photocopy fliers and posters etc.	
5.4	FS stated that the administration and publicity grant doesn’t cover all costs of admin as using commercial photocopiers cost up to £30 per time.	
5.5	FS stated that book keeping and auditing is an issue as people in the past have made away with the grant. Support is needed from HFI with auditing accounts; it was	

	suggested that HFI get an extra person to look at TRA funds and books.	
5.6	HC believes that IVAC would be a better source of advice than TPAS as they're a local group and have more credibility.	
6	Repairs and Maintenance Reprocurement	
6.1	BC declared a conflict of interest and left the room during the discussion took place.	
6.2	DSo explained that a report on this issue had been presented to the panel before, and explains the issue of re-tendering for contracts by 2010; updates are on the timetable provided. The distributed report is more of an update than a consultation.	
6.3	FS asked whether the panel could see the minutes of the board meetings so can see what the process is and have some comment on them. DSo agreed that they could perhaps provide some summaries.	
6.4	DSo commented that the new contract will be done by open procurement, and will be structured in a different way, although no final conclusions have been come to as yet.	
6.5	HC stated that the federation has worked with Kiers and has managed to get them to agree to providing apprenticeships etc.	
6.6	FS and HC agreed that tenants have worked hard to get Kiers to a certain point and don't want to lose that knowledge that has been gained.	
6.7	DSo commented that any contractor will be required to continue a successful apprenticeships scheme. Some Kiers contractors would also move over to transfer to another contractor.	
6.8	DSo stated that the customer panel is looking at what can be learnt from experience and how contractors services can be improved.	
6.9	ES commented that HFI Direct also influences service as it depends if they take the right message and alert the right kind of service to fix a repair.	
6.10	HC stated that Kiers has its own workforce in the borough working in Brewery road. They also sit on resolution team and have a very good appointment system. They phone before they arrive and if going to be late.	
6.11	FS asked who the representative of the Housing Quality Network was. MG will confirm this and let the panel know.	
6.12	ES asked whether other councils had been asked about good practise. DS confirmed they had.	
6.13	HC suggested that tenants go to look round HFI direct to see how it works, as well as the resolutions team.	
7	Homes for Islington – Consultative Panel Update	

7.1	DSo went through the main points of the update, and let the panel know that HFI is now on the national federation of ALMO's.	
7.2	New builds on Armour Close and Boleyn Road are set to complete this summer.	
7.3	It was also noted that Julie West who lives in the Central Street area won this years Mayors Civic Award for Islington's most outstanding resident.	
7.4	There were no questions on this item.	
8	Forward Plan	
	No comments were made on the plan.	
9	Bunhill and Clerkenwell Area Action Plan	
9.1	Elliot Kemp (Senior Planner) from Islington Council introduced himself to the panel, explaining that he came on Paul Elliott's behalf to talk about the consultation process on the Bunhill and Clerkenwell action plan for next 15 years. This deals with several services including housing, Greenspace and transport.	
9.2	Paul will be running the first consultations via leafleting, workshops and public meetings. Paul's contact information is on the bottom of the handout distributed.	
9.3	FS asked why Margery and Baker Street are not covered by the map distributed. EK fed back that the consultations boundaries are influenced by the areas that are most affected by new developments, such as Farringdon etc.	
9.4	BK reported that St Peters ward was included in a previous meeting she attended on this subject.	
9.5	ES asked when the planning meeting for the City Forum in May would be. EK responded that that's a planning application which is dealt with by another department so unfortunately he didn't know the answer. ES stated that if that plan goes forward it will influence this consultation heavily.	
9.6	HC stated that tenants at previous meetings have objected to further student accommodation as there's so much in the area already. She feels the Council should have taken note of objections from previous consultations.	
9.7	The panel was advised the end of the consultation is officially on 13 th of July. However, the nature of the process means it will be continuous with further meetings to collect views.	
9.8	BC commented that she couldn't really read the road names properly on the map provided.	
10	Central Street Performance Report – March 2009	
10.1	DS referred to the distributed report, and stated that statistics show that performance from all offices has increased with the exception of one or two things such as the number of complaints received; therefore a lot of effort will go into reducing these this coming year.	
10.2	FS asked what the complaints were about. DS reported that a lot are on repairs and	

