

COUNCIL MEETING – WEDNESDAY 15 APRIL 2015 ITEM 11 - NOTICE OF MOTION

LABOUR AMENDMENT

Amend the motion as per the tracked changes below, with words underlined inserted and words struck through deleted:

Following pressure from residents, the Wimbledon Guardian and from local Councillors who called for an independent audit, this Council welcomes Circle Housing Merton Priory's (CHMP) admission that their repairs contractor KeepMoat has been overcharging for works.

Council further welcomes CHMPs announcement that they will now undertake a wider investigation to assess the scale of overcharging and to identify ways of improving the system to stop contractors from overcharging.

Council is disappointed with CHMPs continued inability to manage repairs and strongly believes that it is now important to identify a way forward as residents have had to put up with inadequate repairs for too long.

~~This Council notes with concern that it is now more than 6 months since an independent investigation was commissioned into the whistle blowing allegations of corruption and mismanagement within Circle Housing Merton Priory's (CHMP) repairs and maintenance service. Yet, despite the severity of the allegations and the number of people potentially affected, the audit report is still to be released and no firm timetable for publication has been forthcoming.~~

This Council takes seriously its legal responsibilities in relation to CHMP. Under the terms of the agreement entered into under the previous Conservative administration in Merton, CHMP is formally accountable to the council solely in the specific area of whether they deliver on the promises in the offer document at the time of the transfer and whether they keep to their side of the transfer agreement. The council takes seriously its specific and duties to monitor those promises made to hold CHMP to account on behalf of all tenants, leaseholders and freeholders and has therefore:

- Introduced regular liaison meetings with the Cabinet Member for Community and Culture, the Director of Community and Housing, CHMP Managing Director, Circle Regional Director of Property Services and the council's Housing Relationship manager;
- Required CHMP to attend meetings of the council's Sustainable Communities Scrutiny panel for an update from CHMP on the stock transfer commitments;
- Required CHMP to produce a separate quarterly performance report to be available to the Sustainable Communities panel;
- Ensured, as part of their regeneration proposals, that CHMP signed up to a set of 10 Commitments which included continuing to offer a high quality responsive repairs service during the regeneration process.

However despite the above, the council has been clear with CHMP that their repairs service continues to underperform and let residents down. Council therefore:

- a) Calls on CHMP to take urgent steps to ensure the repair service is radically overhauled so that residents get the service they deserve and that they already pay for; and
- b) Calls on CHMP's senior officers to attend the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny panel in June, to answer questions from members and residents on the issue of repairs; and
- a) c) Demands the immediate publication by CHMP of the independent audit report on alleged fraud and repeated overcharging of residents by its repairs contractor, Keepmoat Property Services;
- b) d) Requests that any other such investigations conducted in the future in relation to CHMP or any of its contractors, including by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), are published in a timely fashion to ensure full transparency and accountability; and
- c) e) Notwithstanding the lack of legal powers available to the Council under the terms of the housing stock transfer agreement entered into by the previous Conservative administration, reiterates its commitment to safeguard the needs of residents on Merton's housing estates and hold CHMP to account on the quality of its repairs and maintenance service, particularly in light of the HCA Regulatory Notice served on Circle Anglia Limited in February 2015, and to continue to hold CHMP to account in relation to the promises they made to residents as part of the transfer agreement and the 10 Commitments they signed as part of the regeneration proposals and asks Cabinet to look at the limited legal powers available to us as a local authority if CHMP fail to make changes and demonstrate real impact.

Motion now to read:

Following pressure from residents, the Wimbledon Guardian and from local Councillors who called for an independent audit, this Council welcomes Circle Housing Merton Priory's (CHMP) admission that their repairs contractor KeepMoat has been overcharging for works.

Council further welcomes CHMPs announcement that they will now undertake a wider investigation to assess the scale of overcharging and to identify ways of improving the system to stop contractors from overcharging.

Council is disappointed with CHMPs continued inability to manage repairs and strongly believes that it is now important to identify a way forward as residents have had to put up with inadequate repairs for too long.

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- c) Demands the immediate publication by CHMP of the independent audit report on alleged fraud and repeated overcharging of residents by its repairs contractor, Keepmoat Property Services;
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- e) Notwithstanding the lack of legal powers available to the Council under the terms of the housing stock transfer agreement entered into by the previous Conservative administration, reiterates its commitment to safeguard the needs of residents on Merton's housing estates and hold CHMP to account on the quality of its repairs and maintenance service, particularly in light of the HCA Regulatory Notice served on Circle Anglia Limited in February 2015, and to continue to hold CHMP to account in relation to the promises they made to residents as part of the transfer agreement and the 10 Commitments they signed as part of the regeneration proposals and asks Cabinet to look at the limited legal powers available to us as a local authority if CHMP fail to make changes and demonstrate real impact.

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