

**Partners for Improvement in Islington
Residents Forum Meeting**



Minutes of the Residents Forum

Held at 6.35pm on Thursday 18 September 2008

PRESENT:

Forum Members:

Michael Adedeji	(MA)	Chair of the meeting
Muriel Duncan	(MD)	Vice Chair
Dawreen Charles	(DC)	
Chris Radway	(CR)	
Chris Matthews	(CM)	
Chris Graham	(CG)	
Sally Ingrey	(SI)	
Susanne Lamido	(SL)	
Lisa Crowley	(LC)	
Ann-Marie Greensmith	(AMG)	

Partners:

Ed Butler	(EB)	
John Venning	(JV)	
Tom Irvine	(TI)	
Mike Cahill	(MC)	
Liz Voss	(LV)	
Paula Redpath	(PR)	
Philippa Wooldridge	(PW)	

HFI:

Anthony Jonas	(AJ)	
Jane Mugridge	(JM)	

Apologies:

Richard Best	
Suzanne Bryant	
Shirley Bryant	

Four Communications

Before the business of the meeting, Four Communications introduced themselves and invited residents to volunteer to speak to them about their experiences of the PFI1 contract, for a publication they are working on to mark the end of the refurbishment programme.

1. Minutes and Matters arising from Meeting of 17 July 2008

- 1.1** The Forum agreed that item 4.6 should be corrected to read "at the grate in the gutter rather than in the downpipe".
- 1.2** The Forum enquired as to item 6.2 the outcome of the audit of the Repairs completion performance figures. JM confirmed that Martin

Church from HFI's Contract Commissioning Team has carried out an audit with Partners Repairs Team including ringing up tenants, and a report should be available for the next meeting (**Action HFI**). Martin Church also took a number of Forum members on refurbishment work inspections since the last meeting of the Forum.

- 1.3 CR enquired about item 9.2 – how does Partners intend to increase the number of leaseholder representatives on the Forum. (**Action EB**)
- 1.4 CG requested that future Forum meeting dates be advertised on Partners website (**Action TI**).
- 1.5 AMG enquired about item 7.3 asking if the newsletter article about what the Forum “stood for” was agreed by the Forum. EB advised that the vision had changed on this: Georgina Galliers got together with one or two members of the Forum and in the newsletter article invited residents to the Forum meetings.
- 1.6 SL enquired about the intended Garden Competition. EB advised that the Garden competition is being advertised in the current residents newsletter, to be judged in Summer 2009.
- 1.7 CR noted that the minutes had been updated promptly on the Partners website.

2. Best Value

- 2.1 EB reported that the Best Value Group met on 9 September 2008. He summarised this item as a report on what happened at that meeting and an invitation to a special meeting of the Forum.
- 2.2 EB reported that the Best Value Group meeting talked about what form the Best Value Review will take. The Council, Homes For Islington and Partners will run Focus Groups. The idea of the special meeting of the Forum is to start to look at some of the information that comes back, and to help set the direction of the Review.
- 2.3 EB confirmed that the Forum made some comments at the previous meeting: suggesting the Review should include (i) Harassment and ASB and (ii) enforcement of Tenancy conditions.
- 2.4 EB confirmed that when the final report is complete this will come back to the Forum.
- 2.5 The Forum asked for an explanation of Best Value. EB explained that a Best Value Review is allowed for in the PF11 contract, and it is about the Council reviewing the services Partners provides. It involves talking to stakeholders and customers. It is a review of PF11, officially by the Council, but is being done by the Council, HFI and Partners together. Data collection has started. The write-up of the review has not yet started. 6 November 2008 is to be the Forum's official input into the Review.

- 2.6 The Forum asked whether any stimulus material would be provided before the meeting. EB confirmed yes, the intention is to provide some of the initial data and info received. (**Action EB/HFI/LBI**) The meeting would be a workshop format, looking at some key issues and asking for feedback.
- 2.7 The Forum agreed to a special meeting on Thursday 6 November 2008 starting at 6.35pm. (**Action EB**) This is open to all members. The focus is on PFI1 but all Forum members are welcome.

