

Minutes

Date: 23 April 2025

Meeting : **Housing Operations Committee**

Present : Pam Norton, Board Member
Michael Payton, Board Member
Barbara Bransgrove, Board Member
Annette Dunningham, Board Member
Anne Brown, Resident Member
Jean Gardner, Resident Member
John Vine, Resident Member
David Brigden, Resident Member

In attendance : Robin Roberts, Chief Executive
Glynis Gatenby, Operations Director
Celia Dawes, Executive Support

Observing: : N / A

Item:

Action:

1 Apologies for absence / declarations of interest

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Peter Burdon, Resident Member.

1.2 There were no declarations of interest.

2 Minutes of the HOC meeting held on 29 January 2025:

2.1 Pam Norton asked if anyone had any comments or corrections on the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2025. There were none.

2.2 The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record and were approved.

3 Actions from last meeting

3.1 Wi-Fi upgrade work at Old Brewery House: Glynis Gatenby reported that some of the work had been carried out. There had

Item:**Action:**

been an issue reported regarding the speed of the Wi-Fi. We are working with Social Telecoms on this issue.

3.2 Glynis Gatenby confirmed that she had passed on the thanks of the HOC members to the team regarding community engagement work.

4 Performance measures (quarter 4 year-end, 2024 / 2025)

4.1 Glynis Gatenby introduced the report which provides an overview of performance up to 6 April 2025 and a review of arrears cases exceeding £1,000.

4.2 *Our resources:*

- average relet times, across our general needs and housing for older people, was 19.5 days which within our 21 day target. This is an improvement on last year (20.5 days). There were some general needs lettings in the last quarter of the year
- rent arrears stand at 0.62% for year end, a very strong performance
- there are now four cases of arrears over £1,000, down from seven reported at the last meeting. All cases are being managed in line with our policy
- former tenant arrears stand at 0.14% which is on target and an improvement from last year

4.3 *Our communities:*

- the number of our residents in older peoples housing using digital platforms has increased to 62%, with an increase in the number of users of the resident app
- there is an increase in our social media followers
- the last financial year saw an increase of service requests (18) and complaints (11). This is quite a jump from the previous year which saw 11 service requests and five complaints. These are tabled at point 5.3.1. This may be a more natural level but we will keep an eye on it – there is lots of press about holding landlords accountable and we have had issues with hot water and heating at some schemes. The main reason is property related, lifts at Norman House and Old Brewery House and heating / hot water at Old Brewery House. These issues are now resolved but did take time to rectify. We are looking at compensation for some residents but want to ensure everything is running how it should before offers are made
- 149 compliments were received over the year for a variety of reasons but mainly contractors and communal engagement

Item:**Action:**

4.4

Our residents:

- there are five open / active anti-social behaviour cases which are listed at point 6.2. One case is in Housing with Care which is ongoing, one case in general needs and the rest in housing for older people. These are all being managed appropriately

4.5

Our homes:

- repairs remain at 100%
- gas and carbon monoxide alarm remain at 100% compliant
- the gas safety checks completed within target is showing as red. This is due to the CP12 certificates being completed after practical completion of the new homes at Ronald House and a couple of missed appointments in general needs homes due to resident illness
- legionella testing remains at 100%
- the lift out of action measure reflects issues to the end of March at Thomas House and Old Brewery House. The lifts were out of service at the same time awaiting parts from Italy, both are now back in service
- lift servicing remains at 100%
- the resident friendly FRAs are available on the website and recommended actions are in hand
- cleaning, window cleaning and grounds maintenance contracts continue to be well received. A few minor issues which were resolved
- there is one outstanding report of condensation, damp or mould which is in hand. The family who live in Wandle Valley (seven people in a two bed flat) have not heard anything further from London Borough of Sutton. They were fourth on the list for transfer but may have slipped down

4.6

Our people:

- employees have carried out 363 hours of training up to the end of March

4.7

Pam Norton commented that the family awaiting transfer had been waiting for a long time. Glynis Gatenby agreed, it was about 4 years. She confirmed that we write to LBS periodically and had contacted them very recently.

4.8

Pam Norton referred to the number of complaints, with one being escalated to stage 2, and commented that the issues with the lifts does not help. Jean Gardner added that there was a long history of the lift at Old Brewery House being out of service and remembered that we intended to try to keep a stock of spare parts so that we have them ready should they be needed. She asked whether there was any update with this. Glynis Gatenby responded to say that Michael Kilkelly had begun this, contacting

Item:**Action:**

the contractor to request a list of parts. Peter Toulson (new Property Services Manager) is hoping to include within the lift tender for the contract. Robin Roberts commented that there are some parts / consumables that we can stock but we won't be able to stock them all. Glynis Gatenby added that this is frustrating for all concerned and we appreciate how it impacts people's lives. We offer what assistance we can, offering support services where needed and helping with taking rubbish out, shopping upstairs etc.

