



Housing Scrutiny Commission

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the Housing Scrutiny Commission held on Tuesday 14 October 2025 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G01, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

PRESENT: Councillor Jason Ochere (Chair)
Councillor Catherine Rose
Councillor Jane Salmon
Ina Negoita (Co-opted Member)
Althea Smith (Co-opted Member)

OFFICER Adam Wood
SUPPORT:

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tester, Councillor Hargrove, Councillor Harper and Councillor Livingstone.

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

There were no late items of business.

3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

Ina Negoita declared an interest in item 4 (the Minutes) as they contained information relating to an estate where Ms Negoita was a resident leaseholder.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2025 were approved as a correct record.

5. GOOD LANDLORD PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE

The Chair invited officers and the Cabinet Member, Councillor Michael Situ, to relay progress on the Good Landlord Plan.

Councillor Situ started by outlining the background to the Good Landlord Plan, from the Council's self-referral to the Regulator for Social Housing in June 2024 to a planned inspection by the Regulator and announcement of a C3 judgement in November 2024. The Plan was developed as the Council's response to the Regulator's concerns and to wider issues raised by residents and Councillors.

Ryan Collymore, Director of Repairs and Maintenance, then updated the Commission on the Plan's progress within his areas of responsibility, reporting that:

- good progress had been made on electrical testing compliance and smoke alarm compliance
- the stock condition survey started at the end of September and was progressing well
- Plentific – a system for sub-contractor procurement and management was expected to go live later in October or in early November – helping with managing resource externally and in-house

Abi Oguntokun, Director of Landlord Services (Acting), provided the Commission with developments on:

- estate surgeries and particularly regarding increasing the visibility of officers on estates
- moves to broaden the location of surgeries, using libraries and leisure centres in addition to estates
- revised Anti-Social Behaviour procedures in response to resident feedback
- work and training to improve relationships with residents
- the backlog on housing complaints, now cleared, and reduction in number of complaints
- Bournemouth Road in-person assistance being behind schedule but with alternative arrangements in place
- providing online breakdowns of service charges for leaseholders
- increased information-provision including the annual report on Housing performance and tenant satisfaction measures
- the resident engagement strategy which has been revised and scheduled for Cabinet review in December

Stuart Davis, Director of New Homes, reported:

- the Council's ongoing commitment to delivering new council homes

- the first tranche of new homes (2,500) would be nearing completion by April 2026
- work had started on 700 of the 1,000 homes in the second tranche

The Chair then invited Commission members to ask questions. These included:

- understanding how the Council intended to help leaseholders and others blocked from selling or buying because the compliance documentation (e.g. EWS1 and “letters of comfort”) for properties in buildings over 5 stories was not available
- what percentage of the backlog of complaints had been dealt with
- how residents and leaseholders would receive training without the training officers previously provided
- the availability of alternatives to Bournemouth Road for housing enquiry appointments
- when every home would have up-to-date electrical certification and fire alarms
- how much of the HRA (Housing Revenue Account) has been used to fund compliance work
- how the new IT systems would deliver better outcomes and not just more bureaucracy
- how residents could trust the Good Landlord Plan while the Council’s performance as a landlord was judged to be poor
- how and when resident surgeries would take place and fit with wider engagement activities
- whether TRA groups and residents could create their own surgeries with ward councillors and with officer support
- the assistance available for staff to clear their workloads and to feel supported
- how Stock Condition Survey was tracking against its target of 40% by March 2026
- performance data for Damp and Mould responses and preventative measures to reduce incidences over the coming winter period
- whether, for security, RSOs (Resident Services Officers) could work in pairs at the monthly on-site meetings
- the means to penalise contractors for non-compliance
- whether a back-up existed during the introduction of Plentific

Officers and the Cabinet Member for Council Homes responded to the questions, informing the Commission that:

- not all buildings required EWS1’s and, for those that did, a programme of inspections was in place
- where cladding was not compliant, there were at least 5 mortgage lenders available and the Council could advise on a case-by-case basis

