

RESIDENTS' FORUM – 30 May 2018

MINUTES

Members Present: Martin Hughes (Chair); Blossom Shakespeare; William Crilly; Sonia Dobson; Sylvia Donaldson; Lindsey Malcolm; Eunice Sinyinza; Wendy Jackson; Ben Roe; Geraldine Grant; John Rymell.

Staff & Board Present: Bill Henderson, Director Housing Services; Jeff Driscoll, Head of Asset Management; Karen Orr, Senior Resident Involvement Officer (minute taker).

Apologies: Lloyd Gale-Ward; Kevin Brown; Phil Williams; Annette Morrison.

1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

1.1. The chair welcomed all participants and apologies were noted.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING, MATTERS ARISING, ACTION POINTS UPDATE

2.1 The minutes of 21 February and 25 April were agreed as true and correct records.

2.2 Noted that 3.2 of the February minutes stated the removal of a vehicle by the Local Authority can be a “long drawn out process”. John asked if this process could be less drawn out.

2.3 **ACTION:** Agreed Newlon to consider whether the removal of a vehicle by the Local Authority could be speeded up.

3. ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW FOR 2017/18

3.1 Jeff Driscoll, outlined key themes from his report. Enough stock condition surveys have been done to provide evidence to the Board for a greatly increased five year capital programme going forward. There is now about £6m a year for this programme instead of the previous £2-3m. This year's challenge will be procuring another contractor to do the additional work as Wates cannot. BSW will continue to do boiler replacements for 2018/19 until their contract finishes at the end of the year after which a new contract will be tendered. More double glazing window replacements will now be done including for Victorian street homes. This work will also be tendered for the next five years.

3.2 With the increased capital programme, a more holistic and cost effective approach can be taken. So where scaffolding is erected for window replacements other jobs such as painting and roofing (including insulation) will be done at the same time and by the same contractor. This will create savings as scaffolding is expensive, especially if put up for individual works. Another contractor would be fitting kitchens, bathrooms and rewire with some boiler replacements. Wendy asked if listed buildings will be included for window replacements. Jeff replied they would, although plastic double glazing could not be used. It also depends on what the local planners agree and sometimes Newlon have been unsuccessful getting agreement for double glazing in some listed buildings. Newlon will do what they can in these situations so sometimes will put in secondary glazing instead as energy efficiency is still a key part of the programme.

3.3 In response to Geraldine's query whether residents will have access to the detailed capital programme Jeff replied that Newlon are looking to link all these IT systems together so that

they will be able to request this information. Jeff gave a caveat, Newlon look to replace before the 20 years life of say a kitchen is up. However if it's in good condition it won't be replaced just because its 20 years old. It can be cost effective to do repairing as it could add further years to the life. The stock condition surveys provide some guidance about prioritising as each home is given a life of 1 to 20 years. He also sits down with contractors and look at the geography of where homes are and the efficiencies that can be gained from bundling work together.

- 3.4 Pre work inspections could be done in the evenings and weekends if the resident works and request it. John pointed out that if residents arrange time off work, they can lose money and sometimes the surveyor does not even turn up. Blossom enquired about how many times a boiler would be repaired before it was replaced. Jeff replied that they work on a 15 year replacement cycle although some don't last that long and these are being designed out. Some can be repaired as Newlon do not want to replace boilers at say 7-8 years. Blossom then pointed out that boiler repairs are a regular complaint at the Complaints Panel, with issues about multiple repairs and different engineers coming and ordering different parts. Jeff responded that these type of issues are down to the BSW contract manager. Newlon only pays once for a boiler repair even if multiple visits are made.
- 3.5 Newlon are aware of the problems and will not will be renewing this contract. Data on boiler breakdown by individual home is kept and this helps to prioritise replacements. So if a boiler has had 15-20 callouts it's put to the front of the queue. In response to Sonia's query about the reason for no external painting this year, Jeff explained that fire safety work is taking precedence although it is expected that the painting will take place again next year. Painting of internal communal areas is also affected. She then suggested that residents are informed with Jeff agreeing although he would be cautious about promising what happens next year, now. Martin was concerned that buildings would suffer without external painting and questioned whether this was a false economy. Jeff acknowledged that with the capital works fully funded it could be a waste to put up a scaffold just for external painting and not also do window replacements at the same time.
- 3.6 **ACTION:** Agreed Jeff would look at the possibility of carrying out pre work inspections in the evening or weekends at a resident's request.
ACTION: Agreed Jeff and Karen to meet and draft something for Newlon News about no external painting being carried out during 2018/19.

