



Notes of the PFI 1 Residents Forum Meeting

15/03/07

Held at the Partners Office, Colebrooke Place, N1 8HZ

Present:

Forum members: Georgina Galliers (GG) Chair
Muriel Duncan (MD) Vice Chair
Leigh Norgrove (LN)
David Gorman (DG)
Rosemary Hilton (RH)
Sally Ingrey (SI)
Helen Crawford (HC)

HFI

Board members: Louise Round
Barbara Coventry

Partners:

Tom Irvine (TI) Customer First Manager
Ami-Anne Spring (AS) Customer First Administrator
Ruth Angel (RA) Implementation Manager
Lawrence Wakeman (LW) Works Team Project
Manager
Ian Watkinson (IW) Repairs Team Contract Director

**Homes For
Islington:**

Simon Kwong, Head of Performance & Service
Delivery
Eileen Abbot, Contract Commissioning Manager

<p>Introductions</p> <p>All were welcomed to the meeting and introductions were made.</p> <p>Apologies received from Liz Voss and Chris Radway.</p> <p>GG Chaired the meeting. MD Vice Chair</p>	
<p>1. Minutes and Matters Arising from last meeting 18th January 2007</p> <p>GG - Please can the minutes from the previous meeting be sent together with the Agenda for the next meeting?</p> <p>TI - Unfortunately a member of the Leasehold Management team cannot make it to the meeting tonight, however we have a</p>	

<p>paper that answers the issues regarding Leasehold communal areas that arose in the last meeting.</p> <p>GG - We suggested that a questionnaire be made for tenants and Leaseholders to fill in regarding communal areas, appertaining to their own property to make Partners aware of the issues. Has this been done?</p> <p>TI - The paper that has been written will hopefully answer these questions.</p> <p>LN - The communal areas need investment before people can begin to maintain them.</p> <p>TI - As freeholder, the Council does not have to provide a planned maintenance service for communal gardens – it is sufficient to provide a responsive maintenance service. Partners’ contract therefore does not require Partners to provide planned maintenance of communal gardens.</p> <p>LN - That’s not the question, I’m talking about the bare bones. If there is an over grown garden that is not the responsibility of a tenant or a Leaseholder then someone should have to come and inspect the area.</p> <p>TI - Yes, someone should come to inspect the area, on a reactive basis rather than on a planned basis.</p> <p>LN - My garden needs to be looked at.</p> <p>GG - Leigh can give details of this to Tom.</p>	
<p>2. Oral History Group</p> <p>Introduced by RA</p> <p>RA- The first item I would like to talk about is a proposal to run an Oral History Group with Partners residents. The idea behind the group is to find out about the history of properties in Islington, looking at how they became owned by the Council from previously being privately owned. The project would rely on resident involvement, and as opposed to reading through books about the history of Islington, the project would involve running interviews and hearing stories from the people who have lived this history, to get a real insight.</p> <p>GG- What is the reason for this?</p> <p>RA- This is an extremely interesting project.</p>	

<p>RH- You can find all of this information in the library.</p> <p>GG- This information can be found in the Jeffery Museum, details of how the GLC sold properties to the Council. You can ask the residents, but all the information is archived.</p> <p>RA- Interestingly it's not all archived.</p> <p>RH- The main library in Holloway has the information.</p> <p>LN- I think this sort of information should be put on the Partners website, it's not something we should discuss here.</p> <p>HC- Given all the current problems with major works is this sort of thing really a priority for Partners? Should staff not be doing something more productive?</p> <p>RA- The project wouldn't take up staff time as it will mainly be run by residents. This will only work if residents want to be involved in setting up a project group, steering the direction of the project. I would like to add an article about this in the next newsletter.</p> <p>GG- Speaking of newsletters, what happened to the newsletter, no one has received it yet?</p> <p>TI- This will be arriving any day now, you may have a print out of this if you would like it.</p> <p>GG- Does everyone agree to having an article on the Oral History Project in the next newsletter?</p> <p>All agreed.</p> <p>TI- This will be in April 2007.</p>	
<p>3. Update - Tenants Handbook</p> <p>Introduced by RA</p> <p>RA- We now have a second draft of the Tenants Handbook, that was sent out to those involved yesterday, please contact me and let me know if you haven't received this by Saturday.</p>	

4. HFI/LBI Consultative Panels

Introduced by SK

6.1 Consultative Panels - Elections, meeting dates and venues (page 2)

SK- Regarding the dates for Consultative panels, I will leave it to you to decide on these.

GG- Dates for May have been decided.

TI- They need to be confirmed.

