



## Panel Meeting

Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2020, 9am-12pm

at Trust for London, 4 Chiswell St, Finsbury, London EC1Y 4UP

### MINUTES

**Present:** Raji Hunjan (Chair), Will McMahon (Action on Empty Homes), Lauren Johnson-King (Disability Advice Service Lambeth), Helen Mathie (Homeless Link), Giana Rosa (Children's Rights Alliance for England / Just for Kids Law (CRAE)), Greg Robbins (London Federation of Housing Co-operatives (LFHC)), Ilinca Diaconescu and Tracie Giles (London Gypsies and Travellers), Pat Turnbull (London Tenants Federation), Phil Kerry (New Horizon Youth Centre), Fiona Dwyer (Solace Women's Aid), Pam Orchard (The Connection at St Martin-in-the-Fields (CSTM)), Anna Kear (Tonic Living).

**Apologies:** Derek Bernardi (Camden Community Law Centre), Caitlin Wilkinson (Generation Rent), Maria Morgan (Kineara), Sebastian O'Kelly (Leasehold Knowledge Partnership)

**In attendance:** Leila Baker and Milla Gregor (Independent Consultants), Susie Dye (Trust for London)

**The following joined the meeting at the break:** Tom Copley AM (Deputy Mayor designate), Ellen Storrar and Rebecca Reid (GLA Housing and Land), Bharat Mehta (Trust for London).

### Selected quotes:

*[The Panel should present] a bold vision for what needs to change, the scale of the problem, and the impact on people's lives. The vision needs to capture people's imagination.*

*The tone of asks of the Mayor [need] urgency, and should not be something that could have been written three years ago. These are things we believe the Mayor must do.*

*Members noted that delivering the vision would require a long-term strategy. But none of it could be delivered without a commitment to the vision from the Mayor.*

*There was consensus that the [Priorities for the Mayor] document should mix being provocative, 'punchy' and constructive, and show that what we want is achievable.*

### Meeting notes

#### 1. Chair's welcome and introductions, purpose of meeting

Raji Hunjan welcomed Members to the meeting and set out forthcoming changes to the Panel:

- The Panel term has been extended to July 2020 to take it to the other side of the Mayoral election in May.

- Raji herself will stay on as Chair until July; she will be moving roles to take up a new position at Oak Foundation on 1 May.
- Trust for London has commissioned Leila Baker to carry out a review of the Panel (Paper 2), which Members will be invited to input into, and to discuss at the April Panel meeting.

Raji fed back on her presentation to the Homes for Londoners (HfL) Board in December, and meetings with other stakeholders including London Councils.

- There is an appetite for listening to the experience of people in temporary accommodation. There could be an opportunity to seek additional funding for this.
- There could be scope to explore the potential for small sites to deliver specialist and community-led housing.
- There is interest in the Panel championing 'voice', although this is moving somewhat slowly. In line with the Panel's views, this is being framed as a need for culture change and overcoming silos within the GLA.
- Raji has meetings set up with Debbie Weekes-Bernard and Tom Copley.
- Discussions about data and transparency were also quite open, with recognition that data was needed to understand why not as much social housing has been built as would be expected from policy statements.

Raji noted that the HfL Board is the only time when the Mayor publicly focuses on housing, and it's a privilege to be at the table. Also on the Board are housing associations, London Councils, a representative from Transport for London, and a representative from the private sector.<sup>1</sup>

In response to a question, Susie Dye stated the continuation of the Panel would be decided after the Panel Review reports in May, after the election.

Panel members gave short updates on their work:

- London Tenants Federation is following up their November conference and developing a manifesto on the future of social housing
- New Horizons Youth Centre is exploring the issue of increasing utilisation of supported accommodation.
- Action on Empty Homes is preparing to publish research on wealth investment in the London residential property market. It estimates there are 100,000 'homes without residents' in the capital. It asked Members to complete a research survey on the issue.
- DASL is looking at the intersection between housing and disability hate crime, particularly issues around cuckooing and [grooming] of disabled people.
- LFHC has a new co-op starting and is recruiting new, younger members.
- CSTM highlighted that homelessness in London has risen more than 10% for the second year running. It has identified [advocacy priorities](#) for the first time around housing, treatment, services and local connection. People it has worked closely with before have now been elected to parliament.
- Solace is implementing [The Casa Project](#), developing move-on from refuges, which is preparing to welcome the Mayor, Sadiq Khan to visit.
- Homeless Link is honing its priorities post-election. It is launching research in February around [investment on homelessness](#) over the last 10 years, seeking to influence the spending review and meet new MPs.
- Tonic Living is working on its first older LGBT people's housing scheme, which will be in empty, new-build properties. It has also set up an LGBT+ London Housing

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<sup>1</sup> Details of Homes for Londoners Board membership: <http://bit.ly/HomesforLondonersBoard>

Consortium, which is publishing a [shared manifesto](#) across organisations working with LGBT people across the age spectrum.

