



London Housing Panel

Panel meeting

8 March 2022, 10-12.30 (10-11am Members only) *via Zoom*

KEY NOTES AND ACTIONS

Present: Loretta Lees (Chair)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sophie Delamothe, Generation Rent• Will McMahon (Action on Empty Homes)• Melanie Sirinathsingh (Kineara)• Mikey Erhardt (Young private renters group, Toynbee Hall)• Derek Bernardi (Camden Community Law Centre)• Elsa Corry-Roake (Just for Kids Law / Children's Rights Alliance for England),	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ilinca Diaconescu (London Gypsies and Travellers)• Greg Robbins (London Federation of Housing Co-operatives)• Pat Turnbull (London Tenants Federation)• Erin Mansell (Solace Women's Aid)• Nigel Long (in a personal capacity)• Martin Boyd (Leasehold Knowledge Partnership)
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- **Apologies:** Fiona Colley (Homeless Link), Sebastian O'Kelly (Leasehold Knowledge Partnership). Anna Kear (Tonic Housing Association), Joseph Small (London Councils).

In attendance: Leila Baker and Mary Carter (Panel Secretariat), Susie Dye (Trust for London), Jonathan Schifferes (GLA), Sam Hurst (GLA), Daniella Davila Aquije (GLA), Mariana Schiller (GLA), Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development).

Members only meeting, 10-11am

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and congratulated them on the successful news that the Panel will be funded for the rest of the Mayoral term through to 31 March 2024. Susie Dye, Trust for London, described the decision as a vote of confidence in the Panel. There will be an emphasis on enabling early-stage policy making, to be independent and to uses its diversity of relationships and networks.

On behalf of the Trust and the Panel, Susie thanked Loretta who is taking up a post in Boston, Massachusetts and is stepping down as Chair of the Panel acknowledging that without her involvement and commitment to the Panel, we wouldn't still be here.

Susie set out the process and next steps:

- Recruitment of Chair: Members are welcome to be involved in the detail so get in touch if you want to see the JD and pack. Members are encouraged to think about what and who they want based on their experience of the first 2 chairs, and to share with the Trust any ideas for individuals and networks to promote the opportunity to. Reminder that the Panel can't have a chair and a member from the same organisation. The Chair reminded members that the role of the chair is to support the panel to pursue its priorities, not to set them.
- Membership: Current membership is 13 so there are 2 places to fill – areas mentioned include disability, race equality, migrant and refugee housing. The Trust's experience is that at these break points some people decide to step back and so may get in touch with members. Susie noted that the Panel's members are there to reflect those most affected by housing need whereas the Mayor's housing policy is for all Londoners. The Chair noted that the Panel needs to build EDI into its structure.
- Terms of reference and Secretariat: revisiting these for clarity of roles.
- First full Panel will take place in June and there will be opportunities to engage before then in the above.

The Panel discussed their future work and broadly agreed that its priorities and principles still stand; and that it wants to both work on the Mayor's housing policy agenda and also have its own priorities. The following points were also made by members and there was a desire to take these into and seize the opportunity of the learning workshop on 22nd to discuss them further:

- We want to reshape the way we engage with the GLA, it can be a bit "we say, they do" and we'd like more flow.
- Being engaged earlier and staying involved will help this feel more like an exchange or co-production.
- Panel members keep their networks and members informed and feed in from their views and experiences. A barrier to even more sector engagement is where papers are confidential and can't be shared.
- As members can we make even better use of the time that we have with GLA officers and the Deputy Mayor e.g. by using the members only meetings to discuss the points we want to get across and work on how to have a more pinned down conversation.
- We want to be bringing solutions not just problems.
- We have two years during which we can collect information that we can use to hold to account on outcomes of housing policy work.

The Trust is introducing a new initiative on advocacy around temporary accommodation (TA) which the Panel might want to take into consideration when planning its own work.

The Panel discussed the Comms paper prepared by the Trust: the following ideas were put forward as ways to increase awareness and visibility of the Panel:

- Holding a public event with a topic or focus is an interesting idea that would give the Panel a point to aim at and would raise its profile. The focus could be Planning for London. This would tie in with the GLA's paper which identifies for October-

December 2022 *Further activity under 'Planning for London' (in advance of formal London Plan Review 2026), including public engagement.*

- Create mini video clips with members to post on the website.

Main meeting, 11-12.30

1. Chair's welcome

The chair formally welcomed

2. Business: Minutes and action log

The minutes of December 2021 meeting were approved by Panel and the GLA.

