

Upper St (North) Area Housing Panel Minutes

17/7/07 Emmanuel Church Hall

Present	<p>Voting Members Robert Burbidge – Chair Marion Spall – Andover Jon Koh Hood Court Des Smith – Clifton and Haden</p> <p>Non Voting Members Cllr Sidnell Cllr O’Sullivan (part)</p> <p>Guests Bellobono Fabiana – Hood Court Helen Spall – Andover</p> <p>Staff Jon Farrant – Senior Area Housing Manager Mandy Miller – Housing Services Manager Jenny Greenfield – Senior Project Manager</p>	
Apologies	All remaining Councillors	
Minuites of last meeting	<p>1 in a 100 reps</p> <p>Cllr Sidnell queried whether Partners for Islington managed residents could stand as 1 in a 1000 reps As HFI oversees Partners she cannot see why not.</p> <p>CD stated he understood that they were not eligible but will double check with the governance team. <i>Ed note – double checked with Mike Sims of governance team who says not – although anyone may be co-opted</i></p> <p>Antisocial behaviour It was noted that problems of antisocial behaviour on the Andover Estate are getting worse – this may have something to do with school leavers now being at a loose end during the day.</p> <p>ASB out of hours team to be informed and ASB officers to discuss with police. Further information may be obtained from TRA reps.</p> <p>Six Acres report similar increase.</p>	

Cllr Sidnell reported that efforts are being made to re-locate the youth club to the fringes of the estate – they do important work with youth but their current premises in the centre of the estate encourages youth to hang around, something residents can find alarming. The Cllr is hopeful of a result and will report back to future panel meetings.

Out of Hours ASB Team

Panel still uncertain what out of hours do and how their work is organised.

It was explained that the team acts in a non-confrontational manner and can approach and talk to youths causing nuisance and try and persuade them to leave. The team have no formal powers to move people on but can call police, with whom they have close liaison.

The manager of the team has asked to be invited to the next panel meeting to explain the role and it's limitations and to report on activity

ASB officers

Cllr Sidnell was concerned at the number of open ASB cases in the area – she was particularly interested in whether they bore out many peoples assumption that ASB was largely caused by disaffected youth

MM will prepare reports for panel giving a breakdown of the current ASB cases broken down by type of case but agreed with the Cllr that ASB is very much more varied than people assumed

TRA inspection diary

No full inspection diary exists but a programme of 3 monthly inspections to which TRAs/TMOs are invited is being finalised. CD was informed that all TRAs have been contacted with dates.

Panel members all stated they have not been contacted.

CD to follow up

Complaints analysis

	<p>Circulated</p> <p>Caretaking</p> <p>Three out of the four 'D' ratings are being challenged.</p> <p>Upper St are tackling the low score by</p> <p>Providing additional resources on the Andover Estates Using the blitz team to bring Eric Fletcher/Ashby Houses up to scratch and increased monitoring to keep them their Use of peripatetic caretakers (floaters) to support caretakers having particular short-term problems on an estate.</p> <p>Arrears</p> <p>As the largest office Upper St has the highest total arrears - £1.3m.</p> <p>Average arrears are in excess of the HFI target.</p> <p>A lot of work is going into attempting to bring them down and to intervene early when a tenant starts to build arrears. It is recognised that this can be a symptom of other problems in the tenant's life. Referrals to the Housing Support Officer are used to check this.</p> <p>A new scheme of 'set aside' whereby a tenant with historic arrears who has kept to an agreement for a minimum period of 1 year can have the remaining arrears put into a separate account. Providing they continue to pay their substantive rent this account will remain dormant – although if they fail to pay the arrears will be revived.</p> <p>MM will prepare a paper for next panel describing the initiative.</p> <p>Voids</p> <p>Panel asked if the improvement on void turn around was due to Keirs taking on role.</p> <p>JF Too soon to say – these are performance indicators for the month in which Keirs took over.</p> <p>Minutes accepted as true record</p>	
Estate	MM Paper is a review of the first 13 weeks of operation of	

