

Upper Street Area Housing Panel

8/1/07 Rm 6, Town Hall

Present	<p>HFI Staff</p> <p>Eamon McGoldrick – Chief Executive Jon Farrant – Senior Area Housing Manager Chris Donovan – Performance and Partnership</p> <p>LBI Councillors</p> <p>Cllr Shelley Coupland Cllr Barbara Smith Cllr Gary Doolan Cllr Joan Coupland</p> <p>Voting Members</p> <p>Brian Potter – Chair and Pleasant Place Felix Ngondi – Bentham Court Mary Bowman – 1 in a 1000 Adelhak Menhi – Cluse Court Mike Padfield – Mersey Estate - Rotherfield House Christian Clark - Marquess (Western Isles)</p> <p>Observers</p> <p>Ifeoma Mkparu – Bentham Angela Brooks-Grant – Bentham</p>	
Apologies	Elsa Topping – 1 in a 1000	
Mins of last meeting	<p>P2</p> <p>MP will now cost £8 to get from Mersey Estate to new office at Lyon St by bus. This is absurd; councillors promised offices would be accessible.</p> <p>JF Residents usually can attend any office for most purposes. Surgeries will also be held on estates remote from their own office</p>	
Rent Review	EM Rents are rising in line with government expectations – a national formula is set. The annual	

	<p>increase to reach the governments expectation over a 10-year period is set out in the paper.</p> <p>The average increase for next year is £3.70 a week or 5%.</p> <p>67% of tenants are on Housing Benefit and increases will have a minimum effect on them.</p> <p>Heating and hot water charges will also increase by 5%</p> <p>Caretaker, garage and concierge charges will increase by 4.1%</p> <p>BP these charges are un-pooled and so have no cap. Although this years increase is in line with rents be aware there is nothing to stop the Council increasing these charges sky high.</p> <p>EM Caretaking charges are refunded where there has been a total loss of service for more than 5 days</p> <p>BP This cannot be claimed if any service is provided in absence of a caretaker – even if only minimum daily duties are done once a week for a year no refund would be payable.</p> <p>EM In theory this is right but we would not do this, any suggestion that we would is outrageous and any suspicion of such incidents should be referred direct to him.</p> <p>BP Residents should complain direct to ombudsman and get decent compensation if service is poor.</p> <p>EM All surveys indicate resident satisfaction with caretaking service has significantly improved</p> <p>BP Why isn't there facility to reclaim for any day service is not fully provided.</p> <p>EM Refunds are expensive to process, money which comes out of rent and service charges. Less than 5 days loss of service becomes uneconomic to process.</p>	
Packington	EM – an information paper to keep panel informed of	

	<p>progress</p> <p>Vote on transfer had a good turnout –</p> <p>78% of tenants, of which 89% voted for transfer.</p> <p>88% of leaseholders voted, of which 94% voted in favour.</p> <p>Work on transfer starts immediately with transfer in April. Both stock and land will be transferred</p> <p>Cllr Doolan – Will this trigger a reduction in HFIs management fee from Council</p> <p>EM Yes</p> <p>BP Do leaseholders realise that they will only have a share of equity if/when they return</p> <p>EM There was extensive consultation with leaseholders</p> <p>BP REITs (Real Estate Investment Trusts) are now a reality in this country. Housing Associations can now float on stock exchange as plc and any land transferred from public ownership to them may well end up being administered for profit of shareholders.</p> <p>GD What happens to shared equity arrangements on death of a leaseholder?</p> <p>EM Assumes that arrangement will pass by inheritance/sale with leasehold but will check.</p> <p>(ed note: shared equity can be inherited by resident partner/child, otherwise property would be sold on open market and proceeds divided pro rata)</p> <p>CC Is it true that 300 homes will be for sale?</p> <p>EM Yes, this is usual in developments now, provides some funding and a mixed tenure estate. It will provide £19m towards cost of redevelopment</p> <p>CC £189m for 300 units works out as £63,333 a unit.</p>	
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	<p>Are they being sold as affordable housing</p> <p>EM No, this is the profit, not the selling price. The let properties will provide the affordable housing</p> <p>BP Affordable is worked out assuming a household has an income of £43,000 a year!</p>	
<p>Tenants Compact</p>	<p>EM The current panel will allocate tenants compact and estate security projects for next year, the money and work will then transfer with the estates to the new offices where appropriate.</p> <p>A special meeting will be held in February to consider projects and vote</p> <p>CD Would panel members ensure that any projects they have in mind are with Quality assurance officers asap to allow time for drawing up plans and having them costed before meeting.</p> <p>EM There will be a full report on Tenants Compact at March meetings as there are some changes needed relating to change in office structure, FITAs role etc.</p> <p>One of the points which needs to be considered is whether we have 4 panels – ie one for each office, or more.</p> <p>Board agreed we would start with 4 but that each panel would have option to split into 2. There are advantages and disadvantages to smaller panels – would they be quorate? We could end up with anywhere from 4-8 panels with Compact fund split accordingly.</p> <p>MP Concerned that panel meetings will be a long way to get to – in the case of Lyon St, St Mary's will be joining an established panel on which they will be automatically outvoted on matters like where the panel is held and whether there should be 1 or 2 panels.</p> <p>BP Concerned that no-one from St Mary's will want to attend Lyon St.</p>	

