

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR 16.11.21

Question 1	I've had water ingress and you've done nothing. We had to go to the Housing Ombudsman to get anything done. We also had sewer issues for six weeks. We ring SW9 and you say Network Homes has to approve. Who is the master? SW9 or Network Homes?
Answer 1	The relationship is that Network Homes owns the properties while SW9 carry out the day-to-day management. Where there are structural liabilities, we do have to liaise with Network Homes but issues such as a blocked drain would be SW9's responsibility. We agree that six weeks is an unreasonable period and that we must make improvements.
Question 2	At Barret House there was no intercom for 6 months. It feels like everything that needs to get done becomes a battle. Why do I have to keep fighting SW9?
Answer 2	We know that the service is not good enough. Although some issues do stem back to the latent defects following the block refurbishment, we accept that SW9 can do things better and needs to improve but sometimes it is extremely difficult to hold a contractor to account for works they are responsible for (such as latent defects).
Question 3	I think you need to introduce service level agreements. There are no timeframes, and nothing gets done.
Answer 3	We are aware that there are issues with making timely responses to residents and that we must improve our ability to keep residents informed. Sometimes we can't resolve issues within a set time but what we can do better is keep residents informed.

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Question 4	I had no intercom for one full year. What if there was an emergency? You can't get through to repairs and, if you do, they don't deliver.
Answer 4	We agree, the telephone system is not fit for purpose. The Senior Leadership Team are currently working with Network Homes to find a solution.

Question 5	Burrow House is not being cleaned. Rubbish gets picked up but that is all. I see the staff hanging out in the market when they should be working.
Answer 5	The Estates Manager will be looking into all aspects this of this report.

Question 6	There is a leak next to my flat in Burrow House. I've emailed / sent photos / called. Someone did come to look but I reported this in July and its now November and more damage has been caused by the leak.
Answer 6	We will take full details of this and come back to you on how we will resolve it within 72 hours and Delroy Rankin will personally make sure colleagues get in touch with residents about this and similar issues.

Question 7	Who takes accountability at SW9? Your word seems to be meaningless. You've failed us so many times. Who gets fired? Who gets hired? When you don't do anything no one at SW9 suffers. Only the residents suffer. This is an issue for all residents as we are a community and deserve to be treated as one.
Answer 7	Ultimately Delroy Rankin as Executive Director is responsible. However, various managers and colleagues are also accountable for their areas of service. We also must work with partner organisations to make progress on many issues.

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Question 8	I've lived in Barret House since I was 5 years old. It used to be very bad around here and it has improved. But most issues we have now we can't get anything done.
Answer 8	We are pleased that you've seen improvements but agree that there is still much to be done in terms of delivering services to residents.

Question 9	SW9 need to pull their socks up. You can't tell us you understand yet change nothing internally. What we need is fundamental change. How is that going to happen?
Answer 9	Such change is happening. For example, in September 2020 we brought the cleaning service in house to improve the service to residents. We have also recently changed repairs contractor. The Senior Leadership Team has also changed and the impact of that is beginning to be seen. However, we're surprised to hear some of the issues raised around the cleaning service and will be looking into this.

Question 10	It's like SW9 are in an isolated cocoon believing you provide a service. You don't listen to issues and increasingly people don't complain as there's no point. I've been reporting lighting issues in my block (Fitzgerald) for nine years. SW9 don't write to me about it as you're scared to go on record or give timescales. Who is checking works? Who signs off? How is nine years acceptable? Who is in charge?
Answer 10	We agree that this is an unacceptable amount of time and will look into the matter.

Question 11	I fix things myself as there is no point in asking SW9 to carry our repairs.
Answer 11	SW9 has got a repairs team and we are sorry that you have had to do this.

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Question 12	We say things aren't acceptable and you say you listen to us. So why do we have to wait so long to get things done?
Answer 12	In relation to repairs, we accept that some of the delays are due to SW9, and things have taken far too long. However, there are other matters that require stakeholder involvement, and they can take longer due to the complexities involved.
Question 13	Are reactive repairs where they need to be?
Answer 13	The repairs service is not where it needs to be, but improvements are being made with new staff coming on board. We are also improving repairs contract management and meeting with the contractor weekly.
Question 14	I called the emergency repairs line at a weekend three times. No one came and a leak continued in my home. This service doesn't work.
Answer 14	We are aware that there are issues with the out of hours service and contractors and we are currently in the process of meeting with the service provider to improve this.
Question 15	Why are SW9 so quick to court action? I've been threatened with court action for not letting people into my home to do a gas annual check – which I would have if you'd told me, you wanted access. I've also been threatened for being a week behind with rent which was a result of you not telling me the standing order needed to be updated.
Answer 15	We are aware that this has happened in the past and that some residents have been pushed into the legal stage. We have a plan in place where a member of SW9 staff will be informed to assist when this takes place – Novelette Ellis. If you receive notification of court action, please contact Novelette immediately. In the last two years we have not referred anyone to court for rent arrears.