SK- Go with these dates here.

TI- This is every 3rd Thursday, every 2 months.

Resident Involvement Strategy (page 7)

SK- This section is for information only, and discusses the resident involvement strategy. We are meeting in April 2007 to feedback residents' views on this. The idea is to improve the strategy, providing more ways for residents to be involved. Partners strategy has to be in line with HFI so you will also benefit. An example of this is Developing a Sound Board (4.4) giving people alternatives for how and what they would like to be consulted on. If people are unable to attend evening meetings or be a member of the TRA, they can still have an input via telephone surveys and focus groups.

RH- I find that people on estates tend to get involved more than people in street properties.

SK- HFI manage some street properties too. We will aim to get everyone involved.

LN- Who would choose the focus for the focus groups?

SK- We would need to review the survey results and agenda for change to see what residents think before firming up the proposals.

GG- Looking at training residents (4.7) what would this consist of?

SK- This would depend on what they want and need.

DG &- We had a workshop which Partners ran which was very good.
GG

SK- We can look at sending residents on courses or getting a trainer in to run a session. We will need to identify what

residents think will be best for them.

SI- In my experience it is very difficult to keep people interested and included. When Ann-Marie, Dave and I were involved in the TRA, there was too much work for us. Although TRA's are very important, fundamentally they work better for estate property residents as opposed to street property residents.

SK- But issues like Anti-Social Behaviour affect us all.

SI- Yes, but it tends to turn in to a couple of people doing a mammoth amount of work. The trainers need to get something in return for all of the work that they put in.

DG- The only time the TRA really worked for us was for major works issues.

GG- This was the same with the Residents forum. We started with more than 20 people. A persons social life plays a bigger part than being involved in this sort of thing. As long as they know someone else is doing something they won't get involved.

SK- I would prefer to be optimistic about this. An example of training may be that someone wants to learn how to Chair a meeting, and we can provide it for them.

GG- I wish you luck but don't hold your breath.

Governance Arrangements

SK- We would like residents to offer possible recommendations for the future of the Board. This includes options for the future of sub-boards, potential introduction of allowances to board directors, reducing the size of the board keeping more resident members than council or independent directors and changing the election procedure for residents. Your questions, comments and feedback are welcome.

DG- If allowances are introduced, will the money depend on the amount of meetings a person attends?

SK- The amount of the allowance will be linked to individual responsibility and performance, so attendance would be taken into account.

LN- What is the difference between an allowance and a salary?

LR- An allowance is a flat payment. Members are not employed through HFI. The idea is to recognise time-commitments.

SI- This is difficult, I think you should be paid but is it possible for you to receive money from a separate consortium?

- LR- It's a fundamental role – as Directors we are accountable for what happens at HFI.
- BC- I am a leaseholder and I work in the private sector. I have to take unpaid leave to attend the board meetings.
- LN- Well this would depend on who you work for.
- BC- My company will not pay for me to have the time off. I have taken 4 days unpaid leave since last Christmas.
- LN- Why do you do it?
- BC- I enjoy it.
- GG- There is a lot involved, not just meetings there is the agenda as well.
- DG- Do you want us to vote on this?
- SK- I would like feedback.
- TI- My understanding is that the Forum needs to do this now to ensure that its views can be taken into account by the Board.
- LR - I think the board is not considering this until late April so the Forum could discuss this another day and forward their views to you so that you can pass them on to HFI.
- It is agreed that the forum will pass any feedback on this to TI.
- SK- An area that will affect you the most is Sub-boards (4). The board currently has 2 sub-boards - one is Managed Property sub-board and the other is Contracted Services sub-board.
- LN- By managed property do you mean Leasehold properties?
- SK- This includes both tenants and leaseholders, but managed directly by one of HFI's Area Housing Offices.
- GG- Whenever I have been to the CSSB meetings I feel like a spare part. I'm not brought in to the discussion and I think why am I bothering? I like to contribute at meetings.
- LR- I don't think we offer enough support for people like Georgina at these meetings.

5. Performance at a Glance

Introduced by TI

TI took the Forum through the paper, beginning with Section A - progress on the refurbishment programme.

LN- Do the completed "interim" figures in this section include Leasehold?

TI- No. The number of leaseholder completions is detailed further down.

GG- I understand that If there are tenants and Leaseholders in the same block, and the Leaseholder is given incorrect information, or is not happy with the charges, this can cause delays in the process.

LW- The consultation period for the Section 20 is 20-30 days, there can then be a further 21 days added to this if a resident writes in with comments or questions. Yes this does cause delays and can result in a back-log of works.

