

Minutes of meeting, 6 June 2023

## Hybrid meeting at 4 Chiswell St, London EC1Y 4UP and online

**Present**: Dinah Roake (Chair)

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| * Chris Bailey (Action on Empty Homes) * Ilinca Diaconescu (London Gypsies and Travellers) * Samanthi Theminimulle (Young private renters group, Toynbee Hall) * Mikey Erhardt (Young private renters group, Toynbee Hall) * Bob Green (Tonic Housing Association) * Sagal Afrah (Anti-Tribalism Movement) | * Greg Robbins (London Federation of Housing Co-operatives) * Pat Turnbull (London Tenants Federation) * Svetlana Kotova (Inclusion London) * Tilly Smith (Generation Rent) * Rebecca Goshawk (Solace Women’s Aid) * Richard James (YMCA St Paul’s Group) |

**In attendance**: Sam Ashton (London Councils), Sam Hurst (GLA), Heather Juman (GLA),

Francesca Lewis (GLA), Mikyla Smith (GLA), John Wacher (GLA), Jane Seymour (GLA), Josephine Whitaker-Yilmaz (Praxis), Nanou Thassinda (Migrants Organise), Son Olszewski (Migrants Organise), Leila Baker and Mary Carter (Panel Secretariat), Susie Dye (Trust for London)

**Observers:** None

**Apologies**: Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development), Conor O’Shea (Generation Rent) Marcin Brajta (Camden Community Law Centre) Fiona Colley (Homeless Link) Anna Kear (Tonic Housing Association) Melanie Sirinathsingh (Kineara)

Minutes of 10-10.50 Members pre-meeting

* Chair welcomed Richard James, YMCA St Paul’s Group who have joined to bring the perspective of children and their housing needs; and new representatives of existing member organisations, Bob Green, Tonic Housing Association and Sagal Afrah, Anti-Tribalism Movement.
* Members agreed that Praxis will be invited to attend future meetings as a guest of the Panel pending a decision in 2024 about recruiting a permanent member to bring a migrants and their housing needs perspective.
* December members pre-meeting will start looking at the long term future of the Panel.
* Secretariat to draft short survey of members as part of their internal conversation about continuing to build an inclusive and cohesive Panel for the long term.
* Key issues to raise under agenda items
  + London Planning Guidance. LHFC commented that it’s hard to stay on top of what’s coming out of the work with concerns that ‘benchmarking value’ based on current land value could be gamed; and developers definitions of ‘realistic’ valuations may not be great. LGT suggested members offer to have a workshop with the team. IL raised concern that the fast track could lose specialist accessible housing.
  + Temporary Accommodation Working Group. Paper refers to scarcity of housing and the issue that people seeking asylum are losing basic protections in terms of standards. A-TM stressed importance of not allowing scarcity to divide communities.
* Secretariat to circulate date for members meeting to discuss key media lines.

Minutes of 11-1 Full Panel meeting

1. **Chair’s welcome, introductions and updates**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. **Minutes of the last meeting**

Notes from the last meeting held on 7 March 2023 were approved by Panel and GLA.

1. **Chair’s business**

* The Chair has held meetings with two members of Homes for Londoners Board, Darren Rodwell and Keiron Williams, to get to know them and see where connections lie
* Also Tim Steer, Executive Director of Housing and Land, who will attend September Panel as he has a particular focus on supply. The meeting touched on monitoring providers EDI action plans.
* Members to let secretariat know if they are interested in joining the chair for meetings with G15 or G320.

1. **Standing item: Planning for London**

The Planning for London team are committed to delivering a stakeholder event later in the year and are working with the Panel to determine how and when it will happen.

**Actions and decisions:**

* Secretariat to arrange a short online meeting so that members can be updated following their meeting with London Plan team (14 June) and agree next steps.

1. **Housing Delivery Taskforce**

Francesca Williams, GLA, updated the meeting and answered questions.

Taskforce have focused on a genuine priority list to take to Government, reducing lobbying asks from 61 to 6 and 3-4 project streams. They’re anticipating a long, shallow recession which will continue to make it hard to deliver homes. Looking at what can be done with their own resources, e.g. increasing acquisition of homes, as well as using land and infrastructure to support SMEs.