4. UPDATE ON FIRE SAFETY

- 4.1 During this update, Jeff acknowledged that after Grenfell, fire safety has been a big issue nationwide which has led to a review of the regulations. The review had not produced the expected result on regulatory reform and it was likely that further reviews would take place. For Newlon, typically a fire risk assessment (FRA) covers all communal areas and are based on the building being built to a compliant standard. Grenfell has highlighted that not all buildings meet that standard. Some Newlon buildings have been found to have combustible aluminium composite material cladding (ACM) and will be fixed in the next 12 months.
- 4.2 Newlon have since modified their FRAs so that they are now more in depth. They are a very intrusive type of assessment with three to four carried out for each building by an independent expert. The expert then reports what work is needed to the structure and fabric of the building. These modified FRAs will lead to an increase in costs and impact on Newlon's financial budgets as they are finding significant levels of work. A programme of training for staff about fire safety is being put together. Newlon are also making sure that they specify the right kind of product for future buildings.

4.3 Jeff responded to a query about fire alarms going off by explaining that every block should have a policy about what happens if there is a fire. For Grenfell it was assumed that the building was compliant and compartmentalised and their policy was to stay put.

5. ANNUAL REVIEW OF MAJOR SUPPLIERS

5.1 This report provided information about all major suppliers, defined as those whom Newlon spend more than £500k on annually. Bill expanded that the most concerns were with one of the cleaning contractors, as they were poor value for money. It was noted that Property Services had now stopped using Mulalleys for planned works.

5.2 The gas contractors, BSW had a review rating of amber as some gas repairs were poor. Members recounted examples of some bad experiences with them. Jeff explained that his role is to pick up these kind of problems. By contrast he noted that Wates are very efficient in comparison to other contractors - for nine out of 10 jobs they have the necessary material on their vans. The tenth job may need a more bespoke solution and most contractor systems would struggle with this as well.

6. NEWLON SERVICE STANDARDS

6.1 Bill spoke to Annette Morrison's paper about the Forum being asked to annually review Newlon's Service Standards. Some changes to the standards were made last year based on the Forum's previous recommendations. He then asked what suggestions members would like to make for this year and encouraged them to think about ones that can be measured. Lloyd who was not present at the meeting had suggested the inclusion of "honesty" as a standard.

6.2 The Forum made the following recommendations:

- There should be something about consistency. Bill noted that this is already in the Standards as it is one of Newlon's core objectives.
- Include something about Newlon ensuring that information from a resident about their pending repair will be passed on to the contractor who needs it.
- Include something about the clarity of communication with residents so that Newlon ensures it understands the problem being raised. Such as requesting a resident reporting a repair to send a photo or video to illustrate it; or asking something like - "are you aware if any of your neighbours are experiencing this problem as well"
- Include something in the section on key standards about quality. Bill agreed this and added that Newlon would also need to measure it.
- Add "getting it right first time" in the key standards. Bill commented that Newlon do already report on this for some of their contractors.

6.3 Interspersed with the discussion about standards, some members spoke about their experiences of Newlon services. A common theme being poor communication on repairs and communal repairs and a question about what is being planned to improve this going forward. Members did however recognise that most residents in this situation would not go through the process of making a formal complaint. Examples were given for Hammond Court. With one about mould and another leading to the bins being taken out of the bin store due to a longstanding leak that damaged its ceiling. A number of residents had reported/complained about the leak over months but it had not been resolved. How many residents needed to complain about the same repair, before it was recognised as serious and fixed?

