

STATES OF JERSEY

Public Accounts Committee Andium Homes - Repair and Maintenance

THURSDAY, 26th FEBRUARY 2015

Panel:

Deputy A.D. Lewis of St. Helier (Chairman)
Deputy S.M. Wickenden of St. Helier
Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier
Connétable C.H. Taylor of St. John
Mr. S. Warren, Deputy Comptroller and Auditor General
Mr. M. Robinson
Mr. R. Parker

Witnesses:

Chair, Tenants' Forum
Chair of High Rise Panel
Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association

[15:17]

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Thank you very much for coming today. The purpose of today, as you know, the C. & A.G. (Comptroller and Auditor General) published a report recently about Andium Homes, which is a relatively new entity, which replaces, to a certain extent, the Housing Ministry, as they now manage and look after the entire housing stock that used to be run by the Housing Department. The report was produced and we are then duty bound, as the Public Accounts Committee, to take

that report and present it to the States of Jersey, which we will be doing in the form of our own report based partly on the C. & A. G.'s report but also based on hearings that we are having today and perhaps into the future as well. We are now waiting for a response from Andium Homes to the C. & A. G.'s report as well, having discussed the matter with them today. But we are particularly interested in all sides of the story and that means talking to other affected parties, particularly customers of Andium Homes, which the tenants are and you are representing those tenants. Today, I know this seems like a very formal situation because it kind of is, it is public and it is being recorded but, hopefully, you will be able to relax and answer some of our questions. If you have questions for us as well we would be happy to answer them. We have a list of prepared questions and myself and my colleagues will take you through them. It is nothing too arduous and I am quite sure that you will know far more about Andium Homes and being tenants of the residences that you live in than we will, so that is why you are here. We are very interested to find out what you have got to say. In order to kick off, we have got 3 themes here that we are going to talk to you about. Firstly, collating information, that is you telling Andium Homes what you think, how you do that at the moment and then what they might be doing with that information, so that sort of quantifies the first theme that we are going to kick off with. If I could just hand over to Deputy Martin who is going kick off with the first question and feel free as to who you feel is most suited to answer it but we are very happy for you to all answer the same question.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Yes, good afternoon. Yes, the first question and you may have different information and I would like to hear from all of you if you do have some. It is really basic, as tenant representatives, what information do you get on the quality and the timeliness of housing repairs and maintenance? As a forum I would probably like to go to Candia first, if ...

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

Sorry, can you ask that again?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

What information do you get back from Housing on the information you put in on the timeliness of their maintenance and the quality and the timeliness of the repairs?

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

As a Tenants' Forum we do not get that information feedback at all.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

You do not get any feedback.

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

No.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Okay, can I put the same question to ... I know you just represent one quite large ...

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

As a tenants group we would have ...

Deputy J.A. Martin:

It is, yes.

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

... because we would have regular meetings. Normally someone from Housing attends the meeting and we will have put forward issues and they will respond to that, to those issues and that is the only way for us.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Yes, and to High Rise?

Chair of High Rise Panel:

We have a committee meeting every 6 weeks and anything that has been dragging around for a little while is brought up, which is then passed on to the relative departments in Andium. We get feedback probably immediately because we usually have a representative with us and, if not, we find that something is sorted out. But I also get phone calls frequently about: "We are so and so and we are going to be coming around and painting the outside of your building or we will be putting some scaffolding up." They tell me and then if anybody asks me what is going on I am able to pass that information on to them.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Are you satisfied that once that work is carried out, they have asked for your feedback, whether it may be good, excellent, bad or not of a certain quality, that then they feed back to you again as to say what they would do about it?

Chair of High Rise Panel:

Yes. I have got a feeling that most residents do not like talking to anybody. They will have their little moments as if they are standing over the garden fence talking to each other but it does not ever seem to go any further than that. It is one of those things, you say: "Why do you not go down

to Housing and tell them?” “No, no, I cannot be bothered” or: “No, they will not do anything anyway.” That is very, very difficult to get past. I thought that one of the best ways of doing it, and I had a word with Andium Homes about it, when a business comes to do a job at your house they should have a card which says what they are going to be doing and what then. I suggested that they should leave it with the tenants so that they do not make the tenants fill it in there because they have got some big workman standing over you and you have got to say: “It is very good, thank you!” If they are not there and the tenant has time to think about it and they can go and inspect the job afterwards, they can then write their comments and so then that can go back to Andium and they will have a completely free view of what happened. That is how I think it should happen and, as regards at the moment, feedback only comes through somebody bringing the subject up at a meeting where you discuss and it then goes off to the respective departments and then comes back to you eventually.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Have they, which we have suggested, on that one particular point, have they come back and said: “It is being considered”?