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Question 16	I've lived here a long time and I don't know who my housing officer is anymore. If I knew them then perhaps things wouldn't need to get to the court stage.
Answer 16	We agree that housing officers do need to increase their visibility with residents. We currently have names of our Neighbourhood Services Officer and their patch list on our website. We will now include this information on our Notice Boards around the estate as well as in our Estate Office reception.
Question 17	Does anyone here at this meeting represent Network Homes? Wouldn't their presence here have been a good idea?
Answer 17	SW9 is responsible for the day-to-day management your homes. We wanted tonight to be about your relationship with us, as we have the responsibility of liaising with Network Homes on your behalf. Also, most issues raised by residents are the responsibility of SW9.
Question 18	Is SW9 failing us?
Answer 18	We think that's a little too strong. We accept that there are improvements that need to be made but there are many areas we are making progress with.
Question 19	If we keep having to contact SW9 about issues, then you're not doing your job.
Answer 19	We accept that there are issues with our phone system, customer service and keeping residents informed that we are currently addressing.
Question 20	Some of the information held on your systems is not correct. It makes it hard to book in repairs when you're not listed against your own home. This surely shows that people are not doing their jobs.
Answer 20	It's important to have accurate records. When we are made aware there are issues, we do try and resolve them quickly and we do have work to do to speed up responses and keep residents informed.

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Question 21	Surely name and addresses on the systems should just be right in the first place?
Answer 21	They should be but on occasion we discover they are not and seek to rectify the problem. We agree that it is not acceptable.

Question 22	All we get is excuses not resolution. Many of these problems aren't rocket science. Why don't you just resolve them?
Answer 22	We do our best to fix issues when we become aware of them and seek to continuously improve our services in collaboration with residents.

Question 23	When did we surrender our personal data to Network Homes?
Answer 23	There has been no surrender of personal data to Network Homes. Network Homes was the parent organisation to Community Trust Housing and continues to be for SW9 Community Housing.

Question 24	Were we ever made aware that our data was being handed over?
Answer 24	Your data has not been handed over. Network Homes was the parent organisation to Community Trust Housing and continues to be for SW9 Community Housing.

Question 25	Do SW9 have any control over our data?
Answer 25	SW9 does have control of the data, is registered with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) and complies with all data protection legislation.

Question 26	It seems that SW9 are blaming Network Homes for issues and vice versa. Do you make each other aware of things but not us.
Answer 26	We know that we have to make improvements in keeping residents informed, which is the responsibility of SW9.

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Question 27	Who authorises the threatening letters that we receive about gas checks?
Answer 27	There is a strict legal liability with gas safety checks. This is the reason some letters are drafted how they are. It is for the protection of residents and their neighbours. It is the responsibility of the landlord to ensure all homes have up to date Gas Safe certificates. Sometimes this involves using the legal process to ensure health and safety. When they push for legal action SW9 often refuse. SW9's Novelette Ellis oversees protecting SW9 residents from this issue and can help you if you receive a letter from T Brown (gas contractor).

Question 28	You've got a newsletter. Could you explain the situation with the gas in there?
Answer 28	We will include an article in the first issue of the new year.

Question 29	The procedure over gas is flawed. If they can't find your address, they blame you. Early access can be made. You don't have to wait until the last moment and then threaten court action.
Answer 29	There is a strict legal liability with gas safety checks. This is the reason some letters are drafted how they are. It is for the protection of residents and their neighbours. It is the responsibility of the landlord to ensure all homes have up to date Gas Safe certificates. Sometimes this involves using the legal process to ensure health and safety. When they push for legal action SW9 often refuse. SW9's Novelette Ellis is in charge of protecting SW9 residents from this issue and can help you if you receive a letter from T Brown (gas contractor).

Question 30	I want to know about repairs at street properties. Your new contractors are paid but not doing their jobs. I can't get through on the phone and come into the office over and over. They put up scaffolding for one month but took it down without doing the job. None of my repairs have been done in two years.
Answer 30	We currently have officers present who can assist in resolving this. We accept that there are issues here and will look into getting them resolved. A member of staff will liaise with you directly.

