

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

**PERRY BARR DISTRICT
COMMITTEE
THURSDAY,
19 JANUARY, 2017**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PERRY BARR
DISTRICT COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY,
19 JANUARY, 2017 AT 1500 HOURS, IN
COMMITTEE ROOM 2, COUNCIL HOUSE,
BIRMINGHAM**

PRESENT: - Councillor Hussain in the Chair

Councillors Gurdial Singh Atwal, Tristan Chatfield, Paulette Hamilton, Jon Hunt, Keith Linnecor, Hendrina Quinnen, Narinder Kooner and Waseem Zaffar.

ALSO PRESENT

Neil De-Costa – Perry Barr District Head
Jim Crawshaw - Head of Housing Options
Kate Foley – Acting Senior Service Manager
Louisa Nisbett - Area Democratic Services Officer
Michael O'Connor – Senior Service Manager

NOTICE OF RECORDING

- 1045 The Chairman advised that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site (www.birminghamnewsroom.com) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs.

The whole of the meeting will be filmed except where there are confidential or exempt items.

APOLOGIES

- 1046 Apologies for their inability to attend the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Ray Hassall and Karen Trench.

MINUTES

- 1047 The Minutes of the last meeting on 24 November, 2016, having been previously circulated were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

COMMITTEE CODE OF CONDUCT

- 1048 The Code of Conduct related to District Committees was received and noted.
(See document no. 1)
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HOUSING ISSUES

HOUSING TRANSFORMATION BOARD PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 201617

The following report of the Strategic Director, Place was submitted:-

(See document no. 1):-

Kate Foley presented the report and gave a brief summary. During the discussion the following points were made:-

- Management of Anti-Social Behaviour – Perry Barr district had a low level of ASB compared to other Districts. There had been 73 enquiries received. The correct figure for cases responded to on time was 97.3%. Some had been responded to on time but had not been logged and they were working with staff to correct this. 64 cases had been closed during the period.
- High and low-rise blocks – 100% of high rise were good or better. Low rise, 100% were satisfactory.
- Unauthorised Lodgers – These were assessed as soon as possible. There had been 1 case in Perry Barr that had taken longer than 12 weeks.
- Introductory Tenancies – This was 3.2% owing to issues with rent arrears.
- Conditions of Estates – Average bi-annual estate assessment was 27.6%.
- Voids – Average days to let a property was 34.2 days. The figure had been impacted by properties in a sheltered scheme that were hard to let.
- Repairs – Performance in October/November show signs of improvement. The new contract for Perry Barr and Ladywood was with Wates. There were new KPI's and will be new reports. There were some data issues with data transfer. There was also a new appointments system. The policy used was to treat every repair as you would your home. The contractors had instigated a new bonus scheme which was performance managed. The new contract addressed the issues and the KPI's reflected against all elements of the work.

- Councillor Hussain raised some points including why tenancies had not been made secure, the problem with voids, why there was no target for anti-social behaviour and housing options. Kate Foley informed that the question whether there was a target against a service or not was consistent across the City. Everything should be recorded whether there was a target or not.
- Every District had a number of cases where there was an extended introductory tenancy. There was a procedure for seeking possession of a property. The figure for voids was relatively high. Kate Foley could send details of the properties that were difficult to let to all the Councillors.
- Councillor Hussain found it hard to believe that the figures for appointments kept and response to emergencies within 2 hours were correct and added that tenants said that they had waited longer.
- Michael O'Connor said that contractors were reviewing the data. Data not recorded straight away was classed as a failure leading to incorrect data figures. Performance was starting to improve. Contractors normally attended within 2 hours. BP = Birmingham Promise.
- Councillor Chatfield had received a number of complaints about communication with contractors and the way tenants were treated. It was felt that some contractors acted like bailiffs. A tenant had been without water for 2 weeks when the contractor had not returned. He felt that contractors were slow to repair boilers and there had been a decline in the standard of repairs to council tenants. Councillor Chatfield questioned why the target for emergency repairs had been reduced.
- Michael O'Connor undertook to check the reduction in the emergency target and report back to the Chairman. Complaints and issues regarding heating and hot water were sent to College Road. The figures were better compared to previous years. It had been noticed that there was an issue regarding gas repairs and this had been taken up with Wates. Random checks had been carried out on parts carried by vans. Wates were aware that a change was needed.
- Councillor Zaffar said that the experience of tenants in Lozells and East Handsworth had been the same as those in Oscott Ward. He was concerned about the behaviour and attitude of some of Wates' staff. A case on Hamstead Road was being investigated.
- Michael O'Connor undertook to take back the comments about behaviour of staff to Wates. He commented that it was the same staff as previously, as staff had been transferred by TUPE.
- Councillor Kooner thanked Kate Foley for sorting out a case of a family without heating before Christmas. She requested information about the number of times a contractor had to return to complete a job. Michael O'Connor informed that once a job was issued it stayed open until it had

been completed. There were no statistics about the number of returns. Contractors needed to instil KPI's in their bonus scheme.

- Councillor Linnecor said that the Cabinet Member should be asked to ensure the parts for boilers were available. He stated that when calling cards were put through doors they were vague and suggested that a photo be taken of the card on the door by the contractor to prove they had attended. Michael O'Connor added that a tracker was also in use.
- Reference was made to obsolete boilers and parts. Michael O'Connor said officers should carry out checks on parts for gas repairs on their vans. Where the parts were obsolete a new boiler could be authorised.
- Councillor Paulette Hamilton queried the appointments kept at 65.5%, and appointments made at 94.5% and asked whether these were within the 2nd or 3rd subsequent visits.
- Michael O'Connor informed that if a contractor did not turn up by the end of the appointment time, and this could be by 5 minutes, it was classed as a failure. Statistics were kept of all jobs completed. He did not accept that people were left for 2 weeks without heating.