- CRAE has [an event with young people in parliament](#) on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. It is also lobbying against permitted development, specifically the use of office conversions to house homeless families.
- London Gypsies and Travellers is focused on the jeopardy facing [families living roadside](#), including a Government consultation on criminal trespass, a successful legal challenge to Bromley Council and working with the GLA.

Raji encouraged people to share each other's vacancies and other opportunities on social media, and asked Members to share their (draft, where appropriate) manifestos with Leila.

## 2. Panel's work on the manifesto narrative and asks (Paper 3)

Leila introduced the draft manifesto<sup>2</sup>. She noted that it does not reflect everything that the Panel want to do in future – rather it is designed to be a 'calling card' to the Mayoral candidates. She asked Members to feed back on the tone, level of technical detail and the asks. She invited Members to comment on the evidence outside of the meeting. Finally she asked whether Members want to include any quotes or case studies.

### Structure

It is important that the document reflects a bold vision for what needs to change, the scale of the problem, and the impact on people's lives. The vision needs to capture people's imagination.

It was noted that Mayoral candidates and the wider public may want something with less detail. It was agreed to include a summary of the asks up front.

### Tone

There was consensus that the document should mix being provocative, 'punchy' and constructive, and show that what we want is achievable. We know that the Mayor can set out a vision – he has done so on the PRS.

Members highlighted that there needed to be more emphasis on the potential for Members and communities to take action themselves, positive examples of which had been heard earlier in the meeting. It's not just about asking policy makers to listen; 'we need policy support to get on with doing it ourselves.'

Members highlighted the value of having a document that tells the world who the Panel is, what the Members think about housing, and that collates the evidence on this. A lot of people don't realise how bad the problem has become. The tone for that needs to be inspiring and challenging.

### Asks

It was identified that the document needed urgency, and should not be something that could have been written three years ago when the current Mayor was elected. These are things we believe the Mayor *must* do.

Members noted that delivering the vision would require a long-term strategy. But none of it could be delivered without a commitment to the vision from the Mayor.

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<sup>2</sup> The manifesto has now been published as [London Housing Panel: Our Priorities for the Mayor, March 2020](#)

It was felt that a vision and asks that work for Panel members' stakeholders could also be acceptable to the median voter, because there are lots of people on quite good incomes in London who are in terrible housing.

Several Members are publishing their own manifestos: there is potential to reflect those documents' tone and also potentially pick up some of those asks.

Members noted that environmental issues are rising up the agenda, and examples of environmentally friendly social housing are starting to get attention (e.g. the Stirling Prize for architecture). Making better use of existing stock could be another win.

## Context

Members were aware that the Government's focus is outside London, which created potential for the funding environment for social housing to get worse. In a challenging context, taking action ourselves on small sites might be a valuable contribution.

It was noted that while there is a housing crisis nationally, there are specific issues in London due to the bigger gap in terms of cost of housing and affordability.

## Audience

Raji noted that, while the primary audience for the document is candidates, there are others who could be interested. For example, George Clarke, a campaigner on the environmental issues around housing, could be interested. It was hoped there would be time in the April meeting to discuss pushing the document out more widely.

Greg (LHFC) offered to collate case studies to show what is already happening, to show what's possible. **ACTION:** Greg to follow up with Members.

A detailed discussion followed about individual points of the draft document. In particular, members highlighted:

- The importance of an awareness of people's journey into and out of Temporary Accommodation (TA).
- Accepting what people want in TA varies, requiring nuance in any asks. For some families, staying local to their family is important; for others, being able to plug into services out-of-area is more valuable.
- Recognising the scope of the GLA's powers, while really pushing the Mayor and boroughs to step up. It was felt that Mayoral leadership was really needed, in light of the scale and depth of the crisis in TA.
- The value of pathways for different groups, based on their different circumstances (e.g. women fleeing domestic violence, LGBT people).
- Groups need confidence in need figures, that these genuinely reflected the scale of the TA problem, rather than available resources.
- The potential to explore a 'London Living Housing Benefit' based on what it actually costs to live in London – linking to the joint #CovertheCost campaign on Local Housing Allowance (LHA).
- The importance of seeking resources for communities to deliver housing themselves.
- Wanting the Mayor to commit to social rented homes, rather than affordable homes, particularly on public land. This includes in planning policy as well as funding affordable housing. It was acknowledged that social housing requires 'up front' public investment, and while it was important to retain ambitious targets, this might affect volume.

