



Notes of the PFI 2 Residents Forum Meeting

08/03/07

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

Present:

Forum members: Shirley Bryant (SB)
Susanne Lamido (SL Chair)
Comfort Mintal (CM)

HFI Resident
Board members: Desmond Smith (DS)
Theresa Coyle (TC)

Partners: Katrina Dalby (KD), Customer First Officer
(Partnership Team)
Bob Thurgood (BT), Project Manager R2 (Works Team)
Gary McDonald (GM), Contract Manager R2 (Works Team)
Ed Butler (EB), Head of Quality (Partnership Team)
Ruth Angel (RA) Implementation Manager (Partners)

Homes For Islington: Ivan Willis (IW), Contract Commissioning Manager

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| <p>Introductions</p> <p>All were welcomed to the meeting and introductions were made.</p> <p>Apologies received from Liz Voss, Pat Langley and Anthony Jonas</p> <p>SB nominated and CM seconded SL as Chair. SL was appointed as Chair.</p> | |
| <p>1. Previous Minutes</p> <p>The content of the previous minutes were agreed</p> <p>The Chair requested that all future minutes are formally accepted with a sign off at the end. She also requested the minutes are included in the pack that is sent prior to the meeting, rather than in advance.</p> | <p>Action Point KD</p> |
| <p>2. Oral History Group</p> <p>Introduced by RA</p> | |

RA wants to establish whether there is any interest in a Oral History Group. The idea behind a history group is that talking to people who lived through events and using their memories to write history gives us a greater understanding of the time. Jerry White has written historical books about London. He was a Senior Environmental Health Officer in Islington in the 1970's and 80's and RA has been in contact with him regarding the project. RA has visited the history centre and handed round a number of press cuttings from the past concerning Islington. The key to the success of a history group is residents being interested and owning it. They also have to agree the outcome that they would like to reach, e.g. an article/presentation/book. RA would like to propose an article for the next Tenant Newsletter asking for volunteers and would the Forum's permission to do so.

SL had no objection to the article and offered to give RA a copy of the Islington Gazette
SB was very interested and knew someone who would be keen to get involved.
RA confirmed that she would have time to facilitate the group if there was enough interest.

3. Update on Tenants Handbook

RA introduced item 3.

SL and SB commented on the how excellent the tenants handbook meeting was.

RA showed two examples of Hyde tenant's handbooks. These were the most popular styles and RA has progressed to quotes for Partners. RA has completely redrafted the content as a result of the meeting and feedback from staff. A full second draft will be sent during w/c 12/3/07 for feedback. RA is also in discussion with obtaining certification from the Plain English campaign. This will involve them reading the draft and making proposals for improving the handbook based on the principles of plain English.

DS Will we translate the handbook into other languages?

RA I have spoken to HFI for guidance. We will include a strip along the side which will say what the handbook is and how it can be translated in six community languages. The handbook will also be available in Braille and on tape. We aim to have the handbook at the printers by the end of the month. It is for all existing and any new tenants.

4. HFI/LBI Consultative Panels

Introduced by IW

Feedback on rent from last meeting

Garages and car park spaces – agreed by the board not to increase

the rent and review in the next financial year.

HFI have limited discretion regarding rent increases. They have to follow a formula set by the Government. If this is not done they may lose their subsidies.

SL Does the Govt subsidise social housing rents?

IW I am not an expert but the rents do not meet the cost of borrowing over the last 60 years and therefore we get some subsidy to pay the interest.

EB We can arrange for training after the elections.

Options for the sub boards

HFI have reviewed their governance arrangements and the paper is the outcome of this. The forum were asked to consider which of the three options available they would prefer. The options are to remove the sub boards, leave the sub boards as they are and grant them more powers or merge the sub boards.

TC What are the powers as these are not detailed?

IW These are such things as deciding on local funding, community safety budget, arbitrate disputes, and look at petitions.

DS Merging looks good

TC System doesn't do enough consulting. I would prefer to give more power to the boards and am against merging them. It is difficult to drill down on issues now during meetings. If the boards were merged this would become even more difficult.

SL I don't want to get rid of the boards and merging them would make them too big.

DS They could become more efficient and cost effective.

IW You can keep them as they are and give them more power

SL What is the safety budget?

