

Overview & Scrutiny

Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission

Hackney Council
Hackney Town Hall
London, E8 1EA

Reply to: Thomas.thorn@hackney.gov.uk

30th August 2019

Cllr Clayeon McKenzie

Cabinet Member for Housing Services

Dear Cllr McKenzie,

1. Introduction

I am writing to you further to the Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission meeting of 15th July. At that meeting, you and Gilbert Stowe (Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services) presented and answered questions in relation to Housing Services' Resident Participation Team. Through the paper provided and the discussion, Members explored the history of the function, the activities delivered, the resources in place, recent successes, and areas for potential improvement moving forward.

The item was timed in order that the Commission could hear about current approaches and give views around possible change, prior to a review of the function taking place over the summer.

I would like to thank both you and the Divisional Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services for engaging in what I thought was a useful and candid discussion.

Members welcomed hearing of the improvement plan which had already emerged from discussions with the Resident Liaison Group. In terms of ensuring that the service is shaped around the needs of all residents, we also support the commitment given to consulting on the review's eventual proposals both with residents who are involved with any formal engagements mechanisms (Tenant and Resident Associations for example), and with those who are not.

We also wish to note the strong and positive work which is already in place, including new initiatives to engage more of our tenants and leaseholders, and the ongoing commitment of staff through a period of change. We hope this letter gives recognition to these aspects whilst also setting out our views around areas for improvement.

The discussion in July also covered points around the management and usage of the Council's Community Halls, an area which also falls within your remit. We see the effective use of Community Halls as a key element of maximising resident participation and engagement. It was therefore right that we explored this element within the wider item above. During the discussion and in a previous item, you have

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shared our concern that our halls are an underused asset. . We know that many residents do also.

We feel action is needed to effectively join up these assets with the community groups / organisations delivering the activities which residents want in their local areas. We see this as helping to deliver greater participation by all.

We appreciate challenges around improving the accessibility of our halls - both in relation to financial pressures and around half of our halls being managed by organisations separate from the Council. However, it was clear there was common agreement on the need for improvement.

2. This letter

The Commission welcomed the point you made at the end of the item around using the contents of the discussion to help further shape and drive improvement in the Residents Participation Team function.

This letter is intended to best enable this by bringing together our findings and recommendations which we ask to help inform the next and later stages of the review. These are set out in section 3..

Section 4 of the letter summarises the discussion around Community Halls in the July meeting, and sets out the key points which we ask are considered in the review.

We ask that a response is provided to this letter by 18th September, which will enable publication of the letter and response in the agenda papers of the meeting on the 30th September.

Following that, we have invited you and the Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services to attend the Commission meeting on the 16th December to give an update on the outcomes from the Resident Participation Team and Community Halls reviews.

Our letter should be reviewed in conjunction with the full (currently draft) record of the discussion which is [available here](#).

3. Findings

3.1 Engagement is everyone's business and responsibility

It is important to note that all areas of Housing Services - and the Council more widely - have a role in achieving strong engagement with tenants and leaseholders.

Among other aspects, good engagement in housing relies on having effective complaints processes in place to ensure that tenants and leaseholders get their issues heard and dealt with, that housing officers and other staff are available and accessible, that policies are fully consulted on, and that our tenants and leaseholders are treated with fairness and respect by all the services they come into contact with. This is in addition to effective measures being in place to support tenant and leaseholder involvement in the planning and shaping of services, in providing challenge to help drive improvement, and in the building of communities.

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Responsibility for the aspects above span many areas of the Council. Delivering them effectively can best address a number of issues identified at national and regional level.

Research informing the Government's '*A new deal for social housing*' included common accounts of people experiencing stigma as residents of social housing, and wanting more accountability from their landlords. An investigation by the London Assembly Housing Committee found many social housing residents (in London) to feel increasingly disconnected from their landlords and find engagement with them frustrating and often difficult.

