

Agenda Item 2

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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

25 FEBRUARY 2020

(7.15 pm - 9.55 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Natasha Irons (in the Chair),
Councillor Daniel Holden, Councillor Ben Butler,
Councillor Mary Curtin, Councillor David Dean,
Councillor Anthony Fairclough, Councillor Aidan Mundy and
Councillor Geraldine Stanford

Jason Andrews (Environmental Health Pollution Manager),
Cathryn James (Interim Assistant Director, Public Protection),
Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration) and Ben
Stephens (Head of Parking Services)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies received from Cllr Owen Pritchard (with Cllr Mary Curtin as sub)

2 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 3)

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed

4 CLARION HOUSING - REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE (Agenda Item 4)

Representatives from Clarion were welcomed and introduced to the Panel;

- Simon Gagen - Head of Responsive Repairs
- Vicki Bonner – Director of Housing
- Mike Robbins - Planned Investment Manager
- Paul Quinn – Director of Merton Regeneration

The Chair invited the resident speakers to share their views on Clarions repair and maintenance service.

Waqar Basit

- Constant leaks
- Electrics affected

Alexander Doty (read by Sara Sharp)

- Clarion provides a minimum of maintenance at High Path Estate yet increases the annual service charge every year. In 2019 my annual service charge increased nearly 18%. Unreasonable escalation of service charges is an abusive practice followed by resident associations generally.

- Very few services are provided adequately and most are not provided at all. For example, refuse is collected weekly and, as a result, bins overflow and refuse overflows onto the grounds. Communal cleaning is performed weekly and consists of sweeping and mopping the stairways. Marked, defaced, and broken building and utility structures are not cleaned or repaired. Grounds maintenance is performed weekly and consists of cutting grass with large mowers, leaving shrubs and edges untrimmed.
- I propose that a committee of High Path residents review the services provided at High Path and the related charges that are imposed in order that a recommendation may be made for their improvement and cost savings.

Cypren Edmunds

- Priory Close: Roof blocked with leaves has led to water not able to siphon appropriately which leads to direct leak (and ongoing issues: damp, condensation) into resident's property; also water tank doors of the block aren't fixed properly and pigeons can nest in the area thereby contaminating the water
- Vanguard House: water leaking into ceiling of kitchen & sitting room (severely overcrowded 5 persons (incl. young child) in 1 bedroom flat) from roof and water pressure has been altered because of incident in the cleaning team's area which led to pipes bursting in resident's kitchen. This has led to leaking into elderly neighbour beneath.
- Marsh Court: water flowing from overflow pipe ongoing since 2018 (official complaint made to Clarion) MP/Merton Council's Environmental are aware of case)
- Mychell House: (similar to Marsh Court) water pipe expelling water all day(Technical Inspection Officer, Caretaker and Neighbourhood officer are aware of this)
- May Court: A resident with multiple sclerosis & (young children) has unfinished work to be completed from a water leak which occurred in the summer of this 2019. Damp and condensation in property have developed to the point whereby the resident's health is at a very serious risk.

Pippa Maslin provided a written contribution

- Clarion subjected leaseholders to unreasonable major work's bills, compelling us to have new windows whether we wanted them or not. Originally told we would have to pay £13,000 over two years for new windows, inspections for asbestos, and the checking of and, if necessary, repairs to the roofs. None of us had a problem with the inspections, checks and repairs, but the price for the windows was ridiculous and they would not listen to anyone who did not need their windows replaced. Indeed, a few of the leaseholders got alternative quotes and even spotted that we needed different types of windows to the ones that Clarion had identified as suitable. Thus, Clarion changed the plan and, eventually, we each ended up paying about £5000 instead of £13,000. Furthermore, the people who did the work left a real mess, failing to use enough dust sheets and leaving all sorts of waste in people's gardens.
- Little is done to help make the estate a nice place to live
- No one makes sure that the playground is used appropriately. Smoking, drug taking and drinking take place there and parents are reluctant to allow their children in there.
- The various sheds for residents are in an awful state and need replacing.

