

**Notes from Partners' Open Forum – Thursday 21 May 2026 – 1800-1900**

**Staff Attendees:** Katrina Dalby – Service Improvement and Engagement Manager, Riaan Marescia, Partners Insurance Officer, Laina Thomas, Islington Council.

**Council Attendee:** Laina Thomas

Resident Attendees: 3

Apologies – x3

Subject	Record of Discussion	Action Points	Key
<p><b>Action updates from March's meeting.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The revised vulnerability form was sent to meeting attendees for review.</li> <li>• Leaseholder service charges – We have completed a review of leasehold service charges and have had 4 meetings with the Service Charge team and the Council. We have reviewed the historic charges, reviewed the process followed to calculate them, and caps and omissions. The review has highlighted some issues which have enabled us to improve the process, transparency and leaseholder confidence going forward. Our Service Charge Manager has drafted a communication explaining the history and process which is with the Council for sign off. As soon as it is available we will share with residents.</li> <li>• Through completion of the review, we recognise that communication needs to be improved. We have amended our process to include that if we become aware of an unexpected cost will update leaseholders immediately, rather than wait for the actual bill to be sent. Also, budget holders in Partners will notify the Service Charge Team in advance of any planned expenditure which is in excess of the expected costs so that this can be explained. For example, there were costs attributed to the office relating to new lighting which had</li> </ul>		

	<p>to be installed due to findings in a health and safety audit. Going forwards we will explain that in these types of situations the cost is a one-off cost and shouldn't be incurred again.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diary sheets were provided to the resident as requested.</li> <li>• Sharing property information – at the last meeting a resident asked how each team shares their understanding about a building with other teams. Partners doesn't use a shared property database, so each team keeps details of their knowledge on their own systems. When issues arise, we meet and speak to each other to share understanding and resolve things.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Information from Partners</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would like to host the July meeting as an in-person meeting if that is convenient for attendees.</li> <li>• The Housing Regulator completed their inspection of Islington Council's services and details of their report are on Islington's website: <a href="http://www.islington.gov.uk/housing/council-landlord-performance/regulatory-judgments">www.islington.gov.uk/housing/council-landlord-performance/regulatory-judgments</a>. The Council has been graded a C3 meaning that despite meeting several of the required standards, the council is not fully meeting all standards and needs to make some improvements. One of the areas for improvement, which the council had already begun work on prior to the regulator inspection, is having up to date stock condition surveys explained below.</li> <li>• The council has already begun carrying out stock condition surveys using a company called Ridge. Partners tenants will receive letters within the next 12 to 18 months requesting access to carry out a survey. The stock condition survey will apply to tenanted properties and communal areas.</li> <li>• After sending our PEEP letter which you helped to design to around 300 residents. We've had about 35 returned and around 12 of these will potentially require a PEEP. We are contacting the residents to arrange an appointment. As a reminder, PEEPs are only required for buildings over 11 meters tall.</li> <li>• Cinema club went well, thank you to everyone who attended.</li> </ul>		<p>PEEP - personal emergency evacuation plan</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partners are trying to use QR codes more. We've added them to our vulnerability mailing and as a link to the Council's tree portal.</li> <li>• We want to carry out an accessibility survey on our complaints process. We'll be emailing residents via the Engagement Register to see if they would like to be involved.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Partners Annual Service Plan</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the last meeting residents were asked for their ideas for Partners Annual Service Plan. The Annual Service Plan is about the non-contractual work that we want to do to help us improve our service and become more efficient.</li> <li>• Partners staff; Islington Council and residents have discussed the 2026-27 plan and what improvements we want to make. An extract from the plan has been drafted and shared with residents in advance of the meeting. Residents were asked if they had any questions.</li> </ul> <p>Resident Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Acronyms shouldn't be included in documents for residents as they don't necessarily understand them.</li> </ol> <p>Agreed – Partners to recirculate document without acronyms</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. How are the actions in the plan paid for?</li> </ol> <p>The actions are paid for from existing budgets. Delivery of the actions should improve services and make them more efficient which could include cost savings.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Why do Partners carry out multiple audits/visits, wouldn't it be better for residents if staff came together?</li> </ol>	<p>Re-circulate annual service plan without acronyms</p>	

	<p>We understand that it would be beneficial for residents and Partners if we could combine visits to reduce inconvenience, time and costs. Different staff have different skills and cannot do each other's jobs so one staff member can't complete everything needed at an address. For example, the gas safety check is completed by a gas engineer and couldn't be completed by a repair operative.</p> <p>It would be challenging to co-ordinate multiple staff member's diaries so that they can be at the same address at the same time over multiple appointments. Appointments often overrun or are quicker than expected and it would be inefficient if staff members had to wait for someone else to finish before they could move to the next job. Where specific skills are not needed, we can look at combining visits. For example, we are working towards combining our communal area checks with our fire door checks to reduce the number of visits needed.</p>		
<p><b>Service Charge Follow Up Questions</b></p>	<p>A meeting attendee asked where the money for tenants' contribution to service charges come from and what charges do they contribute to?</p> <p>Partners Response:</p> <p>The payment of a tenant's share of service charges equitable to those that leaseholders are liable for comes from the Housing Revenue Account. For tenants these costs cover their contribution to the service delivery, day to day repairs and maintenance and management of communal areas.</p> <p>The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) funds council social housing. It is intended to record expenditure and income on running a council's own housing stock and closely related services or facilities, which are provided primarily for the benefit of the council's own tenants.</p>		

