

Upper St Area Housing Panel 20/11/06

<p>Present</p>	<p>Brian Potter – Pleasant Place and Chair Mary Bowman – 1 in a 1000 Mike Padfield – Mersey Christian Clark – Marquess (Western Isles)</p> <p>Barbara Coventry – Director Lucy Watt – Councillor</p> <p>Jon Farrant – Senior Area Housing Manager Chris Donovan – PPO</p> <p>Lorenzo Heanue – Operations Manager, Responsive Repairs</p>	
<p>Apologies</p>	<p>Cluse Court Haslam Close Walkinshaw Court</p>	
<p>Mins of previous meeting</p>	<p>PI</p> <p>PFI2 BP – Continually assured that there is no dowry for PFI2 but talk of £153m from DCLG (successor to office of Deputy Prime Minister) needs explaining. Eamon and Doug are putting together a short paper to explain. There is some issue about whether it is a grant or a loan. The SATMAN loans highlight the dangers if it is a loan.</p> <p>BP went to conference in Birmingham run by National Federation of ALMOs and asked questions about ownership of properties built by 3* ALMOs. DCLG confirmed that ownership would reside with ALMO and that if tie with Council was broken or ALMO went down Housing Investment trust route and floated on stock exchange the property would be used for profit of private individuals.</p> <p>Comments from the floor pointed out that leasehold property was anyway</p> <p>Cllr Watt asked what BP would prefer to see</p> <p>BP Ownership of property should be vested in Council</p> <p>BC But it would be social housing anyway</p>	

BP No, it is just a way of selling council housing into private ownership for private profit

MB like right to buy

MP Most tenants just want plain simple Council Housing without all these extra tiers of bureaucracy managing.

Office Closure

BP has spoken to the chairs of the other panels – at least will not vote any of the options for panels in case it is read as accepting that there was proper consultation over the office closures. Other panels are making positive choice top make no choice. BP suggests that panel move straight to a vote not to vote on this item.

MP residents on Mersey Estate very unhappy at moving to management of Lyon St – it is most inconvenient to get to, needing three changes of bus.

JF Islington is very small and it is only 20 minutes walk

MB pointed out not all tenants are as fit as Jon

After discussion it was decided to take the item first on the agenda.

Neither CC of Marquess or MP of Mersey have heard any more about the Estate Service Improvement Group.

JF First meeting will be on 28th Nov at Highbury House in board-room. All participants will be notified over next few days.

BP Decent Community strategy – had meeting with GOL – scope and lack of reality in policy is alarming

Cllr Watt LBI has challenged Mayor of London about the number of new build properties it is expecting in Islington – 1160 a year for ten years is too many to be practical

	<p>P7</p> <p>MB – tree at Wakelin is still not pruned – banging on windows in the wind. The garden underneath it scrappy and dank.</p> <p>CD We were told that tree section did not regard it as needing pruning. Estate services have asked them to look again.</p> <p>JF will look at it personally and will ask about replanting garden.</p> <p>BP Would like to know why chair of HFI is chosen by secret ballot – he wants to know who voted for whom</p> <p>Cllr Watt Secret ballot is usual and prevents undue pressure</p> <p>CC Open vote is the higher standard of democracy</p> <p>P8 Should read aerials not areas.</p> <p>MP Eamon has said that HFI policy of no dishes will not be enforced unless a dish is over-sized or causing problems until future plans for communal dishes have been realised</p> <p>BC worried about dishes attached to roofs, which invalidate guarantees.</p> <p>BP Trusts costs of removal and making good will not be charged as communal repair (and therefore leaseholders have to pay proportion) but to culprit</p>	
<p>Panel restructuring</p>	<p>JF Decision to close Boleyn and Isledon offices has been taken by Board and is not up for discussion.</p> <p>BP The boards decisions can always be discussed</p> <p>JF The paper seeks panel's opinions of the best structure of panels to reflect the new area office structure.</p> <p>The options are</p>	

- 1) one panel per office (an overall reduction of 2)
- 2) 2 panels per office (an overall increase of 2)
- 3) One per office but 2 for East, the largest office. (An overall decrease of 1.)

BP objects to panels being closed down – it limits ability of residents to make themselves heard.

JF one of the options put forward would increase the number of panels

BP Proper consultation has not been carried out, 16,000 letters were sent out and only 3 replies received.