3.2 However, the dedicated Resident Engagement function has a crucial role in direct engagement and community development, and in enabling engagement by others

The responsibility to ensure effective engagement of the Council's tenants and leaseholders go far wider than the 15 Officer posts within the dedicated Resident Participation function.¹

However, the dedicated function does lead on some of the critical functions around engagement.

This includes establishing and supporting engagement through formal mechanisms; most notably Tenant and Resident Associations, Neighbourhood Panels, the Residents Liaison Group and the Scrutiny Panel. The function also delivers training and general community projects, and manages funds for the delivery of the physical improvements to estates prioritised by tenants and leaseholders, and for the direct delivery of social and community activities by tenants and leaseholders themselves.

As noted by the Divisional Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services, the team also has a role in advising on and enabling the engagement of tenants and leaseholders by wider areas, be those within Housing Services or outside this.

3.3 The Resident Engagement Team is delivering positive outcomes

Through the paper and the discussion, we heard about a range of good outcomes delivered by the function. This includes but is not restricted to:

- Targeting support at estates not represented by Tenant and Resident Associations
- Alongside Housing Officers, providing support to the 79 Tenant and Resident Associations in place in the borough, including in their commissioning of activities for their estates and in their promotion.
- Delivering and supporting activities bringing together old and new residents on regenerated estates

¹ The 15 posts include three posts based within the Communications, Culture and Engagement Division, specifically dedicated specifically to (Hackney Housing) leaseholder and resident engagement

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- Working with Public Health and the community and voluntary sector to deliver health and well being events in community halls and hubs, and the establishment of and delivery of activities for, an Over 55s group.
- Resident Training programme covering a range of areas
- Full allocation of £1.1 million Resident Led Improvement Budget funding in 2018/19, for improvements to communal areas on estates as chosen by residents.

I would add that the service is taking a proactive approach in its delivery of new initiatives.

We heard about the successful delivery of its first large-scale fair event, in Hoxton. The service had achieved a high turnout at this event partly due to the new way it had promoted it. Through the activities put on and by securing the attendance of a number of other areas of the Council, the service had enabled our tenants, leaseholders and others to come together to have a good time and successfully enabled engagement by the Council more widely.

This letter makes recommendations aimed at increasing tenant and leaseholder knowledge of the Resident Led Improvement Fund, and involvement in decisions around its allocations. However, since the point of the meeting we have noted that the service is already seeking new ways of securing greater engagement in this process. Our recommendations seek only to further build on this work.

3.4 A committed group of staff, and impact

We also heard about the commitment of staff to delivering a good service to its tenants and leaseholders. Members of the Commission have seen this commitment on the ground. As one said in the meeting, Resident Engagement Officers regularly attend evening meetings. This is part of the job; residents giving up their own time to attend these meetings need to be supported. However, we appreciate that it is not always easy and it is not something that all other Council Officers are required to do as often.

We also note the impact that their work has; shortly after the meeting we noted from a news article a 40-person trip to Walton-on-the-Naze which the Team organised alongside a Resident Group. We appreciate the work on the ground to deliver these sort of activities.



Residents attending a 40-person trip to Walton-on-the-Naze, organised by Residents Group and Resident Participation Team

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We note the points made in the meeting around the improvements which you and the Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services acknowledged as being required, being achievable by putting in place a more effective structure for Officers to work within. We thank staff for their patience as these changes are delivered.

3.5 Need for improvement

The above said, we were grateful for the acknowledgement of improvements needed. We address these in the sections 3.6 to 3.10. From these, we make 11 recommendations, as detailed below.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1 - That the Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services leads on the development of a Resident Participation Team Service Plan. That this sets out and monitors progress against a set of objectives and success measures, which are informed in part by the discussions in the July meeting (recommendations 2, 4, 6 and 10 cover the measures / aspects which we feel should be added as objectives), and wider consultation with stakeholders

Recommendation 2 - We note from the paper that the service worked to target unrepresented estates with support in 2018/19. We ask that this work continues, with priority given to those estates in neighbourhoods with relatively lower numbers of TRAs (based on both the number of TRAs in the neighbourhood and the numbers of estates/Hackney Housing units). We ask that this planned activity is reflected in the new Service Plan (as per Recommendation 1), with success measures and monitoring against these.

