

London Borough of Hackney  
Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission  
Municipal Year 2022/23  
Thursday 20 April 2023

Minutes of the proceedings of  
the Living in Hackney Scrutiny  
Commission held at  
Hackney Town Hall, Mare  
Street, London E8 1EA

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<b>Chair:</b>	<b>Councillor Soraya Adejare</b>
<b>Councillors in Attendance:</b>	<b>Cllr M Can Ozsen, Cllr Ian Rathbone, Cllr Penny Wrout, Cllr Clare Joseph (Vice-Chair), Cllr Joseph Ogundemuren, Cllr Sam Pallis, Cllr Ali Sadek and Cllr Zoe Garbett</b>
<b>Apologies:</b>	<b>Cllr Sarah Young</b>
<b>Officers In Attendance:</b>	<b>Rachel Bagenal (Strategic Head of Housing Regeneration and Delivery)</b>
<b>Other People in Attendance:</b>	<b>Cllr Guy Nicholson (Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Delivery, Inclusive Economy and Regeneration) and Paul Watt (Professor of Urban Studies, Birkbeck University)</b>
<b>People in Virtual Attendance:</b>	<b>Steve Webster (Resident Liaison Group Co-Chair)</b>
<b>Officer Contact:</b>	<b>Craig Player</b>  020 8356 4316  craig.player@hackney.gov.uk

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## **Councillor Soraya Adejare in the Chair**

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

1.1 The Chair updated those in attendance on the meeting etiquette and that the meeting was being recorded and livestreamed.

1.2 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Young.

### **2 Urgent Items / Order of Business**

2.1 There were no urgent items, and the order of business was as set out in the agenda.

### **3 Declaration of Interest**

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

## 4 Resident Engagement for Estate Regeneration Schemes

4.1 The Chair opened the discussion by outlining that estate regeneration could offer existing tenants better homes, more new and affordable housing, and improvements to the local environment. However, when residents were not at the heart of proposals, it could leave residents feeling like they were properly consulted, social housing being lost, and displaces tenants and leaseholders getting a bad deal.

4.2 The Chair explained that the Commission saw this discussion as timely due to the Council's ambitious programme of estate regeneration which were at various stages of delivery, the recent publication of the Housing Services Resident Engagement Strategy, and the ongoing refresh of the Housing Strategy.

4.3 As part of the scrutiny process, Members held a focus group to hear from residents living in council managed estates that had been affected by estate regeneration schemes. This helped Members to understand residents' experiences of engagement, and what they may like to see happen additionally or differently in the future.

### 4.4 Representing London Borough of Hackney

- Councillor Guy Nicholson, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Delivery, Inclusive Economy and Regeneration
- Rachel Bagenal, Strategic Head of Housing Regeneration and Delivery
- Hermoine Brightwell, Project Manager Woodberry Down Estate

### 4.5 External Guest(s)

- Paul Watt, Professor of Urban Studies, Birkbeck University

4.6 The Chair invited the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Delivery, Inclusive Economy and Regeneration and the Strategic Head of Housing Regeneration and Delivery to give a short verbal presentation. The main points are highlighted below.

4.7 The Council's approach to resident engagement for estate regeneration schemes had evolved over the last decade, and whilst more could always be done to improve the approach, it was a culmination of years of engagement experience.

4.8 The Council was undertaking a programme of over 3,400 Council-led homes across more than 30 sites, alongside partnerships such as Woodberry Down. 1,984 new homes had started construction, completed or received planning permission between May 2018 and May 2022.

4.9 These homes were a mix of large and small brownfield sites, including estate regeneration and infill development. The programme would be funded through social rent, shared ownership, Hackney Living Rent and outright sales, and there were plans for 1,000 new Council rent homes by 2026.

4.10 The programme had four overarching commitments. These commitments set out that estate regeneration should be:

- Not for profit, with homes being built for outright sale to pay for social housing

- Council-led, without private developers or by selling off land and would make the most of the land available
- First dibs for local people, with a right to return for existing residents and local letting policies
- Collaborative, with local people would be at the heart of proposals.