<p>surgeries</p>	<p>surgeries examining costs and numbers to judge cost effectiveness against other initiatives like increased visiting and the extension of opening hours of Upper St to include Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings and the availability of telephone services through Isledon Road office and the HFI call centre service.</p> <p>Both Mayville and Durham Road surgeries run for two hours each, twice a week.</p> <p>Despite a drive on publicity there have been few customers. On Tuesdays, for example, there have been no customers on any week.</p> <p>The cost breaks down as £346 per customer visit.</p> <p>The absence of staff from their other duties also has a knock on effect, reducing the available staff time for additional visits</p> <p>In light of poor take up and high cost Upper St recommend that the surgeries cease.</p> <p>Cllr Sidnell The report only highlights the down side of surgeries – residents are just becoming accustomed to the fact they exist and one would expect take up to be slow at first, Would like to see a report detailing the issues residents visit for. Would also like to see the telephone facilities at Isledon Road more widely advertised</p> <p>JF It is difficult to draw too many conclusions with only 22 visitors in 13 weeks. The main reason residents attend office is to hand in Housing Benefit forms and details – under government rules this can only be done at premises licensed for the purpose and the surgeries cannot be licensed. A report will be going to board and the panel’s views are welcomed.</p> <p>From a management point of view the surgeries are not cost effective and by tying up staff reduce rather than increase the service we can offer – would rather staff time was used on increased home visits.</p> <p>Panel discussed the paper and made following points</p> <p>Many residents are still not aware of service</p>
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	<p>Of those residents who have used service opinion is good – on one occasion a young mother whose property was suffering from severe back-surge was able to drop into the surgery and get prompt and effective action.</p> <p>JF Happy to hear that but it was chance that emergency happened on the day surgery was open.</p> <p>Cllr Sidnell Would agree that increased home visits are a good thing and would like to see the tabulation to prove that this is happening in area. Concerned that her request for a home visit in a noise nuisance case had elicited no response after two weeks.</p> <p>JF Concerned to hear this – after a report of antisocial behaviour he would expect the initial follow up to be a prompt home visit (unless specifically requested not to). If Cllr would give him details of this case after meeting he will investigate.</p> <p>Figure of visits carried out will be made available to next panel meeting.</p> <p>Despite this example some panel members did feel that the office was being more pro-active about visiting and dealing with ASB reports.</p> <p>After discussion the panel recommended that the Friday surgery session is retained, but that the issue is re-visited in 3 months, with details of publicity, numbers attending, reasons for attending, cost, schedule of visits in area and take up details of alternatives offered (extended hours at Upper St etc). These will help panel make judge the value of surgery.</p> <p>Panel requested that another mail shot be carried out to publicise Friday session.</p>	
<p>Tenants Compact and Project Team</p>	<p>JG A special team has now been set up under Mike Rees to deal with minor budget projects. Conrad Giwa will attend future panel meetings to give updates. For the moment any enquiries can continue to be made through JG</p> <p>The details of major works projects for 2007/8/9 are being finalised over the next three weeks and public meetings arranged where required. In September the programme will</p>	

	<p>go to the Investment and Delivery Committee (IDC).</p> <p>Firm quotes are being received for Compact projects – savings are being made and it is predicted that there will be an under-spend. Any monies left over will be brought back to panel in September to decide on further projects – there is a reserve list to choose from.</p>	
<p>Estate Parking</p>	<p>JF this is a paper on proposed increases in penalty fees for unauthorised parking on estates.</p> <p>Increased Penalties</p> <p>First proposal is an increase for release from clamping from £65 to £95 and an increase in release from towed away vehicles from £120 to £165.</p> <p>A table is attached to show the charges other boroughs make. The increases would put LBI in the middle range.</p> <p>Panel discussed the issues. Concerns were raised</p> <p>£165 is a lot for someone on benefit to find – although it was pointed out that they would not have to find it unless they parked illegally.</p> <p>At the number of cars properly parked and displaying valid permits but still clamped/towed. Although refunds can be arranged the car owner still has to find the money for release up front, for no fault of their own.</p> <p>At the number of incidents reported/experienced of aggressive manner on part of Wings staff, both clampers/towers and office staff.</p> <p>Panel asked what proportion of clamped/towed vehicles belonged to estate residents and what proportion were outsiders using estate as convenient parking.</p> <p>CD believed it was about 60% non residents but will check</p> <p><i>Ed note – this information is not directly monitored – but 1 in 10 penalised parkers appeals. Of the 27 appeals in June and July 16 were non-residents and 2 were non residents visiting residents but not displaying visitors permits – giving a proportion of roughly 1/3 residents 2/3 non-residents clamped.</i></p> <p>Panel made no recommendations on charges</p> <p>Charges to reflect engine emissions</p>	

	<p>Panel felt this would be a nightmare to administer.</p> <p>Would vehicles be charged on the basis of cubic capacity of engine, fuel type or age and condition of vehicle – all these factors affect the emissions.</p> <p>As our customers tend to be at the lower end of the economic scale those who can afford cars often have older models and would be disproportionately affected by this type of charging.</p> <p>.</p> <p><i>Ed note – following the Richmond example cars pre 2001 would be judged on engine capacity, post 2001 cars by the CO2 figure shown on the car’s V5 documents – also available from the DVLA site www.dvla.gov.newved.htm</i></p> <p>Panel members were broadly in support of idea but concerned about how it would be implemented.</p> <p>JF There will be further consultation about how it is implemented</p> <p>Terms and Conditions</p> <p>JF this is driven by a number of cases where residents have classic cars garaged while being renovated. According to current rules only vehicles with current MOT and Tax may be garaged.</p> <p>After discussion the panel felt that this rule should be relaxed, and staff given discretion on this point.</p> <p>Permit Renewal</p> <p>Permits are currently renewed annually – this is administratively time consuming and troublesome for residents.</p> <p>Proposal is to move to bi-annual.</p> <p>Panel agreed that this is sensible.</p>	
<p>Consultative Panel Development</p>	<p>Cllr Sidnell – Can only welcome paper.</p> <p>Would like to see all panel members receiving training, it would encourage more to come forward as chairs and vice</p>	

	<p>chairs.</p> <p>A training event with a large social element to thank panel members for all the work they put in and encourage networking and exchange of good practice between different panels would be a nice and useful gesture.</p>	
AOB	<p>Panel members concerned that too much jargon creeps into papers – please keep to plain English where possible</p> <p>For next panel:</p> <p>Would like a standing item on agenda for associate director to report back</p> <p>Would like a report on total rent arrears write offs</p> <p>Would like an explanation leaflet of set aside scheme</p> <p>Partners will be holding a funday in September – details to follow</p> <p>New build – panels would like notification of any intended new build before matter goes to panel</p>	