



Minutes of PBHA Forum Tuesday 19th April 2016

Present: 11 Tenants, 1 participants, Andy Love (Chair of The Board), Jane Watson (Islington Supporting People), Pat Yusefu (Islington Housing Manager), Mandy Mansfield (Participation Officer)

Chair: Precious Martini-Brown

Apologies: Vanessa Morris (Head of Services)

Minutes: Mandy Mansfield

Agenda

- 1 Introductions
- 2 Minutes and Matters Arising
- 3 Islington Supporting People/ Change to Support
- 4 Board Meeting invite
- 5 Rent Arrears and arrears prevention
- 6 Summer trip
- 7 Pride Planning Meeting
- 8 AOB
- 9 Date and place of next meeting

1 Introductions

Those present introduced themselves and were welcomed to the Forum

2 Minutes and Matters Arising

- The minutes were agreed as a true record
- **CCTV** – Installation began last week, and should be completed soon. It was pointed out that the cameras are situated too low down and it may be possible to damage/spray/cover them. **ACTION:** This will be feedback to Lightside.
- **Clissold Canteen** – Authorisation has been given to start works put new cladding (covering) on the walls of the canteen, which needs to be done before any works to the floor or skirting.

3 Islington Supporting People/Change to Support

Jane confirmed that due to cuts from Central Government there is a substantial reduction in funding for support. PBHA are in the process of placing a tender for services for next year.

In the meantime PBHA has had to look at new ways of providing support services. In June 25 people who are longer term tenants will be supported through Housing Management Services.

A tenant pointed out that it is the individuals who are now expected to pay through an increase in rent. It is a big increase of £40 a week affecting a lot of disabled and vulnerable people. Jane commented that rent setting is not controlled by Supporting People. However, it has been confirmed by Islington that the increase in rent will be covered by Housing Benefit.

Tenants were advised to seek advice from Islington Disability Rights if appropriate.

A tenant asked for a breakdown of what this money will cover. **ACTION:** An Intensive Housing Management Workshop will be set up for Islington in May (date to be confirmed) to explain details.

A tenant asked what about people in Hackney? The tenant pointed out they were not informed of anything, all that happened was Hackney tenants received letters informing them of proposed rent increases and changes to support. It was very stressful and unsettling to receive these letters. There was general discontent in the Forum about this lack of communication. However this has been an agenda item since February, when invitations were sent to all tenants inviting them to consultations before letters were hand delivered by Support Workers. Andy Love expressed regret that tenants feel unsettled, and explained that negotiations are ongoing with Hackney, and PBHA are not entirely clear whether they will fund the new proposal. If Housing Benefit will not cover IHM in Hackney, there will be no increase in rent. **ACTION:** An Intensive Housing Management Workshop will be organised in Hackney once the position has been clarified.

A tenant asked what if a person starts working? PBHA are looking into this, but tenants will still be able to make a claim for Housing Benefit.

4 Board Meeting invite

The Forum was asked if anyone else would like to attend the Board Meeting in May. MM has already confirmed. MK and IB volunteered to attend. Andy asked the Forum to choose 2 subjects for discussion. **ACTION:** Mandy M will organise a meeting with the above tenants before the Board Meeting to prepare. Board Meeting is on 26th May at 6pm.

5 Rent Arrears and arrears prevention

The Forum was asked for feedback to help develop an arrears prevention policy.

Q – Is there anything PBHA could do before the tenancy is signed that would help prevent arrears? Feedback included

- Sign a contract to get money paid direct to PBHA.
- Help setting up direct debits or standing orders.
- Training /money management course at beginning of tenancy
- A deposit was suggested, but this might not be feasible when people are homeless

- Having a short term 'starter tenancy'

Q – What situations can cause arrears? Feedback included

- Drug or alcohol issues
- Problems with benefit including Housing Benefit
- Mental health difficulties
- People's attitudes towards paying service charge
- Culture of not paying rent

Q – What are the most important things PBHA could do to help both prevent arrears and deal with arrears? Feedback included

- Have a very low threshold before action (two or three weeks) to catch arrears early
- PBHA be more strict in general towards arrears.
- Close liaison between Support Workers and Housing Officer

There was general discussion around the introduction of Universal Credit, as well as introducing licenses, that PBHA lawyers are looking into.

6 Summer trip

The Forum was asked where they would like to go for the summer trip this year. It was pointed out that the journey time to Brighton was a little long. Southend or Hastings was suggested, as well as a funfair or safari park.

The Forum was reminded that the trip this year is £10, that covers the coach and packed lunch. People will be able to book at Reception at Kingsland Hub.

The Forum agreed to plan the trip for Friday 15th July. **ACTION:** Mandy to do posters with suggestions and the Forum can vote where at the next meeting.

7 Pride Planning Meeting

A Pride planning meeting has been arranged for this Thursday 21st April, 12pm at Isledon Canteen. It was clarified that Pride is the annual celebration of all things LBGT but it is open to all to attend and get involved. This year the celebration will be at Isledon Hub on the Friday 1st Friday.

8 AOB

- **Open Squares.** Every year Clissold community garden takes part in Open Squares weekend. This year is on the weekend of 18th and 19th June. There will be produce from the garden for sale, some food and stalls. Free for PBHA tenants and participants.
- **Trip to Islington Boat Club.** The Over 50s Club is visiting the Boat Club this Tuesday 26th July, meeting at Isledon at 10.30am. We'll then get a bus to be there between 11am and 1pm.

- **Theatre trip.** There are three tickets remaining for the trip on Friday 29th April. Meeting outside the Arsenal shop at 7pm.
- **Farewell to Arinola.** Arinola is leaving PBHA after 1 years. She is having a farewell with tenants and participants at Geoffrey Street Workshop on 26th July at 3pm.
- **Repairs.** Three tenants raised issues regarding outstanding repairs to their properties. Details were taken for reporting but the Forum was reminded to contact property team directly if there are any issues over repairs.

9 Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on **Wednesday 18th May** at Kingsland Hub. Lunch 12.30pm, Forum 1pm.