4.11 The Council's consultation principles were informed by the Residents' Charter and Resident Engagement Strategy. These set out that consultation should be:

- Timely, allowing maximum time for engagement
- Meaningful, ensuring input informs changes
- inclusive , including under-represented groups
- Direct, working directly with residents
- Collaborative, giving community members a leading role.

4.12 One case study was Colville Estate. Engagement included the establishment of a Resident Steering Group, which held monthly meetings on areas such as developing and agreeing the brief for the new community centre, and Independent Tenants and Leaseholder Advisors who provided support and advice to individual residents and the Steering Group.

4.13 Consultation had been undertaken with residents to be allocated new homes on internal layouts, windows and balconies through surveys, workshops and in-person exhibitions, with estate wide consultation on public realm and landscape proposals.

4.14 Another case study was De Beauvoir Estate. Pre-pandemic engagement involved in-person consultations, workshops, door-knocking sessions and youth engagement. During lockdown this was moved to online consultation events, a dedicated consultation phone line, printed material and 1,300 e-newsletter subscribers.

4.15 A Resident Steering Group had been established to involve residents in the design proposals, and Independent Tenants and Leaseholder Advisors provided impartial support and advice.

4.16 The New Homes Programme provided another case study. This involved 15 council-owned sites to help towards building 1,000 new Council homes for social rent, in particular the repurposing of underused land without demolishing homes and direct Council investments to build 75% for social rent.

4.17 Early engagement had included a borough-wide survey to inform the choice of suitable locations and engagement before any design work had begun, and an online survey and in-person engagement which had received 445 written responses. Next steps for the programme included ongoing engagement throughout the design process and collaboration with local residents for new developments.

4.18 The final case study was Woodberry Down Estate. A number of commitments were made to residents, including a direct move to new social rent homes for every Council tenant, shared equity and ownership offers for freeholders and leaseholders, and community facilities and social infrastructure to bring new and old residents together.

4.19 The local community was a formal regeneration partner through the Woodberry Down Community Organisation (WDCO). Residents had been extensively engaged with on the masterplan, design of each phase and rehousing processes through resident drop-ins, neighbourhood office, translation services, Independent Tenants and Leaseholder Advisors (IRAs) and fun days.

4.20 The Chair then invited the Professor of Urban Studies, Birkbeck University to give a short verbal presentation. The main points are highlighted below.

4.21 Estate regeneration, especially that which involved demolition and rebuilding, was often advertised as a win-win policy for all involved, which would solve existing problems quickly and would not generate further problems.

4.22 Demolishing and rebuilding existing estates should be considered the last regeneration option due to the extended time involved, complexity of the process, expense, disruption to existing communities, displacement and gentrification effects and negative environmental effects.

4.23 Some of the issues encountered by residents in the consultation process for estate regeneration schemes included unclear regeneration aims, lack of detailed information, meetings not being held at convenient times, unclear consultation formats and a high turnover of regeneration personnel (both in terms of officers and councillors).

4.24 Woodberry Down Estate was an example of where consultation had largely been positive and well received by residents. Reasons for this included there being active members of WDCO who made genuine inputs into the planning process, the long-term employment of IRAs and on-site offices for WDCO and IRAs.

4.25 Some of the problems faced by temporary tenants on estates undergoing regeneration included poor housing conditions, repairs and maintenance problems, a lack of knowledge of the local area, difficulties in socially integrating and a lack of clarity in terms of how long they may be on the estate and their rehousing status.

4.26 Suggestions for how the consultation process may be improved going forward included rebuilding trust through an efficient maintenance and repairs service, appreciating that you are dealing with people's homes and communities, moving away from merely consulting residents to treating them as experts through a dialogic form of participation, and supporting consultation groups such as WDCO.

4.27 Other suggestions included ensuring there was clarity regarding the purpose of regeneration, for example through specifying what the aims and potential benefits would be and for whom, being realistic, and acknowledging potential problems and rehousing may give rise to such as disruption, lengthy regeneration processes and changes to aims and schemes.

