

Agenda Item 3

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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

24 JUNE 2021

(7.15 pm - 9.45 pm)

PRESENT Councillors Councillor Aidan Mundy (in the Chair),
Councillor Daniel Holden, Councillor David Dean,
Councillor Nick Draper, Councillor Anthony Fairclough,
Councillor Geraldine Stanford and Councillor Sally Kenny

John Bosley (Assistant Director Public Space Contracts and Commissioning), Steve Langley (Head of Housing Needs and Strategy), Chris Lee (Director of Environment and Regeneration) and James McGinlay (Assistant Director for Sustainable Communities)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Dave Ward (Councillor Sally Kenny as sub) and Councillor Laxmi Attawar (Councillor Ben Butler 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 ACTIONS LOG (Agenda Item 4)

The Chair explained the purpose of the action log is to pull together the Panel's recommendations and actions, seek updates and highlight any areas outstanding.

Officers provided some updates on the actions listed;

- The Emissions-Based Charging program is yet to hit the ground because we are finalizing the traffic management order.
- Roadworks and utilities - there's a huge amount of work that's been going on behind the scenes on those particular areas, particularly around carrying out further work to monitor numbers and emissions. We're about to invest in 68 air quality monitors around the borough which also capture vehicle volumes and vehicle types which will give us information about the source of air pollution in the borough.
- One stop shop solution - a proof of concept software solution has been identified called fix my street. This will provide some operational efficiencies for residents so they can identify locations on a map based system as well as

pinpoint locations where we can log issues with the service. Those issues being logged will be integrated with the office systems of our service providers to provide more immediacy in terms of resolving those issues and improved reporting and management. Provisional implementation date in November

- The review of the Design Review Panel will be available sometime in the autumn.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration confirmed officers will provide progress reports on the outstanding actions at the next meeting.

5 PERFORMANCE MONITORING (Agenda Item 5)

A Panel Member commented that the council has missed its recycling target for the 123rd month in a row which is in opposition to the Council's communications department which has been communicating for four years that a target of 50% will be hit.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration informed Members that the table doesn't reflect the amended target which is actually 40%. The new target will be reflected in next set of performance indicators. Whilst we're still ambitious and aiming for a higher target, we can't ignore the reality of the recycling levels that we're currently achieving in the borough. One area over the last 15 months that has affected the recycling performance is the fact that more people have been working from home, more waste has been generated and more non-recyclable waste has been generated and that's reflected London wide.

The Chair noted that in the forward plan for this panel we will be looking at how the borough can change its attitude and behaviours towards waste to help increase recycling and meet targets.

6 CLARION: REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE (Agenda Item 6)

The Chair played a short three minute video that was featured on ITV to set the background as to why this item was added to the agenda.

A number of issues and challenges on the Eastfields estate have been brought to public attention through social media since 21 May.

The Chair extended his gratitude to the Clarion Housing representatives for attending this meeting of the Panel. In attendance were Michelle Reynolds, John Ferman, Vicky Bonner and David Chisnall.

Michelle Reynolds, Chief Operating Officer, began by reiterating the apology that Vicky Bonner made recently on television. We recognize that the service some of our residents have received from us has not been of the standard that they should rightly expect. We are so sorry about that and I'd like to apologise myself on behalf of Clarion.

Moving forward we are focusing on the agreed action plan that we have put in place:

- We've written to all of the residents on the Eastfields estate and followed that up with a further communication and newsletter.
- Knocking on doors and holding estate days where staff will be out door knocking and meeting with every single resident on the estate.
- We've reopened the estate office on site so that residents can come down and speak to us.
- Set up a dedicated Eastfield repairs email address so that residents can report any outstanding repairs to us.
- Pest control and baiting were underway on the estate already but we have enhanced and extended that contract.
- Put in additional refuse collections twice weekly
- Added additional resources onto the estate in terms of repair operatives and clarion staff.
- More regular communication with Councillors, our key stakeholders and meeting our residents face to face.

In response to Panel Member questions, the Clarion team expanded further on the work and processes they have implemented;

- Renewed focus on the way we deal with member enquiries to try and improve the communication loop
- We have regular meetings now with the MP's office with regard those cases and enquiries raised.
- The working group, consisting of senior Clarion representatives and Councillors, is still meeting. So far there have been three walk rounds and two formal meetings. Outcomes of the previous meetings were a program of planned works in communal areas on Eastfields and resolving issues with refuse collections. Another group meeting is scheduled for July
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- We monitor our key performance indicators regularly - we've been meeting weekly to look at the progress on the backlog and we are happy to regularly share that performance.
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- In terms of the investment program for the borough, we're looking at spending £8.3 million within the borough and that is a mix of estate, block work as well as some component replacements in the SW postcode.
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- Clarion does have a central stock condition program that's informed by asset data and we have a Head of Asset Management who looks after that function. This informs the program in which our stock condition surveys happen on our estates.

The Panel moved on to discussing recommendations.

A motion was raised by Cllr David Dean that all council tenanted homes on the Eastfields estate are surveyed immediately and alternative accommodation be found for every resident that currently lives in a home that does not attain the government mandated decent home standard. This was seconded by Cllr Daniel Holden.

Following discussions on this recommendation, the Chair explained that he could not take the recommendation forward because as a Panel we do not have the jurisdiction to mandate this action from an external provider. However, we can take a recommendation forward for action from the Cabinet and the Executive and should be mindful that the purpose of this Panel is to create recommendations that can be delivered.

The Panel RESOLVED (eight votes for, none against) to send the following recommendations to Cabinet;

The Panel proposes that Merton's Housing Team lead on hosting a one-stop shop on Merton's council's website, in partnership with Clarion and with the support of the Council's Communications Team. The purpose of this page is to

- (a) Inform residents of their rights, responsibilities and signpost into the current repairs process. This may also include letters and replies sent by the Cabinet member;
- (b) provide single source of information on issues already identified through the publication and regular updating of KPIs for housing repair on Clarion's estates;
- (c) List as set out in precedent in the papers for Sustainable Communities paper of 24th June the current open repair cases for Clarion estate. New repairs should be included when they arise. Where possible common issues should be highlighted.

The goal of these measures is to restore resident and partner confidence in Clarion's management of their stock. The page should be implemented as a matter of urgency and remain until the Cabinet Member is satisfied confidence has been restored.

The Panel further request that Cabinet write to Clarion asking for detailed information on the conformity with the decent home standard of stock across the borough. The response to this request to be shared with the Sustainable Communities panel.

Additionally, the Panel RESOLVED to revisit this item at the next Sustainable Communities meeting 2 September 2021.

- 7 OUTSTANDING CLARION REPAIR WORKS - RECEIVED FROM THE OFFICE OF SIOBHAIN MCDONAGH MP (Agenda Item 7)

Taken with Item 6

8 HOUSING: ACCOMMODATION AND EVICTION BAN (Agenda Item 8)

The Chair proposed postponing this item until the next meeting

Panel agreed.

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