Chair of High Rise Panel:

They did. They thought it was a very good idea. What they let me think about, or what they seemed to be thinking about, was to leave it with the person while the man is there and fill it in and I did not think that was right. I think that it should have his name on it to say who did the job, what firm they were and then after that, yes, it is up to them whether they continue on. I think if they maybe give a bottle of whisky once a month as a prize for all the letters they get... **[Laughter]** everybody will be sending them back!

Mr. R. Parker:

Would it be better if that was done on a computer, so you had the information about who was going to arrive, the time limits and so on?

Chair of High Rise Panel:

But not all of us have got computers, especially ... there are lots of people who just play games on them. It might be all right for a quarter of the people, maybe even a third but if you get people like me that do not use a computer very much it is better that we had a postcard that could be sent back.

Deputy S. M. Wickenden:

Do you think maybe leaving a letterbox in certain large places that you could just drop it in and it is collected?

Chair of High Rise Panel:

In the high rise blocks we have a letterbox for the High Rise Panel and they could go in there but it would take up to 6 weeks to get back to Housing unless we go down there every week and unlock the box, which we do not. We usually do it a week before we have a meeting. But that would be one way to do it, you could put another notice on the high rise and ...

Deputy S. M. Wickenden:

But if Andium are serious about getting the feedback they can send somebody around to empty all the boxes.

Chair of High Rise Panel:

Themselves, yes.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

I take it so many of you will now have mobile phones. If you receive a text message from the supplier saying: "I am coming at this time, this is who I am, this is the reference number for the job and this is the time we are going to be arriving" would you find that useful?

Chair of High Rise Panel:

No, because I can never find my phone and I only use it maybe once or twice a week. I have not got it on me now ...

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Right. What I am thinking here really is that I take your point about I.T. (Information Technology), not everybody is as I.T. literate as others. But it would seem that a lot of people now have a mobile phone and are familiar with texting and I just wondered if that was something which might be helpful.

Chair of High Rise Panel:

It might be an idea to add it in as part of it but I think there must be a lot of people ... they cannot all be as bad as me but there must be a lot of people that do not use a mobile phone or do not have a phone at all. Loads of people have got their landlines but I think I would prefer the landline, except for the nuisance calls you get everyday: "Would you like to buy this or would you like to invest in that?"

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Okay, does anybody else want to add anything?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

No, no, the first 3 have been answered really, unless anyone else can think of anything else.

Deputy S. M. Wickenden:

I just think, obviously, in 2 cases you have got somebody from Housing, a rep, that is at your meetings, are you satisfied with what information you receive at those meetings from them?

Chair of High Rise Panel:

One of the other ladies might like to answer first.

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

We have found that with our States rep now from Housing, they have that divided their ... you know each rep has an estate. They have all got estates now to look after and we found that is very useful. We have just had a meeting a few weeks ago and she came along to that with somebody else from Housing and we found it very supportive. We got across things and maintenance issues as well and we have got a really good relationship, so it is ...

Deputy S. M. Wickenden:

Excellent.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Anything you wanted to add to that?

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

No, I do not think so. We also have Andium Home representatives coming to the Tenants' Forum meetings, which we find very helpful and we get a lot of feedback from those meetings with them attending.

Deputy S. M. Wickenden:

Sorry, could I also ask another question? Is this something that is historic with having a representative that comes around or is it something that has been very new since the creation of Andium Homes in the last 8 months?

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

It is historic, yes.

Deputy S. M. Wickenden:

It is historic, yes, I thought so.

Mr. M. Robinson:

I would just like to ask you a general question really about the satisfaction surveys and I understand that there are some 2 types of satisfaction surveys, those that are for planned maintenance work, everybody gets a survey to fill in, and then those for responsive work and they are done on a slightly different basis.