Recommendation 3 - We ask that the update the Commission is due to receive in December provides both the numbers of registered TRAs within each Neighbourhood and also the numbers of Hackney Housing estates and units within each. This will allow the Commission a more informed view on the areas which are relatively higher and lower represented neighbourhoods.

Recommendation 4 - We recommend that the new Service Plan for the Resident Engagement Team (as per Recommendation 1) includes success measures around:

- The scale of engagement and input by tenants and leaseholders in decision-making around RLIB spending (this might include the numbers and percentages attending walkabout sessions and the numbers engaging in online surveys)
- Outcomes achieved through RLIB spending

Recommendation 5 - We recommend that details of improvements delivered by the RLIB are made available on myhackney.org (the site used by the Resident Participation Team to communicate with residents) and are included in wider RLIB communications within an aim of seeking to engage more tenants and leaseholders in the process.

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Recommendation 6 - We recommend that the new Service Plan for the Resident Engagement Team (as per Recommendation 1) includes success measures around:

- Engagement in the CDF (this might include numbers of applications and the number and values of awards)
- Outcomes achieved through CDF funding

Recommendation 7 - We also recommend that details of activities and events delivered through CDF funding are made available on myhackney.org and are included in wider CDF communications within an aim of seeking to engage more tenants and leaseholders in the process.

Recommendation 8 - We ask that the update in December includes confirmation of Community Development Fund budgets for 2019/20, compared to the £342,000 total budget in 2018/19.

Recommendation 9 - We ask that consideration is given to the examples of digital engagement cited in the London Assembly Housing Committee's [Hearing Resident voices in social housing](#) report. We ask for feedback on any planned use of digital platforms for engaging residents on Hackney Housing estates.

Recommendation 10 - We ask that the paper provided for the update in the December meeting reports on what the Service sees as the wider policies and strategies which the Resident Participation Team sees itself as making key contributions to, and what form these contributions will take.

Recommendation 11 - We ask that the that the new Service Plan for the Resident Engagement Team (as per Recommendation 1) draws on the Council's wider policies and strategies and sets out action and success measures around how these will be contributed to.

3.6 Development of a dedicated service plan for Resident Participation Team

In the meeting Members explored ways that the service might set out its aims and objectives, and monitor progress against these. One suggested that the review should result in the service setting out the activities which were currently delivered, and the actions / measures / performance indicators which would be used to report on its delivery going forward.

The Head of was positive around this suggestion, and felt that the views put forward could help inform the development of a work plan defining what the team would seek to deliver over the next few years, and how success would be measured.

Members feel the review of the function does provide an opportunity for a refresh / development of a service plan for the Resident Participation Team. We feel that this

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should be informed by points discussed in the July meeting, and those raised in consultation activity with other stakeholders.

Recommendation 1 - That the Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services leads on the development of a Resident Participation Team Service Plan. That this sets out and monitors progress against a set of objectives and success measures. That the objectives and success measures are informed in part by the discussions in the July meeting (recommendations 2, 4, 6 and 10 cover the specific measures / aspects suggested by the Commission), and the wider consultation with stakeholders which the service confirmed are being carried out.

3.7 Extent and nature of support for formal resident engagement functions

As covered in the discussions, engagement functions including Tenant and Resident Associations, Neighbourhood Panels, Resident Scrutiny Groups and others can play key roles in building a sense of community, providing a collective voice, and in enabling tenants and leaseholders to drive improvement.

However, we also noted the challenges faced by these functions.