4.9 Pam Norton referred to the write off request summarised in appendix 3, asking if Members were happy to approve. This was agreed.

4.10 The Housing Operations Committee agreed to:

- i) note the performance for quarter 4 year-end**
- ii) note the arrears cases exceeding £1,000**
- iii) approve the write off request**

GG

5 Operational update

5.1 Glynis Gatenby introduced the report which outlines the key areas of operational work undertaken in quarter 4 and includes the new single equalities scheme at appendix 2.

5.2 Community engagement:

5.2.1 There were 83 opportunities for resident involvement in quarter 4 with 695 participants. The review of the year will be completed and brought to the next meeting.

5.2.2 The intergenerational project has gone really well with another session planned for next week and many schemes involved – we are looking to extend the project to Dorothy Pettingell House. InCommon have agreed to fund the sessions at Norman House from April to July as they have been so pleased with the results.

5.3 Recruitment:

5.3.1 Peter Toulson joined us in November, taking over from Michael Kilkelly. He is dealing with issues around properties.

5.3.2 Marie-Claire Newman, who is covering the lettings officer role, will be with us until January next year. Yasmin Taylor had a little girl.

5.3.3 Steve Smith has returned and is carrying out property inspections.

5.3.4 Stacey Smither-Moore is currently on maternity leave having given birth to a baby boy. Xavier Pamment is covering her role on a part time basis.

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- 5.4 Pets policy – scheme surveys update:
 - 5.4.1 Lancelot House is the only scheme who wants permission for residents to have pets (cats and dogs). This scheme has no internal communal spaces and the residents share a communal garden.
- 5.5 Development:
 - 5.5.1 Robin Roberts gave an update on development.
 - 5.5.2 Wandle Valley: meeting with planners regarding the Wandle Valley appeal following refusal of planning applications. The Interim Head of Planning at the London Borough of Sutton is happy to meet and talk.
 - 5.5.3 14 Griffiths Close: this flat conversion will be completed by the end of July.
 - 5.5.4 Trickett House development: we are at the end of procurement; tenders are in and are being assessed. Start of site is planned for October.
 - 5.5.5 Robertson House: there is an opportunity to develop a maisonette to the side and flats on the roof – we would look to add the maisonette first.
 - 5.5.6 Peppermint Court: we are proposing to add two flats on the west side in an unused garden area and enhancements to the scheme. The consultation with residents was well received. Pam Norton asked whether any mature trees would need to be taken down. Robin Roberts confirmed they would not.
 - 5.5.7 The development at Trickett House will take approximately 106 weeks. We will then look to start the development project at Griffiths Close, followed by Cloverdale Court.
 - 5.5.8 The Ronald House development has been shortlisted for a regeneration award.
- 5.6 Planned maintenance programme 2024 / 2025:
 - 5.6.1 The report includes an overview of progress made with our planned maintenance programme at point 7.1. We will now start the new programme.
- 5.7 Single equalities scheme:
 - 5.7.1 The completed 2024 / 2025 single equalities scheme is attached at

Item:**Action:**

appendix 1. We are seeking approval for the 2025 / 2026 scheme attached at appendix 2. A Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) survey will be carried out this year.

5.8 Residents charter group:

5.8.1 The residents charter group continues to meet on a quarterly basis and have currently been working on new initiatives around feedback. They have also written an article on sustainability which is being included in the next newsletter.

5.8.2 There are currently 12 regular attendees from a number of schemes which gives an interesting mix of people. Glynis Gatenby said that she usually introduces topics but the group gives lots of feedback which influences policies and procedures.

5.8.3 Following discussions, we agreed to pilot two 'letterboxes' at Old Brewery House and Trickett House to be used to 'post' responses to repairs surveys to see if this would lead to an increase in responses. We have also asked Sally (Sinclair) to contact any resident who reports a communal repair and obtain feedback once the repair has been completed.

5.8.3.1 Jean Gardner said that they had received communication to explain the use of the letterbox installed at Old Brewery House and asked why it can't be used for other things too. Glynis Gatenby responded to say not at present and explained that we were having to be a bit strict with its use as the boxes were misused before. Martin Sinclair will empty the boxes each week which may cause a delay in getting the responses to us, but we will see how it goes and roll out if successful.

5.9 There were no further comments or questions.

5.10 The Housing Operations Committee agreed to:

- i) note the contents of the report**
- ii) note the completion of the 2024 / 2025 single equalities scheme**
- iii) approve the 2025 / 2026 single equalities scheme**

6 Safeguarding 2024 / 2025

6.1 Glynis Gatenby introduced the annual summary of the work relating to safeguarding of residents carried out by the team. She reminded Members that it is Sutton Housing Society's legal duty to report issues of concern for vulnerable adults and children, not to investigate them and the team are trained accordingly.