MP This figure is wrong, personally knows of 4 people who replied. Mersey Residents very concerned about being moved to Lyon St.

JF This is muddling office closure with panel re-organisation. Vote is on latter. One of the options on office re-structuring would have left Mersey with Upper St but panel chose not to select an option.

BP HFI are trying to save the £1 ¼ m it has lost in management fees due to PF! But LBI have just spent £ 2 ½ m on re-decorating Highbury House for ALMO mgt

BP Does panel wish to vote on options for panels or not? BP does not like either the decision taken to close offices despite of residents opinions nor does he like the proposal to re-organise panels.

BP HFI have invited auditors in to do mock inspection but didn't tell residents – now they have found out they intend to make their voice heard.

Cllr Watt – Auditors were no secret

BP Residents do not want offices closed

JF It gives scope for surgeries on estates – most customers at AHO are for housing benefit which can be receipted at any office. Repairs are dealt with by

	<p>HFI direct, not many people need to visit their own office but can use any one</p> <p>Cllr Watt We need to ensure people understand that.</p> <p>JF Staffing strategy is in progress to sort out which staff will work from which office. HFI are trying to ensure as much continuity as possible, with staff moving with their patches when possible.</p> <p>BC Letters should go out to residents to explain arrangements ASAP</p> <p>BP Move to vote</p> <p>CD Ist vote is on whether to chose an option, if it decided to do so the second will be between the options.</p> <p>Vote taken – unanimous decision note to vote on options.</p> <p>BP emphasised that this is not a matter of taking no view but a positive expression of anger that resident’s opinions were not taken into account when deciding on office closures.</p>	
<p>Capital Programme</p>	<p>Charts show what work is planned on estates. There is also info on web site.</p> <p>BP The delivery of this plan will be greatly affected by the new provisions Ruth Kelly is proposing extending deadlines and funding past 2010 to 2012. ALMOs will not get money to implement by 2010</p> <p>MP Mersey is only down for kitchens but when sample was done they were told they would get kitchens and bathrooms.</p> <p>CD will check with project team. If any other TRA spots anything they believe to be an error please let him know.</p>	

	<p>BP HFI are backing off on doing kitchens and bathrooms because they cannot re-charge leaseholders – more emphasis on works where they can</p>	
<p>Business Plan</p>	<p>BP objects to all three themes – the ALMO was sold to residents as a management company, no one said anything about a way forward. Residents did not vote for new build or to sell services.</p> <p>Cllr Watt HFI is looking at the services they offer. They need to build more houses as the waiting lists are ever increasing</p> <p>BC If HFI have an excellent service they can reduce prices to residents by selling some of that expertise</p> <p>CC has always felt that Council was shackled. HFI may be freer to provide better services by looking at this sort of option.</p> <p>CD Bentham asked if the possibility of Circle33 using buying into our caretaking service would be an example of this</p> <p>JF explained that Bentham is an estate where HFI manage ¾ and supply daily caretaking and Circle33 manage a quarter supplying caretaking once a week. It would be cheaper and to everyone’s advantage for Circle to hire our services. This is a good example.</p> <p>BC believes HFI should be commended on an excellent business plan</p>	
<p>Compensation Policy</p>	<p>Cllr Watt If the gas is cut off to a block, as in Jersey House recently, would the supplier compensate.</p> <p>JF Yes, in the example of Jersey House they are paying £30 a day compensation. HFI are also re-charging management cost of evacuation of building.</p> <p>CC Lift policy was almost impossible to claim under</p> <p>CD Discretionary payments are possible in particular circs. If CC will give details of elderly tenant who was stranded he will write up a report for this to be considered.</p>	

	<p>Cllr Watt Even though no claims succeeded believes it best to leave something in place</p> <p>BP There should meaningful consultation</p> <p>Cllr Watt Concerned about deaf residents and those whose first language is not English getting letters. S there a way of flagging these up?</p> <p>Also suggests a mentoring scheme for newly arrived immigrants.</p>	
AOB	<p>Irene Spence who was sub board associate director has resigned for family reasons. Any takers for post – there are two meetings before Upper St Panel dissolved.</p> <p>CC volunteered.</p> <p>BP raised brickwork around Halton Mansions agreed under Compact not yet done</p> <p>MB announced that the ramp at Wakelin has been installed</p>	