Members agreed with you that these more traditional structures are often reliant on our more senior residents being willing to dedicate significant amounts of time to carrying out the range of administrative tasks currently needed to make them operate effectively. Like you, we are hugely grateful to residents for their contributions and leadership in this area. However, we also agreed that the way which Housing Services engaged with residents needs to change in recognition of the increasing time pressure many of us are under.

As I mentioned in the meeting, I have seen some Tenant and Resident Associations in my own Ward struggle and in more than one case fold. This has been partly due to current leading residents not being able to find others with the capacity to share the work with them.

This is not an issue only affecting Hackney; the London Assembly's Housing Committee's '*Hearing resident voices in social housing*' found that active membership of Tenant and Resident Associations appears to have dropped over the last decade. London boroughs and housing associations have commonly reported a decline in numbers and memberships. Some landlords also said that these formal engagement mechanisms do not appeal to everyone on the estate of block, especially young generations who might be unable or unwilling to give over the time to attend meetings.

As covered further down, there is a clear need to engage residents through other channels (and we welcome the work of the service in doing so). However - as was acknowledged in the meeting - improvement is needed to the systems and processes underpinning the formal engagement functions. This will enable those residents who are willing and able to take leadership roles to navigate them as

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seamlessly as possible; using the channels most convenient for them. It will also better ensure that the Officer support is available as required.

We welcomed the Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services' recognition that the online offer of the service needs to be improved, and his aim to achieve a model where those wishing to do so could access all of the Residents Participation Team's functions online. This will be relevant to the formal engagement functions.

On the formal mechanisms specifically, he acknowledged there had been common feedback from TRA Chairs that 'red tape' was preventing them from doing things more quickly and easily. He also confirmed there was a lack of Officer support for the Resident Liaison Group, and the Resident Scrutiny Panel. He said that these functions played an important role in driving service improvement through the challenge they provided, but they needed dedicated support to be fully effective and sustainable. This included support to ensure that succession planning was in place so that new Members joined the functions to replace others standing down wherever possible. We agree with this.

We noted the plan to secure improvement in these areas through clearer lines of accountability being established in the new structure. We heard it was intended that specific roles in the service - post-review - having responsibility to ensure that the processes and procedures in place around Tenant and Resident Associations were effective, that Association Chairs and Members were able to navigate them in the way that suited them, and that there was support available where it was needed. This was in addition to the new structure providing dedicated resources for the Residents Liaison Group and Resident Scrutiny Panel, within a general move from a generic role structure to a specialist one.

We felt this approach to be sensible. We look forward to updates on its implementation and impact.

As a final point on the formal engagement functions, the paper provided for the item showed the spread of current Tenant and Resident Associations to be quite uneven across the 7 Neighbourhood Areas. There were only 8 in place in the Stamford Hill area, compared to 20 in Homerton. Associations in the other neighbourhoods numbered between 11 and 14. Members did not feel that this inconsistency was likely to be solely down to differing volumes of Hackney Housing units / estates within them, although data was not provided to enable a fully informed view of this.

Recommendation 2 - We note from the paper that the service worked to target unrepresented estates with support in 2018/19. We ask that this work continues, with priority given to those estates in neighbourhoods with relatively lower numbers of TRAs (based on both the number of TRAs in the neighbourhood and the numbers of estates/Hackney Housing units). We ask that this planned activity is reflected in the new Service Plan (as per Recommendation 1), with success measures and monitoring in place against these.

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Recommendation 3 - We ask that the update to the Commission in December provides both the numbers of registered TRAs within each Neighbourhood and also the numbers of Hackney Housing estates and units within each. This will allow the Commission a more informed view on the areas which are relatively higher and lower represented neighbourhoods.

3.8 Participation Budgets (Community Development Fund and Resident Led Improvement Budget) - communication, support around applications, public records of activities delivered

The Resident Participation Team leads on the management and allocation of participation budgets for the Council's tenants and leaseholders.