LN- What about if all Section 20's for a block were returned last summer, and works have still not started?

LW- To my knowledge we are working on all properties that have been served a Section 20.

LN- This is not true as I have had my Section 20 and works have still not started.

GG- People who I have spoken to have all said that delays have been caused due to cost.

LW- All sums in the Section 20 notice are provisional.

HC- It is difficult to challenge the cost of something if the estimate is only provisional.

LW- That is why we carry out a Leaseholders consultation, to discuss the works and clarify any issues. It is impossible to give anything other than a provisional sum for roof works before the scaffold goes up, for example, if you can't gain access to the roof without scaffolding.

HC- Scaffolding has been put up outside my property but works have still not started yet. This is at Farringdon Road.

LW- I believe that works on Farringdon Road are due to start on Monday.

Section B - explained

GG- Does anyone have any questions regarding Repairs for Ian Watkinson?

All- No

Section C – explained

Section D – explained

LN- From personal experience, I am always asked to hold before I even speak when I ring customer service.

TI- The team are meeting the service target, but if customers are regularly being put on hold straight away that is clearly not helpful. Are you then put on hold for a long time?

SI- Yes.

HC- Whenever I try to ring the Leasehold team I am always put through to an answer phone. Customer service are very polite when they transfer the call, but I can never speak to someone in the Leasehold team.

GG- Some departments are very good, but with some you get the invisible person.

TI- If you leave a message on the answer phone do you get a call back?

HC- No

SI- No

LN- This is the same with e-mails, they have no performance indicators for these.

TI- All e-mails that are sent to the enquiries inbox are dealt with by Ami, these are logged and forwarded to the correct department. All e-mails sent to individual officers should be forwarded to Ami to log. On the one hand it is good for customers to be able to have swift email exchanges with staff to get information they need, but on the other hand, it is important that we should log email, and therefore it is preferable if emails are sent to a central inbox. We need to work out how to get this balance right. Please keep me informed of this situation.

6. Homes for Islington comment on Partners performance

Introduced by EA

EA discusses the comments on Partners Performance using handout. It is explained that generally they are pleased with Partners performance however there are problems with satisfaction regarding major works. The areas in which the satisfaction percentage is lower for Partners than it is for HFI is going to be address in the Annual Service Plan, therefore should improve.

LN- Given that there are around 330 leasehold properties with unfinished works, how can Partners be achieving their milestones for completing refurbishments?

LR- There are issues within this area, but Partners are meeting the contractual target for completions.

LN- Well I disagree with your analysis.

GG- What is the problem with the external works? There always seem to be delays in starting works on the outside of a property.

EA- Some of this is to do with the Leasehold consultation period.

TI- We will investigate the gap between the number of dwellings completed internally and the number of dwellings with internal and external works completed.

EA- I am aware that there were major works problems at the beginning of the contract, and I am aware that there are still ongoing problems. I will look in to this.

GG- This is just out of curiosity as people ask questions.

LW- I will look in to this as well. There are different reasons that may cause a delay. When we erect a scaffold we then have to have it checked and be given a licence for it, this can result in a delay of about 1 week from when it goes up to when works start. As well as this if we can't gain access to the top floor of a building we cannot start works, which again causes a delay.

LN- Looking at your graph there is a large dip in satisfaction in January to March 2006, what was the cause for this?

EA- I can't think of the cause for this at the moment, but I will look in to it.

7. Diversity Plan

Introduced by TI

TI explains Getting Residents involved in Diversity handout. The last section of the handout asks the question, *What do you want to see happening on Diversity?* We would your comments on how we can make our services accessible to everybody, we would like to find out who our customers are, to treat them individually and according to their needs. Does anybody have any ideas for the plan?

GG- We need some time to think about this, we can't tell you our ideas right now. Can we forward our ideas to you?

TI- Yes, please forward any ideas and comments to myself or Ed Butler.

HC- The papers for these meetings are sent to us in advance therefore we should be able give feedback now.

GG- Well I didn't get this information in advance.

TI- We want to use as many minds as possible to make sure we cover all areas. You may have spoken to a neighbour who said *'I can't access this service area of Partners because...'* Please let us know about this.

MD- I think you could consider how you look after elderly residents.

LN- What is the Zero Tolerance poster for?

TI- The Diversity Plan looks at the diversity of our staff as well as the diversity of our residents. Some members of our staff have on occasion been made to feel threatened and vulnerable in reception because of the behaviour of a visitor to reception. The Zero Tolerance poster is in response to staff concern.