IW This is a security and anti crime measures budget from LBI. Currently the PFI hasn't had access to it. It might be worth the forum getting clarification on the allocation of this budget to the PFI

TC Wanted to confirm why DS and I are here. We are to listen to your issues on governance and take your views and feedback for the HFI Board.

Introduction of allowances for board directors

TC/DS This is not a payment, it is an allowance. The Local Government are keen to introduce allowances and a lot of Housing Associations generally pay them. It acknowledges that residents are part of the board and elected. Members can attend up to 70 meetings in a year and we feel that the allowance will acknowledge the work and bring some balance to the time and effort which is put in. HFI is behind some other ALMO's as they pay an allowance. It is a controversial proposal but councillors get paid and tenants shouldn't be any different. We have benchmarked against other RLS's and this information is in the pack.

IW What does the panel think?

SB How are residents elected?

TC The election reform society conducts the official election. The last one was July 06.

SL I am not comfortable with the idea of an allowance and would like to see comparable figures. I have done a lot of work for charity and never received financial recompense. It may attract the wrong sort of people.

IW It may actually attract people who don't normally get involved. We just need to take away your feedback today. City West Homes, Gateshead, Bernside Homes all pay an allowance. Further examples are in the notes.

TC I have only recently become a Partners tenant and have been a resident in Islington for 42 years. I have also been head of a resident's board. I think that an allowance will only reimburse me for what I spend.

SB There aren't many tenant associations in street properties

SL Who decided on the allowance amount?

DS If you look at section 5.8 there is the figure agreed by the board

SL How many are on the board?

IW There are 7 resident directors

SL I would like to abstain from the vote

SB I don't think it is a bad idea but will it attract the wrong type of people?

TC You shouldn't let the people put you off

CM Good idea if elected

Reducing the size of the board and having more resident directors

IW There are currently 17 members. 7 residents, 5 councillors and 5 independants

SL Where do the independents come from?

TC They come from when the ALMO was originally set up

DS If the board is reduced there should be more residents. Councillors become members by nomination by the council.

IW Research has suggested that an effective board contains 15 or less members. Evidence says that 9-12 is a good number. A reduction in size would be more efficient and cost effective.

SL How many are you suggesting?

IW I just need your view in principle of the proposal

SB What is the benefit to us?

IW It is good practise for the reasons listed in the report

TC If we reduce the number will we have less residents? I think it would be good if it was made up of 100% residents.

SL Can we reduce the number of councillors?

DS If we had 7 residents and reduce to 3 councillors and 3 independents

Everyone agreed that this was the preferred option.

Changing elections conducted for resident directors

IW Currently the region is divided into North and South. Only candidates in the North can stand for the North elections and candidates from the South can stand for the South elections. The area elections alternate every three years.

SL This seems mad as we are all Islington tenants. Shouldn't there be just one election?

IW The options are to keep the current set up, allow candidates from the whole borough to stand for North and South elections or have borough wide elections every two years.

SL No

IW Option 3 is borough wide every two years with two electoral areas. Anyone eligible can stand and the first year the North would vote and the second time the South would vote.

TC I am pleased with this option as no one is barred from standing. There is a rolling programme and the cost is high

DS Two years ago two people went for the elections. Why do we have to reinvent the wheel?

TC I don't think it worked well

SL Liberal Democrats have the same procedure. How do people stand?

DS Candidates write about themselves on the election papers detailing why they want to stand in no more than 150 words

IW What is the preferred option, 1,2 or 3?

SL Borough wide and anyone can stand, option 2

CM 2 and 3 are similar. To stand people need to be able to chair, speak out and may be the same people will stand each time. I think option 3

SB Majority seem to think option 2

Draft Involvement Strategy

IW EB will be bringing the themes from the HFI strategy into the Partners strategy. New items are estate services and introducing a sounding board. The status survey showed that PFI residents are less satisfied with involvement so the plan may help.

SL It is a lot to do with estates and we don't have such a community spirit in street properties

SB We may be brought together more once the refurbishment starts

5. Performance at a glance + 6 HFI Comment on Partners' Performance

Introduced by EB

Repairs satisfaction is at 91%. 99% of communal repairs are done on time and 100% of other repairs have been done on time. Rent collection target is 97%. It can't be 100% as there will always be some people who don't pay. We always actively pursue tenants who haven't paid their rent. We achieved 98.6% in January. We responded to 100% of correspondence and complaints within 10 working days and we answered 97.6% of calls within 18 seconds.