4.28 Suggestions for how the approach to temporary tenants of estates affected by regeneration schemes may be improved included ensuring properties were of a decent standard when temporary tenants move in, providing funding to assist with fixtures and fittings, taking steps to socially integrate temporary tenants into estates, ensuring an effective repairs and maintenance service and clarifying and updating their housing status.

Questions, Answers and Discussion

4.29 *The Resident Liaison Group Co-Chair asked how the Council ensured residents were given the opportunity to have their say on proposals, and that their views and concerns were listened to and acted on.*

4.30 The Strategic Head of Housing Regeneration and Delivery explained that the Council tried to be as clear as possible at the beginning of the regeneration process about what residents could influence. For example, the Council would give residents the opportunity to have their say on proposals and the design of new homes, and would act on their feedback and tell them what had changed.

4.31 The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Delivery, Inclusive Economy and Regeneration added that the Council remained committed to coproduction and holding meaningful engagement on estate regeneration proposals.

4.32 Woodberry Down Estate presented a good example of this, whereby residents and community groups worked closely with the Council and its partners, such as commercial developers, to influence proposals and design new homes, and ensure regular communication about plans.

4.33 The Professor of Urban Studies, University of Birckbeck added that the approach that residents seemed most amenable to in his research was one where residents were meaningfully involved from the outset in shaping proposals and designs, and where developers were honest about the potential challenges that lay ahead.

4.32 The Project Manager Woodberry Down Estate explained that residents were involved in the Woodberry Down Estate regeneration process in a number of ways, including extensive engagement on the masterplan, design and rehousing through numerous working groups and a design committee.

4.33 Topics engaged on ranged from housing management issues through to more strategic issues such as on new community spaces and the design of new homes. A core principle of this engagement had been to act on feedback and tell residents what had changed.

4.34 *A Commission Member asked for more information on local lettings policies for estate regeneration schemes, for example those developed for Woodberry Down Estate and Colville Estate.*

4.35 The Strategic Head of Housing Regeneration and Delivery explained local letting policies were put in place to give priority to local residents, recognising the disruption that demolition and construction brings. Further written information would be provided to Members following the meeting.

4.35 *A Commission Member asked how the Council measured the success and impact of estate regeneration schemes and various approaches to resident engagement.*

4.36 The Strategic Head of Housing Regeneration and Delivery explained that the Council was currently looking at the ways in which it measured the success of estate regeneration schemes and their impact on residents' lives.

4.37 The Council recognised that measuring success and impact was not just about whether or not residents liked the design of new homes, but also about the longer-term outcomes of regeneration such as economic opportunities, health and wellbeing and access to green and open spaces.

4.38 The Professor of Urban Studies, University of Birckbeck added that it was important that the negative impacts of regeneration were measured and monitored, particularly when demolition was involved, such as disruption to the existing community, displacement effects and negative environmental effects.

*4.39 A Commission Member followed up by asking what the alternatives to the demolition of homes for estate regeneration schemes were, especially in light of the ongoing need for housing in London.*

4.40 The Professor of Urban Studies, University of Birckbeck explained that each borough had its own challenges when it came to housing and the land available to it. Whilst it was recognised that in some circumstances demolition was necessary, it should be the very last regeneration option and refurbishment and infill were preferable alternatives.

4.41 The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Delivery, Inclusive Economy and Regeneration added that the Council was committed to building new homes across the borough, and in particular building or supporting partners to build new social homes.

4.42 If refurbishment was considered a more suitable way forward rather than demolition then that would be prioritised, and there were a number of examples of regeneration across Hackney in which existing homes were being refurbished alongside the building of additional homes.

*4.43 A Commission Member asked what the Council did to ensure that engagement over the course of a regeneration scheme, which could last many years, was maintained and meaningful, and how it dealt with turnover of regeneration personnel.*

4.44 The Strategic Head of Housing Regeneration and Delivery explained that the Council had adopted a residents charter which set out the promises the Council makes to residents, and the rights and guarantees they were entitled to if new homes were built in the area they live. In some cases, bespoke resident charters were adopted in local areas - such as with the Tower Court Estate regeneration project.