[15:30]

I just notice from the Comptroller and Auditor General's report that the responses are about the same in both cases. About 35 per cent of people do respond. But for those that do respond it says that: "The satisfaction score is in the high 90 per cent for both." I just wonder if that is consistent with your own experiences or the experiences of the people you represent. They are saying that their satisfaction rates are for responsive and planned work is in the high 90 per cent.

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

I could not tell you because the Tenants' Forum do not really deal with complaints from tenants or any ... I do not have that knowledge of whether that is a correct figure or not.

Mr. M. Robinson:

Just even from a kind of hearsay basis on the feedback, does that feel about right to you? They are saying that ...

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

No, because I do not think I know anybody who has had one of those.

Mr. M. Robinson:

Of the actual surveys?

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

Yes.

Mr. M. Robinson:

But do you think the satisfaction rates are very much of that sort of order from the repairs that had been done?

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

I know that only through my involvement with the community room that I was involved with that a lot of people are satisfied with work that they have had done but there are also people who are not satisfied.

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

I think since it has changed to Andium and there are different contractors doing some of the work, I think there has been, initially, some problems because the new contractors do not know the estates. I think obviously they come to an estate and they do not always know the set up of the estates. Some of the estates are very large, even ours, and it can be quite confusing just to find where the problem is. But I think that is settling down now. I went around myself with the contractor and showed him where certain things were, community lighting, for example, and when you say community lighting I mean that is a lot of community lighting in a bigger estate. But I think that is improving. There were complaints at the beginning I think because the contractors were not sure where they were going to and I think prioritising. They obviously had their idea what was priority and Andium had theirs. I think they have had a meeting now and they will know what is priority for us tenants.

Chair of High Rise Panel:

What I find is that most people that have had a little job done do not bother to go around telling everybody what a wonderful job it is. It is only if something annoys them, like somebody did not wipe their feet before they came in and things like that. Those are the things that will niggle them, they are the things they will tell their neighbour and this will spread round. It is one pair of shoes not being wiped on the doorstep and everybody knows about it, these terrible people! But really it is only very, very trivial things and everybody who has had a satisfactory job does not tell anybody. You have got to ask them. We had asbestos problems in our high rise recently and the people that came and did the job, I think they did an excellent job. They were in and they were out. They told us what they were going to do. We were kept informed all the time. I cannot really think of any problem. They came and fitted new panels for us, they painted it for us. It would be very nice if they painted the rest of the walls as well but ...

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Okay. The way that companies are measured is what is really called K.P.Is. which is jargon for key performance indicators. In other words, how they are measured as to how well they are doing things. On the housing repairs and maintenance reports of Andium Homes' management we want to try and find out whether these are the right key performance indicators, so how the contract is being measured and is it by the right measurements? The reason why we are particularly interested in this is that to date, under the old Housing regime, there were 4 contractors, for example, procured and authorised to carry out the work and then the work was handed out equally

to all 4, which sounds like a sensible idea because there is no accusation of one getting more than another for any particular scurrilous reason. But there is an unintended consequence of that in that there could be accusations that everybody is getting the same amount of work, so there is no extra effort put in to make sure you do a really good job to get more work, perhaps. This has been raised with Andium Homes and the key performance indicators that they are currently operating with are something which we think at the moment are wrong and they are not clear enough. What you might think is a performance indicator, like wiping your feet before you come into the house, is not something that they are currently listing in their key performance indicators. We would be quite interested to find out what you think is the best performance you are going to get from somebody coming to your home to do a job. What is most important to you as tenants and that would then be fed back to Andium Homes and listed as a performance indicator, as whether they are doing a good or not a good job...

Chair of High Rise Panel:

Basically I think you are covering what I said before. I think that they should let you know who they are and what they are doing and then leave us a card so that we can fill in saying what our satisfaction rate is. That way there is no pressure from anybody, no pressure from the work people who are doing it, no pressure from Andium Homes or anybody else. We just put down there and say: "No damn good" and leave it like that.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Something nice and simple to complete.

Chair of High Rise Panel:

Yes, something nice and simple that ...

Deputy A.D. Lewis

We also understand that you do not always know who the contractor is. If you wanted to contact Andium Homes, you could not necessarily say who it was, they could look back and work it out but ...