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| <p>SB The repairs service is excellent.</p> <p>TC Over the last two weeks I have been contacted by tenants regarding the decent homes standards. I have received some very serious complaints. Why would you rip out a house and then stop the work? I phoned Partners for the first time at Christmas to report an emergency. They told me that it wasn't an emergency and an engineer would not be sent. I asked to speak to the manager and am still waiting for a call back.</p> <p>EB I will check the call logs with the customer service team</p> <p>IW Confirmed the structure and set up of Partners</p> <p>TC I was honest about a bit of heat coming out of my basement radiator which was why I think it wasn't treated as an emergency.</p> <p>BT It sounds like it should have been a call out. If I can take your address I can look into it. TC provided address</p> <p>EB The complaint that TC referred to has been logged and will be responded to within 10 working days.</p> <p>TC I would like to arrange to visit the tenant</p> <p>SB One of my neighbours hasn't had any packing boxes delivered</p> <p>BT Here is my mobile number 07702528828. Please get the resident to call me and I will sort out their boxes.</p> <p>SL When Partners first took over the service was much better than the council's but it is deteriorating. I had a problem with anti social behaviour and a problem with my gate. I have found it difficult to get through.</p> <p>IW External boundaries are HFI's responsibility. Your gate has been passed to HFI who will arrange for a surveyor to attend</p> <p>EB I will take an action point to look at call handling in the organisation</p> <p>DS Why have the empty homes gone up?</p> <p>IW When a property becomes vacant it is refurbished which takes time.</p> <p>BT 43 voids were handed over in one go and on average we probably get 3 a week</p> <p>IW Some have been empty for over 18 months. HFI Agree with the figures. There is some concern over the out of hour's calls</p> | <p>Action Point EB</p> <p>Action Point EB</p> |
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performance. Partners are meeting the contractual target but there is scope for improvement.

SL The council's out of hours service was very efficient

7. Diversity Plan

EB introduced section 7.

We want ideas from the resident's forum on staff and resident diversity. Issues such as recruitment, and access to our services. EB went through the paper and asked the forum what they thought.

SL How do we broaden the forum?

BT We did an open day for round 2 and only 4 people came. We did it when the works were due and did a leaflet drop so that residents knew about it.

EB There are two newsletters at the printers now and the first one will be delivered in the next 7 days. The second one will be delivered in 14 days. The third one will be an election special with tick boxes etc. We are sorry that they will come out at once and in future there will be more consistency

SL I am not pleased about this

TC I am concerned why there are two forums. Why not one as it would be stronger?

BT The two PFI's have different specifications and works team.

TC The forum shouldn't just be about the works, it should also be about other things

SL Didn't want to merge now as we have only just started. PFI1 has been going for 2 years and are a different team

8. Contact Details

KD introduced item 9

We have only received three replies to our request for contact details from the resident's forum. Please can people return these so that we can improve communication between the members?

9. Service Plan

EB introduced item 8

The service plan will be on the website at the end of March/early April. It has incorporated the feedback from the forum, staff and HFI

IC I have some observations. Want it to be sharper and more measurable to enable monitoring

EB We can discuss this outside of the meeting

10. Works Update

BT introduced section 9 and provided an update on the Works progress.

SL Do you use smiley cards for feedback?

BT We don't use smiley cards. The RLO leaves the feedback sheet and collects it at a later date. We do not stand with the resident whilst they fill in the card.

SB I cant believe how hard the team work.

IW We will be looking at the quality of the reports from an independent company

BT 56 properties have been opened since Christmas, 93 opened since October and we have met the contract milestones.

IW We look at the data that underlies the figures PFI1 has an independent survey. We want to do the same for PFI2. The KPI is measured by the data provided by the Works team. We also have an independent view from the outside.

BT I will bring a sample of the resident feedback questionnaire for the next meeting

TC Will it be completed?

BT We can't bring a completed card because of the data protection.

10. AOB

SL It was a very jovial meeting.

TC We need to get the packs on time and formulate a pack specific to Partners and bind them to make it easier

Next meeting will be in April – date to be agreed. This will be a joint meeting for both forum's.

Action
Point BT

Minutes agreed by (sign and print name)

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Date

Chair

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