

RESIDENT SCRUTINY PANEL 30th MAY 2012 – 7PM
ISLAND GARDENS NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICE

Present:

Resident Members

Margaret Donovan
John Courtney (acting chair)
Rubiya Begum

EEH Officers and Independent

Raj Kumar – Independent support to the Panel
Debbie Davies
Peter Griffiths
Keiron Carroll

Apologies

Margaret Hughes

1. Introductions and Welcome

1.1 John Courtney agreed to act as interim Chair the meeting.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

2.1 Minutes of the last meeting were agreed by Margaret Donovan, seconded by John Courtney.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 None, as all matters arising were raised under item 5 on the agenda.

4. Minutes of Service Review Committee 26th April 2012

4.1 Debbie explained that the above minutes show that the group's items have been raised including publication of the three key messages the group identified from the Fire Safety Strategy. The minutes were noted.

5. Review of Void Information from last time

5.1 Debbie went through the information set out in the hand out (as per letter). Debbie explained that EeH void performance looks good but currently include pre -let new build properties which skews the performance as many of these are let from the first day they are available. She further explained the bidding process in that bidders can make an unlimited number of bids but there are no consequences if the property is refused.

Homeless families still only get one offer. Residents can apply for properties outside the Borough through the Housing Moves scheme. Debbie advised that the average spend per short term void property is £1500. This does not

include long term voids where works are required which could not be completed with a tenant in situ. The costs and turnaround times for long term voids are much greater.

5.2 The group then looked at the before and after photographs taken of the void property in Galleon House that the group visited during the last meeting on 21st March 2012. The cost of the works to the property was approximately £3000. Rubiya asked what the gap was between people viewing the property and it being ready for occupation. Debbie said that it took an average 18 days to turn around void properties. Debbie also explained that there was a serious problem with squatting and that Guardians were being used on a low rent to try to resolve this problem with long term voids, for example, properties awaiting demolition.

6. Review of Other Providers Void Standards

6.1 Debbie distributed copies of the void standards for Shepherd Bush Housing and Gateshead Housing to Panel Members. The EastendHomes Lettable Standard goes to all applicants invited to view a property and is translated in Bengali.

6.2 Raj asked if the Lettable Standard in other organisations was going to be adopted by EastendHomes. Keiron stated that Shepherds Bush Housing void standards were very similar to EastendHomes, but EastendHomes standards did not include pictures.

6.3 Rubiya asked how EastendHomes refusal rates compare with other Resident Providers in the Borough. Debbie said she would find out and report it back at the next meeting. **ACTION DEBBIE**

6.4 Rubiya asked when a short term void became a long term void. Debbie stated when a resident has to be moved out of their property to for the necessary work to be undertaken.

6.5 Margaret Donovan said that a payment of three thousand pounds and a new kitchen gave her the incentive to move from a larger to a smaller property.

6.6 Debbie said that the Common Housing Register RPs are looking at new packages for residents, for example a voucher for £500 for white goods, or paying for a removal van all to ensure new residents settle in better.

6.7 Debbie stated that the new contractors had taken a long time to bed in and this had had some impact on void performance.

6.8 The group then had discussion in regard to void standards and the use of pictures to show the standards residents could expect once an empty property was ready for re-letting. It was agreed that the standard to be achieved needs to be made clearer. **ACTION DEBBIE/ KEIRON**

6.9 After some discussion, it was agreed that EeH should arrange a telephone interview of a sample of new tenants to find out why they were dissatisfied with aspects of their moving if they were dissatisfied. **ACTION DEBBIE**.

6.10 Keiron said that six voids were coming available at Mile End in about four weeks time. Keiron to let the group know once they are ready to view.

ACTION KEIRON

6.11 The group decided it would be clearer to include photographs in the new void standards leaflet. **ACTION KEIRON/ DEBBIE**.

7. ITEMS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

7.1 MD enquired whether the reduction in housing benefit for people in properties too large for them would be applied to existing tenants. DD said that it would and that she had recently viewed a useful National Housing Federation leaflet explaining the details which she would forward to MD.

ACTION DEBBIE

7.2 Raj said that the new Welfare Reform Act will have a great impact on RPs over the next few years. Debbie explained the non dependency reduction in housing benefit for households with a resident adult not dependant had already started to impact. It was agreed that EEH should produce an action plan to detail what EeH are doing in response to the challenges. **ACTION DEBBIE**

8. Update/Feedback from LBTH Wide Scrutiny Panel from Margaret Hughes

8.1 Debbie distributed a hand out to the group that Margaret Hughes had completed and emailed for the group.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE, TIME AND VENUE

**Thursday 26th July 2012 at 6pm Island Gardens Neighbourhood Office,
137 Manchester Road, London E14 3DN**

ACTION – ALL- Postponed to September 26th 2012