

NOTES OF THE CENTRAL STREET AREA HOUSING PANEL

Thursday 24th January 2008 – Brunswick Estate Meeting Room – 7pm

Present:

Helen Cagnoni (HC)	Greenwood, Wilmington, Farringdon TRA (Chair)
Frances Sullivan (FS)	King Square TRA
Blanche Woodbridge (BW)	King Square TRA
Maureen Smith (MS)	Brunswick Estate TMO
Terry Lefevre (TL)	Pleydell Estate TMO
Shirley Lefevre (SL)	Pleydell Estate TMO
Danny Unstead (DU)	Pleydell Estate TMO
J Grout (JG)	Pleydell Estate Resident
E Grout (EG)	Pleydell Estate Resident
S Brogan (SB)	Pleydell Estate Resident
D Turner (DT)	Pleydell Estate Resident
Dennis Kleinberg (DK)	Whitbread Estate TRA
Ben Phegan (BP)	The Triangle TRA
Felix Ngonadi (FN)	Betham Court TRA
Barbara Coventry (BC)	Popham TRA and HFI Board Member
Sharon Hayward (SH)	Finsbury Estate TRA
Francois Smit (FS)	Margery Street TRA
Sonya Andermahr (SA)	Quaker Court TMO
Cllr Jyoti Vaja (JV)	Bunhill Ward Councillor, LBI
George Allan (GA)	Clerkenwell Ward Councillor, LBI
Neville Archer (NA)	Head of Strategy and Policy, LBI
Jon Farrant (JF)	Senior Area Housing Manager, HFI
David Salenius (DS)	Area Housing Manager, HFI
Karyn Linkson (KL)	Area Programme Manager, HFI
Mary Caudron (MC)	Community and Service Development Officer, HFI

1	Apologies	
1.1	Apologies received from: a. Joe Trotter and Jamie Fry.	~
2	Notes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising	
2.1	Notes of Last Meeting a. JV clarified point 5.2d and advised that she had stated that councillors should be members of the panel but not have voting rights. b. Otherwise the panel agreed the notes as a true and accurate record of the last meeting.	~
2.2	Whitbread Estate Petition a. DK thanked the panel for their recommendation that a survey was carried out and advised that an architect visited 6 properties. b. DK advised that HFI have said they will get a company in to replace the tracks and realign the windows where necessary however DK did not accept this and was still very concerned about the condensation which was running down the walls causing extreme damp in many properties. c. DK handed HC a dossier of information including details of building regulations regarding trickle ventilation which DK said wasn't adequate.	~

	<p>d. HC confirmed she had been copied into HFI's email to DK but had not seen the survey.</p> <p>e. KL advised that of the 6 windows surveyed, only 1 needed replacement. Because the windows were sustainable for the next 7 years with repairs and some renewal where necessary, HFI would not be doing window replacement on the estate.</p> <p>f. SH felt it was the decent homes criteria that were at fault as the homes were clearly not decent with this condensation problem.</p> <p>g. TL reported a similar problem at Gastigny House where residents were suffering with warped frames, ice on the inside of the windows etc. SL and TL were told that taller blocks were the priority.</p> <p>h. HC suggested that board members take up with the HFI Board the different criteria used for windows in tall blocks as opposed to low blocks and how this unfairness can be corrected whilst decent homes work is being fulfilled. FS wondered how wide the problem was and how many blocks had a similar problem.</p> <p>i. JF advised he had heard a similar petition in the last few days and stressed it was a question of funding and meeting the programme each year with the available budgets.</p> <p>j. JF advised he would take the case back to the new Director of Property Services Peter Taunton to ensure he is satisfied with the response given.</p> <p>k. MC to provide DK with a summary of the issues discussed within the week and copy in HC.</p>	<p>JF</p> <p>MC</p>
2.3	<p>Other Matters Arising</p> <p>a. MC advised that Tony Pendleton from the Triangle Estate had put himself forward to be the second representative on the Estate Services Improvement Group. The panel agreed.</p> <p>b. SH confirmed the issue with her emails had been resolved.</p> <p>c. JV felt Home Ownership's response regarding Whitbread grounds maintenance charges was totally inadequate as they knew what leaseholders were being charged and the onus shouldn't be on residents to provide this information. JF suggested a general response being given with details of who was being charged and exactly what it covered. Residents could then challenge this if they wished.</p> <p>d. SA disputed the response regarding TMO voids and stressed that the TMO had never been contacted. When raised, the first response given was that it was none of the TMO's business. SA advised that the TMO would definitely make someone available to attend a joint inspection if they were notified. DS to take back.</p>	<p>DS</p> <p>DS</p>
2.4	<p>Pleydell Estate Noise Nuisance</p> <p>a. JV asked for an update. DS advised a meeting was held with affected residents and legal advice sought however not enough evidence to take to court as the source of the noise had not been determined. The office had written to all residents to ask for any other witnesses to come forward over the next 2 weeks.</p> <p>b. SB complained that the letter hadn't been sent out by 3rd January. EJ and JG had police on the doorstep and found it distressing as they were being accused of racial harassment. EJ asked if the ASB team would do door knocking.</p> <p>c. DS advised he would get an update from the ASB team. JF suggested the ASB</p>	<p>~</p>