Chair of High Rise Panel

But that is why I suggested that you had ...

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

They put a name on it.

Chair of High Rise Panel:

... the name on the form and the person that was doing the job.

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

Yes, you should know who your contractor is really.

Chair of High Rise Panel:

I do not know. If somebody comes to me and said: "We have come to paint the wall" and you say: "Thank you very much." They do not tell you where they have come from ...

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

But you should ask for I.D. (Identification), for example.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Okay. I think that probably answers our question then. The next thing we want to talk about is how Andium Homes has satisfied yourselves that it secures economy and efficiency and effectiveness in allocating the work. We have spoken a little bit about that just now. We have got a couple of questions about that as well, so perhaps if you have had experience recently with dealing with contractors or your members of your block or your association have, we would be interested to know what the feedback is and Chris is going to ask a couple of questions about that.

The Connétable of St. John:

Yes. Where multiple contractors have been engaged to undertake the same type of responsive repairs, do you notice a difference between tenant satisfaction with the different contractors? Put another way, do you notice that any particular contractor is better at repairing than other contractors? If they are engaging 4 different contractors, are you noticing a difference between them?

Chair of High Rise Panel:

I do not think we could really give you that detail, unless we are plumbers or electricians or builders there is no way that you can tell. That person comes in and does your job, so you do not necessarily go next door to see if they have had the better job. I think as long as the job you get is satisfactory that is where it stands.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

So there is no indicator, let us say. Putting it a different way, we were talking about performance indicators before and you have got a variety of different suppliers. Some will do a better job than others, that is the way life is. Have you noticed any difference between the way that certain contractors behave to others? Just the example you used about not wiping your feet; is there a

big difference or are they all much the same? The reason we were asking the question is they have been procured, they have gone through a procurement process and they have all been approved. We just want to make sure that the fact they have been approved, that they are meeting the standards that have been set for them.

Chair of High Rise Panel:

Again, I just think it is a very hard thing to say but I really only notice it when it comes into the public area for things that are not done successfully there, like somebody may be taking the bits of wood out, et cetera, et cetera and they do not clean the foyer out before they leave. That does happen on occasions. I have reported it and it has not happened since. I think if you follow it through it does not normally happen again. It is not necessarily a person who is doing repairs either. It might be somebody that is moving something for somebody upstairs and they are breaking it up and they are dropping half of the stuff on the floor, so it could be either.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Yes, but you would not know which contractor it was, would you?

Chair of High Rise Panel:

No, you would not, no.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

No, that is why it goes back to your question which Andium said that they must ensure in the future that you all know, their tenants know, who is coming out to deal ... Because you might have the same problem over a few months and get 4 different contractors, 2 of them deal with it fantastically, 2 do not, but if you do not know the difference you cannot report back to them, so they have got a job of work to do.

Chair of High Rise Panel:

Yes, and it goes back to my be all and end all.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Yes, totally, yes.

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

The only feedback that I have had experience of is not response repair, it is planned maintenance with different contractors. I have had feedback that some of the contractors were much better at a certain particular job than others but not that I have ever had any ... I could not tell you on the response repair.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

That is interesting. Thank you.

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

I would say that it is more of an individual thing. You might get somebody from a company who comes in and does a job and you are pleased. You might get somebody else from that same firm coming to do something and you are not happy, their standard of work is not maybe as high and I think that is where those surveys, if the person is named on it, would be more useful.

The Connétable of St. John:

Do you always know the different firms or are you just more likely to know the different people?

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

If it is the plumbing and electrical then we would normally know because they have got their logo.

The Connétable of St. John:

They have got their badge, yes, yes.

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

It is more if it is a carpenter or a builder to do the building side, we might not know who the contractor is.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Right. Is it quite important to you to know who is coming into your house?

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

Yes.

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

I think so, yes. I have asked for I.D. in the past and they have not always had it but that is something I have brought up with Andium to make sure the contractors do, especially for elderly people. They get a knock on the door and they are coming in to do this but: 'who are you?'

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Yes, and we felt the same and we thought you might say that. It was a question we had for the ...

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

My mum is at Osborne Court and they have just had major refurbishments and there were workmen all over the place and it was a little bit daunting. Most of the men introduced themselves and ...

