

# Minutes

Date: 24 January 2024

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<b>Meeting</b>	:	<b>Housing Operations Committee</b>
<b>Present</b>	:	Pam Norton, Board Member Michael Payton, Board Member Annette Dunningham, Board Member Barbara Bransgrove, Board Member Les Cox, Resident Member
<b>In attendance</b>	:	Glynis Gatenby, Operations Director Lise Mellors, Housing Officer Celia Dawes, Executive Support
<b>Observing:</b>	:	n / a

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<b>Item:</b>	<b>Action:</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies for absence / declarations of interest</b>
1.1	Apologies for absence were received from Robin Roberts and resident members Jean Gardner and David Brigden.
1.2	There were no declarations of interest.
1.3	Glynis Gatenby informed Members that Donna Edinburgh had decided to step down from the committee.
<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes of the HOC meeting held on 18 October 2023:</b>
2.1	Pam Norton asked if anyone had any comments on the minutes from the meeting held on 18 October 2023. There were none.
2.2	The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record and were approved.
<b>3</b>	<b>Actions from last meeting</b>
3.1	Item 8.8 from meeting held on 19 April 2023: the show and tell regarding laundry machines at Old Brewery House will take place following installation, probably March 2024.

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- 3.2 Item 6.13, Pets Policy: further consultations ongoing at Peppermint Court and Margaret House.
- 3.3 Item 7.1, heating at Old Brewery House: an order had been raised for contractors and an independent inspection of the heating had been carried out. Further investigation of a “humming” noise will be carried out week commencing 29 January 2024.
- 3.4 Michael Payton asked for an update on the investigation into the anomaly on tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs), perception survey question TP09 (complaint made within last 12 months). Glynis Gatenby responded that the anomaly had occurred where residents had reported repairs and referred to them as complaints. She had found the correct calculation which had reduced the outturn figure slightly from 79% to 72%, which is still high compared to other landlords.

**4 Performance indicators (quarter 3, 2023 / 2024)**

4.1 Glynis Gatenby introduced the report which reviews the performance measure results for quarter 3, up to the end of December 2023.

4.2 The following were highlighted:

4.2.1 Our resources:

- relet times had reduced to 22 days, slightly above our target of 21 days
- there had been no general needs relets
- rent arrears overall stand at 0.76%. We would normally expect to see an increase in January but the figures are not yet available
- appendix 2 shows rent arrears of over £1,000 have increased to seven (from six), five in general needs and two in housing for older people. These are all under control and London Borough of Sutton has agreed discretionary Housing Benefit for one case
- former tenant arrears are outside our tolerance at present; we are hoping one will be reduced shortly.

4.2.1.1 Annette Dunningham asked about lettings at Cloverdale Court. Glynis Gatenby replied that we had reduced the number of voids to four. People were being nominated but unfortunately the social workers were not being as thorough as they should be and therefore Lynn (Goodman, Housing with Care Manager) and the in-house Care Manager were having to carry out checks and enquiries following viewings.

4.2.1.2 Michael Payton mentioned the slight uptick on arrears with general needs properties following a similar trend and asked if we saw anything in this. Lise Mellors replied that no clear reasons could be seen. She currently had one case at Court and another had recently

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been sent a stage 4 letter following a number of warnings. Glynis Gatenby added that we had been promoting the Helping Hands fund and had received a few enquiries and we will be providing a list at the Board meeting of other monetary gains the team had helped with.

## 4.2.2

Our communities:

- there are 150 users of the resident app which is just under one third of our occupied homes. Annette Dunningham commented that the rent section of the app was really clear now which was really good. Les Cox agreed. Annette Dunningham added that the repairs section was becoming clearer too, with the communal parts area described as “brilliant”
- we have over 1000 followers on social media, and this was increasing
- we had received two complaints, one of which was escalated to stage two and had been addressed within timescales. Service requests are listed in the report with no specific theme or trends
- 111 compliments had been received.

## 4.2.2.1

Glynis Gatenby reported that involved residents had received the requested equalities training and had asked for training in complaints. This has been booked for 7 February 2024, during which the various categories will be explained and it will be clarified that repairs and reports of anti-social behaviour are not complaints.