6.4 Did Newlon have mechanisms to identify multiple complaints about the same issue? Bill replied that the contract managers in the relevant teams would be expected to pick up these. If they are not dealt with then they would be escalated to the team managers. But the most effective way would be for the staff member who manages the contract to sort out as quickly as possible. Bill agreed to look into before the next meeting. He also noted that a report about communal repairs would be coming to the October Forum and encouraged members to bring up these issues then. Martin suggested a report comes to the next Forum about Hammond Court communal repairs, which looks into the reasons why they have not been fixed.

6.4 **ACTION:** Agreed Annette and Bill to consider the Forum's recommendations for the Service Standards and report back on what changes have been made as a result.

ACTION: Agreed Bill to investigate long standing Hammond Court communal repairs before the 25 July meeting.

ACTION: Agreed to bring a report to the 25 July meeting investigating long standing communal repairs at Hammond Court. The report to explain the reasons for the delay in repair work.

7. RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT UPDATE

7.1 Members heard that another STAR Awards event was being planned for November 2018. The last one had been held in 2015. A quick consultation was held about the proposed award categories. Members agreed that:

- The addition of an award for staff who involve residents was a good idea.
- All the awards with "of the year" in their title should be changed to " – 2018"
- When asking for nominations, make it clear that the period from 2015 to 2018 can be considered when looking back to see what someone has achieved.
- All the other previous award categories should be kept.

7.2 Geraldine and Eunice both volunteered to be a member of the Planning Group and work with staff to organise the event.

7.3 The last Forum had requested some improvements in the information provided to them. The resident involvement report now included information about recent surveys of residents. Members indicated they were happy with this; the glossary provided to explain how the key performance indicators (KPI's) are worked out; the additional information explaining exceptional performance – good or bad. There was a brief demonstration how the KPI's can be drilled down into to look at the long trend over time and detailed reasons for performance. Members requested that the KPI's are uploaded onto the website. John asked if members could have access to the detailed KPI data as demonstrated. Bill was not opposed although he added that it may not be possible to provide the context to everyone.

7.4 There followed a discussion about the proposed tour of Newlon homes for members. After a quick straw poll it was decided that the tour should visit different types of homes at one time. Members undertook to turn up if they said they would attend. Members will be consulted and the tour organised for the day and time the majority can make.

7.5 **ACTION:** agreed Karen will feedback members' comments about the 2018 STAR award categories to the planning group tomorrow.

ACTION: agreed Karen to contact Geraldine and Eunice about joining the STAR Awards planning group.

ACTION: Agreed Newlon to consider the Forum's suggestion to upload the KPI's onto the website.

ACTION: Agreed Newlon to consider the Forum's suggestion to provide access to the detailed KPI data for Forum members.

ACTION: Agreed Karen to liaise with the Housing Project Manager to organise a tour of Newlon homes after consulting members about their preferred day of the week and time of day. Preferably before the next meeting on 25 July. To see if it is possible to include visits to empty or tenanted homes during the tour.

8. PERFORMANCE REPORT – HOUSING AND PROPERTY SERVICES

- 8.1 Members discussed performance for April. The meaning of the clock icon in the report was not clear. Noted that some data for repairs appeared to be contradictory with the % of appointments kept being 96.49% while the % satisfied with repairs was only 59%. John commented that performance for another KPI was very low as there was just 62% satisfied with the ability of staff.
- 8.2 Wendy thought that the 83% performance for telephone calls answered looked too high. Bill said this could be looked at in more detail and added that it didn't include the residents who request a call back. Getting calls answered is hungry on staff time and he hoped when the customer portal is up and running more residents would use it and less residents will call. However, he also acknowledged that some things, such as describing a repair take time and are easier to deal with by phone. He clarified that if an operator in the service centre is free and a resident calls, they will be answered immediately.
- 8.3 **ACTION:** Agreed to find out the meaning of the clock icon in the performance report.
ACTION: Agreed to look in detail at the underlying data for the % of calls answered KPI and report back to the next Forum.

9. FEEDBACK FROM AND TO THE BOARD/RESIDENTS' SERVICES COMMITTEE

- 9.1 Martin informed members there was no feedback from the Board.
- 9.2 There was no feedback from Residents' Service Committee as Lloyd had given his apologies for this meeting.