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Okay. There is a second part to your question, I think, Chris.

The Connétable of St. John:

Yes. Do you ever get the impression that some contractors are undertaking repairs which they are not really capable of doing?

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

I would say yes, in the past. I think we are most probably going back to, as I was here earlier, where maybe some of the contractors got a bit complacent. They knew they had the contract and ...

Deputy S.M. Wickenden:

There is no incentive?

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

... they did not perhaps have to answer so much to ... whereas now it is with Andium, they have got somebody to answer to, have they not? They have got to prove themselves really I think and that should be better really.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Any indication that perhaps one of them was getting too much work and they could not cope with it?

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

I think maybe sometimes with response, it was taking a long time. It was days sometimes.

Member of the Public:

May I say something if I introduce myself?

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Unfortunately we have not called you as a witness.

Member of the Public:

I see.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Members of the public who are in the gallery cannot speak but we are very happy to take up any submission that you might want to make and if you are a tenant, if we have another hearing, we could call you as a witness, so we are happy to talk to you afterwards. The next thing is about plans to enhance and monitor the effectiveness of tenant engagement, which, in simple terms, means are Andium Homes engaging with you as tenants and the representatives of tenants well enough? We spoke to them earlier about what they were doing; things like tenant surveys. Those of you that use social media, talking about Facebook, Twitter and so on, they have made a huge effort in that area, so perhaps some of your younger tenants may well be engaged in that and I am sure some of the silver surfers amongst you do as well. They are making, it would appear, quite a lot of effort to engage with tenants. At least, that is what they have told us but we are interested to know what you think of that. Over to Scott.

Deputy S. M. Wickenden:

We covered some of this earlier and it is certainly around how we get your satisfaction surveys, et cetera, or even if you do. You say some have not. What steps do you think could be taken to improve the response rates of why people would respond to a customer satisfaction survey?

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

Sorry?

Deputy S. M. Wickenden:

What do you believe that Andium could do to make it so people would respond and give feedback more often?

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

I really do not know.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

The bottle of whisky idea was very good. **[Laughter]**

Chair of High Rise Panel:

Any prize that was given once a month.

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

Yes, say: "If you respond to this you are entered into a monthly prize draw where you get £50 off your rent."

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Do many blocks have suggestion boxes in them?

Chair of High Rise Panel:

As far as I know it is only the high rise ones, yes.

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

High rise, yes, it is, yes.

Chair of High Rise Panel:

[15:45]

Again, I know in the high rise we have a big noticeboard and information could come from Andium and go on the noticeboard to say that ... But they have done it, they sent me letters saying that the roads are going to be done or that so and so was going to be done. I take it as my job to go down and stick it into the noticeboard there so that people can see it, knowing that they are going to have difficulty getting into the premises on such and such a day. They have kept me informed on that one and I think that is very good. It did not used to happen.

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

But they tend to send them to every resident now when something like that happens but ...

Chair of High Rise Panel:

Yes. But a lot of those end up in the rubbish bin.

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

Yes, that is the other point. But I think all blocks of flats have noticeboards.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Say, for the moment, you had a complaint. How would you deal with it?

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

You phone up Andium Homes.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

How is their response? Good?

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

Yes.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Yes, well recorded and ... If you were to phone back a second time would they have a note of it?

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

Not necessarily, not in the past. Personally, I have not had a response repair for 2 years, so ...

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

It was obviously planned maintenance work.

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

Yes, I cannot answer that. Like I said, the Tenants' Forum does not really deal with this sort of thing and I only get this feedback from my work at the community room, and generally it is not bad.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Good.

Deputy S. M. Wickenden:

The response repair that kind of happens, you phone up and you tell somebody something is not working ...

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

Yes.

Deputy S. M. Wickenden:

... and they send somebody out there. On the planned maintenance it becomes a little bit more difficult, I guess.

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

Yes, yes.

