

CARE SERVICES PDS COMMITTEE
28th June 2016

WRITTEN QUESTIONS TO THE CHAIRMAN, CARE SERVICES PDS COMMITTEE

Written Questions to the Chairman, Care Services PDS Committee received from Mr Bob Thatcher

1. Manorfields Boiler Costs – The breakdown provided in the response to the question on 10th March 2016 suggests that the cost of boilers and the Control box, compared to the market prices, are wildly excessive.

Has the Care Services PDS Committee:

- a) Challenged these costs or are they planning to do; and,
- b) Would the existing process allow a contractor to 'rig' the pricing?

Reply:

- a) The tendering process was carried out by a company appointed by Orchard and Shipman. There were three quotes for the replacement of the boiler and the lowest was accepted and the winning bid was some £29k below the budgeted sum of £95K.

Internal Audit are still in the process of reviewing all available documentation in order to establish that value for money was achieved.

- b) Full assurance cannot be given that the process would not allow the price to be 'rigged'. The role of tendering for the work and overseeing that it was carried out to the specification requested by Orchard and Shipman and their appointed contractors. Bromley had no direct control over how companies were selected for different elements of the works, though it is apparent that three companies were asked to tender for the boiler replacement works. The three companies appear to be independent of one another and the cheapest tender was awarded the work. It is also noted that the company awarded the tender is included on the Council's list of approved providers.
2. Manorfields Front Wall – Will the Care Services PDS Committee agree to build up the front wall by bricks or preferably a waist height wooden fence to:
- a) Stop the problem of lights shining in houses opposite in Avalon Road; and,
 - b) Deter hostel residents from sitting on the front wall?

Reply:

Manorfields is a multi-unit temporary accommodation.

It has been agreed that alterations will be made to increase the height of the wall; options are being considered such as using secure planters and plants/flowers. The Council is keen to ensure that any proposed solution is in keeping aesthetically with the local area.

WRITTEN QUESTIONS TO THE CARE SERVICES PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Written Question to the Care Services Portfolio Holder received from Mr Bob Thatcher

1. Manorfields littering – the local residents thank the management team for responding to their complaints when littering has occurred but can the hostel management be more pro-active in preventing this? The fence mentioned in the point above would help mitigate some of this but the bus stop has also become a litter area.

Reply:

Manorfields is a multi-unit temporary accommodation.

Orchard and Shipman have confirmed:

The accommodation rules are displayed on notice boards throughout the building and provided to all residents at the start of their tenancy. Orchard and Shipman have advised that residents are reminded of the importance of disposing of litter appropriately; this is detailed within the newsletters distributed to residents and is verbally reiterated as required.

The maintenance supervisor completes daily checks of the accommodation and area immediately surrounding it in order to remove any litter.

It must be highlighted that without supporting evidence, litter found on the public highway or bus stop cannot automatically be attributed to Manorfields residents.

If a complaint is received Orchard and Shipman will investigate this to the best of their ability and act accordingly in the form of conversation with the particular tenant in question where known, followed by warning letters should it require escalation. We welcome notification of any incidents as they occur in order to ensure that they can be tackled quickly and robustly.

Written Questions to the Care Services Portfolio Holder received from Ms Chris Pecover

1. Generally - Papers for the March meeting refer to a significant discrepancy of accounts between Orchard and Shipman and Bromley Council.

Please confirm the current level of the discrepancy, by how much this has increased or decreased over the last 3 months and the action plan to correct this unacceptable situation.

Reply:

Having reviewed the Papers from PDS on the 10th of March there is no evidence to support the statement that there is a discrepancy between the two accounts.

2. Manorfields Drainage or Sewerage Problem – most mornings there is a ‘sludge gulper’ parked up by Leeds Close and the smell is horrendous.

Is there a problem with the drains or sewage at Manorfields and if so, what can be done about it, please?

Reply:

Orchard and Shipman have confirmed:

There are no ongoing problems with drainage at Manorfields. As the accommodation had been largely empty for a significant period of time prior to occupation, works which lasted approximately 4 days were required to ensure the drains were cleared and able to meet the operational needs of the accommodation. Orchard and Shipman apologise for any inconvenience caused to local residents.

3. Residents of Manorfields suggest a) the environment is noisy, b) it is difficult to get to sleep c) they are often woken up by babies crying or people shouting and d) there are not enough bathrooms so they are not available when needed.

How is the management addressing these issues?

Reply:

Orchard and Shipman have confirmed:

a-c) That they have only received 1 x formal complaint from a resident in respect of noise. This was tackled immediately with the residents involved and there have been no further complaints.

Orchard and Shipman and the out of hours security staff ensure that any inappropriate gatherings of residents are dispersed in order to minimise noise nuisance and ensure that they engage with residents to keep noise levels at an appropriate level. Any residents found to be causing a nuisance are issued with a formal warning and will be asked to leave the accommodation if their behaviour does not improve.

As a number of residents have young children it is the case that they will sometimes cry. Whilst it is possible to hear this between rooms, Orchard and Shipman dispute that this differs greatly to the degree of noise that would travel between flats/maisonettes etc. In addition to utilising their rooms residents are also able to access the communal areas within the accommodation as required.

Orchard and Shipman have not received any formal complaints regarding a lack of available bathrooms.

The Council would like to confirm:

d) The number of bathrooms within the accommodation is compliant with the requirements set out in the planning regulations for the occupancy levels within this accommodation.

Written Questions to the Care Services Portfolio Holder received from Mr Bill Miler

1. Please confirm the current occupancy levels of Manorfields – is it now running at full capacity?

Reply:

Yes, it is at full occupancy

2. Please confirm how many out of Borough request have been made to Bromley for accommodation at Manorfields and how many have been granted.

Reply:

Temporary accommodation placements, for this or any location, are not allocated based upon customer request or self-referral. All placements are made via the Council's Housing Needs service. Manorfields is not available for placement requests by other local authorities. As such there have not been any out of Borough requests for Manorfields.

3. Please confirm whether any incidents of anti-social behaviour at Manorfields or crime in the immediate have been reported to the management or to the police and what learnings from these have been used to improve the welfare of the residents of the hostel.

Reply:

Orchard and Shipman confirm:

There have been no incidents that have required police intervention.

Residents are advised of the accommodation rules at the start of their residency and are notified of the repercussions of failing to adhere to these rules. Orchard and Shipman maintain close management of the site and are quick to intervene in order to prevent any potential issues from developing. This is done by way of clear verbal engagement with residents and is followed up formally in writing as required.