

Alice Shepherd and Oak House Resident Steering Group - RSG - Meeting

Monday 24 October 2022

St John's Community Centre, Glengall Grove, E14

DRAFT MINUTES

Attendance

Residents:

Jane McGregor [JM]

Nadia Mehmood [NM]

Ashley Lowther [AL]

Sharon Holmes [SH] – via Zoom

Others:

Mike Tyrell – LBS, Residents Advocate [MT] – via Zoom

Sofia Chekdouf – One Housing, Regeneration Co-ordinator [SC]

Leila Arefani – One Housing, Regeneration Manager [LA]

Shaun Simpson – One Housing, Regeneration Officer [SS]

Independent Tenant and Leaseholder Advisor:

Ray Coyle – Open Communities [RC]

Stephen Moore – Open Communities [SM]

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

1.1. RC took the Chair and invited all participants to introduce themselves.

1.2. No apologies were received.

2. Minutes of RSG meeting of 26 September 2022 and Matters Arising

2.1. [Re: 8.4] Typo: “LA” to replace “AL” in first sentence.

2.2. [Re: 8.8 – LA said there will be a newsletter within next few weeks] Residents have not received any newsletters yet. RC has draft newsletters ready for comment and will email them all tomorrow and circulate it as soon as One Housing have theirs out. LA said theirs should be finished and ready to post out within the next few days – they've been busy and didn't get it out as quickly as they'd hoped. MT also has a Four Estates Forum newsletter ready to go out soon.

3. Update – One Housing

3.1. LA said they already have Flat 41 which is void and can be used as a regeneration hub meeting space, and they have approval to keep one flat free for this purpose. There has been discussion as to whether one family can move in there and it looks likely that a household that needs it will be able to move in; they are just awaiting final approval for that.

- 3.2. AL said Flat 41 is unsuitable as it's not accessible – there are stairs as soon as you go in. LA said it would have to be checked for accessibility before it could be used. Mynul did check it last week and there are a few areas where it needs a whitewash and a few other things doing. Their voids team are looking at it; it's a work in progress.
- 3.3. NM asked if an A-board would be sited outside to alert people, if it did go ahead? RC said they normally put this information in a newsletter, but could also leaflet the block or produce posters with staff photos – perhaps put one on the door itself. LA said they should know what the timetable is in the next few days; they are talking to the lettings and voids teams. Then they will know when the 1-2-1s with RC can start.

4. Housing Needs Survey

- 4.1. LA said they want to restart these soon. They prefer to do them in residents' homes rather than elsewhere; this helps them to see the household and makes it easier to ensure they have the necessary paperwork to hand. If the resident wants an independent advisor present, that can be arranged.
- 4.2. JM said coming into her home won't make any difference since she is so close to the void property proposed for the hub. It's not something that should be a necessity in completing the forms. NM added that some families might not have much space, or have toys everywhere. RC said some people do feel more comfortable in their own home, but others are anxious. AL said it will be OK as long as there is an option. LA said in their experience, most people are happy to complete in their home; as a starting point they will take that approach, and if a resident absolutely doesn't want the person in their home, they can meet in the drop-in flat. LA said they will put a reminder in the newsletter that One Housing wants to restart the surveys soon, and there will be somebody there who is independent if they want it.
- 4.3. NM said she has a neighbour who had the interview and was waiting for a follow-up – she will send LA an email about it.

ACTION

NM to contact LA with information

5. Newsletter

- 5.1. LA apologised that the newsletter had not gone out as soon as they'd hoped. The main items covered are the appointment of Open Communities as the ITLA, the Housing Needs Survey and a summary of timescales.
- 5.2. JM asked that the newsletter deliveries are all sent together, otherwise residents won't know that they are coming from different people. RC agreed to try to co-ordinate that with LA and MT.

ACTION

RC to co-ordinate with LA & MT

6. Appointment of joint venture (JV) partner

- 6.1. LA said they had hoped to start this process at the beginning of September, but supply chain issues has delayed the appointment procedure at the Tiller Rd site. They felt, given the situation, it would be better to wait until that the Tiller Rd site was done in order to see what could be streamlined for this project.
- 6.2. At Tiller Road, One Housing have informed the successful bidder and from tomorrow it will be in the public domain. They have a meeting at One Housing to complete the process with the successful bidder as well as look at what went well and didn't, to see how they can improve it.
- 6.3. One Housing has already appointed the solicitors and advisory partners, and aim to start the process for ASO in the next few weeks. They will be advertising it on the government website in the first week of January. Organisations who are interested can submit their bids. Residents will be involved at the interview and scoring stage.
- 6.4. RC added that it's important that the bidders do a walkabout of the estate with residents and officers during the interview process. LA said ideally they want more than two bidders – they will do their best to attract as many bidders as they can.

7. Update on decant booklet draft

- 7.1. NM asked for more time to provide feedback to One Housing. LA asked for feedback within the next week to 10 days. RC reiterated its importance as it protects the rights of the community. JM said it's hard to keep up with and is long and wordy. LA said they will be having meetings with every household to go through the document with them. AL said she may have read certain paragraphs differently or interpreted them wrongly. The paragraph on the 'right to return' was confusing, for example. She doesn't want anything in the final document that could be misleading or misunderstood, because there was something that ended up in the Offer Document that wasn't what they wanted. RC offered to go through it with AL in a more relaxed session as residents have got to be happy with it because they are the ones who are directly affected.
- 7.2. AL said arrangements for compensation for residents' appliances, for example if they have a gas cooker and move to a property where they need an electric cooker, need to be very clear. Residents cannot be left out of pocket. JM said it needs to be clear that residents with a gas cooker will be provided with an electric cooker paid for by One Housing.
- 7.3. Re: Rent guarantee, RC said that if a resident paying £120pw moves into a property costing £150pw, it needs to be clear if One Housing is going to pick up the difference. LA confirmed One Housing will pay the additional rent in such cases – RC added that the resident would still have to pay for any uplift in service charge, so they need to be clear about this detail when bidding for properties.

- 7.4. NM asked about the rent for residents who were downsizing or upsizing through the process. **LA said it will definitely be a social rent – she will double-check this.**

ACTION

LA to feedback on rents

- 7.5. Re: Right of return, AL said the wording “Stewart Street” is ambiguous and could mean a return to Alice Shepherd House OR Oak House. It needs to be specific about the block residents return to. LA said the query relates to residents who wish to return to the estate. NM said it is generalised – she wants to return to the Alice Shepherd site. LA said they don’t yet know what the layout of the blocks will be, which is why they are calling the area the Stewart Street redevelopment site. MT said it’s simply a case One Housing Stewart Street as shorthand for Alice Shepherd House and Oak House; JM said it could come back to be a problem later on. SH suggested the wording says: “Residents can come back to site of their choice within the new development.” LA agreed.
- 7.6. Re: Removals (page 7, para 3), One Housing provides the removal company. LA confirmed they would also cover the cost of a removal company chosen by the resident instead, within a reasonable cost.

ACTION

LA to add this line into the Decant Guide

- 7.7. Re: services/appliances, AL asked who is responsible for making the decisions on floor coverings and compensation, as the document says they are taken on a case-by-case basis? LA said it will always be the same person making that decision, and they will be from One Housing. AL asked if there was a framework detailing how decisions are arrived at? RC added there has to be clarity and consistency across the decisions made. LA said it’s difficult to cover all this at this stage of the project.
- 7.8. Re: page 11, para 3, AL asked what is meant by “Housing Register”? LA confirmed it means the council’s Housing Register and is separate from the redevelopment bidding system. This is for people moving away from the estate, not those who are staying on it.
- 7.9. Re: page 14, Question 2, AL asked how many properties a resident can express an interest in? It doesn’t say how many times a resident can do that process. LA said a resident can express their interest in three properties per week, though they may not get an offer to move into any of them.
- 7.10. MT said the council will only allow a resident to refuse an offer of accommodation so many times. In his view, the number of offers is unlimited because One Housing still needs all residents to move out for the redevelopment to progress. LA asked if a resident refuses the first three offers, can the council make direct offers? MT said yes, but only in the last six months before demolition is due to begin.
- 7.11. LA clarified that if an adult child in a household wants to move out, they only get one offer. JM asked what happens if they refuse that offer? LA said they sign up to the bidding system, and if they are offered a property they have to take it.

- 7.12. JM asked if a resident can withdraw interest in a property before an offer is made – therefore avoiding the chance of them ‘wasting’ an offer? LA to check this.

ACTION

LA to feedback on this

- 7.13. AL said residents shouldn't be made to take substandard properties; she visited a property with a family member and they knew they weren't going to accept it before they had even gone through the front door. She had to fight for it, though. LA said this is somewhat out of One Housing's control because Tower Hamlets manages the whole process.
- 7.14. Re: p16, parking permits, AL asked for clarity on how long residents need to have had a parking permit before they are entitled to a space in the redevelopment? RC will go through this with AL separately.