4.45 In terms of turnover of regeneration personnel, it was recognised that officers would change over the course of a regeneration scheme - especially those that last an extended period of time.

4.46 One way in which the Council was looking to mitigate the impact of staff turnover was by moving to an area based staffing model. This involved teams of officers which would be responsible for projects within a specific area, allowing them to build specific knowledge of a local area and build meaningful relationships with residents.

*4.47 A Commission Member followed up by asking how transparent the Council was in explaining how long an estate regeneration project would take to residents and stakeholders.*

4.48 The Strategic Head of Housing Regeneration and Delivery explained that whilst the Council tried to be open and honest when discussing potential timelines with residents, it was difficult to predict exactly how long it would take and the potential challenges which may be faced along the way - especially with more ambitious regeneration projects. For example, volatility in the construction and housing sectors may cause delays for the Council.

4.49 The Council aimed to regularly communicate with residents about plans in a clear, accessible and transparent way, and keep residents informed and updated about the progress of proposals.

4.50 The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Delivery, Inclusive Economy and Regeneration gave an example of residents in Kings Park who were waiting for new homes that were not delivered until three years later than planned due to the pandemic. Whilst this was frustrating for residents, the positive relationships the Council had built with them and constant communication meant that residents were more understanding.

4.51 The Professor of Urban Studies, University of Birckbeck added that it was important to be open and honest with residents from the very beginning, and acknowledge the potential problems regeneration may give rise to such as it taking an extended period of time to complete and the aims of programmes changing over time.

*4.52 A Commission Member asked how the Council ensured it communicated with residents about estate regeneration plans in a clear, accessible and transparent way, and how residents were supported to find out more detailed information easily.*

4.53 The Strategic Head of Housing Regeneration and Delivery explained that the Council communicated with residents throughout the regeneration process in a clear and easy to understand way.

4.54 In practice this meant ensuring residents did not receive huge amounts of technical information full of jargon, but easy to digest information which covered all the details which were important to residents.

4.55 The Council also ran workshops and drop-ins with residents which gave them an opportunity to talk through any proposals in person, and to ensure they understand the plans for their local area, and translation services were also made available for residents who may need them.

*4.56 A Commission Member asked how much of a leading role residents and stakeholders were afforded in the design and development of estate regeneration schemes.*

4.57 The Strategic Head of Housing Regeneration and Delivery explained that Resident Steering Groups were key to ensuring that residents took a leading role in developing proposals and designs.

4.58 For example, on the Colville Estate the Resident Steering Group met monthly with design teams to put residents' views at the heart of proposals, and ongoing engagement was prioritised throughout the design process through workshops and ongoing communication.

4.59 *A Commission Member asked how the Council planned to approach resident engagement for the new programme of council homes which focused on smaller regeneration projects on underused land.*

4.60 The Strategic Head of Housing Regeneration and Delivery explained that the Council recognised that the engagement approach for these schemes may be different from larger schemes. The focus would need to be on how the Council can demonstrate that those residents disrupted by these schemes would get something meaningful in return, such as public realm improvements and access to community facilities.

4.61 *A Commission Member asked for more information on the role of Housing Officers on estates affected by regeneration schemes, and whether there was scope to enhance their roles and increase the face-to-face support they provide to residents.*

4.62 The Strategic Head of Housing Regeneration and Delivery recognised the important role that Housing Officers played on council-managed estates, especially in terms of keeping residents up-to-date with estate-based improvements and works.

4.63 The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Delivery, Inclusive Economy and Regeneration added that the role of Housing Officers focused largely on housing maintenance and management, and that a move to treating estates more holistically would be welcomed, particularly in ensuring more joined up working between regeneration and housing services.

4.64 *A Commission Member asked how the Council engaged with diverse groups who may not usually participate in traditional forms of engagement, such as young people and those from Global Majority backgrounds, and those that may not be directly impacted by proposals but live or work nearby.*

4.65 The Strategic Head of Housing Regeneration and Delivery explained that the Council thought carefully about who it would like to reach when engaging with the public on proposals for estate regeneration schemes. This meant that it did not engage only with those on the estate, but also those in neighbouring areas that may be affected.