## 4.2.3

Our residents:

- there are three open cases of anti-social behaviour which are all currently being monitored – updates detailed in the report

## 4.2.4

Our homes:

- repairs and maintenance showing a strong performance all round. Annette Dunningham commented that residents no longer receive an automated response to emails and some staff are not responding quickly to emails sent direct to them. Glynis Gatenby said she would speak with our IT team regarding automatic responses and suggested enquiries for repairs are sent to our hello@ address instead
- lift out of action measure is within agreed targets
- compliance including gas, smoke and carbon monoxide alarm guidance, lifts, legionella and electrical safety, are all at 100%
- there were three gas certificates completed late in January due to no access on two and one other where further works were required so these will appear in future results
- fire risk assessments and associated works will be completed by the end of March 2024 now, due to staff shortages
- four new reports of condensation / mould / damp since the last meeting. One was due to a leaking dishwasher hose which is resolved, two have works underway to resolve and the fourth has denied access and we are seeking an injunction

**GG**

<b>Item:</b>	<b>Action:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the on-going case involving seven people living in a two-bedroomed flat has had a further clean carried out. There is no likelihood of the family being transferred in the near future</li> </ul>	
4.2.4.1 Michael Payton asked if there was any possibility of offering a tenant in a larger underoccupied property a move to one of the newly developed flats and moving the family from the overcrowded flat into the larger property. Glynis Gatenby replied that when we speak with London Borough of Sutton regarding the new lets, we could make that a condition we consider, she will speak with Martin (Reddick, Housing Manager)	<b>GG</b>
4.2.5 Our people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• staff training was going well and a move to tailored training will be put in place</li> </ul>	
4.3 The report of the review carried out by Campbell Tickell into performance measures is included in the papers.	
4.3.1 One recommendation is for the Housing Operations Committee (HOC) to delve deeper into performance reports. Glynis Gatenby suggested that HOC Members suggest a topic for each meeting. Pam Norton noted that the topics would have to be agreed in advance so that the preparation work could be done. Glynis Gatenby said that a programme could be done and suggested voids and lettings be the first topic – get the feedback and go from there. This was agreed.	<b>GG</b>
4.3.2 There are two recommendations that we do not agree with, and one that is to be amended (this will go to the Board in February 2024). These are reflected in the action plan.	
4.3.3 Pam Norton commented on the increase in staff sickness and asked if this was affected by the one case of long-term sickness. Glynis Gatenby confirmed it was.	
4.4 There were no further comments or questions.	
4.5 <b>The Housing Operations Committee agreed to:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>i) note the contents of the report</b></li> <li><b>ii) note the arrears cases exceeding £1,000</b></li> <li><b>iii) note the outcome of the performance management service review carried out by Campbell Tickell.</b></li> </ul>	
<b>5 Operational update</b>	
5.1 Glynis Gatenby introduced the report on the key activities in quarter 3 and highlighted the following from the report:	
5.2 Community engagement:	

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- there were 93 opportunities for residents to be involved in events and activities, many held in December
- last March, we got feedback from residents to plan events going forward – we will do this again and present a report to the Board in May

## 5.2.1

Barbara Bransgrove said that it would be interesting to know how many of the 697 participants attended multiple events and said it would be good to understand how many individuals take part in our engagement events. Glynis Gatenby agreed that the number of individuals taking part will be included as part of the annual evaluation.

**GG**

## 5.3

Recruitment:

- Steve Smith has now retired; his retirement event went well and the thanks of the Board were passed to him as requested
- Terri Brandon who was recruited as Steve's (Smith) replacement had decided the role was a backwards step for her so had resigned with one week's notice (as per her contract's probationary period). We plan to recruit for the role in February. In the meantime, Delco will continue to do the statutory checks at the schemes
- Xavier Pamment, our ICT assistant, left us in early January to take up a role which fits with his university course. We are not at this stage planning to recruit to this role and Stacey (Smither-Moore) is covering WiFi cafés etc.