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Question 31	It is frustrating to keep reporting the same thing. Where does the buck stop?
Answer 31	Ultimately Delroy Rankin as Executive Director is responsible. However, various managers and colleagues are also accountable for their areas of service. We also must work with partner organisations to make progress on many issues. We agree that many issues are unacceptable, and the Board Chair will take a hand in ensuring they are resolved.
Question 32	I've lived in a street property for a long time. Not everything is the fault of SW9, but my home is neglected and does need work. But I give SW9 credit for doing what they can.
Answer 32	Thank you for this feedback. As part of the transfer there was a street property refurbishment programme in place between 2009-13. However, these properties do require regular investment to keep them maintained and SW9 will seek to have these discussions in the future with the landlord.
Question 33	I was not told that Network Homes had handed over our building to SW9. There is snagging that still needs to be done. Now it's with you but you send it all to After Care. Nothing is getting done.
Answer 33	We have requested a snagging list as we are concerned at the number of issues that still need to be addressed. This is with our Repairs Manager who is working through the list, including the houses as well as blocks.
Question 34	What is taking place with parking? You want to move us to under-crofts but charge us more. The survey was rubbish as you'll do what you want anyway. The changing of the timings will also isolate us from having visitors. Where is the sense of community? This is supposed to be social housing, but it looks like a money-making exercise. I'm already charged for services I don't get in a street property. Why do SW9 think we can afford to pay more?
Answer 34	Any changes to the parking will need to be approved by the Board and no decisions have been made yet. This feedback will all be taken into account.

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Question 35	You should consult with residents more. There are lots of ways to do this so don't blame COVID for lack of interaction. Consultation is key.
Answer 35	We agree that we could consult on more issues.
Question 36	There is a clear disconnect if Board don't listen to residents.
Answer 36	We acknowledge this concern and events such as Meet & Greet are designed to help improve the dialogue between residents and SW9.
Question 37	Do staff park for free?
Answer 37	SW9 makes an allowance for staff parking as part of employment arrangements.
Question 38	Is anyone going to be patrolling and monitoring parking until the proposed end time of midnight? If not, what are we paying for? Is it just a money-making exercise?
Answer 38	Any changes to the parking will need to be approved by the Board and no decisions have been made yet. The idea however is not to make money but to improve the local environment as well as move cars off the estate to allow essential works to drainage to be carried out.
Question 39	Why did you not mention the drainage improvements in the survey information sent out?
Answer 39	The survey was about parking arrangements and their impact on residents. At the time of the survey, we did not include information on the drainage works as these had not yet been agreed or timescales set. We potentially should have included this strategic objective in the information given. Any changes to the parking will need to be approved by the Board and no decisions have been made yet.
Question 40	I asked for a meeting about the parking, but no one came back to me.
Answer 40	We are sorry no one came back to you, and we will arrange the meeting. We will also be sending out the results of the survey when they have been reviewed.

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Question 41	Given all the issues, what are the benefits for going independent?
Answer 41	We are at the beginning of this process and will set out the benefits to residents in due course.

Question 42	How has social housing benefitted from the sale of private housing on the estate?
Answer 42	The building and sale of private homes has helped us to carry out the refurbishment of existing buildings which was set out in the original offer document.

Question 43	If repairs are not being done, is it because the money has run out again?
Answer 43	The money has not run out, but we do have to prioritise works.

Question 44	There is confusion about who is in charge. SW9 or Network Homes?
Answer 44	We acknowledge that this can be confusing as there can be overlapping responsibilities. Network Homes is the landlord and SW9 is the managing agent. As such SW9 is your first point of contact for resolving issues. We will also produce a leaflet explaining the responsibility split between the organisations.

Question 45	If you went independent, how would you get more money to reinvest in the community.
Answer 45	At present there is a shared distribution of rental income between the two organisations (Network Homes 47%, SW9 53%). In the event of independence SW9 would retain 100% of this income.

Question 46	We pay you and we need our issues managed now. You're supposed to champion us.
Answer 46	We agree that SW9 has responsibility to deal with many of the issues raised and that there have been problems in resolving some of these. The Meet & Greet has been designed as one of the ways in which we can improve our service to residents. There are also ways for residents to get involved and help make improvements.

