

Item No. 15.	Classification: Open	Date: 14 June 2022	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Report of the Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission: New council homes on existing estates in the Borough of Southwark	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission	

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That cabinet note the recommendations from the housing and community engagement scrutiny commission arising from the scrutiny review of new council homes on existing estates in the Borough of Southwark, paragraphs 7 to 12.
2. That cabinet request that the relevant cabinet member reports back to cabinet on the recommendations within eight weeks.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. At its meeting on 5 October 2021 the housing and community engagement scrutiny commission received a report from the Director of New Homes, and Development Manager, Housing and Modernisation Department on New council homes on existing estates as a case study 1 on Brenchley Gardens Estate. The commission also received addresses from the Cabinet member for Council Homes and Homelessness, councillors of Peckham Rye Ward and representatives of the Tenant Management Organisation (TMO), and Tenants and Residents Association (TRA).
4. At its meeting on 15 December 2021 the housing and community engagement scrutiny commission received the case study 2 on Kingston estate from the Cabinet member for Council Homes and Homelessness, Development Manager, Head of Development, and Director of New homes, Housing and Modernisation Department.
5. At its meeting on 7 February 2022 the commission received addresses from a resident of the Kingston estate and the Ward councillor for the area of Kingston estate on the consultation issues during the development project.

6. The commission considered and agreed the set of recommendations at its meeting on 24 March 2022. The rationale and commission recommendations are set out in paragraphs 7 to 12.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Set out below are the recommendations of the housing and community engagement scrutiny commission.

7. The addresses from Ward councillors and TRA representatives indicated that there are inaccuracies in the report for Brenchley Gardens submitted to the scrutiny commission and it also failed to acknowledge the poor handling of the consultation processes. It is important for the council's housing officers to understand the nature and function of a scrutiny review, the role of scrutiny is to be a critical friend. The reports produced for scrutiny need to be a complete and accurate record of the issues, events and timelines. It is based on the provision of this information that scrutiny can identify areas of concern and prepare recommendations for improvements to future consultation processes.

Recommendation 1 - Given the issues with the written report provided to the Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission on 5 October 2021, the Cabinet member takes steps to ensure all officers in housing understand the function of scrutiny and the importance of providing a full and accurate assessment of where things may have gone wrong, for lessons to be learned for the future.

8. It is clear that there is a need for better visibility on new housing development projects being launched, better communication and consultation processes especially with key local stakeholders. It is important that such communications, consultations and discussions are carried out early in the project to ensure perspectives of residents, ward councillors, Tenant Management organisations (TMOs') and Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs') are considered. Given the challenges faced during the pandemic with door to door consultation and in person engagement with the community at project steering groups, it is also important to have robust digital modes of consultation in place through webinars and online meetings.

Recommendation 2 - Cabinet member asks officers to build early discussions with key local stakeholders into the new homes process including arranging webinars or online meetings where ward councillors, TMOs and TRAs can explain their perspective on new housing projects, and how councillors seek to input into these.

9. The Southwark Group of Tenants Organisation (SGTO) addressed the cabinet meeting on 7 December 2021 and in its speech outlined the issues residents faced with consultation processes for new homes development in Southwark. The council needs to consider resident consent with the help of

meaningful and genuine early engagement processes. The council also needs to consider the potential impact of construction work especially in rooftop-developments and in fill sites. It is important that the council give due consideration to incorporate all the principles of the SGTO Consultation Charter into the Council's own consultation protocols.

Recommendation 3 - The Cabinet should give due consideration to incorporating the principles of the Southwark Group of Tenants Organisation (SGTO) consultation charter into its own consultation protocols.

10. Effective engagement and consultation are key to a successful new homes development project especially on existing estates where roof-top developments, in-fill sites and loss of green spaces are being proposed. It is also important that the council ensure proper representation of councillors, officers, architects and residents at council led project meetings. The council also is responsible to communicate any changes in the proposed housing developments in a clear and efficient manner to key local stakeholders during the project duration, this is a major area of concern evidenced in these case studies of developments on estates.

Recommendation 4 - The Cabinet member asks officers to implement a consultation protocol which prioritises clear, consistent and timely communications for all development projects where the council is building on existing estates. This protocol should take account of recommendations made in the SGTO consultation Charter.

11. In the case study of the new homes development at Kingston estate there were issues of engagement with the TRA due to geographical proximity and also that it covered other estates of Nelson and Portland. The views and opinions of residents of Kingston estate were not accurately represented. It is in the council's best interest that residents of specific estates are thoroughly consulted without completely depending on TRAs or TMOs for feedback.

Recommendation 5 - The Cabinet member should ensure that the protocol on consultation makes clear that it is the council's project team who is responsible for consultation with all residents and that TMOs and TRAs are important bodies to consult, but they are not a replacement or proxy for all residents.

12. It is important for the council to cater to all residents with varying abilities and preferences to access and submit feedback to consultations. The council needs to ensure that alternative routes of communication and dissemination of information takes place seamlessly throughout the community. In order to achieve maximum visibility it is important that door to door knocking, distributing leaflets, notice boards, telephone feedback, letters and invitation to project meetings are carried out during the consultation processes. The 'commonplace' consultation website has been a major concern amongst residents and TRA representatives due to issues

of accessibility, security certificate technical issues, wordings and format of the questions and overall reliability, it is important that commonplace is reviewed as a primary online tool for resident consultation.

Recommendation 6 - The Cabinet member should review consultation practice to ensure there is always an easily available non-digital alternative route for residents to find out about proposals and contribute their views. The Cabinet member should also review the effectiveness and reliability of Commonplace as a tool for engagement.

13. It is for the cabinet to decide whether or not to accept the scrutiny commission's recommendations.
14. Overview and scrutiny procedure rule 15.3 requires the cabinet to consider and provide a written response to the report within two months.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission agenda and minutes- 5 October 2021	Southwark Council Website	Amit Alva Amit.alva@southwark.gov.uk
Link (please copy and paste into browser): https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=551&MId=7028&Ver=4 (see item 5)		
Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission agenda and minutes- 15 December 2021	Southwark Council Website	Amit Alva Amit.alva@southwark.gov.uk
Link (please copy and paste into browser): https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=551&MId=7238&Ver=4 (see item 5)		
Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission agenda and minutes- 7 February 2021	Southwark Council Website	Amit Alva Amit.alva@southwark.gov.uk
Link (please copy and paste into browser): https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=551&MId=7030&Ver=4 (see item 5)		
Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission agenda and minutes- 24 March 2022	Southwark Council Website	Amit Alva Amit.alva@southwark.gov.uk
Link (please copy and paste into browser): https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=551&MId=7031&Ver=4 (see item 6)		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Member	Councillor Gavin Edwards, Chair, Housing and Community Engagement Scrutiny Commission	
Lead Officer	Everton Roberts, Head of Scrutiny	
Report Author	Amit Alva, Scrutiny Officer	
Version	Final	
Dated	30 May 2022	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Law and Governance	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	30 May 2022	