	<p>team target the flats nearby and meet with the complainants in early February to update them. JF stressed that if there was any doubt as to the location of the noise it would not stand up in court.</p> <p>d. JV asked DS to check whether the alleged perpetrators had adequate floor covering in their flat.</p>	<p>DS</p> <p>DS</p>
3	Consultative Panel Development – Consultation	
3.1	<p>Panel Training</p> <p>a. MC advised that the report was included again as the panel didn't have a chance to discuss it at the last meeting.</p> <p>b. Following feedback from the other panels an open training session for anyone interested in being a chair or vice chair would be organised in April.</p> <p>c. MC asked if the panel if they were interested in any other type of training.</p> <p>d. HC suggested training on finance, i.e. where the money came from, how budgets were set etc. SL agreed this was important, especially as she had heard the repairs budget was being cut. SH thought training on how rents were currently set would be helpful.</p> <p>e. The panel felt that even though the other areas had turned down further training, they should still be invited as once a session was set up they might want to attend. MC to feedback to the Governance Team.</p>	<p>MC</p>
4	Developing Islington's Housing Strategy 2008-12 – Consultation	
4.1	<p>Background</p> <p>a. NA introduced the report and asked the panel for their comments, suggestions and priorities. LBI wanted to consult as widely as possible so NA would be attending all the panels and area committees as well as meeting with community groups.</p> <p>b. NA was aiming for a draft to be produced in Summer and completed by early Autumn. NA distributed questionnaires and asked the panel to complete them and return to MC.</p>	<p>Panel</p>
4.2	<p>Feedback from the panel</p> <p>a. DK thought there were not enough council homes.</p> <p>b. SH and HC thought that for something as important as this an open conference should be organised so all had the opportunity to be consulted with.</p> <p>c. SH felt there should be more low cost rented council housing and not shared ownership, as this was too expensive. SH added that there were too many luxury developments and that residents should be referred to as such and not as 'customers'.</p> <p>d. PB disagreed that new private buildings didn't bring something to the area but that the increased affluence increased the polarisation of the area. PB felt the main issue was the lack of maintenance of council homes.</p> <p>e. BC hoped all residents were being consulted with. BC thought overcrowding was a big issue and LBI needed to make more incentives for single people to move out of larger properties. FS agreed there was a desperate shortage of larger family homes.</p> <p>f. TL felt that density was an issue and a lack of infrastructure. With all the new developments, there was a need for more doctors, dentists etc.</p> <p>g. BC felt it was a great thing that HFI was now building homes and that these</p>	<p>~</p>

	<p>were larger units.</p> <p>h. HC was concerned about the council selling off land, as this would create a shortage when the Council started building new homes.</p> <p>i. SH was concerned that council tenants were paying money to the treasury but were not getting anything back. SH didn't think that local councillors were lobbying enough on behalf of residents.</p>	~
5	Housing Revenue Account – Review of Rents, Fees and Charges – Consultation	
5.1	<p>Background</p> <p>a. JF advised that this was an LBI report, which HFI had been asked to take to the panels. JF introduced the report, which laid out the charging increases for rents, communal heating, parking penalties and caretaking in 2008/9.</p> <p>b. MC provided SH and HC with hard copies of the additional information they had requested regarding the HRA and general fund budget for 2007/8, which had previously been sent by email.</p>	~
5.2	<p>Rents</p> <p>a. The panel queried why there was no one from LBI to answer questions regarding the report.</p> <p>b. SH was very concerned that the rent constraint allowance had been sliced off the formula this year which was there to make sure tenants rent wouldn't go up over 5%. SH objected to the over 5% increase.</p> <p>c. SH advised that other boroughs give some leeway as to what the final rent figure was. There was some lobbying regarding this but no one was here from LBI to give any feedback.</p> <p>d. SH asked the Councillors present regarding this. JV said she didn't have the answer there and then but that SH could attend the next Executive to get the answer from the relevant person.</p> <p>e. SH raised the issue that tenants were being charged twice for some things e.g. youth work as they already paid council tax into the general fund and were also paying from the HRA.</p> <p>f. JF accepted that the report didn't have the detail SH wanted and stressed that LBI had assured him the increase was strictly in accordance with Government guidelines.</p>	~
5.3	<p>Heating and Hot Water</p> <p>a. JF advised that the fuel charges associated with the communal heating did not meet the cost so there was a deficit.</p> <p>b. JF went through the proposals to meet the deficit, which were either to increase the complex charges to meet the deficit or to simplify the charges so they were based on bed size and phased in over 3 years.</p> <p>c. MC handed out some updated figures on the worst affected areas.</p> <p>d. HC was concerned about the increased charges, particularly for bed sits which housed many elderly residents.</p> <p>e. SL advised that if the boilers were changed over to individual heating, the cost would go up enormously so SL felt it would be a fair change in 3 years time.</p> <p>f. SH asked about the costs associated with the energy reduction measures in 4.1.2. The panel requested this information and a timetable on when this work will be done.</p>	~ MC

