



## Mayor and Cabinet

**Report title: Housing Select Committee in-depth review of resident engagement in housing development: *final recommendations and summary of evidence***

**Date:** 12 February 2020

**Key decision:** No.

**Class:** Part 1

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Contributors:** Executive Director for Corporate Services (Scrutiny Manager)

### Outline and recommendations

This report presents the final recommendations arising from the Housing Select Committee's in-depth review of resident engagement in housing development. The summary of evidence gathered and considered is attached as Appendix A.

Mayor and Cabinet is recommended to:

- (a) Note the views and recommendations of the Committee as set out in this report.
- (b) Agree that the Executive Director for Housing, Regeneration and Environment be asked to respond to the review's recommendations.
- (c) Ensure that a response is provided to the Housing Select Committee.

## Timeline of engagement and decision-making

This review has drawn on national research, evidence from council officers and local partners, and the views of local residents. The evidence gathering timetable of the review was as follows:

**4<sup>th</sup> June 2019 - scoping paper.** The Committee received a scoping paper presenting the most relevant and up-to-date guidance on resident engagement in housing development in order to provide background research and inform the scope of the review.

**10<sup>th</sup> July 2019 - first evidence session.** The Committee received evidence on the approach to resident engagement in Lewisham, including case studies on previous developments, from Council and Lewisham Homes officers.

**August to October 2019 - call for evidence on the council website.** A call for evidence inviting residents to submit their views and opinions in relation to the review. This was promoted via social media.

**5<sup>th</sup> September 2019 - workshop with the RB3 (Brockley PFI) residents.** Residents provided their views on, among other things, the best ways for residents to be informed and involved; obstacles to engagement; and how to reach as wide a range of people as possible.

**18<sup>th</sup> September 2019 - meeting with LB Hackney's Head of Estate Regeneration.** Discussions centred on Hackney's recent experience and practice with resident engagement in relation to housing development.

**18<sup>th</sup> September 2019 - second evidence session.** The Committee received evidence from key local housing partners on their approach to resident engagement in housing development, including Phoenix Community Housing and Peabody. L&Q were also invited.

**30<sup>th</sup> September 2019 - meeting with residents local to Hillcrest Estate.** Residents provided their views on the best ways for residents to be informed and involved; how to reach as wide a range of people as possible; and what should be done differently.

**3<sup>rd</sup> October 2019 - workshop with TRAS on Pepys Estate.** Residents provided their views on the best ways for residents to be informed and involved; how to reach as wide a range of people as possible; and what should be done differently in the future.

**10<sup>th</sup> October - meeting with LB Southwark's Community Engagement Manager.** Discussions centred on Southwark's recent experience and practice with resident engagement in relation to housing development.

**30<sup>th</sup> October 2019 - third evidence session.** The Committee received evidence from [TPAS \(the Tenant Participation Advisory Service\)](#), a national tenant engagement organisation and author of the [National Tenant Engagement Standards](#).

**1<sup>st</sup> November 2019 - meeting with Homes for Lambeth's Head of Operations.** Discussions centred on Lambeth's recent experience and practice with resident engagement in relation to housing development.

**6<sup>th</sup> December - meeting with Lewisham Homes New Development Team.** Discussions centred on Lewisham Homes' recent experience and plans for resident engagement in relation to housing development.

As well as the evidence gathered through the activity set out above, officers and councillors also attended the following: Achilles Street "Bring it to the table" engagement event (4<sup>th</sup> September); Forest Estate Residents Association meeting (19<sup>th</sup> September); Tanners Hill Tenants and Residents Association (26<sup>th</sup> September); Bampton Tenants and Residents Association (17<sup>th</sup> October); and Urban Design London "Meaningful Engagement" event (4<sup>th</sup> December 2019)

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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. This report presents the final recommendations arising from the Housing Select Committee's in-depth review of resident engagement in housing development. The summary of evidence gathered and considered is attached as Appendix A.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Mayor and Cabinet is recommended to:
  - (a) Note the views and recommendations of the Committee as set out in this report.
  - (b) Agree that the Executive Director for Housing, Regeneration and Environment be asked to respond to the review's recommendations.
  - (c) Ensure that a response is provided to the Housing Select Committee.

