

Resident Scrutiny Panel Meeting
Wednesday 23rd April 2014, 6PM
Tayside House, 31 Pepper Street, London, E14 9RP

Present:

Resident Members

Usha Begum [UB]
Genia Leontowitsch (Chair) [GL]

Apologies:

Resident Members

Margaret Donovan [MD]
Margaret Hughes [MH]

Officers & Independent

Debbie Davies [DD] – Head of Policy & Service Improvement
Alex Bailey (Minutes)

Action

1. Introductions & Welcome

All present introduced themselves to each other.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Margaret Hughes and Margaret Donovan.

3. Minutes of 26th February 2014 / Matters Arising

3.1 Item 4.6 – GL observed that she had been referring to several stairwells as opposed to just one

3.2 Item 5.2 – GL stated should read 'St George's estate homeowners' to avoid confusion

3.3 Item 3.1 – DD informed the panel that Keith Davis has visited the property and believed that one may be relocated but the other cannot. EEH will continue to discuss this with KD.

3.4 Items 3.3, 6.1 and 7.2 – these were covered on the agenda or AOB

3.5 Item 7.4 – The panel confirmed that their vouchers had been received.

Pending the amendments noted at 3.1 and 3.2 above, the Panel **AGREED** the minutes as an accurate record.

4. Review of emergency calls under new contract

4.1 GL commented that she had been amazed how many calls had been handled well for a new contract. DD explained that she and two colleagues had reviewed the details of every call. DD believed that small things could be done to effect improvements, e.g. the contractor details to be recorded in the same place every time. There were also issues identified around vulnerability and operatives not always understanding repair priorities with regards to the heating season.

- 4.2 DD added that EEH has approximately 5 different kinds of heating system and that John Hinds will review with Mears to make sure that the correct flags and information are showing on their systems for each property. DD commented that it appears from the review that the operatives do understand repairs and can give basic advice without reference to contractors.
- 4.3 GL asked a question about a specific case and DD explained that contractors can typically give a small 'top up' when credit is low, but EEH is not sure if a contractor attended.
- 4.4 GL asked about another case where a need to follow up with an adjoining property was identified. DD stated that not all of the relevant information had been provided but that following a meeting earlier that morning she was confident that Mears understood what was needed. It was discussed that a recent major incident had been handled well and that this had been commented on by the Lead Member for Housing. DD added that KPI monitoring will begin soon once EEH is confident that all information is being correctly provided.
- 4.5 GL felt that the script was not sufficiently precise to cover eventualities such as the window which recently fell out on St George's estate. DD believed that it was not possible to devise a 'catch all' for every circumstance although the reference within the script to anything endangering a resident would be relevant in that case. GL felt that the residents in this particular case would have benefitted from a reassurance follow-up call. DD stated that this formed a part of the script and added that the ECO call handling contractor have been reminded that calls can be escalated to the EEH Duty Manager rather than trying to chase up contractors and keep tenants informed.
- 4.6 GL asked if the exercise would be repeated. DD replied that the aim was to carry out a quarterly sample review and that John Hinds will meet with them regularly. GL commented that on the whole she was encouraged by the progress achieved to date. DD emphasised the value of receiving information on all the calls received as opposed to only those where jobs had been raised.

The Panel **NOTED** the report.

5. Welfare Reform Impacts

- 5.1 GL thought that EEH was doing a lot in this area. DD observed that some of the anticipated impacts in 2013/14 did not materialise due to the policies adopted by LBTH. GL asked about financial planning and DD explained that the anticipated impacts had been 'pushed forward' although there is a fair degree of uncertainty over the timescales of implementation.

5.2 The inclusion of welfare reform as a 'medium' risk on the risk register was discussed and DD explained that risks are reviewed on an annual basis. GL asked about the 'substantial' assurance level found and DD explained that the framework for assessment is TIAA's (the auditors) standard model and that 'substantial' is the highest level of assurance provided.

5.3 GL asked about the profile of the households affected by the cap and DD and AB explained that typically larger families are affected. It was discussed that for some of the more extreme cases it is not the housing-related welfare payments which are the issue. Finding employment for such cases to resolve the restrictions will be difficult, given, as UB observed, that the minimum hours for Working Tax Credit eligibility has increased to 24 hours. DD added that a reference to available money advice and food bank referrals was included in the recent resident newsletter.

The Panel **NOTED** this report.

6. **LBTH Scrutiny Panel Update**

6.1 GL explained that the panel had been very critical of THHF as they had not received the necessary support to carry out investigations – interviews etc. A meeting has been arranged with the THHF executive for May 13th to discuss future proposals and activities.

The Panel **NOTED** the update.

7. **Any Other Business**

7.1 GL detailed how she had been embroiled in her own case of ASB she had reported near her property. She had found the process to be convoluted. GL did not find the chase-up phone calls from staff useful as the person making the calls did not have the necessary background information which merely caused her frustration.

7.2 GL asked about the timescales in introducing the Orchard ASB management software and DD explained that this is part of a bigger project with associated necessary technical upgrades. DD will update the panel of anticipated timescales.

DD

7.3 GL added that she didn't believe that it was just about software but that there were also training and management issues. GL wondered if it was worth progressing with the planned investigations into ASB management given the scheduled introduction of the new software. DD felt that the panel's input could be valuable in contributing to the process mapping when the new software is being implemented and introduced. GL added that the panel will need further support if they are to effectively carry out further scrutiny. DD suggested trying to arrange staff and resident focus groups. DD will also send out the HouseMark review of EastendHomes' ASB service as a starting point.

DD

- 7.4 GL felt that partnership working did not work as well as it could, e.g. not currently referring to the Youth Offending Team as need to wait for results from CCTV and associated legal issues. DD commented that there can often be conflicting issues for housing managers and the various partner agencies around 'enforcement' and 'diversion'. GL relayed the feedback she had received regarding SNT short-staffing, and that she was coming to understand how cases can take a long time to make progress. DD observed that the HouseMark review had called for a robust understanding of what the most likely effective action will be, and that expectations need to be set at an early stage.
- 7.5 GL asked if EEH carried out satisfaction surveys on ASB. DD explained that a system is in place and that EEH' performance is high compared to our peers. DD will send out a copy of the relevant section from a KPI report or the Annual Report. **DD**
- 7.6 GL stated that from discussions with other residents there was a consensus that it was a broader training/management issue in how EEH manages ASB. It was agreed that a staff focus group will be arranged to meet with the panel once the timeline for the new module is established. **DD**
- 7.7 Upcoming meetings: DD commented that it may be necessary to schedule a meeting around the finalisation of the Operating and Financial Review which is due by 30th September. DD elaborated that EEH is looking at a new structure to improve the level of financial information provided whilst making it transparent and understandable for residents.
- The panel provisionally agreed the date of the next meeting for 24th June 2014, 6PM at Tayside House.
- 7.8 DD commented that an article on the work of the Resident Scrutiny Panel had been included in the recent resident newsletter and UB confirmed that she had seen this feature.
- The meeting closed at 7.30pm.*