Chair of High Rise Panel:

As regards to repairs, every time I have rung them or what sometimes happens is that an old lady or an old gentleman will stop me and say: "So and so is happening." You may not have heard

about it for several months but as soon as I have rung them up and say there is such and such a thing going on there, within 2 days it seems to have been repaired. An example of that would be a little while ago one of the neighbours - they are fairly new to the block - told me that the door going down to the garage had been forced open at some time and somebody has cut all the wood away by the side of the lock. All they had to do was put a pencil in there and do that and they could go upstairs and into the flats. It had obviously been there for a long, long time but nobody had bothered to report it until this particular person did. I rang up Housing and there was somebody there the following day repairing it. I think that was excellent. I do not know if all of the things like that happen. But if it does not happen and there is a delay the information always comes through to the High Rise Panel every 6 weeks and everybody from the sort of tenant high rise things brings their information in and say: "This was supposed to be done. There are drips coming down there and they are still coming down and what is being done about it?" The only way I get the information is through that way.

Deputy S. M. Wickenden:

When we were talking to Andium earlier one of the things they were talking about was giving better responses to their tenants, certainly with the customer in the heart of their business. If they gave you kind of feedback on what they have been doing and what they have been doing well and also what they have not been doing well, would that appreciated?

Chair of High Rise Panel:

Yes, I am sure it would be. Again, the noticeboard is there and anything that they have done was ... when they were putting scaffolding up outside the building last time there was a notice in the board there to say the scaffold was going up and they reckoned it would be there for 2 weeks and it was not advisable for children to play on the scaffolding, which I thought was quite a good idea.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Can I just add, we have a question here that says, are you satisfied with the level of tenant engagement by Andium? I would like to turn that around and say, are you satisfied with the participation with Andium - I know it is relatively new - or what participation would you like to see from Andium with the tenants going forward on planned maintenance and response maintenance? Would that not be a way to get more interest if you are listened to and you point out obvious things that do not work and then you get feedback on it? Do you think that works now or do you think it could be improved going forward?

Chair of High Rise Panel:

I think there is always room for anything like that to be improved. At the moment, they will tell people representing their block in the high rise about such and such a thing and that will come

down and it will be discussed. But it only usually happens if they are not satisfied. If 2 or 3 weeks go past from their reporting it and nothing has happened then they will have a little moan and that representative will generally bring it up. There is always a representative there who takes a copy of the minutes and they go out to the respective department. At least, that is what I believe happens because they do get dealt with. I cannot think of anything else on that now.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Anyone else?

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

I know with the planned maintenance ... I know at Osborne Court the tenants were highly involved in it. They have meetings and put suggestions and, to me, they seem to be listened to. I went on behalf of my mother because she could not attend. I would like to see a bit more of that.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

When it was completed there was a follow up to see the suggestions put in that were followed by the contractor or by Andium?

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

They are not quite finished yet, they are still doing property maintenance now.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Okay, that would be interesting, yes. Is that something you would expect them to follow up?

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

Yes.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

I think that is what they were promising, so we just need to see if that is what they will do.

Chair of High Rise Panel:

Can I butt in again, please?

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Yes, of course.

Chair of High Rise Panel:

What I found is that if we ask our representative that comes along to the meeting if we have had a problem, could we talk to the person there then, generally, the following month that person is there and gives us a talk on what they do, et cetera, et cetera, so that everybody has got some idea of what is going on and they can put questions to these people and ask them. That is one thing that I do find. Generally, if I ask for somebody to attend because it would be interesting maybe or because there had been a problem, they are usually there this following month and they give us a nice little talk for 10 minutes telling us what they do, et cetera, and I think that is a way of putting the information. I do find - I do not know if it is just high rise - that most of the people that live in there live in their own little world and it is very, very hard to get anybody to represent them. This is one of the things that they do. As I said right at the beginning, they just seem to talk over the garden fence with each other and that is when you get your information coming back from them.

Mr. M. Robinson:

When we spoke to Andium before they talked about planned visits to all the estates by members of their staff, including the senior management, and I just wondered if you were aware of these planned visits and how useful you think they are.

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

Yes, very useful because these visits are all communal areas and not for individual properties and on my particular estate I now know the person that does our visits and he picks up all the repairs that need to be done to the communal areas. I think that that is a very good thing that they have done. I think it is only since they have been Andium that they have started to do it. Yes, it is very positive.

Mr. M. Robinson:

Do they ever visit individual tenants?

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

No.

Mr. M. Robinson:

It is only kind of like in a communal basis.