## 3. Summary

- 3.1. In June 2019 the Housing Select Committee agreed to carry out an in-depth review of resident engagement in housing development.
- 3.2. The aims of the review were to consider how Lewisham Council and its housing partners engage with communities around the process of regeneration and housing development; what has been learned from previous engagement activity; how so-called "seldom-heard" groups and other local stakeholders, including TRAs, are engaged on housing development; and what could be learned from other local authorities.
- 3.3. Given that Lewisham Council is committed to delivering 1,000 new social homes by 2022 – a programme that will involve various levels of resident engagement – the committee agreed that it would be an appropriate time to review current practice in order to support the Council to achieve its strategic objectives.
- 3.4. The committee has considered a wide range of information during the course of the review through public engagement workshops, evidence sessions with subject experts, and meetings with other local authorities. The committee is extremely grateful for the evidence, guidance, support and time provided by everyone who has been involved in the review.
- 3.5. It is clear from the evidence provided that there are already a number of examples of good practice on resident engagement emerging in Lewisham – particularly recent initiatives to increase engagement with seldom-heard groups. The committee has also been reassured by evidence from officers from the Council and Lewisham Homes that plans for future resident engagement are in line with best practice. The committee also notes that the Council has recently carried out its first resident ballot on estate regeneration and approved a Residents Charter in the last year.
- 3.6. The committee has nonetheless set out a number of comments and conclusions based on the evidence gathered during the review. Some are key principles – many of which, it is important to note, are either already in place or part of future plans – and some are recommendations for further action. The committee only expects responses to the specific recommendations.
- 3.7. While the committee is reassured that the Council and Lewisham Homes' plans for resident engagement will be increasingly in line with best practice, the committee stresses the importance of these plans being monitored and evaluated to ensure that things are working as well as they can be – a point which is reflected in the recommendations.

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## 4. Recommendations

- 4.1. The comments and recommendations set out below fall under the three key themes that emerged from the evidence for the review: early engagement; ongoing engagement; and seldom-heard groups. A summary of all the evidence gathered is set out in the attached *Summary of evidence* report.
- 4.2. The recommendations are relevant to the engagement process for small and large developments, irrespective of the requirement to hold a resident ballot.
- 4.3. While the review's recommendations are primarily aimed at the council in light of its commitment to building 1,000 council homes, the committee encourages *all* housing developers to work with the council to ensure community involvement in development is as thorough as possible. The committee looks forward to the publication of Lewisham's *Statement of Community Involvement* following its review.

### 4.4. Early resident engagement

- 4.5. The importance of genuine, early engagement with residents was a key theme throughout the review – from guidance provided by the Mayor of London to feedback from public engagement exercises. The committee identified the following key principles and recommendations:

#### 4.6. Key principles:

- Residents should be involved in the housing development process from the outset, as soon as development on a particular site becomes a realistic possibility.
- Early engagement should be focussed on genuinely listening to residents' priorities and concerns to develop a detailed understanding of the area, relevant site history and any local opposition.
- Engagement should start with a "blank piece of paper", before any specific design proposals, so that residents do not feel like they are being presented with a "done deal".
- Early engagement is an opportunity to be clear with residents, from the outset, about the purpose and drivers of a project and to prevent misinformation early on.

#### 4.7. The committee recommends:

1. *Early resident engagement should include detailed stakeholder mapping and early engagement of local leaders, community groups and local service providers in order to identify local issues and opposition, seldom-heard residents, and engagement preferences and opportunities.*
2. *"Place attachment" – residents' sense of local identity – should be analysed and taken into account on larger-scale and complex projects.*
3. *Early resident engagement should make the case for new homes as a social necessity and highlight the potential benefits to the local area.*

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#### 4.8. **Active and ongoing engagement**

4.9. The committee received evidence on engagement methods, the timing and location of engagement activity, geographic boundaries for involvement, TRA engagement, and comments on openness and transparency. The committee identified the following key principles and recommendations:

4.10. Key principles:

- Ongoing engagement should be focussed on addressing the local priorities, concerns and motivations identified through early engagement and highlighting potential benefits.
- It should be accessible to as wide a range of people as possible, aim to meet the engagement preferences of residents, and not normally involve onerous time commitment.
- In areas without existing resident groups consideration should be given to establishing residents' working groups for specific aspects of a project.
- The most affected residents should be engaged most intensively, and the roles of everyone involved should be made clear as early as possible. This includes the roles and responsibilities of the Council, Lewisham Homes, and other partners.
- Local Councillors and other local leaders should be regularly engaged throughout to tap into local opinion, communicate potential benefits, and broker compromise
- Resident involvement at the design stage can provide opportunities to tackle social and environmental issues identified during early engagement.
- The Council should set the standard for resident engagement on housing development.

4.11. The committee recommends:

4. *Plans for ongoing engagement and communications should be developed with the involvement of residents and stakeholders, and feature a variety of involvement structures, including at the design stage, based on residents' engagement preferences.*
5. *There should be different levels of engagement based on proximity to the development, taking into account local geography, with the role of residents and stakeholders in the process, and the key stages at which they can influence, made clear from the start.*
6. *"Town-hall seminars", bringing together councillors, officers, architects, and resident groups to explore issues around development should be considered for larger-scale and complex projects.*
7. *An engagement plan template should be developed for smaller and large-scale projects.*

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#### 4.12. **Seldom-heard groups and capacity building**

4.13. The committee heard that engagement with seldom-heard groups is one of the toughest challenges for resident engagement, particularly with those who might feel uncomfortable or intimidated attending typical public consultation meetings. The committee received evidence on a number of different approaches and methods.

4.14. Key principles:

- The early identification of seldom-heard residents and their engagement preferences should be a key aim of early engagement.
- There should be engagement mechanisms and support in place to enable seldom-heard residents to have their say, based on their engagement preferences.
- Residents should be given regular opportunities to feedback at on the engagement process.

4.15. The committee recommends:

8. *The Council and Lewisham Homes should work with other Council teams, external partners and organisations, and local residents, to proactively identify and reach out to seldom-heard groups early on.*
9. *Engagement methods for seldom-heard groups should include making targeted contact, specifically inviting attendance at engagement events, and community events tailored to the interests and activities of the relevant seldom-heard groups.*
10. *Independent advisors should be considered for major regeneration projects.*
11. *Engagement activity should be monitored and data collected – particularly on engagement with young people and residents who have not been engaged with before.*
12. *Residents should be involved in evaluating engagement plans.*

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## **5. Financial implications**

- 5.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

## **6. Legal implications**

- 6.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

## **7. Equalities implications**

- 7.1. Equality Act 2010 brought together all previous equality legislation in England, Scotland and Wales. The Act included a new public sector equality duty, replacing the separate duties relating to race, disability and gender equality. The duty came into force on 6 April 2011. It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 7.2. The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
  - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

## **8. Climate change and environmental implications**

- 8.1. There are no direct climate change or environmental implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

## **9. Crime and disorder implications**

- 9.1. There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

## **10. Health and wellbeing implications**

- 10.1. There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

## **11. Background papers**

- 11.1. Review scoping paper, *Housing Select Committee*, 4<sup>th</sup> June 2019 ([see item 7](#))
- 11.2. First evidence session, *Housing Select Committee*, 10<sup>th</sup> July 2019 ([item 5](#))
- 11.3. Second evidence session, *Housing Select Committee*, 18<sup>th</sup> Sep 2019 ([item 5](#))
- 11.4. Third evidence session, *Housing Select Committee*, 30<sup>th</sup> Oct 2019 ([item 4](#))
- 11.5. Summary of evidence, *Housing Select Committee*, 16<sup>th</sup> Dec 2019 ([item 6](#))
- 11.6. Final recommendations, *Housing Select Committee*, 30<sup>th</sup> Jan 2020 ([item 4](#))

## **12. Report contact**

- 12.1. *John Bardens, Scrutiny Manager*, [john.bardens@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:john.bardens@lewisham.gov.uk) 020 8314 9976

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