The action log has been updated here and will be brought back to the June 2022 meeting.

Member updates

Members provided 2-minute updates.

London Federation of Housing Co-operatives reported that it's a strange time for co-ops coming out of lockdown with unusual events – a fire, dealing with void and a flagship development on hold.

Empty Homes Agency fed back on the community plan for Holloway which is returning to the planning committee following adjustments due to not being tenure-blind (93% of flats facing the busy road were for social housing); questions over the funding of the women's building on the prison site; objections over the lack of community facilities; and a viability assessment gap with Peabody at £44m and the council at £3m. There's lots of learning to be shared and they're working out how to do that.

EHA also gave evidence to the GLA housing committee on under-utilisation; have just had empty homes week with a focus on retrofit; and are launching a manifesto for upcoming elections. They note that there has been a 7% rise in empty homes in London last year, the only area in the country experiencing a rise.

London Gypsies and Travellers continue to experience huge demand. There's been a disappointing lack of progress on delivering new sites with promises not delivered. Their biggest issue is the Police, Crime and Sentencing Bill which will make it an offense for nomadic families to stop on land overnight without consent from the landowner – urgent work required around negotiating stopping places.

Nigel Long (personal capacity) has published work on community-led housing and how loneliness impacts older and disabled people; is about to publish on digital infrastructure and the link between housing and social care support and how people retain independence; and has submitted written evidence to the Levelling-Up Select Committee on future regulation of social housing.

London Tenants Federation (members now include are council tenants and leaseholders, housing association tenants, members of Tenant Management Organisations and members of Co-ops) also gave written and spoken evidence to the Committee. They've got 2 new part-time workers and have been focussing on holding meetings with members in their regions and on single issues (fuel poverty, overcrowded homes, building safety, rent and service charges) so that they can involve London tenants as widely as possible.

Leasehold Knowledge Partnership acts as secretariat to the APPG on Leasehold and Commonhold Reform, recently working with cladding groups and MPs on the Building Safety Bill. Government making clear its view to remediate existing stock rather than provide new homes. Trying to include right to a residents' association on every high rise building to represent themselves collectively.

Generation Rent is about to launch the Private Tenant Engagement Charter into how LAs can better engage with private tenant; has been working closely in response to Levelling-Up White Paper looking at decent homes standard and how linked to PRS; is working with Renters Reform Coalition on the Renters Reform Bill and is launching a policy blueprint late in March; and working on Police, Crime and Sentencing Bill, looking to make sex for rent illegal.

Camden Community Law Centre reported that while they had lost their legal challenge against the government on the Everyone In initiative (saying publicly it was ongoing but privately telling LAs they could restrict it only to the most vulnerable and at their discretion – people refused mainly those with NRPF), they have received permission to appeal to the Court of Appeal. Also reported that a similar initiative introduced in December (Protect and Vaccinate) also emphasised discretion for LAs whether to accommodate and now covid restrictions are lifted some LAs (e.g. Hackney, Tower Hamlets) are now evicting everyone in TA; others trying to create move-on plans. The legal sector is expecting a massive wave of evictions because of the impending cost of living crisis, which is likely to hit PRS hardest and in turn will impact TA and LA budgets as they'll have to provide emergency accommodation.

Kineara fed back on its PRS support project in Southwark with people at risk of homelessness – most issued S21s, in high arrears or in TA. Struggling to heat their homes and pay for food. They are trying to build links with landlords willing to rent to people on benefits or who need support – there are incentives LAs can use to house people but finding landlords can play them off against each other claiming others will pay more. Aware that many won't be able to stay in PRS (where placed by council) due to high rents and cost of living and will end up presenting as homeless again in maybe a years' time. Shelter in Southwark – funded by council for last 4 ½ years – have lost the funding and will impact on support available as well as on Kineara and others.

Just for Kids Law / Children's Rights Alliance for England are working on access to housing for homeless 16/17 year olds and care leavers – forming youth-led housing and care campaign for 16-25s in London, extending priority to care leavers and removing intentionality test. Hoping the Care Review will be opportunity to prioritise housing needs of care leavers and are publishing a briefing on barriers to housing for care leavers (in April). Also working with London Councils and Homeless Link on developing key asks about LAs improving support for care leavers in their area. Sharing publications in next couple of weeks.