LFT were disappointed that the term ‘social rented’ was not in the paper and felt that the council-led affordable homes is opaque. GLA explained it’s used as shorthand for ‘social rented and other genuinely affordable homes’ and they are talking to DLUHC about increasing flexibility in the Affordable Homes Programme to increase the focus on social rented homes.

LHFC welcomed the flexibility to the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) rate but questioned how many additional homes it would result in as it appears to be only 80. GLA will check how additionality would work out.

**Actions and decisions:**

* Noted that Panel prefers to see the term social rented used to separate it from other forms of affordable housing. GLA to check with colleagues on the detail of numbers on additionality.

1. **Report from temporary accommodation working group – Special item**

An extended update from the working group was circulated including a draft Open Letter for discussion. Representatives from Migrants Organise and Praxis were invited to attend and contribute to this item as guests of the Panel.

**Actions & decisions:**

* Open Letter: The meeting was broadly content with the letter and raised the points below for amendment and/or for including in a companion document. The secretariat will revise and share back the letter so that it can be agreed by each party. This will include guidance. Please let the secretariat know any organisations that might want to sign. The points raised were:
  + Check we are using the correct legal definition of age (London Councils)
  + Consider adding that LHA should be pitched at median market rent levels
  + Be more assertive/specific about standards in TA, that they should be same as other accommodation. Could link back to Renters Reform Bill Part 5 to add more specificity.
  + Rent control would be straying from core topic of the letter but could go into work on media lines.
  + Make clear asks about self-contained are about TA specifically as shared accommodation for young people or refuges where share kitchens wouldn’t fit with this ask.
  + Add ‘and regardless of immigration status’ to middle bullet under standards
* TA and people seeking asylum. The points made by representatives of Migrants Organise, Praxis and Generation Rent (who have carried out work on TA with Migrants Organise) were:
  + Asylum Accommodation: In the open letter the focus is on HMOs, Children Act Homelessness legislation. Need to also consider how much there are children in hotels. Asylum Act only talks about hotels. Was initially about 6 weeks. Accommodation should be that for only 6 weeks, after which you have a right to play, right to be in your own place etc.
  + Transition following status being granted. How can someone who is unable to work for years step into the housing market? Quick grants for housing deposits for example, would give someone a real chance to be housed. Otherwise they are forced into the homelessness process.
  + The call for a named officer would be incredible. There’s also a division of responsibility with a lot of passing around between Home Office and local council. A couple of local councils have an asylum seeking liaison officer (Kensington, Islington).
  + The issue is not just standards, but also insecurity, having to move from hotel to hotel. Also there is often oppressive surveillance, affecting quality of life.
  + This really chimes with what Brighter Futures group of young asylum seekers. The two things they mention is the surveillance and the lack of standards, and that standards that exist in other areas of housing need to apply to the housing that asylum seekers are allocated.
* Issue of gatekeeping and access to duty for LGBT young people and domestic abuse survivors. Include this in companion document. Solace can provide detail.
* London Councils will share with TA working group outcomes of commissioned work on a triage homelessness service that would provide a framework for people in need who sometimes experience gate keeping.

**Actions and decisions:**

* Secretariat to review the Open Letter for the points that have been made; possibility of elaborating on this in the companion document.
* Secretariat will revise and share back the letter so that it can be agreed by each party.

1. **Report from other Panel working groups**

A summary document of the activities of the working groups was circulated with the meeting papers and taken as read. The Working Group Chairs reported back to the meeting including what they see as the implications for their group of the recommendations in the GLA’s Housing and Race research report.

**7.1 Housing supply**

**Actions and decisions:**

* Will bring to September meeting work on the overall benefits as well as costs of social housing supply for a longer discussion. Planning to hold a meeting with GLA Public Health – all welcome. Date to be confirmed.

**7.2 Building Londoners’ voice in housing**

**Actions & decisions:**

* Decision for Voice and Project groups to merge. GLA to bring to merged group a proposal from Housing & Land, and Community Engagement teams about how they can work together. Meetings of the merged group will be online or hybrid.

**7.3 Project working group**

**Actions & decisions:**

* See above decision for Voice and Project groups to merge. Future meetings will focus on hearing feedback from the secretariat’s meeting with the London Plan team; and developing key media lines.