Chair, Tenants' Forum:

Yes.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

What about in your block, does anybody ...

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

Yes, we have a very good experience with Andium and they notify you beforehand with letters and if an individual does want to meet up with them you can ask for them to maybe to pop in and have a word with you. I normally make myself available anyway and go round because I am a State rep for Liberation Court as well. I normally go round and pinpoint some things that might be bothering the tenants, so, no, it is really good. The Andium rep came to our last meeting to introduce himself to the other tenants and I think she enjoyed that part of it as well.

Chair of High Rise Panel:

I know we get a caller from the States, who I think is the leader of Andium Homes but he comes around every single Monday and is there available to talk to anybody that wants to be ... I often see him standing out in the quadrangle area there talking to somebody and they may go off with them or something. But a lot of them have not any reason to go down and talk to him about that and I do not know whether he visits people personally and knocks on the door. But I think if there was a reason for him to do it he probably would but I cannot tell you any more than that.

Mr. R. Parker:

On the planned maintenance, how far in advance were you informed of any planned maintenance that is going to take place?

Chair of High Rise Panel:

In my case I am told 3 years is the next time when they are going to be doing certain jobs in our place and I have got a lot of people, especially the older people, saying: "They are going to move us out" and I have to assure them that nothing is going to happen until such and such a time and it is very unlikely that they will be moved out. I cannot say they are not because things and circumstances may change but that is what I am told.

Mr. R. Parker:

But could they communicate that in a better way to the tenants?

Chair of High Rise Panel:

Yes, I think they could do because, especially older people, they are getting scared that they may lose their home and they have been in there 20 years. A lot of old people, they do not talk to the States about it at all, they will come and talk to somebody like me. I had one lady that was shouting at me across the supermarket the other day, she says: "Have you had that meeting yet?" I said: "I told you last week that I deal with only high-rise problems." I said: "If you really want to know anything about it you will have to go down to Andium Homes and have a word with them." I

said: "Look, I have had a word with them and they assure me that everybody in your area is likely to stay there and I cannot tell you any more than that, you would have to go and ask yourself." But she probably will not and she will probably ask me again next week in the supermarket again.

Mr. R. Parker:

Most of this communication is verbal communication in relation to attending the meetings or someone coming to the sites but is there anything that is on a more formalised basis or is it very much that sort of way?

Chair of High Rise Panel:

Sorry, I did not quite understand what you were trying to say.

Mr. R. Parker:

No, what I am getting at is that you are told, yes, but there is nothing in writing or is it all put up formally on the noticeboard? I am just trying to think of the communication system and how you get this sort of feedback coming from Andium. Is this disseminated by yourself or your association?

Chair of High Rise Panel:

I think that you have a point there. Maybe this business where people are getting scared that they are going to be moved out - they could do with a small notice in the noticeboard saying: 'we have no intention of doing any work on your property for 2 years and we will keep you informed.' Something like that.

Mr. R. Parker:

Yes, I am just wondering on other things, that on the standard sort of maintenance, if a particular item is failing in a number of properties, do you get informed that this could be something they need to replace?

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

We do.

Mr. R. Parker:

You get that sort of ...

Chair of High Rise Panel:

Yes.

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

Yes, we have had some heating replaced and plumbing work and we were all notified well in advance, told which company would be coming to do the work and given a contact number with the contractor. Osborne Court was the same, where mum was, they were told well in advance what work was going to be done and got letters all the time telling them what was the next stage.

Mr. R. Parker:

When someone makes an appointment, how reliable are they at turning up on the due date and time?

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

I was happy with the contractors and mum has been very happy at Osborne Court as well. There has been the odd thing, maybe somebody might have been delayed in one property and he might have been an hour or so late but they would just, you know, explain. They would normally give a ... say we will between those times or after that time.

Deputy S. M. Wickenden:

That does not seem to be a trend really at all.

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

No.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Lorraine, you were here for the earlier hearing, was there anything that Andium Homes said at that hearing that you were particularly interested in and you would like to make any comment on?