Most notably, these include the Resident Led Improvement Budget, an allocation of funds to each Hackney Housing estate (and street based properties) for improvements to communal areas as prioritised by residents, and the Community Development Fund which tenants and leaseholders can access for the delivery of community development and engagement activities on Hackney Housing estates.

These funds were new for 2018/19, and replaced previous participation budget arrangements. There was an aim of making these funds open to more of our tenants and leaseholders. The Resident Led Improvement Budget is available to all Hackney Housing estates whether or not a Tenant and Resident Association is in place. The Community Development Fund is available to all estates, with a criteria aimed at encouraging applications. We welcome this.

Resident Led Improvement Budget

We welcome the allocation of the full £1.1 million Resident Led Improvement Budget in 2018/19, and this funding level being repeated for 2019/20. This said, Members in the meeting suggested that greater public information might be made available on the outcomes delivered from the funding. They felt this could help the service communicate more widely on the fund in order to seek greater engagement in it.

One Member said that most residents did not know about the fund, nor the estate walkabouts on which decisions around the works were made. The same Member also noted that the walkabouts were not always at the optimal time to allow for greatest involvement, and that whilst residents had the option to request a separate time, many did not do so.

On these points - and since the time of the meeting - we have noted that for 2019/20, views around priorities for RLIB improvements were sought via an online consultation which residents could complete directly or be supported to do so by Housing Officers. This was in addition to the usual measures of writing to all tenants and leaseholders and inviting attendance at estate walkabouts.

The consultation report notes the low response rate - with 213 responses across 17 estates. However, it will still add an additional piece of evidence to that gathered

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through the existing channels. It demonstrates the service working to seek to engage residents in the Resident Led Improvement Budget in new ways, and is something to build upon further. We appreciate and thank Officers for this.

Recommendation 4 - We recommend that the new Service Plan for the Resident Engagement Team (as per Recommendation 1) includes success measures around:

- The scale of engagement and input by tenants and leaseholders in decision-making around RLIB spending (this might include the numbers and percentages attending walkabout sessions and the numbers engaging in online surveys)
- Outcomes achieved through RLIB spending

Recommendation 5 - We recommend that details of improvements delivered by the RLIB are made available on myhackney.org (the site used by the Resident Participation Team to communicate with residents) and are included in wider RLIB communications within an aim of seeking to engage more tenants and leaseholders in the process.

Community Development Fund

As mentioned above, the Community Development Fund replaced a previous budget (the Tenant Levy), and was opened for a wider groups to apply for. We understand that this change was due to the previous fund (which was only open to registered TRAs) having been regularly underspent. We heard that the new fund was designed within a principle that each Hackney Housing estate would be apportioned a notional amount of the fund, which would be allocated following applications from residents and residents groups.

However, the new, more open arrangement, has not been translated into high take up of the fund. Less than a third of the budget for 2018/19 - £95,000 out of £342,000 - was successfully allocated for community events and activities. This was due to a lack of applications. This of course means that our tenants and leaseholders have not benefited from as wider range of social and cultural events as was possible.

To address the continuing issue of low take up of this fund and of its predecessor, the Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services said there was a need for the duty of managing, communicating and supporting applications to this fund being formally incorporated into specific job descriptions. This was within the wider aim of a move to a structure with specialist rather than generic roles.

We heard this would better enable a proactive approach where there was effective publicity to ensure residents were aware of the fund and where the service provided support to parties interested in applying, when this was needed. This would help ensure the fund was used and utilised in the best possible way.

We support this, and agree on the need for full publicity of the fund, on making the application process as seamless and accessible as possible, and on providing

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proactive, positive support to those applying in all cases. As I mentioned in the meeting, a Tenants Residents Association in my Ward has not held events for some time, which leaders have put down to the application process for funding not being as user friendly as it might be.

I also made the suggestion in the meeting that the service might be more proactive in the through the direct delivery of events with any funds which had not been allocated by a specific point of the year.

