

Place Select Committee

A meeting of Place Select Committee was held on Monday, 11th June, 2018.

Present: Cllr Derrick Brown (Chair), Cllr Sonia Bailey, Cllr Louise Baldock, Cllr Evaline Cunningham, Cllr Maurice Perry, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Paul Weston and Cllr Bill Woodhead MBE.

Officers: Craig Willows, Jayne Robins, RM (CS) Gary Woods, Peter Bell (DCE).

Also in attendance: Councillor Nigel Cooke (Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing), Member of the Public and Member of the Press.

Apologies: Councillor Ken Dixon.

PLA Declarations of Interest

15/18

Councillor Derrick Brown declared a personal non prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item Scrutiny Review of Consolidation of Thirteen Housing Group as he had family members who were residents in Thirteen Housing Group houses.

Councillor Paul Weston declared a personal prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item entitled Scrutiny Review of Consolidation of Thirteen Housing Group as he was currently an employee of Thirteen Housing Group. Councillor Paul Weston withdrew from the meeting and left the room during consideration of the item.

PLA Minute Silence

16/18

Members stood in a minute silence in remembrance of those who died in the Grenfell Tower fire.

PLA Minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2018

17/18

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2018.

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

PLA Scrutiny Review of Management of Memorials

18/18

Consideration was given to the draft final report and recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Management of Memorials. Subject to some minor amendments, Members agreed the draft final report.

AGREED that, subject to the identified minor amendments, the final report be approved for submission to Cabinet.

PLA Scrutiny Review of Consolidation of Thirteen Housing Group

19/18

Representatives from Thirteen Housing Group and the Local Authority were in attendance at the meeting to provide evidence in relation to the review.

Members were reminded that the consolidation of Thirteen Housing Group took place in July 2017, and the following background papers / website links were

provided to Members for information:

- Cabinet Report – Strengthening our Joint Working / Developing a Joint Investment Plan (Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and Thirteen) (July 2017)
- Thirteen – Customer Satisfaction Surveys (April 2018)
- Thirteen – Performance Report (April to December 2017)
- Thirteen – Website Links

Representatives from Thirteen Housing Group gave a presentation to Members that covered the following key points:-

- Thirteen Housing Group is Housing Association – Not For Profit
- Challenges
- Priorities
- Delivering Great Customer Service
- Stakeholder Feedback
- Growing the Business as a Social Entrepreneur
- Contributing to Regenerating the Tees Valley
- Being Team Thirteen
- Consolidation
- The Rationale and Affecting Tenants
- Engaging with Tenants and Leaseholders
- Operational and Strategic Engagement
- Investment and Alignment

The main issues discussed were as follows:

- Concern regarding new grass-cutting arrangements – how will Thirteen address this? This is a live issue and Thirteen's Grounds Management Manager met Council's operational teams to discuss.
- Good to hear recent commitment to sprinkler systems in high-rise properties.
- Decision made for all 13 high-rise blocks to be retro-fitted with sprinkler/misting systems – information events will follow after designs are agreed (outlined in investment plan).
- Repairs – anecdotal evidence that worker comes out, discovers that the issue is not what they thought it would be, then leaves and logs the job as complete. Committee assured that if a worker visits someone's home and does not have all the required parts to complete the job, this should be recorded on the system as a 'follow-on job' (not complete). Thirteen do not want performance skewed – only the scheduler/team leader can close off jobs. Some customers have waited longer for specific parts, but this is monitored. Emergencies take precedence – this can result in planned work being put back.
- Void properties on Eltham Crescent concerning. Thirteen review all properties on a weekly basis.
- Replacement of fires (gas to electric) – some tenants unhappy regarding this process. Thirteen are unaware of any issues, but will look into any specific concerns that Members inform them about.
- Performance Overview March 2018 (Thirteen Performance Pack): five Customer Service KPIs moving in the wrong direction – reasons for this? Issues around void turnaround time, average time to answer calls and avoidable contact. Void turnaround times were set a target for the 17/18 financial year that was not achieved but was still considerably better than the year before. Average time to answer calls met targets through the year and was significantly

better than the year before. Avoidable contact missed its year-end target but again was significantly better than the year before. All the customer services KPIs were set further stretch targets by the Board for 18/19 and this is monitored and reported to the Board.