	<p>The main features of the HRA are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• it is a landlord account, recording expenditure and income arising from the provision of housing accommodation by local housing authorities (under the powers and duties conferred on them in Part II of the Housing Act 1985 and certain provisions of earlier legislation)</li> <li>• it is not a separate fund but a ring-fenced account of certain defined transactions, relating to local authority housing, within the General Fund</li> <li>• the main items of expenditure included in the account are management and maintenance costs, major repairs, loan charges, and depreciation costs</li> <li>• the main sources of income are from tenants in the form of rents and service charges</li> <li>• the HRA should be based on accruals in accordance with proper accounting practices, rather than cash accounting</li> </ul> <p>The fund covers these costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Day to day repairs and maintenance work in council-owned properties</li> <li>• Providing the housing service to residents</li> <li>• Communal items e.g. maintaining lifts and stairways, paid for via service charges</li> <li>• Depreciation and loan charge costs</li> <li>• Recharges for any central costs such as IT, HR, etc that cover the landlord service and staff</li> </ul> <p>The HRA is ringfenced, meaning councils cannot add to it from budgets for other services or subsidise other services from it. It is also self-financing: council taxpayers do not pay into it and the account must balance.</p>		
--	---	--	--

	<p>You can read more here:</p> <p><a href="http://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-revenue-account">www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-revenue-account</a></p>		
<p><b>Services available to residents</b></p>	<p>A resident at the meeting suggested Partners should provide more information about support services available to residents.</p> <p>Partners Response:</p> <p>Residents should regularly check Partners website news section as there are details of schemes and initiatives available to residents to help with finances, free food, training and development, fun free activities etc.</p> <p>Another place to find out more about support and activities in Islington is the Council’s Find your Islington page:</p> <p><a href="http://findyour.islington.gov.uk/kb5/islington/directory/home.page">findyour.islington.gov.uk/kb5/islington/directory/home.page</a></p> <p>Here are details of some support services available in Islington.</p> <p>Council tax support for those on a low income:</p> <p><a href="http://www.islington.gov.uk/benefits-and-support/council-tax-support">www.islington.gov.uk/benefits-and-support/council-tax-support</a></p> <p>Help with childcare and family costs:</p> <p><a href="http://www.islington.gov.uk/children-and-families/help-with-childcare-and-family-costs">www.islington.gov.uk/children-and-families/help-with-childcare-and-family-costs</a></p> <p>Money and debt advice:</p>		

	<p><a href="http://www.islington.gov.uk/advice/money-and-debt-advice">www.islington.gov.uk/advice/money-and-debt-advice</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en">www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.islington.gov.uk/advice/free-independent-advice">www.islington.gov.uk/advice/free-independent-advice</a></p> <p>Energy Grants:</p> <p><a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/find-energy-grants-for-you-home-help-to-heat">www.gov.uk/government/collections/find-energy-grants-for-you-home-help-to-heat</a></p> <p>Help on your doorstep is another useful place to go for help. They work with residents to find solutions to the issues which make life difficult, strengthen communities to do more for themselves and enable people to improve their life chances:</p> <p><a href="http://www.helponyourdoorstep.com">www.helponyourdoorstep.com</a></p>		
<b>Window Cleaning</b>	<p>A resident asked whether Partners are responsible for cleaning residents windows.</p> <p>Partners response: Cleaning windows is a residents' responsibility. Partners nor the Council are responsible for cleaning residents' windows.</p>	Resident to provide Partners with the information which says that cleaning windows is the landlord's responsibility.	
<b>Insurance</b>	<p>Partners Insurance Officer Presentation:</p> <p>Partners Building's Insurance is provided by Howdens. Residents can make a claim online and see full details of the policy on Partners website: <a href="http://www.partnersislington.net/leaseholders/buildings-insurance/">www.partnersislington.net/leaseholders/buildings-insurance/</a></p>		

	<p>The insurer’s loss adjuster will assess a claim and make the final decision on whether the claim is successful.</p> <p>Contents insurance is the responsibility of tenants and leaseholders. Islington Council offers a low cost insurance scheme for tenants and right to buy leaseholders: <a href="http://www.islington.gov.uk/housing/council-tenant-services/your-tenancy/home-contents-insurance">www.islington.gov.uk/housing/council-tenant-services/your-tenancy/home-contents-insurance</a></p> <p>A resident asked how the cost of insurance is calculated each year.</p> <p>Partners Response:</p> <p>Every year Partners goes to the insurance market and obtains quotes for insurance cover for the properties Partners manages. We always look for the best value for money for Building’s Insurance. Details of the policy procured are available on Partners website.</p> <p>A resident asked whether the cost of replacing tiles that needed to be replaced during recent cyclical work would be covered by an insurance claim as the roof had only recently been replaced.</p> <p>Partners Response:</p> <p>If a leaseholder believes that a cost included in any work that they are being charged for is unfair then they should in the first instance raise their concerns with the Site Manager or Repairs Team.</p> <p>Following this, if you are unable to resolve the issue when the leaseholder receives their final account, they can submit a ‘final account challenge’ and specify which costs they don’t agree with which would</p>		
--	--	--	--

	be reviewed by the Home Ownership and Repairs Team. If repeat works are identified, then the resident would not be charged for them.		
<b>Tenancy History</b>	A resident shared their experience of signing up for their tenancy 45 years ago and explained how very little has changed in relation to tenant responsibilities. They even met Margaret Hodge when they attended a meeting with the council about the layout of the flats after they were compulsory purchased in the 1970s. The resident still lives in the same home with the same neighbour.	Partners to contact resident about doing an article in the Gazette	
<b>Next Meeting July 16<sup>th</sup> 1800-1900 Partners Gas/Kitchen Team- In person</b>			