LN- Yes but what do you have a Zero Tolerance to?

TI- Threatening and abusive behaviour to our staff.

DG- Partners must have a code of practice to follow?

TI- Yes, we do have codes of practice, but to improve our services and make them more accessible we would like feedback from our residents.

LN- You could look in to the times in which repairs operatives can carry out appointments. I can't take time off from work in term time and the repairs team don't work at weekends.

TI- Thank you, this would be a change in our service offering and

obviously would carry cost implications. I will pass the comment on to Ed Butler who is leading on this Diversity Plan.

- LR- Are there any time limits on this? You don't seem to have time-limited targets for actions.
- TI- This is not the full Diversity Plan; this is a document to consult the forum on diversity issues.
- EA- Our team can fully update residents and provide a full report. HFI have given lots of recommendations for diversity, which we have fed back to Partners. It's about tailoring the service and knowing how people need the service delivered. This is an ongoing process. Partners had an audit last year which showed that services at Colebrook Place were good but that they could be improved on. This is something that we will monitor.

8. Update - Contact Details

Introduced by TI

TI - In response to a suggestion from members of the PFI2 Forum, Partners are trying to gather confirmation from members of both Forums that they are happy for their contact details to be shared with the members of both residents forums. The idea behind this is for members to be able to talk amongst themselves via e-mail or telephone. I am aware that PFI 2 residents are keen to talk to PFI 1 residents. Ami recently sent forms for people to fill in and send back to us but only a few people have returned them. There is no obligation to do so, but we have some forms here so if anyone would like to share their details then please do so.

TI- I would also like to inform you that we are arranging a joint meeting for PFI 1 and PFI 2 residents in April. Invitations for this will be sent out to you soon.

9. Update – Service Plan

Introduced by TI

TI explains that all ideas have now been put forward for Partners Annual Service Plan. This will be uploaded on the website for people to view. Paper copies of this can be provided if anybody would like one?

MD, GG, RH, DG would like copies.

EA- HFI are still giving feedback on the plan at the moment. What I felt was that some of the outcomes that are asked for are immeasurable therefore you can't see if they have been achieved.

TI- When this has been agreed then I will be able to provide paper copies.

10. Works Team Update

Introduced by LW

LW explains the works team update. Refurbishment work at 35 Wharfedale Road has now started and will be finished by the end of March 2007, this property will be used for open days and as a respite for residents. The response for the open day on 27th February 2007 was poor. The next open day will be on 12th April 2007 from 2.00pm – 7.00pm, and this will be an Easter Special open day. Our next Leasehold open day will be at Colebrook Place on 27th March 2007. The last Leasehold Consultation evening went very

well and we received positive feed back. We have recently changed our teams around, this will enable us to cover a wider area during works

LN- I have never been to a Leasehold Consultation evening.

LW- The evening is designed to give residents information on what we do, how we work, and what will happen. There was a very good turn out last time.

EA- How many people came to the evening?

LW- I'm not sure of the exact number, but this room was filled.

HC- If works are due to start in Farringdon Road on Monday, will I be informed of this?

LW- You should have had a letter by now. I know that with Farringdon Road there are problems with the Red Route and parking issues. We have been told to move on by the police, the delay could be for around 1 week.

HC- Will this affect my Leasehold charge?

LW- No.

HC- Will I get 2 bills for the works, front and rear?

LW- No, once the survey has been done you will get a final account.

EA- I am concerned about the delays with major works.

HC- For example, if I receive the letter tomorrow, and get feedback from a friend who works in property. I can let you know I'm happy to proceed or ask to discuss the works, however if I do want to discuss the works, this will then cause another delay for other residents in the block.

EA- I would like feedback on the works programming.

LW- We don't get enough help when it comes to licensing which can cause delays.

EA- But this doesn't effect the surveys.

LW- A survey has been issued, they are in place. The start date for works is on the letter. Helen if there are any problems please ring to let us know.

Any Other Business

GG- Is there any other business?

RH- Tom, the problems with the tree that I have been talking to you about are not solved yet.

TI- I will follow this up and someone will contact you shortly.

HC- Is there an HFI pest control policy that I can have please?

TI- The Islington Council policy is on the Council's website.

HC- I've already looked at it. I would like an outline of who has specific responsibility for pest-control.

TI- I can tell you that if you are a tenant pest-control is Partners responsibility and if you are a leaseholder pest-control is your own responsibility.

HC - Could I see the policy, please?

Minutes agreed by (sign and print name)

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Date

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The meeting closed at 8.30pm

Next meeting: Thursday 17th May 2007 at 6.30pm