- Any lessons for Stockton following Universal Credit roll-out in Hartlepool? The lessons learned from Hartlepool going live were to get to people early – some need intensive support, some only guidance. Need to understand individual circumstances. Dedicated team in place now – benefits should be seen in Stockton from experiences in Hartlepool.

- ASB policy – issue with one resident (12 complaints received).

- Members raised some issues around communication between themselves and Thirteen (communication with some Ward Members has not been as good as with others), and re-iterated the need for the partnership between Thirteen and Ward Members to be strong as they are often the first port-of-call for tenants - ensure Ward Members receive the twice-yearly newsletter and are made aware of any online consultations.

- Future investment – will there be a mix of properties? Some flats, some bungalows – committed to a mix of developments to suit different needs.

- Stock sustainability categories 1-5 – how are these determined? Look at all homes on a 30-year basis as part of a 30-year business plan. Independent surveyor sent in to check homes take samples throughout the year. Every three years, Thirteen have samples undertaken independently to check. These surveys determine what goes into the investment plan in terms of roof replacements, windows, etc. All information obtained gives a score which results in a category grading. Expected to have high-performing stock ('Decent Home Standard' and above). Category 4 and 5 properties will never recoup the investment put into them. Anti-social behaviour and voids factored in.

- Commend Thirteen for Acorn House development – lots of people have passed compliments.

- Development in Fairfield magnificent – response to calls for repairs superb.

- Has there been a shift away from normal rent to affordable housing? No policy shift to affordable rent – core business is social rent. Thirteen provide affordable rent when it is stipulated by the Local Authority either as part of s106/nominations agreement. Do speak to housing and planning colleagues on specific types of properties required. Defined level of need identified by Council.

- New Co-ordinators – some reservations regarding arrangements as potentially more being put on them (though overseeing less properties). Thirteen advised that management oversight had been strengthened with more neighbourhood service managers in place with maximum of 6 direct reports instead of perhaps 25 in some cases. Created much smaller focused teams – much tighter teams and support network. Lots of work has gone into determining patches. Four non-specific Co-ordinators also in post if the need arises for additional support in certain areas. Chair of Thirteen Customer Council added that from tenants' point of view, they prefer this new arrangement.

- Will the new Co-ordinators address ASB? Co-ordinators will be able to pull on all services around them, but will have the ultimate responsibility for their residents.

- Different levels of social housing will mean different levels of relationships with Co-ordinators – would like SLA to include timings on feedback (to Members as well as tenants). Thirteen advised that they already have a Member protocol in place that covers this and other things.

- Inexperience of some patch managers may make it difficult for them to deal

with the sometimes complex issues that tenants may have/raise. Thirteen should ensure that the new Co-ordinators are not working in isolation, but can learn from each other's experiences across all Wards.

The Committee requested the following further information:

- More in-depth information in relation to Thirteen's customer surveys.

A report from the Council's Housing Services Manager was noted which highlighted the joint working with Thirteen, and how their investment programme supports/aligns with the Council's social, economic and regeneration priorities.

It was proposed that a site visit be undertaken to enable Members to see the impact of Thirteen's investment in the Borough. The Committee agreed that a visit to Acorn House (Thornaby) and a site at the 'lower-end' of Thirteen's scale should be undertaken prior to the next Committee meeting.

AGREED that:

- 1.The information be noted.
- 2.Further information be provided as requested.
- 3.Site visits be scheduled to take place prior to the next Committee meeting.

PLA 20/18 **Work Programme 2018-2019**

Consideration was given to the Work Programme 2018/19. The next meeting is on 9 July 2018.

AGREED that the Work Programme 2018/19 be noted.

PLA 21/18 **Chair's Update**

The Chair had nothing further to report.