

## **BENHILL RESIDENTS' STEERING GROUP MEETING (No.5)**

- Venue:** Thomas Wall Centre, Benhill Avenue, Sutton SM1 4DP
- Date:** Tuesday 11th December 2018                      **Time:** 7.00pm - 9.00pm
- Attendees:** Residents from the following blocks: Woodville House, Hazelwood House, Clevedon House, Homedale House, Newlyn House & Chesterton House.
- Regen Team:** Ian Sellens (LBS), Michael Hunte (LBS), Simon Pickles (LBS)
- SHP:** Suzanne Richards Jones (SHP)
- Observers:** Cllr David Bartolucci, Colin Hawkins (SFTRA)
- Apologies:** Cllr Ali Mirhashem, Pat Bridgman (Roundshaw resident): Lara Amato (SHP): Pedra McKenna, Cllr Richard Clare, Rowland Kay: Beverley Brigden (SLA), Margaret Phillips (SLA)
- Chair:** Clive Lynch (Resident)

| <b>1.</b> | <b>Welcome, Introductions &amp; Housekeeping</b>  | <b>Action Owner</b> |
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|           | Clive Lynch (CL), chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.  |                     |
| <b>2</b>  | <b>Matters Arising</b>  |                     |
|           | <p>CL said that the resident only meeting from the previous week was a success. CL's notes from the meeting were circulated.</p> <p>CL explained that questions were included in the notes but that doesn't stop new questions from being raised. The hope was that by raising queries in advance it should prevent the repetition of questions from one meeting to the next.</p> |                     |

| 3 | Question Time  |  |
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|   | <p>Questions brought forward from the “Resident only” meeting:</p> <p><b><u>Q1. Who pays for the Independent Tenant &amp; Homeowner Advisor (ITHA)?</u></b><br/> <b>A1.</b> Simon Pickles (SP) explained that a Government grant will fund the ITHA role. The funding received is for a variety of regeneration activities and the ITHA is a part of the overall funding.</p> <p><b><u>Q2. Estate Agents are unaware of the possible regeneration of the site. Some residents felt we should inform estate agents of the possibility of regeneration.</u></b><br/> <b>A2.</b> SP explained that estate agents do not carry out legal searches, rather solicitors do. When they carry out conveyancing searches they check such things as planning applications or legal notices but we have not reached the stage where the solicitors would be aware during a search. While SP did not want it to be difficult for sellers, this is a grey area as no formal decisions have actually been made.</p> <p>Michael Hunte (MH) advised the meeting that as part of the conveyancing process the seller should advise the buyer as part of full disclosure process. With the amount of publicity and literature distributed on this subject most residents ought to know that the council is exploring the possibility of regenerating the area.</p> <p>Cllr David Bartolucci (DB) added that the Local Plan is in the public domain so solicitors should be aware of potential plans via that document. Finally the concept of “buyer beware” was flagged up.</p> <p>A further concern was raised over the impact of potential plans on land values. SP confirmed that the approach of a “no regeneration scheme world” would apply to Benhill, that is properties would be valued as if no regeneration was considered.</p> <p><b><u>Q3. CL wants help from the ITHA with Freedom Of Information (FOI) requests.</u></b><br/> <b>A3.</b> SP mentioned it was important the Council was transparent in its decision making and would respond in full to any FOI, regardless of who they came from.</p> |  |