6.2 There had been ten safeguarding alerts concerning ten individuals,

Item:**Action:**

seven in older people's housing, two in housing with care and one in general needs. This is an increase in number from last year, however last year's number was quite low. The categories were neglect or self-neglect (6), financial or psychological abuse (2) and domestic violence (2).

6.3 All cases are now closed following investigation by the Borough. Housing Managers will however keep an eye on these cases.

6.4 Pam Norton asked if some of the cases of neglect involve residents refusing help. Glynis Gatenby confirmed that they are.

6.5 Michael Payton referred to the ages of the cases of self-neglect in older people's housing noting that they are towards the younger age group for this category, rather than the older. Glynis Gatenby replied that these cases could stem from undisclosed or undiagnosed mental health issues. One case of self-neglect in the housing with care scheme also related to alcohol abuse.

6.6 Pam Norton asked if there were any further comments. There were none.

6.7 The Housing Operations Committee agreed to:

i) note the contents of the report

7 Voids and lettings summary

7.1 Glynis Gatenby introduced the annual summary of voids and lettings over the 2024 / 2025 year.

7.2 There are two primary routes to access accommodation with Sutton Housing Society; nomination via the local authority (older people housing, general needs and much of our housing with care homes) and through our direct waiting list (our older people housing which includes internal transfers).

7.3 We had 43 homes that became vacant in the last financial year with over 50% being the result of the resident sadly passing away. The remainder were transfers, residents moving into a care home or moving to live closer to family. Three homes remained vacant at the end of the year due to the resident passing away.

7.4 There were 45 lettings throughout the year which included some properties that were vacant at the end of March 2024. These are broken down at point 5.1. All of the general needs lets and all bar one of the housing with care lets were via nomination from the local authority however the split between our waiting list and nominations from the local authority was quite even.

Item:**Action:**

7.5 Results from our (random) audit of 20% of lettings is given at point 5.3. From the audit:

- the ethnicity mix of lettings is the same as the ethnicity mix of the Borough (three of the eight were from BAME background)
- the average age was 67 which is reflective of the people we are housing
- most were let on first offer
- no complaints regarding our voids and lettings procedures were received
- we received three compliments on our voids and lettings procedures

7.6 We are not expecting any major changes this year except for decants for the Trickett House development.

7.7 Pam Norton thanked Glynis Gatenby for the report and asked if the London Borough of Sutton know about the new flats, which are GLA funded, being nominated straight from our direct waiting list. Glynis Gatenby confirmed they do but they have no access to the new homes as there are no nomination agreements with the Borough for these homes. We may however offer them some of the older flats (many of which are refurbished to the development standard) in the scheme if they become available following development.

7.8 There were no further comments or questions.

7.9 The Housing Operations Committee agreed to:

i) note the contents of the report

8 Policies for approval

8.1 Glynis Gatenby introduced the paper which is seeking approval for two policies attached as appendices (1. Rechargeable repairs, 2. Managing unreasonable behaviour).

8.2 The rechargeable repairs policy has been updated to incorporate a paragraph regarding authorisation of recharges by the appropriate manager prior to being issued for payment. The policy appendix outlines the recharge figures which are uplifted each year by CPI +1% or as agreed by the Operations Director.

8.3 The managing unreasonable behaviour policy has been introduced due to the increasing number of residents / housing applicants / third parties who behave in an unacceptable or unreasonable way and incorporates the old red file / lone working policy.

Item:		Action:
8.3.1	It sets out how we manage the unacceptable behaviour whilst ensuring resident and housing applicants are treated fairly, with respect and receive the service needed from us.	
8.3.2	Michael Payton referred to the managing unreasonable behaviour policy, commenting that it is quite an important policy as it treads the line between residents voicing their concerns but also protecting staff if their approach is aggressive or inappropriate. He asked if we created the policy ourselves? Glynis Gatenby replied that she did create most of it herself but looked at various websites. Michael Payton suggested we see how it goes, how it is bedding in. Glynis Gatenby agreed and said she would bring it back to HOC next year for further review.	
8.4	The Housing Operations Committee agreed to:	
	i) approve the updated rechargeable repairs policy	GG / cd
	ii) approve the new managing unreasonable behaviour policy, bringing it back next year for further review	GG / cd
9	Any other business	
9.1	David Brigden mentioned that the front entrance door at Thomas House does not always latch which was a security issue. Glynis Gatenby replied that a brand new front door is to be fitted and she will let David (Brigden) know when it will be done.	GG
9.2	Pam Norton asked if there were any further items to discuss – there were none.	

Date of next meeting: 23 July 2025 at 5.30pm