Also, as local Councillors, many of us are aware of the really valuable contributions of community and voluntary sector to life in the borough, which includes the delivery of events with social aspects. As an example - during the item - one Member noted the weekly event Foodcycle deliver in a Community Hall in the borough, where volunteers cook and serve a three course meal for anyone wishing to attend, and which a wide cross section of the community attend.

Having reflected further, I do see grounds for the service exploring the possibility of releasing unallocated funds at a given point of the year to enable direct delivery of activities by itself, and also to community and voluntary sector organisations for the delivery of events, targeted at our tenants and leaseholders. We ask that this possibility is further explored.

Recommendation 6 - We recommend that the new Service Plan for the Resident Engagement Team (as per Recommendation 1) includes success measures around:

- **Engagement in the CDF (this might include numbers of applications and the number and values of awards)**
- **Outcomes achieved through CDF funding**

Recommendation 7 - We also recommend that details of activities and events delivered through CDF funding are made available on myhackney.org and are included in wider CDF communications within an aim of seeking to engage more tenants and leaseholders in the process.

Recommendation 8 - As a final note, we ask that the update in December includes confirmation of Community Development Fund budgets for 2019/20.

3.9 Engaging residents outside of the formal engagement structures

In the meeting other Members and I made points around the challenge for the service in seeking to secure the involvement of tenants and leaseholders who were not engaged through the more formal structures in place. This was both in terms of involvement in the decisions affecting their areas, and in wider events and activities. This included points around the channels through which this might be best achieved.

One Member noted the role the Council was playing in the direct delivery of intermediate and open market housing, in addition to the building of new homes for

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social rent. They felt that a refreshed approach to resident engagement might explore how the engagement of different residents might be best achieved.

In the discussion, the Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services was in full agreement on the need to contact and engage residents in different ways, and to ensure that all residents were able to interact with his area in the ways which suited them. He acknowledged that up until recently the service had relied on more traditional routes. He confirmed that there was a need to get stronger in the use of platforms including social media and texting.

We heard there was good practice in places; a Senior Housing Officer in one neighbourhood had piloted an initiative where he regularly contacted residents via text messaging. This had delivered good outcomes including a high turnout of residents at a local fair arranged by the service. Feedback gathered from residents on this initiative had been positive. The challenge for him as Head of Service was to ensure that this good practice was rolled out across the borough. The Residents Participation Team would also be expected to play a leading role in identifying and disseminating best practice.

We welcome this work. From this short discussion item we cannot claim to have all the answers on how to engage our residents who are not going down the formal channels. As I said in the meeting, my own view - which the Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services appeared to share - is that more large events like the one at Hoxton might be used to enable tenants and leaseholders to come together and also to formally gather their views towards upcoming decisions.

However, we only ask that the Resident Participation continue to seek to identify and spread good practice examples across its own service and Housing Services generally. This should include learning from other providers. On that point, the [London Assembly Housing Committee](#) report mentioned does share a number of these. This includes the highlighting of a number of digital initiatives delivered by housing providers which have aimed to achieve higher levels of engagement and to provide ways to reach out to residents who might not want to go to or might not feel comfortable in a formal Tenant and Resident Association-type meeting. One of these was the establishment of an online service testing group where 50 residents test new online services, for example. We found these particularly interesting examples and ones which we think the Resident Participation Team might draw from.

This report might also be a useful general reference point from which to look at good practice elsewhere.

Recommendation 9 - We ask that consideration is given to the examples of digital engagement cited in the [London Assembly Housing Committee's Hearing Resident voices in social housing](#) report. We ask for feedback on any planned use of digital platforms for engaging residents on Hackney Housing estates.

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3.10 Room for greater join up between Resident Participation Team and wider services, and role in the delivery of Council policies and strategies

In the discussions, the Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services said he saw room for improvement in the way the service engaged with the wider priorities and commitments of the Council.