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

No, not really, no.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

It was quite positive feedback, obviously they were aware of some of the questions we would like to ask them and they came well prepared. What we will be doing now is monitoring that to see whether they deliver on what they are saying, which will, hopefully, rely a little bit on your associations to help us ascertain whether that has been delivered or not. That is something perhaps for the future. But also at this stage because it kind of brings an end to the more structured questions, unless any of the members of the panel have any other questions? It is an opportunity for you to ask us any questions or present any issues that you feel do exist, so we

have asked some probing questions, is there anything that you would like to add to your contribution today, any concerns you have about how Andium are currently operating?

Chair of High Rise Panel:

The only thing I can say and it may sound as if I am creeping up to Andium all the time but I do find that recently, since Andium became a company in their own right, that they have improved tremendously in their communications and everything else. I do remember in the old times, we are talking back 25 years, and you would go to Housing and you would get a very big rebuff from them: "What the hell do you want and why do you not go home?" Or: "Why do you not go back to where you came from?" That sort of attitude used to be there. It has improved tremendously since then and they seem even better now, I think anyway, since Andium took over.

[16:00]

I think they have got more money to spend and they feel more confident and this is one of the things that can make things happen.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

That is good, excellent.

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

I think as well we do have a community letter that goes out as well to all the residents and that is quite informative. It tells you what the planned maintenance is going to be for the following couple of years maybe and lots of other little bits of information, photographs of the new projects and things. We have tenants put something in that letter as well if they want.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Yes, okay. I am going to go slightly off script here a little bit and nothing to do with the C. & A.G.'s report but, as you probably know, in the U.K. (United Kingdom) it was common practice a few decades ago where one had the right to buy as a tenant of a government-owned building. We do not have that in Jersey at the moment. Do you think there will be any appetite from any of your tenants to have that if it was so desired and capable of being done by Andium Homes?

Chair of High Rise Panel:

I think that would be a very good idea, especially if the price is going to be a lot lower for long-term residents, et cetera, take a scale, yes. I think a lot of people would like to ... especially, shall we say, people who have got younger children growing up and look as if they are going to be stuck in

a flat for ever and ever, if they had a chance to move into a house and it is made easier for them, I think that would be a very good idea.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

It is not part of Andium's business model at the moment.

Chair of High Rise Panel:

No, I know that, yes.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

But a number of politicians have mentioned it in manifestos in recent times. That opportunity to be a home owner is strongly desired by a lot of people and it is quite difficult in Jersey, as we all know.

Chair of High Rise Panel:

In the old days you used to be able to have the States loan on your house, which was a very, very reasonable price and you could buy houses a lot cheaper obviously. A lot of people went that way when they first started and then that disappeared, so that is a shame really in lots of ways.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Yes. Okay, it is interesting to know. As I say, there is a right-to-buy scheme in the U.K., it still exists, there is not one here and if there was a strong appetite for it and it was capable of being progressed under Andium Homes, then that is something which perhaps could be ...

Chair of High Rise Panel:

Does this system work if somebody is already occupying the premises that have been there for some time? They get the opportunity to buy?

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

That is how it works in the U.K., yes.

Chair of High Rise Panel:

Yes.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

There is a downside and that is that if you do not replace those homes with more homes, those that require social housing, that cannot afford to buy that want to rent, you need to replace them. That is unfortunately something that Margaret Thatcher did not do, which is why there is a

shortage of social housing in the U.K. now. It is not all positive but for those that have acquired a house as a result it has been very positive.

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

I think as well the only other downside can be is if you buy your property and then you have got tenants either side of you and it is probably a bit difficult if you have got ...

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Yes. There is a different approach as to how you maybe look after your home, if you own it and you rent it, although there is some evidence ...

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

It does not always happen though.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

Not always but the evidence we have at the moment is that those that are living in social accommodation generally look after it very well and we have certainly had no feedback from Andium Homes that there is a genuine problem with that at all. If it is well looked after by Andium Homes then it is well respected by the tenants. I think that is certainly an important relationship.

Head of Liberation Court Residents' Association:

Some of the estates have had houses that have been bought by people.

Deputy A.D. Lewis:

I think in the past, I am not familiar with the entire history but that may well have been the case. Okay. Yes. Okay, right, thank you very much for coming along today and no doubt when we have compiled our report you are welcome to read it and if you have any further comments we would be very interested in hearing them.

Deputy S. M. Wickenden:

Thank you very much, we appreciate your time and your feedback.

[16:04]