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| <p><b><u>Q4. After any regeneration what would be the mortgage and rent levels?</u></b><br/> <b>A4.</b> SP explained that existing rent levels would apply to existing tenants if they moved to any new build on the estate. This would not be the case for new (additional) social tenancies on the new build site. Property prices would be based on the market values of the new properties.</p> <p><b><u>Q5. Is SHP completing an audit of all leasehold properties across the borough? A letter was received with the quarterly service charge advising of an audit of leasehold properties.</u></b><br/> <b>A5.</b> SHP to confirm the exact position. Ian Sellens (IS) to report back at the next meeting.</p> <p><b><u>Q6. Where are the gas meters located and who is responsible for the upkeep of the pipework? Concern was expressed that some people were abusing the external gas pipes.</u></b><br/> <b>A6.</b> Some are situated outside the front door, others had theirs inside the property. The provider or UKPN are responsible for pipework up to the meter; the Leaseholder or Landlord after the meter and into the property. A mandatory annual gas safety check is required for Council tenanted properties. With regard to Leasehold properties, there is no obligation to carry out an annual gas safety check.</p> <p>SP advised the meeting that the fact that there is no expectation for an annual gas safety check for Leasehold properties will be escalated to the monthly performance meeting between the council and SHP.</p> <p><b><u>Q7. The Residents' Steering Group (RSG) would like to use the caretaking room to carry out surgeries and a base for canvassing the estate.</u></b><br/> <b>A7.</b> SP confirmed the Council would encourage the RSG to use the room but a risk assessment will be required, with CL expected to sign the Health &amp; Safety proforma. The expectation is that access will be arranged early in 2019. This space will be shared with the caretakers.</p> <p>A discussion followed about the purpose of the 'canvassing' by the RSG. Is it to stimulate conversation and drum up support for the RSG or is it to gain information?</p> <p>SP clarified that the Council and other bodies have strict rules on the storing and distribution of information from visits. The Council already holds information on vulnerable households or those who are a threat to staff. Furthermore there are DBS</p> | <p>IS</p> <p>IS</p> <p>SP</p> <p>IS</p> |
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|  | <p>checks on all staff who meet with members of the public.</p> <p>CL is keen the group is seen as separate from the Council and wants the group to have its own identity.</p> <p>Council officers can provide helpful advice with regards to the “Do’s &amp; Don’ts of information gathering”, and data protection via its Data Protection Team.</p> <p>Colin Hawkins (CH) reiterated the importance of residents having their own working space. It was suggested that maybe the ITHA role could help with the canvassing.</p> <p>SP cautioned with the use of the word canvassing and how it is defined. It should be for the purposes of raising awareness of the RSG and the process on which it is engaged with the Council and to hear concerns that can be relayed to the Council. Dropping off leaflets about the RSG is fine, but RSG members visiting tenants in their homes requires further discussion.</p> <p><b><u>Q8. CL raised concern about the Council’s relationship with the sub tenants of non resident leaseholder as they may feel the Council may be intimidating them. CL is keen for the community to be seen as looking after them and that part of the role of the RSG is engaging with residents through surgeries and leaflet drops which would bring them under the “protection” of the RSG.</u></b></p> <p><b>A8.</b> The Council has a contractual relationship with the property owner; not the sub tenant. However, there was a commitment to come back to the next meeting on how we plan to interact with Non resident leaseholders.</p> <p><b><u>Q9. CL asked why court injunctions preventing access to site for travellers had been displayed across the borough while Benhill had been excluded.</u></b></p> <p><b>A9.</b> LBS to investigate further and report back.</p> <p><b><u>Update post meeting:</u></b> <i>The Council’s injunction is for 3 years and covers the whole of Benhill Estate.</i></p> <p>SP again offered one to one visits to all residents by Ian Sellens, Housing Regeneration Project Coordinator. The purpose is to find out more about the individual needs and preferences of residents, as well as gauging the overall mood of the estate and address any concerns. Please contact Ian directly on 020 8770 5738 or via email: <a href="mailto:ian.sellens@sutton.gov.uk">ian.sellens@sutton.gov.uk</a>.</p> | <p>IS</p> <p>SP</p> <p>IS</p> |
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| 4. | Feedback from Residents Meeting on 5th December  |                     |
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|    | <p><b>Independent Tenant and Homeowner Adviser Specification &amp; Evaluation Questions.</b></p> <p>Feedback notes on the specification were welcomed and will help the group to identify the best ITHA for Benhill. One of the suggestions was to reduce the amount of jargon included in the specification. Residents would also want established as part of the process how an ITHA would overcome the potential lack of resident engagement?</p> <p>A request was also made to reformat the specification document to include numbering or lettering instead of bullet points for ease of understanding.</p> <p>Residents asked how long will it take to identify &amp; appoint the adviser?</p> <p>MH responded it could take about 3 months from the point that the specification and tender documentation is issued.</p> <p>CL was keen that the adviser would:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Help with FOI requests</li> <li>2. Advocate for the maintenance of the green spaces &amp; playgrounds</li> <li>3. Go at the speed to match the residents needs</li> <li>4. Advocate for the relocation of the residents</li> </ol> <p>SP clarified the role of ITHA. The role won't commit to for instance more green space, but rather would express the voice of the residents if that is what they want.</p> <p>MH will add the suggested recommendations and suggestion from the RSG and re-circulate a new draft specification for final comments before the start of the tender process.</p> <p>It was asked how many properties would be on the "new" site. SP said it was mentioned in May 31st 2017 public meeting that potentially 1076 properties would be delivered The RSG asked how will the infrastructure cope with all the extra people? SP explained that the Council's Strategic planners are looking at the bigger picture.</p> <p>It was suggested that a planner and a member of the Town Centre regeneration team be invited to a future meeting as a guest speaker to help the group see how the Council is preparing for the future. The group will need to determine the key priorities they want to discuss at their meetings.</p> | <p>MH</p> <p>SP</p> |