3. Works Team Update

- 3.1 LV reported that after over 5 years, the works portion of the PFI1 contract finishes in less than 2 weeks. The last of the scaffolding will be coming down this week and will mean that Partners has completed external works to over 900 street properties. Overall Partners has carried out internal works to 1590 homes. There are around 70 properties where Partners has been unable to complete internal works because of the ill health or vulnerability of the residents. But health and safety checks and minor upgrade works have been completed.
- 3.2 LV reported that Resident satisfaction has improved fairly consistently over the last 5 years, and tenant satisfaction has been recorded at its highest levels this year. Partners has already transferred lots of the lessons learned on PFI1 to ensure a great service on PFI2 and will continue to strive to improve the service provided to residents.
- 3.3 LV said Partners would like to thank the Residents Forum for their input and feedback on the refurbishment works over the years, and particularly for all their help with the tenants information packs which have been great at helping people know what to expect.
- 3.4 CR asked if Partners will still be doing the 70 yet to be done. He asked what happens if the fact that work hasn't been done has an effect on other properties. AJ advised that flooding by residents is an issue for tenancy management to deal with, regardless of refurbishment. CG said there shouldn't be a nuisance from one flat to another and this is a management issue.
- 3.5 CR requested that the criteria for not carrying out refurbishment (no access / vulnerability) be brought to the Forum. EB said Partners would take away the request and respond after the meeting. (**Action EB**)
- 3.6 AMG advised that although the refurbishment has been completed in her home there is now damp, although she accepted part responsibility as she hadn't pushed the issue. MC said that he is fully committed to resolving any issues that are outstanding on PFI1 and awaiting on individual cases, including CR's. MC confirmed he is happy to look into AMG's case and that Partners has things in place to deal with damp if it arises. (**Action MC**)

- 3.7** CG suggested that damp issues suggested a failure to properly survey the property before the start of works. MC said that all properties were properly surveyed, but damp can have lots of different causes which do not imply any failure to survey properly. The landlord has an obligation to deal with damp if it arises.
- 3.8** AMG suggested that PFI1 residents should be advised of this commitment. JV commented that dealing with damp is part of Partners' repair obligations. If a tenant reports damp the Repairs Team will attend.
- 3.9** MD expressed disappointment that on one of the inspections with Martin Church the insulation was not right. MC confirmed the item had been raised and confirmed again his full commitment to resolving problems that come up on PFI1.
- 3.10** SL expressed concern that she had reported some repairs on behalf of neighbours but has not always received a response from Partners Quality Team. TI confirmed that all reports received have been forwarded to the Repairs Team for action, and records are kept. TI suggested that SL had been given updates.

4. Repairs Team Update

- 4.1** PR said she knew the consensus of the Forum was that the Repairs Service is not brilliant and has taken on board the suggestions for customer care improvements. The Forum has suggested daily spot checks which have been implemented. CSOs have all been sent on training. The standard greetings and farewells have been implemented. MD commented that she had used the service in the last two weeks and the greeting is very nice.
- 4.2** CR expressed a lack of faith in the Repairs Team's performance information based on his own experience. Did not want special discussion on this (repair reported on-line 17 July 2008) but was just raising the point. PR to look into repair ref 27913908. **(Action PR)**
- 4.3** PR reported that the Repairs reporting function is much more prominent on the new website which is about to be launched. She confirmed that the repairs reporting inbox is monitored every day.
- 4.4** CG suggested that lightbulbs in communal areas should be replaced with energy saving bulbs as and when they are replaced. PR confirmed she would consider this and come back to the Forum. **(Action PR)**
- 4.5** DC expressed concern about operatives having courtesy to ask if something can be rested on tenant's furniture, not assuming that they can do so.
- 4.6** SL enquired what happens if something gets damaged during refurbishment works. LV confirmed that Works Team would go and assess the damage.

5. HFI Consultative Panel Papers

- 5.1** AJ advised the Forum that all the papers in the booklet are about HFI and don't directly affect Partners residents. The first report is about sustainability. AJ suggested the Forum might want to ask Partners about sustainability.
- 5.2** SL said that HFI is better than Partners in various things. She enquired about what HFI does to ensure Partners meets its standards. AJ confirmed that HFI have meetings with Partners to share best practice. CR suggested that as part of the Best Value Review HFI could do a gap analysis to highlight things which HFI do and Partners don't. AJ suggested it would be a short list. AMG commented that a gap analysis might be comparing apples and pears. For example, double glazing would be standard in estate properties but not possible for PFI in street properties. EB confirmed that sustainability could be added to the Forward Plan for future agenda items (**Action EB**). CG noted that one of the 4 "C"s in Best Value is Comparison.
- 5.3** CR enquired whether Partners intends to halve the waste to landfill by 2012 from a baseline of 2008. PR confirmed that the Repairs Team is signing up for it.
- 5.4** MD asked whether Partners has considered solar panels on street properties. JV confirmed that Partners has received some requests from residents for permission to install solar panels.