We heard the review would seek to place the service on a footing from which it deliver greater brokering of contact between the wider Council and residents, as it had done very successfully with a recent event in Hoxton.

We also heard there was room for improvement in the extent of join up with the wider organisation and its partners, which was partly due to the legacy left by Housing Services having previously been delivered by Hackney Homes as an Arms Length Management Organisation. Reorganisations of other areas of Housing Services since its move back into the Council had succeeded in achieving better join up. However, this was an area for improvement for the Residents Participation function.

We agreed with the Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services that effective join up with other areas could help the Council and its partners meet its objectives.

We also feel that the review of the function provides a timely opportunity for the service to explore and set down the more direct contributions it will make to progressing wider aims and objectives of the Council.

In the meeting a Member noted the wide range of policies and strategies which were in development or had been recently completed; including the Inclusive Economy Strategy, the Arts and Cultural Strategy, and a Green Infrastructure Plan. He felt these were likely to include objectives which the Resident Participation Team could play an important part in engaging with tenants and leaseholders on, and in embedding on our estates and other areas.

As a practical example of this, a Member suggested that wider plans of the Council might include objectives around urban greening (such as greater tree planting, green roofs and walls, and soft landscaping).

He suggested that this might be reflected in a service plan for the Resident Participation Team including aims / actions around aiding projects on estates which would deliver more green areas, and communicating to residents on any funding opportunities around the greening agenda.

Recommendation 10 - We ask that the paper provided for the update in the December meeting reports on what the Service sees as the wider policies and strategies which the Resident Participation Team sees itself as making key contributions to, and what form these contributions will take.

Recommendation 11 - We ask that the that the new Service Plan for the Resident Engagement Team (as per Recommendation 1) draws on the

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Council's wider policies and strategies and sets out action and success measures around how these will be contributed to.

4. Community Halls

We look forward to hearing about the outcomes of the Community Halls review, in the Commission meeting on the 16th December.

The discussion in July concerned fee structures (in terms of the flexibilities in place for community events and activities), the potential for halls to play a part in wider partnership aims (including the delivery of health and social care services at locations close to residents' homes), and on the need for the facilities and offer of the halls to be improved.

We were grateful for the positive responses during the discussions by you and the Head of Tenant and Leasehold Services.

We also note the challenges you face as you work to further improve accessibility, use and quality of community halls.

We know action has already been taken including reduced and waived fee rates being made available in some cases. We are aware that Housing Services are required to deliver substantial savings (our April meeting heard that this totalled £4.5 million over the near term), and also that running costs of our halls are increasing. We also note the additional complexity brought by around half of our halls being managed directly by TRAs or TMOs.

This said, we were encouraged by there being common agreement on the need for further improvement, and on the review which has been initiated.

We ask that the Community Halls review gives consideration to the points below:

- How Community Halls will play a role in the delivery of Council and partnership priorities
- How the visibility and accessibility of Community Halls (both those run by the Council and TRAs/TMOs) to community groups and organisations delivering activities will be improved
- How the split between Council-run and TRA and TMO-managed Community Halls will be managed to ensure effective use in all cases, including:
 - Any role for the Council in supporting wider use of all Council-owned Community Halls
 - Any measures to ensure equality of access to all Council Community Halls for all residents
 - How the use of all Halls will be evaluated on an ongoing basis

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5. Final comments

I hope that this aids yourself and Officers in helping to deliver the improvements to the resident engagement function which you acknowledged as being required. We also hope that it will provide some useful input into the Community Halls review.

We look forward to receiving your response to the Commission's recommendations. We would be very grateful to receive this by 18th September 2019. We also look forward to your attendance at the Commission on the 16th December 2019 to present on the outcomes of the Resident Participation Team and Community Halls reviews.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sharon Patrick', written in a cursive style.

Cllr Sharon Patrick
Chair, Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission