**FLAG Committee Meeting**

**Date:** Wednesday 23rd October 2024

**Time:** 19:00

**Location:** Estate Management Office

**Present:**

* FLAG committee members: Kathleen Laing (KL), Kath Sims (KS), Lorna Reith (LR), Melissa Carames (MC), Michael Baumgartner (MB), Pelagia Elefthiriades (PE), Quentin Given (QG), Sylvia Morgan (SM), Tui Lin (TL) and Vicky Ladizhinskaya (VL).
* Haringey Council: Paul McCabe (PM) -Head of Repairs and Maintenance- and Mitchell Wooding (MW) -Electrical Operations Manager-.

1. **Welcome and introductions.** LR gave apologies from Anna Chin.
2. **Minutes of meeting** held on 30th July and AGM on 9th September. LR asked for corrections or issues related to both documents. PE pointed out the adult cycling lessons and LR asked her to supply leaflets.
3. **Repairs.** PM apologised for missing the AGM meeting of 9th September, which was entirely his responsibility. Since taking up the job of Head of Repairs and Maintenance three and a half months ago, he has been meeting with residents as one of his goals is to enhance the reputation of the service provided by his department. He acknowledged the service doesn’t meet its customers’ expectations and pointed out the areas on which they have to improve:
   1. Customer journey: The period between the customer reports a problem and the repairs operative attends the property is very long. They are not communicating effectively.
   2. Diagnostics: They are sending the wrong operatives to deal with repairs.
   3. Team culture: The Repairs Team to understand what the department is trying to achieve.

He explained his background is in transformation and talked about his intention of putting structure around the service to change the culture within the team. Before taking his current post, he held a very senior position at a property services company for a year and, prior to that, he spent 11 years working with housing associations on improving their property and housing services.

He is looking at Haringey Repairs and Maintenance’s structural procedures, teams and delivery model and how to improve those areas and build a team of experts around him. The intention is setting up objectives and action plans which are deliverable around the backlog of repairs. It is a complex process which doesn’t have an immediate solution. He is trying to find a way of changing the culture within his team, delivering small wins so people can see they are making progress and, at the same time, trying to keep all stakeholders involved on what is going on.

He expects the current situation could be turned in 18 to 24 months, where things would be as follows:

* Voids dealt with within 14 to 21 days.
* No more than 3,000 repairs at any one time, which is what is expected at an organisation of 16,000 properties.
* All repairs are managed within the SLAs for different types of repairs.
* Disrepair volume would have gone down from 1,000 cases to no more than 100-150 and they would be genuinely legal disrepair cases.
* Their staff will all have objectives and clear targets to reach and a way of dealing with customers that meets their expectations.

LR mentioned the current strike of Repairs staff and asked PM if he thought it would be resolved fairly soon. Residents were under the impression repairs couldn’t be reported.

PM pointed out it should be business as usual as it is only the operatives which carry out repairs, and not the rest of the team, who are on strike. They have hired four contractors to support during the four weeks of strike. The response time will be the same as usual for the following two jobs:

* Emergencies: 2 to 24 hours.
* Routine repairs: 20 days.

The third type of jobs, planned repairs with 90 days response time, are being managed differently during the strike. They will use a lone team to do some complex work.

So far, the volume of repairs being reported since the strike started is less than they were expecting.

PM reckoned an agreement over the dispute would not be reached very soon as there are fundamental differences between the parties.

LR asked if one of those support contractors could have been the person who a resident reported as having turned up unannounced at their property with the intention of inspecting a balcony at 18:45. The contractor had no ID and was not allowed in.

PM explained support contractors should have a high visibility jacket on with identification of the company and they should all carry some form of identification.

KL pointed out a repair crew she was expecting didn’t turn up on October 22nd. When she called the repairs department on the same day, she was told the no show was due to the strike. The job was then re-scheduled for November 29th.

PM said his department should have contacted KL to explain the job had been affected by the strike and passed on to a contractor. PM asked LR to add details of KL’s example to the list of issues across the estate she had collated for him.

LR brought up the main issues on the list supplied to PM prior to the meeting:

* Upper balconies leaking to flats beneath. It is a structural issue known to residents across the estate. When reported, the council treat it as a brand new problem, several contractors are sent over and it takes a long time to have it resolved. FLAG would like the council to learn from previous cases, for it to have a way of collating the information which could be applied for future similar cases with leaking balconies.
* Leakage on the internal draining pipes. In several cases, it has been solved by putting in a sleeve internally. LR asked why there was not learning, and it is treated as it is the first time it happened.
* Condensation: the rooms above garages and walkways (in the blocks of flats) get condensation due to lack of insulation in garages and communal walkways. Cold bridging: it is a surface which is exposed to the outside, where there is no insulation. Residents cannot solve the issue by changing behaviour (moving furniture around or leaving windows open to improve ventilation). It can only be solved by adding insulation.

