

Items for Area Panel from Central Area Tenant Only meeting held on 7 August 2014

1. *Reporting after hours repairs*

The Chair read a letter that Ann Ewings (who was unable to attend the meeting) had given him about problems with after-hours repairs.

Ann reported a broken intercom system to the out-of-hours repair service over a weekend. This was an urgent repair as it left the front door unlocked. She asked for a job number, and was told that the job would be passed to dispatch, and they would phone back later with a job number. Ann was concerned about not having a job number, and was eventually given one which she was told would be confirmed on Monday by email, along with details of the job. This didn't arrive, and when Ann chased it repairs were unable to find the email or job number, which had to be raised again. Ann felt that this system was disjointed and unsatisfactory.

Barry Hughes said that a recent leak at Sylvan Hall had been sorted out very quickly and efficiently out of hours, without a job number. He found that repairs reported by email always got a job number by return email. As not everyone has access to email, it was agreed that alternative systems also needed to work well.

Alan Davis said he didn't get job numbers when reporting repairs, but it was noted that the system for tenants in Sheltered Housing was different, as they reported repairs to their Scheme Manager or Carelink.

It was agreed that there is a lack of clarity about the procedure when reporting out-of-hours repairs. Tenants are generally told they must ensure they get a job number when reporting repairs.

ACTION: *a clear description of the process for reporting out-of-hours repairs to be circulated at the next Area Panel.*

Response from Perrin Horne, Partnership and Resident Liaison Manager – Tel:- 01273 294641

We are sorry to hear about the difficulties Ann Ewings felt she had when she raised a repair with Mears. She has since received a letter confirming that an investigation took place and she was advised of the following,

“Mears listened to the recordings of your calls, on 26 July at 11.21am there was a call lasting 7 minutes and the call handler gave you the job number (9370628). The call was disconnected and when you called back the call handler gave you the estimated time of arrival of the sub-contractor and gave you the job number again at the end of your call, so the correct procedure was followed.

I have enclosed a copy of the resident representatives' process for resolving repair and maintenance issues. It is much better to follow this process rather than raise things at Area Panel as the matter is logged as an issue with Property & Investment and there is no need to wait for a meeting to get a response. Property& Investment will look into matters for you and you can start this process by telephoning (01273) 293427."

Clarifying the repairs process

Please be aware that when telephoning to report all repairs residents should ring 0800 052 6140, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The out-of-hours call centre staff will:

- Raise **all** emergency jobs - raise a job and provide a job number at the time of the call.
- For non-emergency repairs, will send an email to the Brighton Mears to raise a job the next working day OR request the call handler to call the tenant back on the next working day to make an appointment.

I do hope that this clarifies matters for you all.

2. Estate Inspections - deterioration in service

John McPhillips, from Albion Hill, said his Resident's Association had noticed a deterioration in the service they received since the work of the Estate Warden was taken over by Neighbourhood Officers.

When Barry Hills was their Estate Warden there were regular estate inspections, and Barry was very active in ensuring that small jobs around the estate were picked up on and completed. This system worked well, as residents could show the Estate Warden problems that might not be immediately apparent to someone not living there.

Over the last couple of years inspections have gradually declined, and this work has not been getting done.

Carl Boardman said problems had arisen at Warwick Mount when the officer responsible for the estate inspections left, and jobs were not handed over so there was no continuity and jobs did not get done.

Two issues were noted by the meeting:

- a) There was a lack of communication and consultation about the change from Estate Wardens to Neighbourhood Officers.*
- b) The current system is flawed and not as effective as the previous one, although there are good people working hard within it. The reduction in numbers of staff working in this area means the service has suffered.*

It was agreed that estate inspections are very useful, but only if they happen in a consistent and organised way. There needs to be a regular schedule, good communication with the Resident's Association and effective follow-up.

ACTION: The meeting asked for a clear description from the council about the present system for estate inspections - how it works, how often they take place, who is invited to attend them and what Resident's Associations can expect from the process.

Response from Robert Keelan, Neighbourhoods Manager – Tel:- 01273 292361

I am sorry that there is some dis-satisfaction with estate inspections. All of the council's estate inspections are well organised and tenant reps have had the dates of the inspections hand delivered in April this year.

Deliveries went to the Chairs and Secretaries list provided by the Resident Involvement Team.

All of the dates and results of the estate inspections are on the council website and can be found by typing in estate inspections into the search bar. Estate inspections are listed by ward and both of these areas are under the Queens Park Ward.

Inspections look at repairs that might need doing, the cleanliness of communal areas, grounds maintenance or improvements that are needed, basically the whole estate.

- Appendix A has details of the Queens Park Estate Inspections
- Appendix B gives the results of the last area 9 Albion Hill inspection
- Appendix C gives the results of the last Warwick Mount inspection

If any resident wants the Neighbourhood Officer to inspect a common area then they can contact the Housing Customer Service team on 01273 293030.

The 12 Neighbourhoods Officers in the service carry out regular inspections on the 14,000 tenant and leasehold properties in the city alongside many other duties.

3. ***New Area Panel structure***

The following concerns were raised about the new Area Panel structure and Area Panel meetings:

- a) Central, with 21 Associations, is much larger than other Areas (for example East has 7 Associations). This means that at Area Panel meetings, Central Resident Associations will have less time each to raise issues or give feedback, so will overall be less well represented.*
- b) Given this pressure on time it is particularly important that papers for the Area Panel arrive well in advance, so residents can read them before the meeting. The agreement is that residents receive the papers two weeks before the Area Panel, but this has not been happening.*

ACTION: *The meeting asked for the above points to be noted, and for a commitment from the council to provide papers two weeks in advance.*

(a) Response from Hilary Edgar, Housing Operations Manager - Tel: – 01273 293250

In the past there have been 21 association members of the Central Area Panel. We acknowledge that Central is large and East is small in terms of numbers of associations however four of the Central associations do not attend the meetings and not all of the rest of the associations attend all the meetings. The number of homes in each panel area is as follows; Central has 3388, East has 3043, West has 3876 and North has 3877.

(b) Response from John Peel, Democratic Services Officer – Tel:- 01273 291058

The current process for agenda circulation for Area Panels is as follows. Each Panel meeting is approximately 6 - 7 weeks apart:

- Tenant Only meeting
- Resource Centre compile items from the Tenant Only Meeting
- Items are sent to the council to respond
- Officers gather responses to the issues raised
- Those responses are sent to democratic services
- Democratic services prepare the agenda including reports, blue pages and citywide reports
- Agendas are despatched

Area Panel agendas are currently dispatched 8 clear days ahead of the meeting. That timescale conforms to the council's standard and legal procedure for publishing and distributing information for all meetings it holds including committee meetings and full council.

Due to the elections next year all council committee meetings are ending at the end of February or in early March and the last Housing Committee is on 4 March 2015. The Tenant Only meetings are between 4 – 16 December, the Area Panels are between 26 – 30 January where feedback is obtained on Housing reports. The Housing Committee reports go to the Housing Committee pre-meeting on 10 February and to the Housing Committee on 4 March.

The ability for reps to digest the information therein is acknowledged and appreciated but to bring that deadline forward a further week in the Panel cycle would have significant impact on the ability to gather sufficient and comprehensive responses to the Blue Page items, write reports for the agendas and also compromise the time taken to create, compile and distribute the agendas themselves.

However, the possibility of sending papers 10 clear days ahead of the meeting will be investigated and actioned if feasible for future meetings.