	<p>g. TL referred to the problems with the windows at Gastigny and Whitbread and how much it would take to heat the flats.</p> <p>h. HC thought that a survey should be carried out into the energy efficiency of the buildings. PB pointed out that you can't measure efficiency until the heating was metered.</p>	
5.4	<p>Parking Charges</p> <p>a. The panel noted the increased charges.</p>	~
5.5	<p>Service Charges</p> <p>a. JF advised that the service charges would increase by 3.9%, and also the refunds.</p> <p>b. HC recalled the panel requesting that HFI was proactive and gave refunds automatically. JF confirmed this was the case for heating and hot water but was not aware it was agreed for caretaking. JF accepted the point that all refunds should be automatic.</p> <p>c. MC to feed back all the points and issues raised by the panel and request responses where necessary.</p>	MC
6	Consultative Panel Tenants Compact and Estate Security 2008/9 – Consultation	
6.1	<p>Introduction</p> <p>a. JF introduced the paper and advised that the funding would be distributed by stock between the 4 area offices.</p> <p>b. This meant Central Street had £357,627 tenant compact funding and £46,253 estate security funding to be shared between the three areas within Central Street.</p>	~
6.2	<p>Feedback from Residents</p> <p>a. SH felt that youth work should be general funded.</p> <p>b. HC advised that in previous years the panel had refused to fund any works to garages and parking as this should come from the garage rental income. HC wanted to know how much this was and where it goes. JF advised it went into the HRA although HC couldn't see it listed on the additional information provided. DS advised it might be listed just as rental income.</p> <p>c. BP asked how the community safety money was decided. DS advised that the office put bids depending on area priorities, which were then decided upon by the IDC. BP felt that the Triangle was always left out. HC said that the budget was quite small and therefore Triangle work might cost too much to fund from this budget but would probably be covered by Major Works budget.</p> <p>d. DS asked the panel how they would like to split the money between the wards. The panel agreed it should be divided by the number of properties per ward.</p>	MC
7	Disposal of Land Managed by HFI - Information	
7.1	<p>Background</p> <p>a. DG distributed copies of HFI's repair obligations and advised the panel that HFI had bowed to customer pressure and carried out repairs over and above its repair policy. DG advised that HFI would be looking to more strictly apply the repairs policy.</p>	~
7.2	<p>Feedback from the panel</p> <p>a. BW advised she had been told that elderly residents would get a new letterbox. DG didn't think this was in the repairs policy.</p> <p>b. DG confirmed that caretakers could go up to a certain height using a ladder and that all had received this training.</p>	

	<p>c. JV felt that it was important that residents were told HFI was now sticking to the policy.</p> <p>a. SH suggested a booklet with diagrams was suggested and DG confirmed diagrams were in the tenants handbook and online.</p>	~
8	HFI and Consultative Panel Update – Information	
8.1	<p>Update</p> <p>a. The panel noted the report.</p>	~
9	Decision Items at last Board and Sub Board – Information	
9.1	<p>Decision Items</p> <p>a. The panel noted the report.</p>	~
10	Forward Plan – Information	
10.1	<p>Forward Plan</p> <p>a. The panel noted the report.</p>	~
11	Central Street Performance Report (November 2008) – Information	
11.1	<p>Local Performance</p> <p>a. DS distributed the performance report for November and advised that the office had done extremely well, coming top for the month and was also the top performing office year to date.</p> <p>b. The panel congratulated the office on this achievement and also for the performance report, which they found very informative.</p>	~
12	Antisocial Behaviour Update - Information	
12.1	<p>ASB in the Central St area</p> <p>a. The panel noted the report and advised that they found it very useful.</p>	~
13	Any Other Business	
13.1	<p>Local Issues</p> <p>a. HC raised the issue of the healthcare for London questionnaire and asked all panel members to get involved in the consultation. MC to send around the details.</p> <p>b. HC asked for it to be recorded that Alec Forshaw was leaving LBI and wanted to thank him for all his hard work in saving so many important buildings in Clerkenwell.</p> <p>c. HC also thanked MC for her excellent work and wished her well in her new job.</p>	MC
13.2	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>a. The next meeting would be held at 7pm on Thursday 20th March 2008 at the Brunswick Meeting Room, Mulberry Court.</p>	~