Housing Allocation Policy – Re-Registration

Jim Crawshaw attended for this item. The following document had been circulated to Members:-

(See document no. 2)

During the discussion the following points were made:-

- The new scheme had been worked on for a couple of years and had now been signed off. The new re-registration scheme would start in February, 2017. Everyone on the waiting list would need to re-apply by 20 April, 2017. Jim Crawshaw stressed the importance of re-registering during that period in order to keep the same date of application.
- Letters were being sent out. Applicants would be given an ID to log onto the new system. A second letter would be sent as a reminder. The online system only would be used in the future. There would be a team of officers who could visit the most vulnerable people to offer assistance.
- The list of frequently asked questions would be updated regularly.
- In reply to comments from Councillor Hussain about people who did not have, or were unable to use internet facilities, applications could only be made on the internet. Choice Based Lettings, an online system had been used since 2011 and was used by people to bid for properties. People were encouraged to get help from families and friends. An online system was also used to apply for people to apply for benefits. The team to assist people with the system would also include 2 visiting officers.

- Councillor Linnecor was concerned that the most vulnerable people would be affected and he said that this had been overlooked. He did not think that computers were always better.
- Jim Crawshaw said there had been some issues with the current scheme and IT systems had been proved to work. People requiring assistance would be helped by the staff.
- Councillor Atwal felt the scheme was unfair to people without computer skills and those with language difficulties. Jim Crawshaw answered that they were aware that the system translated into to a wide range of community languages. The most vulnerable would be assisted and targeted to ensure they could re-register.
- In reply to questions from Councillor Paulette Hamilton about supporting the most vulnerable, and query whether there would be a right of appeal if someone missed the date for re-registering owing to them being out of the country or another genuine reason Jim Crawshaw said that there was a right of appeal to review the decision if proof could be given.
- Councillor Kooner was concerned that the system was online based only and referred to Birmingham being one of the most diverse cities in the UK. Councillor Kooner asked for details about how the points were allocated in order to share with residents. She said that measures should be put in place to assist vulnerable people including those with language difficulties. Councillor Kooner agreed that consideration should be given for people unable to complete the process owing to being abroad.
- Jim Crawshaw reiterated that the system would translate into a vast amount of community languages, therefore language would not be an issue. The allocation scheme was published by every Local Authority and circulated. It was also sent out to all applicants. A banding system was used with the top band being those with severe housing needs. He was happy to share the information.
- There would be a market stall at the next Cabinet Committee attended by 6 members of the re-registering team. In reply to a suggestion from Councillor Kooner for mobile drop in surgeries in local areas, Jim Crawshaw informed that this had been tried when choice based lettings were introduced, however there had been little uptake.
- In reply to Councillor Jon Hunt about the possibility of BCC Call Centre assisting with the forms, there were no resources for the BCC Call Centre to do this. It was confirmed to him that only tenants wanting to move would need to register. Medical evidence could be sent in to support applications, however existing medical evidence would be used if there was no change of circumstances.
- In reply to Councillor Chatfield Band A was prioritised by who was registered the longest.

- In reply to Councillor Hussain there were 196 families in temporary accommodation. It was more difficult to house larger families.

1049 **RESOLVED:-**

That the report of the Strategic Director, Place be received and noted.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

1050 **RESOLVED:-**

The schedule of meetings was noted for future District Committee meetings in the Council House, Victoria Square, Birmingham B1 1BB on the following Thursdays at 1500 hours:-

Committee Room

23 March, 2017	2
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WARD UPDATES

1051 Updates were given as follows:-

Handsworth Wood Ward – Councillor Narinder Kooner

- They had discussed LIF and the budget. There were a number of residents who were concerned about Landlords and street cleansing.

Lozells and East Handsworth – Councillor Hendrina Quinnen

- They had informed residents about the future council. They had promoted partnership working.
- Progress had been made with regard to street cleansing. Thanks were given to the street cleansing team however there were still issues with flytipping. They were trying to educate people to take responsibility. There were some voluntary organisations assisting them.
- A cleaner streets plan was being worked on.
- Unadopted Roads were an issue and some clarity had been sought. The Environmental Summit had been successful. There had been an increase in attendance at the Ward meetings. The main issues were housing and families.

Oscott – Councillor Linnecor

- The next meeting was on 29 March. Issues were the on-going problems with trees. It was hoped a survey on overgrown trees would be available. Others were parking outside schools. There had been a discussion on

libraries and they were looking for agencies to help. Regular issues were transport, parking and government cuts.

Perry Barr – Councillor Jon Hunt

- They had discussed LIF at the Ward Advisory Board meeting. They had looked at Health Jobs and Skills. Another meeting would be held in March. the Neighbourhood Report had been signed off by the Deputy Leader.
- Problems were flytipping and dog fouling. There were concerns about libraries however they had been given reassurance that they would be kept at the heart of the community. Parks were a major concern and the budget consultation.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

1052 Items to be considered for future agendas were suggested as follows:-

- Updates from the Champions
- Talk from Assistant Leader regarding the challenges of devolution.
- Cycle Revolution.

OTHER URGENT BUSINESS (REPORTS BY OFFICERS)

1053 There was no other urgent business.

AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

1054 **RESOLVED:-**

That in an urgent situation between meetings, the Chair jointly with the relevant Chief Officer has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 1638 hours.

CHAIRMAN