6. Performance Summary

- 6.1** EB introduced the item and talked the Forum through the paper. The paper was Homes For Islington's "basket" report, allowing some comparison in performance with HFI's Area Housing Offices, and giving overall "scores" for Customer Care and Efficiency.
- 6.2** EB explained that this report was provided because the Forum asked for comparison information. A small group from the Forum might want to get together to establish what performance information the Forum should receive in future. Partners wants to design a report which is most useful to the Forum.
- 6.3** CR and CM volunteered for this small group.

7. ASB update

- 7.1** PW introduced the report on Partners management of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and invited comments.

- 7.2** PW said that Partners Housing Management Team is trying to get back to basics on tackling ASB. Partners checked what people thought about what Partners were doing. Partners has been implementing certain things in response to what residents said. These include making sure residents know how to contact us; making it easier for residents to report ASB. We purchased dictaphones and bought sound recording systems. Evidence from these can be used in legal action.
- 7.3** LC enquired whether this was “cloak and dagger”. PW confirmed that there would normally be a process before then and Partners would try to resolve problems in other ways. CR suggested that as an early part of the process the alleged perpetrators could be made aware that Partners has the equipment. PW confirmed that alleged perpetrators are informed that Partners has tools and powers available.
- 7.4** SL suggested that Partners should sometimes just get people round the table. PW confirmed that she has sat down with people and talked issues through. Sometimes mediation is very useful and sometimes people prefer to have a stranger as mediator, so mediation is often offered.
- 7.5** CR highlighted the low satisfaction rating reported by residents with Partners handling of ASB. EB noted that because of the nature of the service area, satisfaction ratings are usually relatively low. CR suggested that some of the improvements are not very targeted to address the satisfaction problems. SI commented that the survey was good and Partners appeared to have got quite a lot from it.
- 7.6** CG suggested that changes could be made to toughen up the terms of the tenancy conditions. A lot of complaints were about noise. CR commented that he had been told hard flooring cannot be used. PW confirmed that the Council’s tenancy conditions do require to suitable floor coverings, but also noted that this sort of requirement is currently being tested through the legal system.
- 7.7** CR commented that the victim of ASB or nuisance does not always know what is going on with the investigation and action that Partners is taking. PW confirmed that there are Data Protection issues.
- 7.8** SL raised concerns about dogs and pets
- 7.9** JM introduced an HFI report on Partners management of ASB. Partners are following HFI’s procedure as at the start of the contract. HFI have some differences and have been looking at these with Partners.
- 7.10** The Forum discussed the possible benefits of an out-of-hours service for reporting ASB. PW confirmed that the majority of issues that people need to report are noise related, so Partners uses the Council’s Noise Team. In a situation where a resident perceived a risk to their safety the appropriate people to call would probably be the police. CR suggested it might be possible to give training to the out-of-hours repairs line staff.
- 7.11** PW tabled a report and asked the Forum to note the recent success of Partners in achieving a Possession Order with the help of residents who

gave evidence in the case. The report demonstrated the amount of work and evidence that can be involved in achieving this sort of outcome. The Forum congratulated the Housing Management Team on the outcome.

8. Leaseholder Information

- 8.1** EB reported that Partners is seeking to improve the quality and quantity of information for and communication with leaseholders. Articles are going into the Partners Gazette. In October there is a leaseholder fair.
- 8.2** EB advised that Partners will be running a Focus Group looking at satisfaction, and looking at ways to improve Partners' communication with leaseholders. Partners has also established a Resident Involvement Register, including a number of leaseholders who have specified what issues they would like to be consulted on and by what method. Partners also has a customer care project which will look at communication in general – not just with leaseholders.
- 8.3** CR asked if Partners will be targeting leaseholders to join the Forum, noting that leaseholders need to be told how to become a member. CR suggested that this could be advertised in a newsletter. EB confirmed this could be done (**Action EB**).
- 8.4** CG suggested Partners could also advertise the Leaseholder Forum on the 2nd Wednesday of each month. (**Action EB to consider**)
- 8.5** The Forum discussed how to raise interest in the Forum and encourage new members. AMG commented that at the last meeting there was a discussion about an article in the newsletter telling residents what the Forum stands for. MA commented that some people outside think the Forum is just a talking shop. CR commented that if the Forum is successful in getting observers it would be positive. CR commented that the Forum is tremendously productive. MD suggested that Forum members could invite neighbours.
- 8.6** SL suggested a bigger quantity of juice could be made available at the next Forum meeting (**Action TI**)

9. Partners Fun Day

- 9.1** EB confirmed that Partners Residents Fun Day would be held at the Claremont Project, White Lion Street on the afternoon of 4 October 2008. Details in Partners Gazette. Forum members were encouraged to attend.
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The meeting closed at 8.35pm.