- estate services. However, an action plan has been put into place with estate services and there's now a new manager in Central Street, so levels of complaints should improve.
- 10.3 BW feels that no one follows up the jobs that are done on estates. DS replied that there is a system in place to do this.
- 10.4 JP reported that tenants on Lagonier House complained about overgrown trees over a year ago; nothings been done and now a branch knocked a window then onto a leaseholders window.
- 10.5 DS replied that although HFI can chase up other contractors, e.g. tree surgeons they're not responsible for them.
- 10.6 FS feels that estate services officers don't follow things up and offer feedback to people who report repairs.
- 10.7 DS acknowledged that there have been problems with customer care in estate services but that this is going to change. Tenants should be told when jobs are going to be done, and there are contracted response times with Kiers, who need to give feedback and that will happen.
- 10.8 HC reported that she would like to see complaints received and how they're broken down. DS answered that a summary of these are displayed in the Central Street reception area.
- 10.9 BC asked whether complaints about anti-social behaviour have gone down. DS reported that never get many complaints about this. Recent surveys found there was 72% satisfaction rate with how peoples ASB cases were handled, which could be improved. Now clients are being phoned at end of case to see how they felt it was handled. Central Street is working to an 80% satisfaction rate target.
- 10.10 DS reported that there's been an increase with ASB cases, many of which are noise complaints. HFI are looking into what can be done about this.
- 10.11 FS feels a reason for this could be that there are a lot of single professionals moving in who can't tolerate families. Also mentally ill tenants tend to make reports on noise or create it. FS reported his block is half full of mentally ill who are very vulnerable.
- 10.12 HC reported that the priorities for housing are often given to single owners who have come out of institutions. Where masses come from one type of vulnerability it can cause a problem. HC feels TRA's need to know if new tenants are mentally ill so not to call the police and instead call a support number if there is a problem.
- 10.13 DS reported that HFI only has control on the choice based letting system, but apart from that allocations are controlled by Islington Council. DS advised that if a tenant has support needs, tenants can advise their Tenant Management Assistant (TMA) who can then refer them to a Housing Support Worker.
- 10.14 FS reported that the people who live in estates are often the last to know if new tenants have support needs.
- 10.15 IF reported that there's a serious case on the second floor of Newland court who's attacked a TRA committee member. DS advised the police need to know about this as it's a criminal act.
- 10.16 HC reported that priority points are often on medical ground. If it's on someone's

	report would be good to find how many with requiring support with mental health are being put in each area as many in one area can cause problems with social services.	
10.17	DS reported that a TMA would know if a flat's empty, although they can't stop allocations being made.	
10.18	FS says there's a legal duty to ensure there's a good mix of people on the estate. DS will write to Stuart Nichols, lead of allocations on estates, to find out more on this policy.	DS
10.19	IF asked DS what can be done if tenants are living in filth and its affecting other flats. DS responded that they should report it to HFI. If nuisance is causing problems HFI can consider action.	
10.20	DS reported that the Central Street Income Recovery team achieved gaining the lowest average debt ever. This is partly due to support given to tenants. The panel extended their congratulations to Mervyn Espie, team leader.	
10.21	DS reported that caretaking results targets have been achieved in the office.	
10.22	MR reported there's been no caretaker on Ternling Walk on Popham estate for 5 weeks. DS will talk to Peter Rushbrook about this.	DS
10.23	The voids team have reached an average of 22 days turnaround of void properties. FS reported that the voids team were very good.	
10.24	DS reported that the office plan will be brought back to the panel at a later date.	
10.25	HC asked if any staffs are being lost at Central street. Ds replied that they are not, although one change is that the location of office will be moving by March 2010.	
11	Cluse Court Petition	
11.1	DS referred to the distributed petition, saying that the main issue is with insulation in the roof and also a problem with the ventilation system.	
11.2	AM asked who to go to if you want to get a description of work that was undertaken on the roof as he has been given the run around. He was put onto an insurance company a few months ago who rejected the claim, and was advised to get legal advice. He's very angry that he's been going round the houses.	
11.3	DS reported that Central Street don't manage property services at the office but can refer any complaints on to the team and the resolutions team. If it's a contractor, HFI need to work out who was in charge of the contract at that time.	
11.4	AM advised there is still a leak now. DS said this should be reported to HFI Direct.	
11.5	AM asked about what will happen about damage to furniture? DS advised that a TMA would have visited the property three years ago when the problem occurred and referred it to relevant contractor.	
11.6	DS reported that from what AM said about the insurance company they are seemingly saying HFI are not liable, in which case it would become a legal repair issue, for which there's a special team to deal with it.	
11.7	DS advised AM to talk to the insurance company. AM reported that the contractors who repaired the work just put lino on top of existing lino, which didn't fix the	

	problem. DS suggested that AM write directly to John Park to complain and ask him to come down and visit the property.	
12	Any Other Business:	
12.1	HC reported that the gate repair to Greenwood House still hasn't been sorted out, and they are now getting bikes and scooters coming on the way to house. HC is concerned they will lose the insurance claim if it's not dealt with. DS will raise this with Mr Rawling at the refuse service.	DS
12.2	IF requested that someone investigate no. 4 and 8 Newland court as the smell is unbearable and it's infested with rats. DS stated they're aware of a vulnerable tenant at number 4.	
12.3	FS asked whether caretaking pilot schemes have finished yet and was informed they hadn't. BW reported that the pilot on King Square had finished and felt it was a waste of time, as caretakers were taken away from tasks they usually do.	
12.4	BW asked whether responses to the surveys on the pilot had been collated yet. DS stated that as yet they haven't but when they have been the report will come back to the panel.	
13	Date of next Meeting: Wednesday 15th July	