	<p>EM There will be a decision to take as to whether the Compact fund is divided in a straight split between offices or whether to introduce an element of taking into account property numbers.</p> <p>CC Concerned by the size of some of the bills</p> <p>EM Shares this concern. Keirs have been asked to work up a list of 50 most common projects and tender. Sub contractors usually do (this work). Panel should query any estimates they feel are too high so that residents get best value. HFI are looking to see if there is a way of taking residents suggestions of contractors for some jobs, providing the contractors meet our specifications.</p>	
<p>Tenant and leaseholder satisfaction surveys</p>	<p>According to surveys satisfaction is increasing but there is still a lot of room for improvement.</p> <p>Current satisfaction rating for tenants is 54% (up from 38% in 2004) and for leaseholders is 34% (no data available for 2004 and no breakdown between RTB leaseholders and those who have bought in is available)</p> <p>Younger residents and those from BME communities are less likely to be satisfied</p> <p>TMOs and Partners report higher satisfaction ratings.</p> <p>The surveys are being used to identify areas of weakness and draw up an action plan.</p> <p>Cllr Smith All the surveys conducted by post – this skews the figures, as people who are not satisfied are more likely to respond and different sectors of the community have higher response rates.</p> <p>EM We have to conduct the surveys by post in order for figures to be directly comparable with other organisations – government sets rules.</p> <p>We do recognise that results are skewed by this and are developing plans to conduct face-to-face interviews but these will be in addition and cannot be included in official figures.</p>	

<p>Land disposal</p>	<p>EM Only one item in Upper St area – the derelict site in Graham St</p> <p>MP Would like to see social housing provided rather than affordable as most people cannot afford affordable housing.</p> <p>EM The term affordable housing tends to be used as an umbrella term for both.</p> <p>BP Affordable housing is reckoned on a household income of £49,000! Most of the disposals will go to Housing Associations and with the advent of REITs those may well float on stock exchange meaning land will be managed for the profit of shareholders Does not approve of privatising a public asset (unless to leaseholders)</p>	
<p>Consultative Panels</p>	<p>EM This is the last meeting of the Upper St Area Housing Panel.</p> <p>The March round of meetings will be under the new arrangements.</p> <p>Initially one panel will meet for each of the new offices. The board has agreed that if those panels so desire they could split in two. There are advantages and disadvantages to this type of split.</p> <p>Panel members need to consider the size of a panel – will it be easy to obtain a quorum etc, the distance members travel, cost implications, possible confusion if panels for one office take conflicting views and the size and flexibility of Compact fund allocations amongst other considerations.</p> <p>It is possible for the March panel to decide to remain as one panel form considering central items but to set up sub-panels to meet and consider local issues.</p> <p>The March panel will elect a chair for that meeting only and decide on how to structure future meetings (i.e. one panel or two, dates and venues)</p> <p>The resultant panel will hold their elections in the May</p>	

	<p>round. Leaseholders, Partners and TMOs have been asked to synchronise their elections.</p> <p>BP Understands Central St Office is to close</p> <p>EM These reports are premature. The area in which the office is situated is to be redeveloped and as part of that development a purpose built office may be included, meaning that the office will be temporarily housed whilst demolition/construction is being carried out. It may be that, after consultation, it is decided to move to a different location – near the Angel for example. None of this will happen until 2009, there will be talks before then.</p> <p>GD What happens if part of a panel wants two panels and the rest want one.</p> <p>EM It will go by majority vote.</p> <p>GD All the constituent parts of Upper St will be joining other panels in which they will be in the minority and automatically outvoted.</p> <p>BP Where would West office hold its meetings? Not, presumably at the Town Hall. Most of St Mary's Ward members will not want to travel all the way to Lyon St with several bus changes.</p> <p>There is a Board meeting on 15th January and members should go along to the first 20 minutes, which is an open question time.</p> <p>Does not approve of member of staff taking chair for elections.</p> <p>Cllr Smith This is standard practice in many organisations.</p> <p>BP FITA or councillors should do it</p> <p>EM It is a formality for 10 mins only</p>	
Board decisions	HFI has been recognised two more awards – finalist in UK Housing Awards for witness support scheme,	

	<p>Personnel Today award for online staff diversity training</p> <p>Provision has been made for 3 staff to train as special constables (now called BoroughBeat).</p> <p>BP What does the ring-fencing referred to in paragraph 3.4.2 refer?</p> <p>EM When the Council give HFI money for a specific purpose over and above management fee it is ring-fenced and can only be used for stated purpose.</p>	
AOB	<p>A paper will be brought to March panel about resident involvement, the role of FITA etc.</p> <p>MB Block letter to Wakelin House about dogs caused a lot of grief</p> <p>BP A number of residents have raised it with him.</p> <p>CD We have received a number of complaints about dogs defecating and urinating on the walkways of Wakelin. They may belong to residents or visitors or they may be strays. A letter was sent to all residents, to warn anyone owning dogs or having visitors with dogs that this behaviour is unacceptable and reassuring everyone else that we take the matter seriously and are trying to do something about it.</p> <p>JF will review text of letter but this is good practice in such cases.</p> <p>BP Has the audit commissions report been published</p> <p>EM This was not a formal inspection but one commissioned by HFI in advance of the real one to give us a picture of areas in need of improvement.</p> <p>MP If HFI residents paid for it then they should be able to see report.</p> <p>EM Will check if it is to be publicly released.</p> <p>MP The estate security budget which is given to</p>	

	<p>Rosebowl and Canonbury project was given on condition that they would report back to panel on their work. Panel has not had a report.</p> <p>CD They attended twice but panel did not have time to hear them, Written reports were circulated with the next papers.</p>	
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