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Question 47	Accountability is an issue. We do not know what is SW9 and what is Network Homes. But if you take 53% of the money then you have 53% of the responsibility. Money seems to be spent recklessly. No one monitors whether services are delivered. Why should we trust SW9 to independently manage the estate if they can't manage individual blocks?
Answer 47	SW9 is responsible for the delivery of local services which includes day to day repairs. As a charity SW9 endeavours to make sure the money is spent correctly. Part of our responsibility is to monitor the services provided by contractors. We accept that there are times when SW9 or the contractor does not meet the required levels of expectation. SW9 has been your managing agent since 2016. Part of the reason for the introduction of the Meet & Greet programme is to improve trust between residents and SW9.

Question 48	You are wasting our money. Is the management going to change with independence? Will you resign? In the private sector, if you don't perform, you go.
Answer 48	SW9's resident-led Board has responsibility for the appointment and monitoring of the Senior Leadership Team. If the Board deem that performance is not at the level they would expect, then it is their responsibility to agree the appropriate way forward.

Question 49	I don't care about Network Homes. You are the face. You don't fight our corner with Network Homes. You need to listen and champion us.
Answer 49	SW9 is responsible for the delivery of local services which includes day to day repairs. As a charity SW9 endeavours to make sure the money is spent correctly. Part of our responsibility is to monitor the services provided by contractors. We accept that there are times when SW9 or the contractor does not meet the required levels of expectation. SW9 has been your managing agent since 2016. Part of the reason for the introduction of the Meet & Greet programme is to improve trust between residents and SW9.

Question 50	We need more accountability from staff. We need feedback over issues and to surveys.
Answer 50	We are aware that we need to make improvements in keeping residents informed which includes giving feedback on survey results. We are introducing processes and change to improve the accountability of our teams.

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Question 51	How are things going to improve?
Answer 51	Part of the reason for the introduction of the Meet & Greet programme is to improve trust between residents and SW9. The Board have also requested the urgent production of a service improvement plan.
Question 52	With repairs what is resident responsibility and what is SW9? Or Network Homes?
Answer 52	Responsibilities are set out in tenancy agreements and lease agreements. There is also a leaflet that sets out these responsibilities available from the housing office or online: https://www.sw9.org.uk/media/11102/8163-sw9-repairs-leaflet_web.pdf
Question 53	It's not right that we keep having to get in touch to get repairs done. We have no choice but to trust you to manage our homes.
Answer 53	We agree that there are issues here and improvements that need to be made. Changes are being made to our repairs team and we are looking to make improvements in contract management. Part of the reason for the introduction of the Meet & Greet programme is to improve trust between residents and SW9.
Question 54	How are the heating engineers selected? How do we get rid of T Brown?
Answer 54	The T Brown contract has recently been extended by 18 months. To procure a new contract can take 6-9 months and COVID meant that it wasn't possible or practical to deliver a procurement exercise for the service at the time. We are looking to make improvements in contract management.
Question 55	I would like to know more about where we are with the Options Agreement.
Answer 55	Currently there is an options appraisal taking place which includes the valuation of the estate. At some point in 2022 the Board will decide about the viability and merits of independence. Should it be deemed that SW9 is viable as a standalone registered housing provider, a consultation and ballot will take place with residents.

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Question 56	Will we be getting the security back on the estate?
Answer 56	We carried out a trial with contractor Park Guard which was successful. We are now reviewing the costs and will consult with residents about introducing this service on a permanent basis if residents are in favour.
Question 57	When will the independence vote take place?
Answer 57	Currently there is an options appraisal taking place which includes the valuation of the estate. At some point in 2022 the Board will make a decision about the viability and merits of independence. Should it be deemed that SW9 is viable as a standalone registered housing provider, a consultation and ballot will take place with residents.
Question 58	There are issues with the phones. I have to go through three lines to speak to someone. Why, in an open plan office, can no one pick up a phone?
Answer 58	We agree there are issues with the phone lines that we are seeking to resolve. We are introducing four new dedicated repairs call lines that should be up and running before Christmas. We will advertise the new repairs number in due course.
Question 59	How will voting for independence work?
Answer 59	We will lay out the specifics in due course, but tenants and leaseholders will participate if a ballot takes place.
Question 60	There are fire cladding issues at 11 Robsart Street. When will these be resolved? It's been two years.
Answer 60	We are sorry for the delay, and we are working with Network Homes and contractor Higgins for a start date on these works.
Question 61	We are waiting for answers to the Advance Questions. Are you not going to deal with them?
Answer 61	We will make the answers available to you in the next 5 working days. These have now been published.