

## Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission

20th April 2023

### Report of Members' Focus Group with Residents Affected by Estate Regeneration Schemes

Members held an online focus group with residents affected by estate regeneration schemes in the evening of Thursday 13th April 2023.

The aim of the focus group was to hear from residents living in council managed estates that have been affected by estate regeneration schemes to understand their experiences of resident engagement and what they may like to see happen additionally or differently in the future.

The focus group was attended by Members of the Commission and eight residents from across Colville, Kings Crescent, Woodberry Down and Regents Court Estates.

Insights from the focus group are summarised below.

#### Has the Council been open and transparent with you from the beginning about the proposals and clearly explained how they will affect you and your neighbours?

- Some residents felt that the aims of regeneration were not made clear at the beginning of the process, and some expressed a desire for officers to provide a better understanding of the potential benefits and for whom they apply to at an earlier stage.
- There was also a desire for officers to be more realistic and help residents understand what some of the potential negative impacts might be, for example disruption, lengthy regeneration timescales, and the likelihood of significant changes to proposals/deviation from earlier promises.
- Some residents felt that there was a lack of appreciation from officers that regeneration schemes were dealing with people's homes and communities, and as such should be dealt with in a way which treats residents as experts.
- Some residents felt that officers could be more proactive in sharing best practice and bringing residents across regeneration estates together so that they are aware of what is being offered across the borough and what is possible or not possible.
- There was a feeling that a more consistent approach to estate regeneration was needed, and for any deviation to this end to be clearly communicated to residents - for example in relation to split household provision.

#### Has the Council given you opportunities to have your say on the proposals and design of new homes, and has the Council acted on your feedback and told you what has changed?

- Active members of tenant/resident organisations felt that they were able to make genuine inputs into the planning process, and access to support networks and

professional advice such as Independent Residents' Advisors were particularly useful to this end.

- Some residents felt that consultation was at times tokenistic, that there were no guarantees that their views would be validated or taken forward, and that engaging would not always make a difference.
- There was some feeling that residents tend to only be involved at the end of the policy cycle, when major decisions have already been made, limiting their influence. Others felt that suggestions take a long time to be acted on, and that there was little sense of urgency.
- Some residents felt that the engagement methods used were not suitable for all residents, and that a mixed approach to engagement was needed (for example regular in-person meetings, regular newsletters and regular digital communications e.g. emails, websites, social channels) and that these methods should be applied consistently across all regeneration estates.

#### Has the Council kept you informed and updated about the progress of the proposals?

- Some residents felt that meetings were held at inconvenient times. It was felt by some that residents need to be engaged at their convenience, need to be allowed to submit views in a way that suits them, and information needed to be made available quickly, simply and in a shareable format.
- For some residents the high turnover in regeneration officers made it difficult to keep an ongoing dialogue open about key issues arising throughout the various stages of regeneration. For some, promises and expectations were set by previous officers but not followed through by those that took their place.
- Some felt that they needed to be proactive in seeking updates for themselves, that there was a lack of ongoing information provided and accessible points of communication for residents to be easily updated or raise issues.
- Some felt that there was a lack of joined up working and communication between various council departments and contractors, which leads to residents not getting timely answers to their questions or concerns and issues not being quickly acted upon.
- Residents appreciated the role of housing officers in advocating for residents, and felt that they were visible and active on estates. However, some felt that they were under-resourced and at times unable to deal with all concerns and issues raised by residents.

#### Has the Council supported community cohesion and integration on your estate through ongoing engagement activity?

- Most residents had concerns around the changing social dynamics on regeneration estates and community cohesion and integration. Some had experienced tensions between long standing and newer residents, especially in communities where there is a wide inequality gap.
- Some felt there was a lack of appreciation for the time and effort residents put into facilitating community integration themselves, and that a more concerted effort was needed to proactively take steps to socially integrate new residents into the community.

- Equitable access to estate facilities and services was highlighted as an issue for some, especially as regeneration estates have moved towards more mixed provision. In some cases access to facilities and services is perceived to favour one group over another, and as a result resentment can grow.

### **Officer Contact**

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