VL added residents wouldn’t know if they have a leak or condensation. There is no learning and no identification of trends within Haringey Repairs Team, which is costing money to Haringey council and inconvenience to tenants who might be living with mould for months/years because of a series of patching visits and not solving the issue. She suggested the council carry out a proper survey.

PM explained the current structure of his department and how the task allocation works: he is at the top and below he has team managers and, underneath, planners. Each planner has a specific trade (e.g. plumbers) under their management; electricians would be managed by a different planner, and so would be surveyors or plasterers. There is no link to allocation. In his previous job, he created teams around a number of properties which would have a level of experience and knowledge of the properties. PM thinks it would be a huge culture change for Haringey Repairs and doesn’t think they are ready for it just now, but it is where he wants to get.

VL suggested for Haringey to use FLAG’s local knowledge to expedite action in certain areas to resolve systemic issues.

LR asked how the process of identifying a permanent solution to a known systemic issue would work.

PM argued the challenge is that an issue like a leaking balcony or condensation would fall under different processes and thus it takes so long for a permanent solution to be reached. The processes would relate to the different departments involved:

* Major works: they would look at projects like insulation and would have the capital investment to do it.
* Repairs: carrying the small repairs.
* Structural works.
* Energy Team: they would be looking into the energy rate in terms of insulation, for instance.

Those four departments would be able to help but at the moment they might not all be getting involved because an issue might not satisfy the criteria of all of them. PM points out someone in the middle who would approach all four teams and make a case. That person would be himself. They need to fill the gap between the four teams and find solutions.

KS said there was not enough preventative work and gave the guttering as an example. The lack of preventable response by Haringey has escalated the major repairs when they didn’t need to be.

PM acknowledged the lack of planned maintenance. Now they have the machinery to clean gutters but not enough staff: 3 out of the 5 members in the roofing team are on long-term sickness. They have just approved a team of contractors to deal with roofing jobs.

KS argued FLAG could pinpoint the issues by blocks within the estate for Haringey to be aware of systemic issues and find smarter solutions which would benefit both the council and residents.

VL asked for Haringey to cooperate with FLAG and use the local knowledge from the residents to resolve systemic issues.

LR suggested a pilot project where FLAG and the Repairs team would work together. If PM is keen to change the structure within his teams, moving from silo-working to a neighbourhood-focused model.

PM said it was an interesting idea. He would have to meet with the Capital Investments Team and make a case to set up a new way of working which would save them money in the long term as they would be resolving issues instead of keep on sending surveyors and inspectors several times. Even if Capital Investments agreed with the project, PM argued we might not see an immediate result as there are issues which could take some time to resolve:

* Balconies might be a longer term, as they are very expensive to fit.
* Insulation: there is an Energy Team currently upgrading properties which are below rating D. He would suggest to have this team surveying relevant properties to deal with damp and mould. This would be more achievable and in a shorter period.
* As it would affect both properties owned by the council and by leaseholders and could result in an increase in service charges, there would be a consultation (Section 20) amongst residents. LR mentioned some leaseholders have already put insulation under their flooring to deal with condensation due to cold bridging; PE and VL shared their cases.

An action was agreed for PM to go back to his team and ask for any progress on cases related to Ferry Lane, find which reports are available and if any recommendations have already been made at the Capital Board. If none have been made, he would request an inspection of the relevant properties to give recommendations.

MB suggested an alternative approach to the insulation solution: garages are all owned by the council and it would be cheaper have them all insulated instead of insulating the floors of flats above.

LR foresaw the challenge of the council knowing who the current hirers of garages were.

VL pointed out the unknown contents of many garages might be contributing to the condensation issue.

PM acknowledged MB’s suggestion to be considered as a start to deal with systemic condensation.

PE raised the issue with doors locking mechanisms. She had problems with the locks of both her front door and her balcony door, where the handle starts playing up and eventually comes off, with a potential risk of getting locked in.

VL highlighted issues with doors and windows are also a systemic problem across the estate. Back in 2013 they were all changed as part of the Decent Homes scheme. In her opinion, the problem is not the structure but the locks themselves, which cannot cope with the weight of the frame and glazing. She stressed the solution would be replacing locks, not windows/doors.

LR explained leaseholders had received Section 20 notices about front fire doors and cabinet doors having to be replaced. FLAG requested a meeting with the project manager and an explanation on why they need to be replaced so soon after the previous upgrade: all fire doors were changed in the Decent Homes programme in 2013 and back then some leaseholders were given permission to replace their own. The programme manager has not responded to the email after a month. LR asked CW for assistance on having a response.

CW explained the programme manager is part of a different team, the Fire Safety Project.

LR brought up instances of scaffolding not being dismantled after jobs are completed and instead left up for a long time, causing inconvenience to residents (e.g. blocking natural light, compromising safety as it increases the risk of burglary). FLAG are under the impression that contractors don’t remove scaffolding so they can save on storage.

PE gave the example of the scaffolding which was set up outside her block of apartments on Kessock Close. It went up on May 27th, without having received any notice from the council. She found out through her next-door neighbour that it was related to a repair to be done in their flat (mouldy walls), which the contractor only started 6 weeks later. It took them 3 weeks to complete the job. The scaffolding was removed at the beginning of October. She asked if leaseholders were being charged more for this.

LR explained FLAG had been told that the cost of the scaffolding is part of the total cost for the job, so it doesn’t cost any more for them to leave it up. She asked why contractors are not told to dismantle scaffolding once no longer needed.

PM wasn’t aware about that case. He guessed it could be one of the following two reasons:

* The contractor was told to dismantle the structure, but didn’t comply. If this was the case, the Repairs team would have to check invoices to ensure they were not overcharged.
* The scaffolding was needed for another job in a different part of the block/estate. This shouldn’t carry an extra cost.

LR to add details of PE’s scaffolding case (related to 69 Kessock Close) to list of issues to send to PM. She asked that all residents affected by the installation of scaffolding are informed in advance by the council in the future.

PM explained his roofing team manager has recommended to have a scaffolding administrator to manage the installation and dismantle of these structures and have the capacity to keep residents informed.

VL raised the issue of leaseholders being overcharged for services supplied by the Repairs and Maintenance Team. When FLAG revised repairs reports provided by the council, they noticed contractors charging more than once for the same repairs, leaseholders being charged for items which were not their responsibility. She finds astonishing this revision work is not done by the repairs team at least once a year.

PM argued the current state of affairs is not how he thinks things should be done: they don’t have a contracts manager; a commercial manager and he cannot see a clear strategy around procurement of contractors. He hasn’t read in detail the contracts of the three general build contractors currently used by Haringey, but he doesn’t understand why a repairs team would have a general building contractor at the supply chain as this means that jobs will be passed over to subcontractors. To him, they should have their own team and then specific contracting lines with a clear schedule of works, clear pricing agreement.

LR pointed out contracts were agreed by Homes for Haringey and, when the housing service was brought back in-house to be run by the council, those contracts were no longer in place. So they had to be set up again from scratch.

PM explained the current plan to reshuffle his department: a job vacancy for a Commercial Manager was advertised today –paid at commercial rates, which is quite expensive; under this manager there would be three finance officers and contract managers. His predecessor hadn’t seen the value of replacing those positions and that resulted in the situation he inherited: a team of people making a decent job of a bad situation. To lead Haringey’s housing service one would need people with excellence and expertise advising what to do and who to reach out to. PM’s current challenge and goal is to convince his team to change the way things are done and keep residents informed at the same time.

VL suggested FLAG and the Repairs team could collaborate in revising the repairs reports. PM would have to provide the reports and FLAG would check there are no inconsistencies.

LR thanked PM and CW for coming along.

PM reiterated his apology for missing the AGM and committed himself to share the issues agreed at the meeting with the capital projects board and will keep FLAG informed of any progress.

1. **Matters arising:**
   1. Open Green Spaces consultation. QG reported council officers were still trying to collect the conclusions. Both MB and Jeanette Sitton were also due to feed back to the consultation group.

KS reported the gardening team had to deal with wasp nests in the planters on Jarrow Road and suggested that bramble bushes were trimmed across the estate to minimise the impact of wasps.

* 1. Garages. KS had a reply from the council, but it wasn’t very helpful.

1. **Crime Panel.** KS reported it was a similar presentation to the one given at our last AGM, with statistics showing low crime activity at our estate. Both the councillor who attended the meeting and KS raised the fact that our estate is still highly impacted by the crimes committed around it. The main issues on the agenda were: closures related to drugs, shoplifting activity at Tesco, daily walkaround to prevent violence against women and girls at night time and understaffed department due to sickness. They would like to have the next panel at Ferry Lane Estate.
2. **Borough/wide residents associations network meeting.** MC reported on the online meeting she attended on behalf of FLAG on 4th September. Lack of parking enforcement and poor cleaning were the main issues raised by RAs. The representative of HTBG, by Tottenham Spurs Stadium, is part of the council’s Parking Group and informed us of the intention of pushing for estate roads to become highway roads. She reckoned legal changes would mean an improvement in parking enforcement. The representative from Broadwater Farm Estate shared with us the pilot engagement project they have agreed with the Council to improve the cleaning regime in their estate: his RA had put forward a series of recommendations for the Cleaning Team; the Community Engagement Team will monitor and, if residents and council are happy with the result, it will be a permanent regime. The Community Engagement officers in the meeting updated on funding applications (Public Voice is the new organisation working with the council).
3. **Planning meeting about works on Ferry Lane (instead of bridge).** QG explained this was a follow up on how to deal with the congestion on the northern side of the pavement on Ferry Lane. The original scheme of building a separate bridge from Hale Village into the station was scrapped years ago due to lack of funding. As an alternative, at the end of 2023 TfL proposed road works on the current railway bridge, to which FLAG had some objections. At the planning meeting, QG represented FLAG as an objector, since we wanted to propose changes to the proposals of narrowing the south side of the pavement and modifying the cycling lanes because it would increase conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists. The Engine Room (Hale Village’s residents association) objected to TfL’s whole scheme on the grounds that funds could still be raised for a second bridge.

The planning committee refused planning permission for the road scheme on grounds of safety. QG will be contacting TfL to find out if they will be appealing this decision.

The Engine Room are optimistic that David Lammy MP will push for both the alternative bridge and the road works to go ahead.

VL suggested to reach out to TfL, council or other relevant people regarding the congestion of Tottenham Hale station and the impact of all the new housing developments in the wider area (Blackhorse Road and Walthamstow Central).

LR suggested to raise it with the Regeneration Team, as it is part of regeneration that the infrastructure should be able to cope. Maybe they should be looking at diverting passengers into other routes to avoid Tottenham Hale. LR to invite the head of the Regeneration Team to the next Committee Meeting.

MB enquired if we could find out why the funds for the alternative bridge were not used to build it. VL and LR explained the money was earmarked but never enough to cover the whole project. TfL and Network Rail, the companies in charge of the redevelopment of Tottenham Hale station, disputed who had to pay for the bridge.

1. **Leaseholders section 20 notices about replacing doors.** Dealt with during PM’s intervention.
2. **Bulb planting.** QG reported 1,200 bulbs were awarded to FLAG by the Mayor of London. The first planting session was on Saturday 12th October; at the front of the estate, along the pathway that goes up to the bus stop on Ferry Lane, The next ones will be on Saturday 26th and Saturday 2nd November.

LR mentioned some of the bulbs will be donated to Ferry Lane Primary School.

1. **Finance report and Newsletter.** QG reported there was about £1,200 in the account, that Haringey Council had agreed to give us £400 for funding and advertising fees from the newsletter were also due, so total income would go over £1,600. This money would cover the next 12 to 18 months. More money will need to be raised as our outcomes are higher than our income.

LR mentioned FLAG will ask the council to cover the cost of hiring the school hall for an extra meeting as the senior officer from housing had to leave last year’s AGM early due to personal reasons.

VL suggested to approach local businesses in search of advertising opportunities in our newsletter to get extra funding. She gave Markfield Park coffee shop as an example.

MB suggested Table 13.

It was agreed it was worth approaching them.

QG reported the October Newsletter is slightly delayed due to an unforeseen emergency at the printing shop.

KS suggested to look at alternative printing facilities and will find out who prints out Hale Village’s newsletter.

1. **AOB:**
   1. Storage of rough sleepers’ belongings. LR gave an update on the proposal agreed at the last AGM to ask the Antisocial Team to use the bulky storage rooms to keep items left behind by rough sleepers. They thought it was a good idea and passed it over to the Housing Team, as they would be the ones making a decision on it.

SM asked officers to keep an eye for rough sleepers under the railway bridge at the top of the estate and report it to StreetLink if needed.

* 1. Waste management plant’s takeover. QG reported FLAG and the school’s chair of governors met with Sortera, the company which has taken over O’Donovan’s waste management plant on Markfield Road. They talked to the new management about the impact of O’Donovan’s business on the residents and were shown the improvements done to the site by Sortera: they have cleaned up the compound (including most of the mountain of waste which was next to the Network Rail tracks), concreted the area and are trying to improve efficiency. They claim to have very good environmental policies. The communication channel is open for future discussions and opportunities.
  2. PE presented the project Veolia is running in collaboration with the school on how to reduce waste. It is called ‘In the know’ and will target children, parents and the wider community. The sessions are held at the school every Friday. It was agreed PE would share the details with LR to pass the information onto residents.
  3. PE talked about the cycling sessions for adults the school is holding on Fridays from 9:00 to 10:00. The scheme is sponsored by TfL and the bicycles are provided by the school.
  4. PE thanked those who attended the soup festival at the school. At the end of November, they will hold an international food party and in December there will be a winter fair.
  5. Smoke from boats. VL pointed out the council environmental officers are not showing up at properties affected on the same day of the report, so action cannot be taken; they council must change their protocol to be able to take prompt action. Residents affected must also report it.

1. **Date of next meeting:** Most people are busy throughout December, so it is likely the next meeting could be held in January.