Leila thanked Members for their input. She committed to edit the document and send back to Members for final comments. She invited Members to share any particularly good statistics

or quotes from people with lived experience via email. ACTION: Leila and Members to follow up on manifesto.

-- Break – Deputy Mayor Tom Copley and others (see above) joined the meeting --

### **3. London Housing Panel briefing for Tom Copley, inc Q&A**

Tom comes into post as Deputy Mayor on 23 March; he is currently still a Member of the London Assembly.

Raji shared the progress of the Panel to date, presenting as she had done to the Mayor's Homes for Londoners Board.

Tom stated that he "come[s] from the point of view that a decent, affordable home is a human right. A home is the centre of people's lives, has an impact on health and everything else." He expressed concern that housing had not been a high priority for central Government. It's a strength that housing is devolved in London, but the team is working 'within serious restraints.'

He said he was looking forward to working on innovation and ideas, and what's possible within the Mayor's powers.

His priorities are:

- 1) Genuinely affordable homes, particularly council and social housing. He will be a) delivering on the existing Affordable Homes Programme; b) negotiating the next programme. A key unknown is what the Gov't will do. While the Mayor's focus is on social housing, he heeds seven times as much funding to do this. He is also focused on delivery of community-led housing, and pleased with the funding the Mayor has for this. He also recognises the need to deliver homes for different groups, e.g. more sites for Gypsies and Travellers.
- 2) Rough sleeping and homelessness. The most visible effect of the housing crisis is rough sleeping. But he also recognises hidden homelessness. Achieving change here needs investment from central government (£574m). He noted that charities are very effective at taking people off the streets, but people are arriving faster than we can take them off.
- 3) Private Rented Sector. Work done on the London Model for the private rented sector is very important. The Mayor is pushing for more powers to introduce that, as well as on landlord licensing. Also working on driving up standards.

Tom stated he is very keen for ideas. "If it's something the Mayor has the power and the resources to do, I am keen to hear about it."

A discussion followed, which covered:

- Evidence
  - The value of evidence in seeking to make sure that what is being asked of central Government reflects the ambition of Londoners, and what they are keen to deliver.
  - Sometimes a 'killer statistic' (the example was the London Assembly finding that 42% of Right to Buy homes are now in the PRS) can help make the case.
  - There is potential in showing the Mayor what communities are already doing, and supporting the Mayor to make the case for it.
  - In some places a good evidence base exists, e.g. the CHAIN database which records information about people sleeping rough and the wider street population in London. In such cases, the Panel highlighted that what's needed is commitment to go and meet the people who are affected 'who we are here to serve', not necessarily more statistics.

- Temporary Accommodation
  - Exploring what the role for the Mayor on TA might be. Tom Copley noted that the Mayor has been involved through providing funding for Capital Letters, PLACE and Setting the Standard. He stated he is always willing to have a conversation about areas where it's possible for the Mayor to do more. He noted the Mayor's power to convene and bring boroughs together.
- Affordable housing
  - The balance of 'affordable' and social housing, particularly on public land. It was noted that there are reasons to be cheerful in some public sites being built with 100% affordable housing, and that boroughs are building up their development teams and building council housing again. There are challenges in that more social housing is needed, and Right to Buy is still in place.
  - The new Government brings potential to have fresh conversations, but also some new challenges (e.g. in relation to attempts to revive injunctions against Gypsy and Traveller communities).
  - It was also noted that we are three years into a Mayoral term, and that communities are expressing impatience where there has been a lack of delivery.

#### The role of the Panel and the GLA

- The potential for the Panel to make a joint, focused ask. The example used was the joint campaign against the vagrancy act by the homelessness sector, which got attention.
- Recognising the quality of the staff we are working with on both sides, there was a discussion on how to strengthen collaboration between different areas of work at the GLA.
- The Panel talks a lot about culture change. For example the Mayor has been pushing the housing association sector to increase the representation of BAME staff. But it doesn't yet feel like the conversation is happening about how the culture would need to change to value diversity in terms of lived experience within the organisation.

Tom and the Panel welcomed that they had begun the conversation. It was noted that the next potential meeting date would be after the May elections.

#### **4. Chair's closing remarks and recap any agreed dates/actions**

Raji, Susie and Leila confirmed next steps to finalise the manifesto.

#### **5. Next meetings**

- Tues 24 March 1-2pm – *optional* Panel/GLA lunch and learn (Venue: GLA, 169 Union Street, London SE1 0LL) [CANCELLED due to COVID emergency]
- Thurs 23 April 9:45-12pm – Panel meeting
- Thurs 21 May 9am-12pm – Panel meeting (tbc)