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|  | <p>Cllr DB added that there are a lot of factors impacting on the plans for Sutton Town Centre and the Benhill RSG is an important part of a larger cog. There is a lack of infrastructure for an increase in residents where help is required from parties external to the Council, for instance TfL.</p> <p>CL wants to know “where do we fit in?”- Is Benhill a big part of the solution in providing housing or is there a bigger picture?</p> <p>SP explained the regeneration team are looking at 7 sites in the Sutton Town Centre area. The Local Plan and Town Centre Masterplan are both in the public domain and identify what are Sutton’s priorities.</p> <p>CL emphasised that the group needed to generate its own priorities with the help from the ITHA. Residents may give up if it’s too complex but with the help of the ITHA, some results may be achieved.</p> <p><b>Estate Regeneration, Rehousing &amp; Compensation Scheme (ie Council’s Commitments)</b><br/> No discussion held at this meeting. The report was circulated at the previous week’s residents only meeting and details the separate offers under the Estate Regeneration Rehousing and Compensation Scheme to the different tenure types across the estate (Secure Tenant, Resident Leaseholder and Non Resident Leaseholder).</p> <p>The Estate Regeneration Rehousing and Compensation Scheme Item to be a future agenda item to work through RSG feedback.</p> <p><b>Future Surgeries at Newlyn House</b><br/> CL advised that the caretaking room at Newlyn House will be a key resource for residents and will allow residents the chance to gather information and understand how residents feel about any changes.</p> <p>Ian Sellens along with SHP to progress the use of the caretaking room by the RSG and the expectation is that access should be in place before the next meeting.</p> <p>A further suggestion was made to better utilise the notice boards at Newlyn House for displaying information and for promoting events etc.</p> | <p>SP</p> <p>IS</p> <p>IS</p> |
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|           | <p>CL added that he's keen to maintain as many as possible rented properties on the site. A number of residents also stressed that they would be keen for the site to be maintained as Council owned housing.</p> <p>One resident stated he liked the high rise properties at the top of the High Street and would be happy to see a similar style on Benhill.</p> <p>Cllr DB explained that it is crucial to get the right design and homes for residents and to establish Sutton's identity, especially in the town centre ward, with a clear sense of place.</p> |  |
| <b>5.</b> | <b>Communication</b>  |  |
|           | <p>A draft version of the Benhill webpage was shown to the group on the laptop. The page will once approved be located within the Council's website and will be a means of communicating with residents and stakeholders. The Council is looking for the website to go live in early 2019.</p> <p>MH stressed that any ideas or suggestions for the web page would be welcomed.</p>   |  |
| <b>6.</b> | <b>Residents' Steering Group Roles &amp; Responsibilities</b>   |  |
|           | <p>SP reiterated the importance of filling the other key roles of the RSG, that is Vice Chair and Correspondence Secretary, as this would help to make the RSG stronger. These roles are also important in providing more structure to the group.</p> <p>CL said that once the ITHA was on board, the key positions within the RSG should be filled.</p>  |  |
| <b>7</b>  | <b>Agreed Next Steps</b>  |  |
|           | <p>Date of next RSG meeting will be <u>Wednesday 30 January 2019</u> at 7.00pm. (Venue of Salvation Army confirmed). Officers on site from 6.30pm.</p> <p><u>The "residents only" meeting will take place on Wednesday 23rd January</u> (Again, venue of Salvation Army confirmed). Start time, 7pm until 9pm.</p> <p>An offer was again made for RSG members to have an initial 1-2-1 meeting with IS, which would help the Council to further fine tune the survey questions. Group members can contact IS to arrange a convenient appointment.</p>               |  |

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| <b>8.</b> | <b>Any Other Business</b> |  |
|           | None                      |  |

| <b>9.</b> | <b>Summary of Actions</b>  | <b>Owner</b>  |
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| i         | Residents to consider taking up the role of RSG Vice Chair and Correspondence Secretary.   | RSG           |
| ii        | Estate Regeneration Rehousing and Compensation Scheme to be a future agenda item to work through with the RSG.                             | Ian Sellens   |
| iii       | Chair of the RSG to have access to the caretaking room at Newlyn House.  | Ian Sellens   |
| iv        | Better utilise the notice boards at Newlyn House.  | Ian Sellens   |
| v         | A plan to be established on how we engage with non resident leaseholders.  | Simon Pickles |
| vi        | Why have court injunctions preventing access to the site for travellers been displayed across the borough while Benhill had been excluded. | Ian Sellens   |
| vii       | Support the RSG in understanding data protection, including the "Do's & Don'ts of information gathering and sharing.                       | Ian Sellens   |
| viii      | Clarify whether SHP is undertaking an audit of leasehold properties.   | Ian Sellens   |
| ix        | Invite a member of the Council's Strategic Planning Team and Town Centre Regeneration Team to a future RSG meeting.                        | Ian Sellens   |

**Useful links:**

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| <p>Homes for Londoners - Mayor of London publication: Good practice Guide to Estate Regeneration. See following link:<br/> <a href="https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/better-homes-for-local-people-the-mayors-good-practice-guide-to-estate-regeneration.pdf">https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/better-homes-for-local-people-the-mayors-good-practice-guide-to-estate-regeneration.pdf</a></p> |
| <p>Estate Regeneration National Strategy - Resident Engagement and Protection - DCLG publication. See following link:<br/> <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/estate-regeneration-good-practice-guide">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/estate-regeneration-good-practice-guide</a></p>   |
| <p>Mayor London's new funding condition to require resident ballots in estate regeneration. See following link:<br/> <a href="https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla_cfg_section_8_resident_ballots_-_18_july_2018.pdf">https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/gla_cfg_section_8_resident_ballots_-_18_july_2018.pdf</a></p>   |

15th Oct HEB: Estate Regeneration Rehousing and Compensation Scheme:

<https://moderngov.sutton.gov.uk/ielssueDetails.aspx?IId=40537&PlanId=0&Opt=3#A13942>

[7](#)