In response to the speakers, the Head of Responsive Repairs explained;

- Moffatt Court has had relined gutters

- Marsh court – The condition and age of the block is a factor. The pipework configuration requires gaining entry to all flats. Residents will be rehomed in 18 months as part of the regeneration plans.
- Customer satisfaction from December is the first time all indicators have been green.

In response to Panel Members questions, the Head of Responsive Repairs and the Planned Investment Manager clarified;

- Lifts have a maintenance cycle of every 3-5 weeks. Investment is being considered in the next financial year.
- Data produced - real time info, no manual interference.
- Clarion agreed to share their quarterly figures.
- Clarion recognise there is an issue with the maintenance of the communal areas.
- Section 20s – we always seek the best value for Clarion and residents. We undertake aerial surveys to ensure work needs to be done. Whilst we recognise that cheaper quotes can be obtained by residents for the work, we have stringent Health and Safety regulations to adhere to.
- Clarion will follow up whether the job reference number can be communicated to the out of hours service as this has been a frustration for residents.
- Clarion are trialling a text service for resident satisfaction after any jobs are completed. If the trial is successful the app will be rolled out.

ACTION: The Director of Housing agreed with the Chair for the implementation of a working group consisting of senior Clarion representatives and Cllr Irons and Cllr Stanford to undertake site visits to those areas highlighted by residents, starting with Eastfields and High Path. The Director of Merton Regeneration suggested exploring using the Merton Community Panel as a focus for this activity.

ACTION: Clarion agreed to return to the Panel in the next municipal year, along with their annual data so the Panel can look at the trends.

5 DIESEL LEVY IMPLEMENTATION (Agenda Item 5)

The Director of Environment and Regeneration introduced the report and invited the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Health and the Environment to elaborate further.

In response to Members questions, the Director of Environment and Regeneration and the Environmental Health Pollution Manager and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Housing and Transport and the Head of Parking Services clarified;

- Consultation process starts in May 2020.
- CPZ's are triggered by petitions and resident led. This will continue to be the policy.
- The metrics for success will include air pollution levels and the health benefits.
- The borough does not yet comply with the Air Quality objective, we continue to monitor 50 spots in the borough
- The EQIA will be discussed with equality groups and mitigation action points looked at.
- A Panel member requested whether any other additional data sources inform the policy? Environmental Health Pollution Manager agreed to share the 3 year trends with the panel when they are available.

- A Panel member requested whether the TFL journey data shows any shift to public transport? The Head of Parking Services agreed this will be included in the Cabinet report.

Councillor David Dean raised a motion which is “If this Council believes diesel cars are dirty then every diesel car should be treated the same way”. The motion was seconded by Councillor Daniel Holden and debated by the Panel. (Two votes for, six against) Motion fell.

A Panel Member raised a motion requesting that “Cabinet considers the full EQIA of their proposals The distribution of vehicles should be looked at. Heavier polluting in some parts of the borough. There is an Equality Impact issue in terms of the changes to visitor permits. The Chair commented that permits are already being looked at and requested further clarification on the term ‘vehicle distribution’.

A Panel Member asked the Director of Environment and Regeneration whether it would be possible to obtain this type of data. The Director of E&R explained we would need to request whether the DVLA could provide this. The Director of E&R queried the link to the EQIA as geography is not a protected characteristic.

Cabinet considers the full Equality Impact of their proposals across the borough by looking at the available data on car vehicle ownership by area to see if it impacts the EQIA. Danil Holden seconded. Two votes for, six abstentions

The Chair queried whether the vote should pass given that there isn’t enough positive support for the motion and if the Panel were clear on what the recommendation was. Not enough conclusion to pass it.

Revote (Two votes for, six against). Motion fell.

Panel RESOLVED (eight votes for, none against) to make the following reference to Cabinet:

“This Panel recommends that Cabinet look at the available evidence with the intention of putting a greater focus on incentives to encourage and support residents to change vehicles to less polluting types, including examples from other boroughs’.

6 AIR QUALITY - ACTION PLAN (Agenda Item 6)

The Environmental Health Pollution Manager (Air Quality) gave an overview of the action plan.

7 PERFORMANCE MONITORING (Agenda Item 7)

Cllr Butler and the Director of Environment and Regeneration reviewed a small number of the KPI’s.

8 WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 8)

The work programme was agreed.