4.66 It was acknowledged that the Council did not currently record who attended engagement meetings and activities, and had not undertaken any research into who may be more likely to engage with traditional methods.

4.67 The Council did engage with young people with a particular emphasis on the things that would interest them, but there was perhaps more to be done to utilise the views of young people who may grow up throughout the regeneration scheme and develop a longer-term view of the process.

4.68 *A Commission Member asked what the Council did to ensure social cohesion and integration on estates affected by regeneration schemes, and in particular how it ensured parity of access to those facilities provided as part of the regeneration process.*

4.69 The Strategic Head of Housing Regeneration and Delivery explained that each estate which had undergone a regeneration scheme was mixed tenure, which aimed



to create communities of residents with a mix of income levels and facilitate social interaction and cohesion.

4.70 The Professor of Urban Studies, University of Birkbeck added that in his experience mixed-tenure estates often did not lead to greater social cohesion or mixing. In reality there were significant societal differences between many of the people living on these estates that were difficult to overcome and build a sense of community.

4.71 The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Delivery, Inclusive Economy and Regeneration added that the engagement and co-production was particularly important when developing proposals for community spaces, and ensuring they were designed and delivered in a way which was accessible to all tenures.

4.72 A Commission Member asked how the Council promoted engagement activity that strengthens community cohesion and resilience on estates affected by regeneration schemes.

4.73 The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Delivery, Inclusive Economy and Regeneration explained that engagement activity that strengthens housing communities were led by Housing Services. The transition from engaging with regeneration to housing management was crucial, and it was important that the services worked together to manage the transition closely and ensure there were no barriers for residents.

4.74 *A Commission Member asked whether affordable accommodation for key workers was provided by the Council through its estate regeneration schemes.*

4.75 The Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Delivery, Inclusive Economy and Regeneration pointed out that the Council provided some homes through Hackney Living Rent, which was set at around a third of average local incomes with homes let and managed by the Council. One example of this was at Gooch House in Clapton, in which 16 bedsits were refurbished into Hackney Living Rent homes.

### Summing Up

4.76 The Chair thanked Commission Members for their questions and all witnesses for their responses and engagement with the scrutiny process.

4.77 It was explained that, after the meeting, the Commission would reflect on the evidence heard and may make suggestions or recommendations for improvement for consideration.

## **5 Minutes of the Meeting**

5.1 The draft minutes of the previous meeting held on 22nd March 2023 were presented.

5.2 Members agreed the draft minutes as an accurate record.

## **6 Living in Hackney Work Programme 2022/23**

6.1 The Chair referred to the Commission's work programme and highlighted the discussion items planned for the remainder of the municipal year.

6.2 The Chair then thanked all Commission Members for their hard work over the course of the municipal year and highlighted some of the key areas of work it had undertaken.

6.3 The Commission had looked at a number of topics relating to registered social landlords in Hackney (including the Council), which included reviewing progress against the implementation of the Charter for Social Housing Residents, and exploring particular issues of local concern such as nominations and lettings, tenancy sustainment, repairs, complaints, safety and resident engagement. It would be looking to finalise its findings and recommendations for this piece of work over the coming weeks.

6.4 It also looked at the partnership approach to the policing of drug use in Hackney, and in particular how effective this approach has been, how consistently it is used across our communities, and the impact it has had on residents. Again, it would be looking to finalise its findings and recommendations from this piece of work over the next few weeks.

6.5 The Commission reviewed the progress of the Council and its partners in advancing equality, diversity and inclusion in the arts and culture sector, bringing together a number of key stakeholders to understand their views and perspectives, especially in light of the pandemic and ongoing cost of living crisis.

6.6 The Chair reminded Members that the joint meeting with the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission to review the coordinated partnership response to the concerns raised by the Child Q incident would be held on Tuesday 25th April 2023.

## **7 Any Other Business**

7.1 None.

Duration of the meeting: 7pm – 9pm