1. **Affordable Housing and Development Viability London Plan Guidance consultation**

The Chair noted that there’s varying levels of expertise around this technical issue but that shouldn’t matter, what’s important is that the guidance reflects the issues the Panel cares about in the sense that they reflect the diverse experiences of diverse housing needs in London. GLA stressed how important it is that the Panel engages with this.

This is an update of the Supplementary Guidance to be taken into account when creating new local plans and the consultation ends on 24 July.

Key points:

* Mayor’s preference for Low Cost Rent to be delivered as social rent because it meets the needs of Londoners. Requirements in order to fast track (the threshold approach). Most local plans will be guided to this.
* Guidance for intermediate homes for key workers. Encourages local authorities to set eligibility criteria, three month marketing period for key workers. After that cascade down to other eligibility criteria. Came out of raised importance of key workers from pandemic. Suggestion: definition of key workers should come from this (drawn up with trade unions, local authorities). Covers almost 30% of Londoners.
* Intermediate rent top cap increased to £67,000. Increases the number of middle income households eligible. At the moment they can’t access private or sometimes shared ownership. Increases reflect household with two key workers could earn this.
* Might lead to increase rents, could also improve viability and lead to a greater number of affordable homes to be delivered.
* New section on service charges; ensure that they are affordable to affordable housing residents, and no additional charge other than the service charge to use the facilities.

Four Panel members were invited to share what they see as being important to reflect in these proposals:

1. London Gypsies and Travellers: Gained quite a lot in the last London Plan. Affordable Homes Programme is available to fund the delivery of new sites and refurbishment. Seen little uptake unfortunately. Want to understand could there be any stronger links made in the guidance that sites are a form of affordable housing delivery, to give more incentive to London local authorities to provide this type of accommodation?
2. Inclusion London (Disabled people’s organisation): The focus on social housing is welcome. Ensure that accessible housing is present in the social housing element and not undermined through fast track. Know that accessible units are more expensive and it’s harder to market them. Keen that they aren’t lost.
3. Generation Rent: Driving the supply of affordable homes is good, is part of the process of digging ourselves out of the crisis. Interested in the impact of the Infrastructure Levy as opposed to S106. Fast track route is a good thing; needs to strike a balance between increasing supply and delivering affordable homes. Anything that meaningfully drives up social rented homes supply is valuable.
4. Solace Women’s Aid: See the links between the scarcity of social and affordable housing and the groups we support and the gatekeeping behaviour. Seen a decrease in the percentage of survivors going into social housing from 12 to 7%. Noting there is prioritisation for key workers, been calling for a ringfence for survivors. Recognise that may be more of a borough level issue.

Chair then opened up for discussion and the following points were raised with members of the GLA’s Planning Team.

* Action on Empty Homes asked:
  + What impact the inflation of build cost is going to have.
  + To clarify benchmark values and how they plan to use existing use values.
  + How will they interface with Mayoral responsibilities? Will undermine the Mayor’s role.
* London Tenants Federation: One of the problems is that in the London Plan, boroughs are allowed to do only 30% social rent in their local plans. Leading to small amounts of social housing. Key worker rents: example of Peabody building with12 key worker homes all being let out at London Living Rent, which is double the social rent. Concern that it’s displacing housing for social rent.
* Tonic Housing: Guidance needs to be supported by Equalities Impact Assessment that has teeth and evidence behind it. It states “no impact” for transgender people without evidence. Is that up for consultation?
* Concern about time lag between guidance and when will see it flow through.

Specific responses from GLA officers were:

* Regarding inflation build costs and difficult market conditions: The industry is pushing back on aspects of the guidance and it’s difficult for local authorities to assess as they tend to depend on external experts. Can provide some guidance on what’s realistic, can also come back using the mid-term reviews if build costs were not as high. Also looking at whether values are increasing as much as build costs.
* The consultation on the infrastructure levy closes 9 June. The new approach is more tax-like in substance and there are concerns that it will result in less affordable housing being delivered. A fixed levy on the end value, right at the end of the process after all units are sold, brings valuation to the centre of the process. The development sector don’t know what their liabilities will be; and it will be difficult for local authorities. It will affect the Mayor’s role as it will be set by each local authority in a patchwork of different structures. It will also take a long time to come forward; a 10-year roll out.
* Regarding striking a balance between increasing supply and delivering affordable homes and whether the balance is reflected in the wider London Plan document: Agree the balance is really important. The focus on this document is social rent, because we’re in fortunate place of having the guidance and affordable homes funding.
* LFT’s point about key worker homes displacing housing for social rent and London Affordable Rent being a legacy of the previous framework: Guidance is that 40% should be provided in line with the local split. Most boroughs do weight it to social housing requirement. Higher proportion of social rent should be provided in order to follow the fast track route. Keen not to incentives developers avoiding the fast track route. Policy H6 does still talk about London Affordable Rent, which is a legacy of the previous framework and the guidance is clarifying the lean towards social rent.
* The time lag between the guidance and when it will flow through should be quicker because it’s in line with an existing London Plan and therefore not requiring a new London Plan process.

**Actions & decisions:**

* The Mayor is consulting on two new pieces of London Plan Guidance. The Consultation is open until 24 July.
* Member questions and comments have been minuted and shared back with GLA Planning team.
* GLA officers offered to follow up directly with LGT on how guidance could be strengthened to encourage Gypsy and Traveller sites as part of the AHP; and with Tonic about whether the Equalities Impact Assessment of the guidance having ‘no impact’ for transgender people is up for consultation. Also to give some thought to Inclusion London’s concerns that accessible housing monitoring should be strengthened to ensure its supply is not undermined through fast-track.

1. **Open Space to raise emerging or pressing topics**

A member asked does the Mayor support Darren Rodwell’s statement will be evicting young people involved with knife crime. A GLA officer will respond [received on 07.06.23 following the meeting: Here is the GLA response: Tom Copley, Deputy Mayor, opposes Councillor Rodwell’s proposal and is happy for this view to be passed on to the Panel members. Please see this [statement from the Mayor](https://amp.lbc.co.uk/news/sadiq-khan-labour-leaders-threat-evict-tenants-knife-crime/)].

1. **Next steps**

The Chair thanked the GLA, Praxis and Migrants Organise for attending and contributing to the meeting.

**Date of next London Housing Panel meeting**

10am-1pm Thursday 14 September 2023 (10-10.50 Members pre-meeting).

**Dates of other future meetings:**

Homes for Londoners Board meeting – 12 June 2023.

Meeting held on 6 June 2023

**Actions & Decisions. Drafted 07.06.23 pending full minutes**

* Minutes of Panel meeting held on 7 March 2023 were agreed.
* Members pre-meeting
  + December members pre-meeting will start looking at the long term of the Panel.
  + Members to let secretariat know if they are interested in joining the chair for meetings with G15 or G320.
  + Secretariat to draft short survey of members as part of their internal conversation about building an inclusive and cohesive Panel for the long term.
  + Secretariat to circulate date for members meeting to discuss key media lines
* Planning for London Programme
  + Secretariat to arrange a short online meeting so that members can be updated following their meeting with London Plan team (14 June) and agree next steps.
* Housing Delivery Taskforce
  + Noted that Panel prefers to see the term social rented used to separate it from other forms of affordable housing. GLA to check with colleagues on the detail of numbers on additionality.
* Report from temporary accommodation working group - Special item
  + Open Letter: The meeting was broadly content with the letter and raised the points below for amendment and/or for including in a companion document. The secretariat will revise and share back the letter so that it can be agreed by each party. This will include guidance. Please let the secretariat know any organisations that might want to sign. The points raised were:
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* Reports from other Panel working groups
  + Supply working group: Will bring to September meeting work on the overall benefits as well as costs of social housing supply for a longer discussion. Planning to hold a meeting with GLA Public Health – all welcome.
  + Voice working group: Decision for Voice and Project groups to merge. GLA to bring to merged group a proposal from Housing & Land, and Community Engagement teams about how they can work together. Meetings of the merged group will be online or hybrid.
* Item on Affordable Housing and Development Viability London Plan Guidance
  + The Mayor is consulting on two new pieces of London Plan Guidance. The Consultation is open until 24 July.
  + Member questions and comments have been minuted and shared back with GLA Planning team.
  + GLA officers offered to follow up directly with LGT on how guidance could be strengthened to encourage Gypsy and Traveller sites as part of the AHP; and with Tonic about whether the Equalities Impact Assessment of the guidance having ‘no impact’ for transgender people is up for consultation. Also to give some thought to Inclusion London’s concerns that accessible housing monitoring should be strengthened to ensure its supply is not undermined through fast-track.