ACTION

RC to discuss with AL

- 7.15. NM asked what checks One Housing has in place to check claims made by households about their needs in the Housing Needs Survey, to avoid people exaggerating their circumstances and getting something they are not entitled to. Medical details could be exaggerated too. RC added that this is literally a life-changing situation for residents and, for some people, if they see an opportunity, they are going to take it. LA said there will always be some people who attempt to game the system. They will check everybody's documents. They have also worked with some adult children to help get documentation if required (such as a passport). Proof will be required of any medical needs residents have.
- 7.16. AL asked why One Housing is asking residents if their total household income is over £85,000? LA explained that residents have to give this information to apply to be on the council's Housing Register. RC said that households earning more than a set amount will not be are not eligible for social housing
- 7.17. NM asked why One Housing is asking for proof that a baby or child lives in a property? LA said it needs proof that the baby or child does live there and not with a parent or guardian who lives elsewhere, for example.
- 7.18. JM asked if residents still need to supply that information if they are not going to bid for a property? **LA doesn't think so, but will check this.** Each home is being created bespoke for each household – at least up until a cut-off date.

ACTION

LA to check and feedback

8. Landlord Offer commitment tracker

- 8.1. LA said there has been no change since last month. AL asked if it can still be changed? LA said most changes will come at the detailed design stage depending on what people's needs are. AL said residents are not happy with all of the content of the Landlord Offer – it was rushed, and there were things that people wanted in it

that are not in it. RC said it's still possible to create a residents' charter or manifesto; the key point now is agreed in discussions, you have got it as a manifesto to refer to going forward.

- 8.2. LA said MT and the Four Estates Forum met – Riverside intend to honour all the commitments made in the Landlord Offer. MT added that the CEO of Riverside made a promise to deliver on the projects and that it will be in the newsletter he is preparing. MT added that Riverside is committed to delivering, even if the economic situation means it may take longer.
- 8.3. MT said the Government is going to limit the amount by which rent can be increased. Rents are due to go up 12% next year – under current rules. However the Government are looking at a 5% rise (plus inflation at 1%) in order to limit the Housing Benefit bill. This could mean that every social landlord could be downgraded in terms of their financial viability. MT added that, to make matters worse, house build inflation is running at 25%. RC added he thought some of the regeneration programmes could be affected by this. MT said he's told that the Mayor of London is going to consult on the change to planning regulations so that the tall buildings zone is extended. This could lead to more properties for sale being provided to help the figures stack up.
- 8.4. AL asked when this scheme will go to planning, and what will the options be? LA said they are aiming to submit the final planning application at the end of 2024; before then, over the next couple of years when they are doing the design work, they will be having a few meetings with the planners to ensure that they are happy with it. NM asked that, if the planning policy changes in the meantime, would One Housing build higher? LA said that, if there were financial viability issues and they are allowed to build higher, they may look at doing that.
- 8.5. AL asked why One Housing will be speaking to the planners so soon? LA said they had pre-planning approval but that's different to formal planning approval; when undertaking a project of this size, an organisation will meet with the council a few times so it can make sure they are on-track with what is likely to be accepted by the planning department.
- 8.6. Once the JV partner is on board, they will undertake 1-2-1s and the Housing Needs Survey. During that time, they will also go back to the council 2-3 times to show them how things are progressing.
- 8.7. RC said, looking at the wider current political and economic situation, it's possible that One Housing may come back and say the only way to make this viable is to build more flats for private sale. We will need to keep an eye on that over the next couple of years. AL asked that, in this scenario, would One Housing go back to consult the residents? LA said it is the Mayor of London's policy to have an estate-wide vote if changes to the scheme make it different enough from the original proposal. That situation has not been tested yet in real life.

9. Any other business with OHG officers present

- 9.1. SH has not reviewed the decant document from the last meeting. LA said, before they incorporate all the requested changes to the document, they will wait to be sent all the remaining comments. **LA to send an email asking for final comments to be received within the next 10 days.**

ACTION

LA to request comments from residents over the next couple of weeks

10. Any other business without OHG officers present

- 10.1. **RC said he will share the draft newsletter with the RSG.**
- 10.2. Looking ahead, RC will meet with the residents only on 19th December.
- 10.3. Re: priority status in the bidding process, AL said Alice Shepherd House residents who are not moving back to the site should have equal priority with those in Oak House – this is not in the Offer Document.

11. Date of next meeting

- 11.1. RC and residents agreed that St John's Community Centre hall will be booked for future meetings if available, and that meetings will take place on the fourth Monday of the month, between 7pm-9pm. RC to block-book the hall.

ACTION

RC to contact Laura Miller to block book the venue

- 11.2. The next meeting will take place on Monday, 28th November.

Meeting ends.