## 5.4

Development update:

- Ronald House: due for completion in late March / early April with lettings probably taking place in late April / May 2024. Michael Payton suggested this could be ideal as a swap for the (damp) overcrowding issue on Wandle Valley. Glynis Gatenby advised that there were some naturally occurring voids at Ronald House which had been brought up to development standard and would be available at social rent, which could be suitable
- Bridges Court new bungalow: the legal issues have now been resolved and contractors should start on site in February.
- Trickett House: a meeting was held with the design team before Christmas and it was agreed to carry out the development in three phases: first the enabling works (drainage, electrical mains etc), secondly the two floor extension to the rear block and finally the front block and completion of external works. We are provisionally looking to start works in July 2024 with completion in September 2026. Annette Dunningham asked if any parking space would be lost due to the development. Glynis Gatenby responded that there would be a net gain on parking spaces overall
- The development programme has been pushed back due to delays in previous projects. Therefore Griffiths Close will be 'freshened

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up' with internal decorations and some roofing work in the meantime

- Cloverdale Court: it has been decided that the development will be scaled back, and the top floor will not be added due to the nature of the clients at the scheme. Only the extensions will be built

5.5 Planned maintenance programme:  
This is nearing completion with only one kitchen / bathroom replacement outstanding at Old Brewery House. The communal lounge works, although delayed, are due to finish in February. Delivery of fire doors was also delayed and are also due in February.

5.6 Pam Norton thanked Glynis Gatenby for the report, stating that we are not far behind in the planned maintenance programme with issues down to deliveries and contractors. She asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

5.7 **The Housing Operations Committee agreed to:**  
**i) note the contents of the report**

## **6 Policies for approval**

6.1 Glynis Gatenby explained that three policies were being presented for approval, all of which have been reviewed to ensure they meet with regulatory standards.

6.2 Rent arrears policy:

6.2.1 This has been generally 'tidied up' with a few minor amendments (highlighted in red font) and no major changes and was being recommended for approval. There were no queries.

6.3 Tenure policy:

6.3.1 Again this policy has been 'tidied up'. Section 3 around secure tenancies has been removed as we no longer have any of these and they will not be used in the future. Grounds 7 and 7B have been added to the possession list.

6.3.2 Annette Dunningham questioned succession rights in housing for older people (over 55s) – if a resident married a younger person (under 55) and went on to have a family, then passed away, would the family / person under 55yrs be able to succeed the tenancy? Glynis Gatenby responded that anyone under the age of 55 cannot be included on the tenancy. However, they may succeed to the tenancy but not at that property, although they would probably remain there in the interim whilst this was being sorted out. They would have to have right to rent, leave to remain etc.

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6.4 Complaints policy and handling code:

6.4.1 This policy has largely changed to reflect the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) complaints handling code and changes coming up in April 2024.

6.4.2 We have not seen the final version of the handling code as yet but have included what we understand is required and it will be reviewed in May / June 2024 to ensure that any changes introduced as a result of the consultation are included and will be brought to the Housing Operations Committee for review and approval.

6.4.3 Glynis Gatenby explained that some of the information on the policy was quite procedural, but we have to add this to the policy to comply with the Housing Ombudsman Service.

6.4.4 The self-assessment, attached at appendix 4, has to be completed annually. Item 4.8 has to date not been an issue. Item 7.3 requiring that a Board Member be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints is best practice at the moment but will become part of the Code so this will be discussed at Board in February. When the new information is published, we will know whether there is any leeway on this.

6.4.5 Pam Norton referred to staff being trained to recognise the difference between a service request, a formal complaint and survey feedback. However, the policy goes on to say that the resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as one. Glynis Gatenby confirmed this is the case, staff can suggest an issue is treated / raised as a complaint even if the resident does not use the word. She added that these are words we have to use in line with the HOS complaints handling code but we will look at re-wording this section to something more suitable.

**GG / cd**

6.5 Pam Norton referred to the rent arrears and tenure policy and said it was hard to see where the policy ended and the procedure began. Glynis Gatenby agreed that although we usually try to separate policy and procedure into two documents, these are purely policies and we have been instructed by the Regulator that some of the procedural information has to be included so more detail has been required.

6.6 There were no further questions or comments.

**6.7 The Housing Operations Committee agreed to:**

**i) approve the rent arrears policy**

**GG / cd**

**ii) approve the tenure policy**

**GG / cd**

**iii) approve the complaints policy with amendment to wording as per item 6.4.5 above**

**GG / cd**

**Item:**

**Action:**

**iv) approve the self-assessment against the complaints handling code.**

**7 Any other business**

There was none.

**Date of next meeting: 17 April 2024**