Solace said the increase in demand for their services over the pandemic is levelling out but at a higher level than pre-pandemic. Waiting for outcome of bids on safe accommodation duties; secured some for move-on. In partnership with Connection at St Martin's launching women's homelessness strategy this week – street homelessness, multiple disadvantage, violence against women and girls, all key issues around women falling through gaps.

Young private renters group, Toynbee Hall has a project working alongside Rainbow Collective (citizen journalism group that worked with Grenfell United) producing a series of short videos about how housing crisis affects young private renters for work on Renters Reform Bill – launching end April/early May at an online event and Panel members are

invited. They're seeing pressure and competitiveness for properties extending to more affluent young renters. Concern that people don't know how to access council support very well – keen to hear from GLA what they plan to do about advice to LAs around communicating discretionary housing payments etc.

Loretta has been asked to speak as an expert witness at Commission on Poverty and Regional Inequality – specific focus on London, poverty and housing – poverty created by London's housing market as opposed to national tax benefits or minimum wages. Asked Panel members for any evidence or thoughts.

Deputy Mayor Tom Copley said he was delighted the GLA can continue to fund the Panel. Their additional funding had also gone to two new projects around social housing – one supporting councils to acquire land to develop social housing; the other around a right to buy back scheme. He thanked Loretta for being a passionate advocate for social housing and for the Panel itself and her contribution to the Homes for Londoners Board.

Responding to:

- Just for Kids Law - Hounslow right to buy back deal buying back 550 homes including 20 for care leavers.
- Camden Community Law Centre around NRPF – Mayor's In for Good initiative is still supporting rough sleepers with NRPF though it's hard to find move-on for them and the GLA are lobbying government.
- Generation Rent – looking at Renters Reform Bill and pledge to end no fault eviction and working with Generation Rent to ensure no loopholes. Encouraging that private renting is part of levelling up and included in decent homes standard.

GLA officers also responded saying that they would get back about some issues outside of the meeting and also that:

- GLA also gave evidence to the Levelling Up Select Committee.
- In connection with this – and reflecting on the number of reports mentioned in members' feedback – that it would be good to have an easy way to share documents between the GLA and Panel in the future.
- The GLA has been working on a Cost of Living Hub to signpost people to support. Will update Panel when up and running (April).

In response to further questions from the Panel:

- Whether there are plans to encourage councils to pursue improvement orders? GLA match fund places on a Middlesex University course to bring through a larger cohort of better trained LA enforcement officers. Will also respond outside the meeting.
- The SHLAA and SHMA are both up for review and renewal. GLA is open to ideas about data what would indicate that landlords are selling up. Empty Homes Agency said that a concern was marginal landlords with older properties that they leave empty rather than sell.

3. GLA Future Funding

GLA officers welcome the opportunity to work with greater funding certainty, allowing for a comprehensive and co-designed programme of Panel activity. Previous funding decisions had only provided funding year-by-year.

Recent funding expiry dates have focused minds for Panel members and the GLA, in several dimensions:

- Notably, GLA officers observe that while the Panel's independent volunteer membership and diverse representation are essential to the credibility of articulated priorities, the Panel's status is also dependent on the recognition associated with funding from London's government.
- Furthermore, recent Panel activity has led the GLA to gain greater confidence that the Panel provides a valuable in-depth channel to engage in early policy development, within the Mayor's housing agenda and overall strategy.
- In terms of ways of working, workshop formats within Panel meetings have been productive in allowing for interactive discussion. The capacity for Panel members to contribute to policy development between meetings has varied.

The forthcoming learning workshop on 22 March will be an opportunity for us to consider potential ideas for refreshing the format and focus of the Panel's activity based on learning and achievements to date. For example:

- The potential value of giving further consideration to the Panel's objectives, principles and priorities for the Mayor, including recognition of the Mayor's priorities in the coming two years).
- Panel membership, specifically: recruitment of new members where existing members do not wish to (or are unable to) sustain their membership; agreement on overall objective of comprehensive representation, and how to best achieve it.
- The continuation of, or change from, quarterly, two-hour Panel meetings.
- While certain aspects of the Panel's operation may change, the GLA has agreed with Trust for London that existing Secretariat arrangements will continue, at least, to the end of June 2022 to ensure that continued Panel activity is not diminished.

Panel members said that they see the priorities and principles as still relevant and noted that it is not the chair that sets these. GLA responded that they are content that priorities and principles stand but want the panel to have the opportunity to revisit these after three years. The policy items in their paper are what the GLA is bringing as their part of a shared agenda.

