

## **Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission**

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission held on Wednesday 15 December 2021 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

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**PRESENT:** Councillor Gavin Edwards (Chair)  
Councillor Damian O'Brien (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Jon Hartley  
Councillor Sunny Lambe  
Councillor Richard Livingstone  
Councillor Jane Salmon (Co-opted member)  
Bassey Bassey (Co-opted member)  
Cris Claridge (Co-opted member)

**OTHER  
MEMBERS  
PRESENT:** Councillor Stephanie Cryan

**OFFICER  
SUPPORT:** Amit Alva, Scrutiny Officer

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Renata Hamvas, Ina Negoita (Co-opted member) and Officer Stuart Davies.

### **2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT.**

There were no items of business which the Chair deemed urgent.

### **3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS.**

There were no disclosure of interests or dispensations.

### **4. MINUTES**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2021 be agreed as a correct record.

### **5. NEW COUNCIL HOMES ON EXISTING ESTATES - CASE STUDY 2 - KINGSTON ESTATE**

The commission then heard from Councillor Stephanie Cryan, Cabinet Member for Council Homes and Homelessness, Lorraine Roach, Development Manager and Tim Bostridge, Head of Development, Housing and Modernisation on New council homes on existing estates, as a case study on Kingston Estate.

Councillor Cryan, Tim and Lorraine addressed the commission on the following points

- Issues with engagement as the Tenants and Residents Association for the Kingston estate involved two other estates Portland and Nelson and was not located in close proximity to the Kingston estate.
- Lack of resident attendance at project groups and also later officers being unable to engage due to pandemic restrictions.
- Misleading information spread in the community due to lack of in person engagement by officer and councillors due to the pandemic, causing residents to be against building new homes.
- Engagement efforts by officers through pop up signboards, flyers, newsletters and holding open air events.
- Pre-existing issues within the community of anti-social behaviour not addressed by the Council leading to mistrust with the residents.
- Project team looking to convert vacant commercial properties into residential properties.

The commission then had discussions around the following themes

- Early engagement with residents and resident representative (advisor) participation in project steering groups
- Lessons learned especially the need for more in-depth consultation such as door to door knocking and non-digital modes of consultation.
- Consultation with informal community groups having strong concerns, where there is also a possibility of forming a TRA with the support of the community engagement team.

Tim and Lorraine then answered the commission's questions on

- Effectiveness of the community engagement team to carry out consultations in the absence of a TRA
- Kingston estate new homes project progressing to planning stages in spite of objections from residents
- Monitoring the implementation of consultation processes and guidelines in the community.

The commission heard from officers that during consultation on Kingston estate regular communication through newsletters, communication boards and leaflets was carried out. All communications to residents had information on the commonplace website including letters posted to residents. Issues were raised by residents only at the planning application stages hence the project could not be paused by then to address these concerns. Project managers in the new homes development team have rigid process to follow during the phases of a project, consultation processes have different levels of progress, template newsletters have to be approved by Head of Service and Ward Councillors before they are sent out, these factors make it highly unlikely that processes were not followed.

The commission then heard from Liba a resident of neighbouring the Kingston estate on issues faced by residents on Kingston estate. Residents only became aware of the development when drilling for soil samples to ascertain building suitability commenced. Although building over garages was an option the proposal was for new homes to be built on green space which is quite limited and shared by 88 families in the estate unlike affluent areas with private gardens. A resident petition was signed to not build on green spaces which was rejected, 97% of residents also signed a petition to stop the infill due to space constraints between buildings.

The commission then had discussions around the following points

- The housing needs, especially the 16,000 people on the waiting list in the borough as a result of families living in small and inadequate properties, moving house due to medical needs and people fleeing due to domestic abuse
- Anti-social behaviour and security issues at Kingston estate
- Council's commitment to biodiversity and creating additional green spaces and allotments
- Digital consultation issues and alternative means such as an independent tenants and residents advisor.
- Planning policies and regulations on the Kingston estate development being outside the remit and powers of this commission.

The Chair and the commission members agreed to invite residents of the Kingston estate to attend the commission's 7 February 2022 meeting to gain further insight into matters of consultation.

## **6. IMPACT OF FIRE SAFETY ACT AND THE BUILDING SAFETY BILL UPON THE HRA AND LEASEHOLDERS**

The commission received a report from David Hodgson, Director of Asset Management and Ian Young, Departmental Finance Manager, Housing and Modernisation on the Impact of Fire Safety Act and the Building Safety bill upon the HRA and leaseholders.

The commission heard from officers around the following themes

- Building Safety Bill post Grenfell enquiry brought 170 Southwark buildings in scope for building safety plans having a significant financial impact of £7m
- Interim resources of officers from across the Council under the strategic board and director are working on a number of work streams to delivery building safety plans
- Partnership Board involving London Fire Brigade, Ministry for Building Safety and Communities and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
- Financial report containing other associated costs of staffing, building safety managers, building control costs, data warehousing, maintenance and upskills training
- Budget commitment of £7.1 billion in staffing costs some of which will be through capital funding, however consequently this will have an impact on the much needed investment programmes for new homes, district heating and climate change initiatives which will in turn lead to higher HRA borrowing
- The 170 buildings in scope in Southwark do not have Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding in the external walls and any areas that need remediation will be charged back to the contractors, however funding is still required to ensure all other building safety regulations are met in the new plans

Councillor Cryan explained to the commission on the need for political representation in the Building Safety Board that the board is in its initial stages of learning technical and legal aspects, the idea is to have more insight into the bill before appointing councillors to the board.

The commission then asked questions on the following topics

- Learnings from previous fires and fire risk assessments such as the fire at Lakanal
- Financial support for leasehold charges and external contracting work for fire and building safety

The commission learnt that lessons have been learned from previous fires on procurement, supply chain, performance specification and products, however with the new Building Safety Bill competency and skills training are the biggest challenges. Some lobbying with Central Government is required to gain financial

support from the Treasury. The commission also discussed the Fire Safety Audit of buildings, its outcomes, remedial measures and also its cost implications. Leasehold charges will be applied on a case by case basis after determination of needed remedial measures and whether it is the contractor's responsibility or the Council's.

**7. CABINET RESPONSE TO THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMISSION: ESTATE CLEANING SERVICES AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR TO SOUTHWARK ESTATES**

The Cabinet response was noted by the commission.

**8. CABINET RESPONSE TO THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMISSION: REVIEW OF COMMUNITY HUBS**

The Cabinet response was noted by the commission.

**9. WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22**

The work programme was noted by the commission.

Meeting ended at 9:17 pm.

**CHAIR:**

**DATED:**