- there were no outstanding Stage 1 complaints
- data on complaint response times would be added soon (likely within 3 weeks) and updated on a quarterly basis thereafter
- procurement of a training partner was underway
- in addition to Bournemouth Road, appointments with officers were available at two other office sites and work was in progress to enable appointments at leisure centres and libraries
- subject to access, all homes should have up-to-date electrical certification and fire alarms by end of March 2026
- the Housing Revenue Account's role in managing Council homes included allocating resources depending on needs, and the primary needs here were issues involving health and safety
- while the C3 judgement from the Regulator was a cause for concern, both the Council's identification of its own weaknesses and the work programmed as part of the Good Landlord Plan to counter these were already in progress before the inspection
- feedback from the Regulator's own questions showed increased resident satisfaction with the housing services being delivered
- technology had the capacity to deliver wide-ranging improvements from the repairs side (e.g. Plentific, discussed earlier) to leaseholders being able to access breakdowns of their charges online
- completed training needs-analysis of all frontline staff allowed for a more tailored provision of support
- RSOs would have monthly, scheduled housing surgeries in e.g. a TRA Hall or library
- as the surgeries are rolled out, TRAs will be more closely involved with the work and there will be a focus on empowering RSOs so they can action and track more of the issues directly
- the Stock Condition Survey began later than originally planned with 20% completion now expected by March 2026 (40% by September 2026)
- the data showed improvements in responding to Damp and Mould – in the future, with the introduction of Awaab's Law, the data would be updated more frequently
- resource has been provided to deal with the increase in cases of Damp and Mould expected with the colder, wetter months and from the increased level of reporting happening because of the Stock Condition Survey
- in cases where contractors failed to comply with contracts, break clauses existed
- as previously acknowledged, contracts hadn't always been managed as strongly as they should have – the Council's contract management team has been reinforced and new procedures have been adopted
- the nationwide reach of Plentific meant that supply shortages of contractors shouldn't be an issue and the Council's own 170 operatives would anyway be called on first

The Chair recommended that publicly available versions of the Plan be updated to reflect the revised timetables for Stock Condition Survey completion.

6. THE REVISED RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Abi Oguntokun, Director of Landlord Services (Acting), introduced the revised Resident Engagement Strategy which responded to feedback provided by the Regulator, by residents and by recommendations from the Housing, Community Safety and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission in the previous year.

Abi reported on the opportunities, formal structures and funding in place to support the Council's engagement with residents whilst also noting the lack of evidence linking these to service outcomes. Abi explained that from January, four new Boards aimed to change that by establishing clearer links between resident-supported structures and desired outcomes.

Further developments included increased publishing of performance data, developing a remuneration policy to pay residents for their time and travel, a Digital Engagement Strategy and a shift in approach to working with residents more collaboratively. It was hoped the revised Resident Engagement Strategy could come before Cabinet in December.

Councillor Situ stated that the new system allowed for residents to contribute to more specialist areas of the Council's landlord services by sitting on one of the focused Boards. By increasing the use of digital engagement and through involving more residents, the strategy would also be more agile. In Councillor Situ's view, the Strategy would provide a shift in role for residents, from one of providing feedback to one of taking part in decision-making.

Councillor Situ acknowledged that more discussion around the Strategy's later development with the Homeowners' Forum and the Tenants' Forum would have been better. However, meetings with residents had been helpful and Appendix 4 of the engagement report provided improvements based on their suggestions.

The Strategic Director of Housing, Hakeem Osinaike, also noted that the Regulator of Social Housing and the tenant engagement organisation, Tpas, had provided positive feedback on the strategy.

Before opening to questions from Commission members, the Chair commented on feelings among some residents that there had not been enough time to view the revised strategy. Councillor Situ explained that drafting of the strategy had been late because of a late report from Social Life and that additional meetings he had since held with residents had registered some of their concerns. He was also willing to meet again before the finalised strategy going to Cabinet in December.

The Chair then invited questions from the Commission. These included:

- whether Social Life had provided a fuller report of which the published version was only a summary and, if so, whether the full version could be published
- why a Leaseholder Board was being reconstituted when the previous

- iteration had failed, as had been predicted by those residents involved
- how, as a longer-term aim, a shared sense of community might be rebuilt so that the differences which the Social Life report recorded between leaseholders and tenants in tenure type might become less significant relative to fact that they were neighbours
- how the Strategy might use the Boards to create a sense of place and, in its documentation, illustrate what the user journey would be like from a resident's perspective around questions such as how someone could engage with the Council on housing issues, or how they could find the answer to a particular question
- how the report could more clearly outline a range of residents' opportunities to engage with the Council such as through illustrating how the process might look in 5 or 6 different types of estate as well as in different areas and for different tenure types, with the aim of making the process of engaging more practical and more reflective of the different needs across the Borough