4. Data access

Jonathan demonstrated the Planning London Data Hub and encouraged members to try using it. The idea is for communities to be more easily able to navigate the planning system. See www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/digital-planning/planning-london-datahub for a link to the Hub and www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVxxOLmgrCc for a YouTube video about how to build a dashboard.

The chair noted that the panel can input about what kinds of data are needed (after playing around with it to see what it provides) and also that some boroughs have been identified as lacking the skills to populate the database and if there is a skills gap in boroughs then there may be one in the voluntary sector too. A member suggested the Panel should set up a working group.

5. Temporary accommodation

Joe Small from London Councils was unable to be at the meeting but provided an update. The London Housing Directors Group acknowledge the need to keep up tempo on TA work and London Councils are playing a convening role getting housing directors together soon and creating a project group to re-focus on what else boroughs can do on TA now that Capital Letters (Pan-London procurement company) and Setting the Standard (pan-London nightly lets accommodation standards initiative) are operational. Making any gains on TA provision will involve some really creative thinking – many officers feel as though we're really pushing the limits of what can be done with given resources and current national policy and housing crisis environment.

He asked that if people have examples of other cities/areas doing some really innovative work on TA (research/case studies/ideas) that they can share that would be useful as part of the prep-work for the new TA working group.

Panel members raised the following points as being important in addition to those raised in the slides that had been circulated to members:

- The increase in evictions and the potential for mass evictions linked to the rise in cost of living and numbers requiring TA adds to its importance but also points to TA not really solving the housing crisis.
- Aware of the dilemmas faced by people in local authorities working with substandard TA properties and having to make decisions around whether to close them down, house people there etc. These will also be exacerbated if need rises.
- What's currently often missing is support from social care for people who move into TA
- The Panel could spell out more clearly how voluntary sector skills can be accessed.

6. GLA Updates

Planning for London: There is a new team in place which will be developing its public engagement work over the Autumn maybe exploring deliberative democracy tools/approach. The chair suggested that Panel members might be well placed to directly assist the GLA in this including sharing knowledge of what works (and doesn't) from e.g. Community Plan for Holloway.

EDI: The Panel workshop on EDI had strongly informed the GLA's work, particularly on taking an intersectional approach to EDI and looking at qualitative data beyond usual data sources for development of EDI Action Plans in the AHP. Their approach and guidance (being reviewed this summer) is available at <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/homes-londoners-affordable-homes-programmes/homes-londoners-affordable-homes-programme-2021-2026/guidance-meeting-edi-funding-conditions>

They will be setting up an equalities page in their internal resources to equip colleagues with tools and would welcome the Panel's input into different data sources (and will share a draft with the Panel).

The GLA's housing and race research report will also be shared with the Panel shortly.

The Panel re-emphasised the importance of including social class as a protected characteristic.

1. Closing remarks and date of next meeting

The learning workshop takes place on 22nd March. The next formal Panel meeting will be in June 2022 date to be confirmed.

Key actions

1. Panel members to feed into the Trust via Susie Dye about recruitment of a new chair, what the role is and where to promote it.
2. Planning London Data Hub - it was suggested that members have a look at the Hub to see how they might want to use it and what more they might want to ask of it. Suggest that this is brought back to the June meeting
3. Temporary accommodation item - Update the draft slides on Panel summary of work and share with the minutes of this item with London Councils to feed into London Housing Directors Group
4. Planning for London - The chair would like explored the way the Panel can assist the work of the new PforL team and input from its experience e.g. from Community Plan for Holloway. There is interest in working with the GLA to hold a London Housing Panel event focused on this early stage work in Autumn 2022 as its budgeted event.
5. EQIA - GLA is developing internal resources around intersectional approaches to EDI to equip colleagues with tools. They would like Panel input into qualitative and quantitative data sources and will share a draft with the Panel (no timeframe given)
6. GLA commissioned research on Housing and Race - this is in the process of being signed off and will be shared with the Panel
7. There was a fair amount of interest in working with the GLA on *Encouraging greater number of applications from providers for specialist and supported housing within new rounds of Affordable Homes Programme funding*. Secretariat to clarify process for this and the other policy items listed in the GLA Paper that fall in Q1 i.e. before the next formal panel meeting. Also interest in working with the GLA on *Public consultation on government's Tourist Accommodation Registration Scheme and regulation of short term lets*