

Meeting to discuss CRE and Resident Engagement

Friday 11 Mar 2016 9:30am at Guildhall 2

Present:

Darren Welsh (Director of Housing RBK) Councilor Cathy Roberts, Fidelis Linehan (RBK Housing), Jill Preston (Chair CREst) Vanessa Palmer (Vice-Chair CRERA) Mike D'Souza (Chair One Norbiton)

Communication and the Governance of Housing

This meeting began with plea by two thirds of the community groups on the CRE that in future RBK will communicate with **all** groups individually as important information was not reaching them.

RBK said that this would happen and that everything was going to change, as it was wasting officer to attend so many reduplicated meetings.

Instead a single new 10-person committee will provide governance for Housing across the borough. Just one person will represent each of the existing groups, such as Leaseholders and Tenants etc.

Also it was made clear that at end of September the large RBK grant. Being made to the FED would end. Instead other organisations are being invited to bid to do the requisite community engagement.

A "soft" market test on what was the best way of doing this will soon be under way. Also in future, arrangements for engagement would be widened beyond tenants and residents groups and include the use of social media etc.

Regeneration of the Cambridge Rd Estate

CREst One Norbiton and CRE all agreed that their members needed to know some important questions about Regeneration. *When would any change start? Will it involve stock transfer? Would their tenancy rights be affected? Would they be able to return to live here? Would their rental costs increase?*

Darren Welsh said that the proposal is still only at an early stage. However a timetable for regeneration across the borough has been agreed by RBK for all larger estates in 2015. Because CRE was the largest and had already made plans to rebuild Tadlow and Piper Hall, it will be the pilot. Already all empty flats are only being re-let with temporary leases. There is no agreed scheme yet but a community acquisitions strategy is underway and map has been drawn up of the (about 160) different legal interests that exist on the CRE so that buyouts can be costed.

A firm called Renaisi has been working as RBK's consultants and have now produced a preliminary document. Any rebuild will require decanting residents to other estates. RBK gave us reassurance about tenants rights to return and the right to retain their existing leases. i.e. *Secure Tenancy agreements will be re-granted unless the government introduces new legislation to change this.* However those choosing to return to a new-build flat, even at a social (50% of Market) rent, may be faced with an inevitable rent increase.

The good news was that the CRE regeneration has now been short-listed by the Mayor of London's GLA housing scheme. RBK has applied for a £60 million grant. If we get this it will mean more social housing can be built. However the decision on whether RBK gets this money has been delayed until after the results of the mayoral election. In any event RBK is not seeking to reduce their stock of Social housing.

Until the Mayoral election has taken place.

The hops for the new scheme are that we will maintain number of dwellings and increase the number of those that will be affordable.

They are not seeking to reduce social housing or change the Housing Revenue Account which is at the moment £4million

The decant policy during the development will differ for Tenants, Leaseholders and Freeholders. Fidelis Linehan is developing a scheme which could involve all 830 properties on CRE. *Actual building may not start before 2019 and the usual duration of these rebuilds is 10-15 years.*

Phasing will be published so that each of those affected will know where they are in the queue. Tadlow may not necessarily be the starting point and the important issue will be determined by such things as the cost of purchasing Freeholds etc.

The dream scenario for Tenant rehousing is a rolling decant, e.g. for people move out of their flats into an empty flats in Tadlow while the development where they live is taking place. The decant policy due to be published in June. Cllr Julie Pickering is the overall programme manager.

New build properties always are worth more but the value of CRE dwellings are very low compared with the rest of Kingston and there will be opportunities to buy a (25% or more share) in joint ownership with RBK. *There will be a right to return and rents may be capped rents equivalent of social rents.*

New community provision is envisaged.

If rehousing on the estate is not wanted it should be offered elsewhere in borough.

All three groups hope to maintain an ongoing dialogue with RBK about this important issue and we will keep you all informed about what is going on.