Officers, and Councillor Situ, responded to the questions noting that:

- there was no fuller report from Social Life, only the version published
- views of Leaseholder/Homeowners' Boards and their efficacy were diverse, and additional feedback on their role could be provided to the Cabinet Member for consideration before the Strategy was finalised
- the points raised about a resident's perspective on the information provided in the Strategy were helpful

7. TENDA ROAD (NEW BUILD HOMES)

The Chair proposed that the Commission note the contents of the report but wait until the independent report on Tenda Road becomes available in the new year for a full discussion on the matter. In this way, the Commission could use the information available then to make more meaningful recommendations.

The Commission agreed that consideration of the item be deferred.

8. POST-GRENFELL COMPLIANCE AND FUTURE FIRE SAFETY INVESTMENT

This item was considered in conjunction with Item 9. Marie Curie – Recommendation to demolish subject to Cabinet decision.

Before inviting Officers and the Cabinet Members for New Homes & Sustainable Development (Councillor Helen Dennis) and Council Homes (Councillor Michael Situ) to come before the Commission, the Chair briefly noted that having Items 8 and 9 allowed Members to understand the key issues of fire safety as well as the investment needed.

Councillor Helen Dennis informed the commission that the Marie Curie block on Sceaux Gardens Estate straddled both Cabinet Members' portfolios. Its recent history was provided – having breached compartmentation guidance regarding Fire Safety, residents were moved out before investigations carried out. Requirements of the Fire Safety Act (2022) and the work needed as revealed through further surveys and investigations meant that the Council was proposing its demolition since even with substantial investment, the block would carry significant risks. As proposed, the site would then join the new build programme already planned for Sceaux Gardens' Florian and Racine blocks.

The Commission then asked questions including:

- if, regarding Marie Curie House, other options were available between demolition and investment of £23million+ for fire safety
- how residents were being supported and if they could return to properties in a rebuilt block
- the length of time needed for demolition and rebuild
- whether other estates faced similarly complex fire safety issues
- what had been learned from Marie Curie or could have been improved in the process

Officers, with Councillors Dennis and Situ, responded:

- that other options, judged unfeasible, had been considered including, initially, works to make the block safe with residents in place and works to increase fire safety although the option here would require additional monitoring of risks
- that changing legislation since 2022 imposed increasing levels of intervention
- that, although alternatives were explored, all options involving the retention of the building required accepting risks to resident safety which were too high for the Council to agree to
- that the 3 tenant households remaining in Marie Curie had been offered alternative accommodation and the Council continued to seek appropriate accommodation for them
- that the Council continued to negotiate with the 3 non-resident leaseholder households
- that those previously offered the right to return were communicated with including through in-person meetings with officers
- that the intention was for the cleared site, if demolition was agreed by Cabinet, to become part of the Florian and Racine development where planning permission has been received
- that development would seek to maximise the delivery of social rent homes whilst needing to raise funds to contribute to that development
- that the Ledbury estate, for different structural and fire safety pressures, had 4 blocks with demolition agreed (including one already demolished with

rebuilding underway)

- that – for Marie Curie – the pace of decision-making had been slow although this was set against changing legal requirements for building and fire safety, and with significant uncertainty regarding central government funding for development, and for retrofitting and fire safety

9. MARIE CURIE - RECOMMENDATION TO DEMOLISH SUBJECT TO CABINET DECISION

This item was considered in conjunction with Item 8. See item 8 for discussion.

10. WORK PROGRAMME 2025-2026

The Commission discussed a range of potential topics, deciding to prioritise:

- a Review of District Heating and related issues
- updates on the implementation of the Good Landlord Plan
- Housing Delivery updates
- a Review of Social Landlord Communications and Performance
- updates on the work to implement the recommendations from reviews of the Canada Estate, Fair Street / Devon Mansions and Kirby Estate
- TMOs – their performance, residents' experience of them, how the Council supports them

11. CABINET RESPONSES TO THE HOUSING, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMISSION'S: "SCRUTINY REVIEW OF TENANT STRUCTURES (DRAFT RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY)" INTERIM REPORT

The report was on the agenda for information.

Meeting ended at: 9:20pm

CHAIR:

DATED: