



## Mayor and Cabinet

### **Response to Resident Housing Select Committee in-depth review on engagement in housing development**

**Date:** 14 September 2021

**Key decision:** No

**Class:** Part 1

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Contributors:** Executive Director for Housing, Regeneration and Public Realm

## **Outline and recommendations**

Mayor and Cabinet to consider the officer response to the 12 recommendations made by the Housing Select Committee following the committee's review of resident engagement in housing development.

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## **Timeline of engagement and decision-making**

Housing Select Committee, 30 January 2020 – Resident engagement in housing development: Summary of evidence

### **1. Summary**

- 1.1. At its meeting of 30 January 2020, Housing Select Committee presented a summary of their review of resident engagement in housing development.
- 1.2. The committee noted that from the evidence that they had gathered as part of their work that commenced in June 2019, there was already a number of examples of good practice across the Borough.
- 1.3. The committee considered that there was an opportunity to implement new practices to build on the good work that was already developed and made 12 recommendations to further improve resident consultation.
- 1.4. This report sets out those 12 recommendations and the officers' response.

### **2. Recommendations**

It is recommended that Mayor and Cabinet:

- 2.1. Consider the officer response to the 12 recommendations made by the Housing Select Committee following the committee's review of resident engagement in housing

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development.

### 3. Policy Context

#### Housing

- 3.1. The Council's Corporate Strategy (2018-2022) outlines the Council's vision to deliver for residents over the next four years. Building on Lewisham's historic values of fairness, equality and putting our community at the heart of everything we do, the Council will create deliverable policies underpinned by a desire to promote vibrant communities, champion local diversity and promote social, economic and environmental sustainability. Delivering this strategy includes the following priority outcomes that relate to the provision of new affordable homes:
- Tackling the Housing Crisis – Providing a decent and secure home for everyone.
  - Building an Inclusive local economy – Ensuring every resident can access high-quality job opportunities, with decent pay and security in our thriving and inclusive local economy.
  - Building Safer Communities – Ensuring every resident feels safe and secure living here as we work together towards a borough free from fear of crime.
- 3.1. Lewisham's Housing Strategy (2020-2026), includes the following themes that relate to the provision of new affordable homes:
1. delivering the homes that Lewisham needs.
  2. preventing homelessness and meeting housing need.
  3. improving the quality, standard and safety of housing.
  4. supporting our residents to live safe, independent and active lives.
  5. strengthening communities and embracing diversity.

### 4. Background

- 4.1. In June 2019 the Housing Select Committee agreed to carry out an in-depth review of resident engagement in housing development.
- 4.2. 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 'seldom heard' groups and other local stakeholders, including TRAs, are engaged on housing development; and what could be learned from other local authorities.
- 4.3. Given that the Council and its delivery partner Lewisham Homes are working on the Building for Lewisham Programme to deliver new, genuinely affordable, Council owned homes, 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.
- 4.4. The committee 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.
- 4.5. In the committee's report of January 2020, they noted that from the evidence provided that there was already a number of examples of good practice on resident engagement emerging in Lewisham – particularly new initiatives to increase engagement with so called 'seldom heard' groups. The committee has also been reassured by evidence

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from officers from the Council and Lewisham Homes that plans for future resident engagement are in line with best practice.

- 4.6. Whilst the committee had evidence of good practice, there is always room for improvement and so the committee made a number of specific recommendations to build on the good work.
- 4.7. The report of January 2020 preceded the pandemic and the additional challenges that lockdown has brought for officers and residents to engage. Officers across the Council and Lewisham Homes have used innovative approaches to continue to engage with residents during the period where traditional forms of engagement have not been possible.

## 5. HSC recommendations and officer responses

- 5.1. In its report of January 2020, the Housing Select Committee made 12 recommendations to continue to improve resident engagement on housing development schemes. These recommendations and officer responses are outlined in paragraphs 5.2 to 5.13:

### Recommendation 1

- 5.2. *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, hard-to-reach residents, and engagement preferences and opportunities.*

Stakeholder mapping has been implemented for all potential schemes from the outset. The Lewisham Homes Development team develop the stakeholder map at the outset of the project, from discussions with Ward Councillors, the Lewisham Homes stakeholder project team which includes the caretaking and housing management officers and a walk and talk on the estate with residents, a survey and door knocking. The survey enabled residents to provide their preferences for days of the week and times for engagement and consultation activities and preferred methods. This identified the residents who do not have access to the internet so that individual needs could be met. The survey, followed up by door knocking, enabled residents at the outset of the project to provide their key design priorities for review by the project team and architects. This was followed up with a meeting where residents met the architects and gave further insight to their community and design requirements.

The Lewisham Homes resident database is also reviewed, to further understand more about the community and the consultation needs. From this Lewisham Homes have been able to identify the demographics of people living on the estates and surrounding areas and have tailored engagement to suit individual needs. For example, Lewisham Homes have offered translation services for people where English is not their first language and telephone contact alongside paper documents or 1-2-1 home visits are provided.

All communication is sent to a wide radius area to invite the community to get involved in a method of their preference. This can be through 1-2-1 meetings (online or in person), online Zoom meetings, Commonplace dedicated web page commenting, paper surveys and questionnaires.

Through early engagement residents have been listened to and have been able to provide feedback on current issues they have on their estate such as lack of refuse/recycling facilities and lack of bicycle storage. This feedback has then been considered and has helped to shape design proposals before planning applications are

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submitted.

All stakeholder maps have contact details of local Councillors and MP's for the Ward each estate is located in, with Ward Councillor briefings held by Lewisham Homes on a quarterly basis or more frequent if required

Lewisham Homes have a communication consultant for the majority of schemes who they collaborate with to identify key community groups and political stakeholders and develop an independent Statement of Community Involvement for each scheme.

The impact of Covid 19 and lockdowns has meant that Lewisham Homes have had to limit in person community events. As an alternative, Lewisham Homes have offered to engage with residents by holding webinars, speaking with residents on the telephone, Zoom 1-2-1 meetings, hand delivering and distributing communication materials as well as each site having a dedicated Commonplace website for the community to provide comments. Where allowed as part of Government guidance, door knocking and face to face events have taken place.

Through surveys and conversations with the community, it has been highlighted that the majority of people's engagement preferences is face-to-face. Lewisham Homes have held successful estate pop up events with good attendance, but also providing an interactive meeting online for people who feel more comfortable with this method of responding to consultation. The community are encouraged to complete a survey either in paper copy or online to give their feedback to design proposals.

## Recommendation 2

- 5.3. *“Place attachment” – residents’ sense of local identity – should be analysed and taken into account on larger-scale and complex projects.*

Through consultations with residents i.e. through surveys and one to one conversations Lewisham Homes and the Council have been able to capture what is important to residents about their local area.

As an example, during a consultation event at Drakes Court, a resident advised: "Drakes Court has a history. It was bombed in the war and rebuilt. It would be good to have a plaque in memory of this". This feedback has been shared with the architects who are looking in to how a memorial piece can be incorporated into the building or landscape design.

As part of the development of the Heathside and Lethbridge estate, a local artist was commissioned by Peabody Housing Association to produce a piece of public art. Working closely with local residents it was decided that a new sundial commemorating a local historic battle from 1497 - 'The Battle of Deptford Bridge' - would be built. It is now the focal point of the public square provided alongside the new community centre, nursery and café built as part of the scheme.

Through further consultations and engagement with residents the Council, Lewisham Homes and housing association partners will be asking more questions focusing on what can be done to support residents' sense of local identity within the proposed developments. Responses will be analysed by the community engagement team and fed back to the design team.

The focus of large scale projects, such as the redevelopment of the Achilles Street Estate is to allow existing residents to remain part of the community when the new

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homes are made available. The Council has committed to all residents who took part in the ballot on the future of their estate, that they will have a new home available to them on the rebuilt estate. As part of this commitment the Council will work closely with residents regarding their preferences for their new homes which includes allocating new homes close to current neighbours and support networks.

Lewisham Homes have developed with the Achilles Resident Steering Group (RSG) an engagement programme, following training by an independent expert on various engagement methods, so that residents could best determine what is suitable for their community. The RSG then presented this back to their community in the form of an online meeting, due to being in lockdown at the time, with positive feedback.

Lewisham Homes supported the RSG to engage with their community to develop the Resident Design Charter following engagement activities with estate residents on what design principles are important to them. This document was included in the procurement tender pack for the selection of the architects and was followed up with a walk around the estate and area with the architects upon selection.

The architects for the Achilles scheme and Lewisham Homes are working with the RSG to hold a community event in the autumn to develop further with estate residents the themes from the Resident Design Charter. In addition to this, workshops with Deptford Green School children and Childeric Primary School children have been held by the architects and Lewisham Homes to understand more about their views on local identity and place attachment and it involved the school children interviewing local businesses too.

At the the former Ladywell Leisure Centre development site Lewisham Homes held an interactive in person workshop with involvement from the local St. Mary's Lewisham C Of E Primary School children and community residents. This was led by the architects and local artist Jake Sherwood. The community in the workshop developed a model of the site and surrounding areas and gave local valuable insight into what would need to be considered by the project team as important to local community needs.

### Recommendation 3

- 5.4. *Early resident engagement should make the case for new homes as a social necessity and highlight the potential benefits to the local area.*

From the outset of engagement activities the Council and Lewisham Homes make it clear the purpose of building new homes. The case is set out in all communication materials that are shared with residents and stakeholders e.g. newsletters, Commonplace website, surveys and information packs. Please refer to Appendix A Elderton Road newsletter December 2020 as an example.

In this communication material we explain that housing is in short supply across Lewisham and creating new homes is crucial to addressing the growing pressure on the Council's Housing Register.

In the published Residents Charter (<https://lewisham.gov.uk/inmyarea/regeneration/building-affordable-homes/the-resident-charter-for-estate-regeneration>), there is a guarantee to build an increased amount of homes for social rent. The charter sets out the reason for this guarantee and supports the case for new homes.

On individual schemes, the Council, Lewisham Homes and housing association

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partners highlight other benefits such as improved public realm.

#### Recommendation 4

- 5.5. *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.*

For each Lewisham Homes development scheme there is a communication strategy developed from the stakeholder map. For the Achilles estate, residents of the estate were trained on community engagement and consultation by an Independent Expert and following this they developed the Achilles commonplace website and newsletter content is developed by the RSG and Lewisham Homes. A timeline of the project is also developed at the design stage which is shared with residents and stakeholders to view and to provide their opinions.

The first engagement survey for each community Lewisham Homes work with includes a survey seeking their views on engagement preferences at the outset of the project, This survey is provided in paper copy with a freepost envelope to residents and residents are given the option to complete it online. Door knocking is carried out to encourage residents to complete the survey. The results are analysed and preferences of involvement are added to the stakeholder map for the Lewisham Homes Development Engagement team to adhere to. Please see Appendix B for an example survey.

Residents have commented to Lewisham Homes that the newsletters are useful regular communications and recognise the Building for Lewisham branding on the front of envelopes as important to open. Non resident leaseholders have commented they are pleased the online meetings are continuing alongside in person events, as it provides many with the opportunity to attend engagement activities even if not local, or living in the UK.

From engagement activities, Lewisham Homes identified residents on the Achilles estate who had an interest in more involvement. As such, these residents had a training programme from independent experts over 3 months to capacity build. These residents became Communication and Design Champions, who with Lewisham Homes jointly developed the Terms of Reference for the Achilles Resident Steering Group (RSG). The Champions were also trained on how to engage others on their estate to be involved, as such a youth representative was encouraged to take part and is now the Vice Chair of the RSG.

#### Recommendation 5

- 5.6. *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.*

As above, there is a strategy on how to engage with different stakeholders for all of the schemes which includes details of how stakeholders can influence at each key stage. In the newsletters, that are also published on the commonplace website, Lewisham Homes provide timelines showing the stages of the project and demonstrate that the consultation has been meaningful by highlighting the feedback received and how that feedback has been incorporated into the scheme. This is demonstrated in Appendix C, Elderton Road July 21 newsletter. The Statement of Community

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Involvement also outlines clearly what feedback has been received and how this has influenced design proposals and the co-design process.

All estate residents where development is being considered have been invited to attend online and in person training by an independent Lewisham architect on design stages, how to influence design, design policy and how to read architectural drawings as part of Design and Communication Champion training. This has been attended by over 25 residents so far with positive feedback. One of the feedback forms stated *“it was evident that an effort is being made to connect with residents and foster greater inclusion with the development”* and another resident said *‘the Champions programme empowers residents, promotes inclusion in community decision making and facilitates positive change’*.

#### Recommendation 6

- 5.7. *“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.*

Due to Covid restrictions it has not been possible to have seminars in person, however alternative methods have been found by having webinars with residents and online design team meetings. Lewisham Homes have also held quarterly ward councillor briefings to update on the development of the project including providing updates on resident engagement.

With the easing of Covid restrictions we will be able to revert to ‘Town-hall seminars’ but will still provide the webinar option for residents who are shielding, who are uncomfortable with meeting in person/in a group or now have a preference for the online option.

#### Recommendation 7

- 5.8. *An engagement plan template should be developed for smaller and large-scale projects.*

As outlined in 4.5, there are engagement, consultation and communication strategies in place for all schemes regardless of the size.

The communication, consultation and engagement strategies all differ depending on the stakeholder map. However, they do all involve the Lewisham Homes Occupational Health team and Lewisham Disabled People’s Chair as key stakeholders for review of the accessible homes.

All of the Lewisham Homes schemes have a website on Commonplace. This website is bespoke to each housing scheme and provides all correspondence to estate residents and the wider community from the outset of the scheme, including newsletters. This provides residents who move into estate void properties to ‘get up to speed’ on events and involvement so far.

As part of the engagement strategy, this has involved where possible training residents by an independent consultant on procurement to jointly select key project consultants. The Ladywell Design and Communication Champions jointly procured and selected the Landscape Architects with Lewisham Homes for the scheme, including the Champions devising the tender questions and scoring matrix related to community engagement and social value.

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Engagement with the community does not stop at the point for planning permission being granted, Lewisham Homes continue to work with the community with Meet the Contractor events, newsletters and attendance at TRA meetings to further shape the process from when the new homes are completed and residents move in and integrate with the existing community.

In addition to this, Lewisham Homes are working on developing with resident input a revised approach to the Home User Guide. This Guide is to help residents know how to operate items in their home, understand what is their responsibility and other key information. Feedback from residents has suggested that information that has visual aids is most helpful, such as a step by step video of how to operate the heating controls, as such we are working on a project to develop this with residents.

#### Recommendation 8

- 5.9. *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 hard-to-reach groups early on.*

The Community Engagement team at Lewisham Homes have met with officers at Southwark Council who are working on a similar programme of building new council homes across the borough due to the extreme housing shortage. During the meetings they discussed their methods on how to identify and reach seldom heard groups. They do this by ensuring their engagement activities reflect the diversity of their estates through profiling. Lewisham Homes have done this across all of the estates where development is proposed by working with the housing management team and using in house systems to support this.

Lewisham Homes also regularly meet with Tenants and Residents Associations and existing local community groups to provide updates regarding the development of the scheme who then communicate information to local residents who will then contact us directly.

#### Recommendation 9

- 5.10. *Engagement methods for hard-to-reach groups should include making targeted contact, specifically inviting attendance at engagement events, and community events tailored to the interests and activities of the relevant hard-to-reach groups.*

As well as sending invitations to consultation events, to maximise input, Lewisham Homes make direct contact with residents who live on estates where the proposed developments are taking place by contacting them on the telephone or by door knocking when possible. This has proved to be effective for the Greystead Road consultation event as residents were able to discuss their concerns/queries with officers in advance and confirm their attendance. This contact also prompts residents to refer to the communication material previously available so that they are fully informed on the evolving plans. Through door knocking, Lewisham Homes has also been able to identify where translated materials are required, but not previously known and also develop engagement with younger residents.

Some of the young adults on the estates Lewisham Homes are working with have been engaged through door knocking and grass roots engagement, as such some of these residents are now working with Lewisham Homes on identifying opportunities for them as part of the social value programme for work experience placements and local labour

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opportunities to work on the Building for Lewisham programme. One example of where engagement has been successful in ensuring a long term legacy, is where a Lewisham Homes resident was engaged about the Building for Lewisham programme and is now employed on the Knapdale Close scheme as a traffic marshall. An interview with Chris can be seen here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRN86CMZ8XA>

Through surveys Lewisham Homes have managed to establish which residents have a computer and which residents are IT confident. Some residents who live on the Dacres Road estate disclosed that they were not comfortable using Zoom which discouraged them from attending a training workshop about design from an independent architect earlier in the year. Subsequently Lewisham Homes arranged for another workshop to take place on their estate in person in July 2021 which was well attended.

## Recommendation 10

### 5.11. *Independent advisors should be considered for major regeneration projects.*

As part of the communication and engagement strategy for the Achilles Street redevelopment, Lewisham Homes and the Achilles Resident Steering Group (RSG) are currently jointly procuring an Independent Advisor (IA) who will provide information, advice and support to estate residents. This is of course to provide an option to residents to talk to someone who is independent of Lewisham Homes and the Council. The Achilles Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) is represented in the RSG.

Lewisham Homes set up a series of online meetings for the Achilles RSG with other London Borough regeneration resident steering groups and their independent advisors to enable sharing of information and lessons learnt, developing an understanding of the Independent Advisor role and items they should consider for the brief.

In addition, the RSG jointly procured the Independent Chair for the Steering Group meetings. Lewisham Homes has also employed TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) to train the RSG members.

## Recommendation 11

### 5.12. *Engagement activity should be monitored and data collected – particularly on engagement with young people and residents who have not been engaged with before.*

As part of the management of projects, the Council, Lewisham Homes and our other housing partners record data from the various engagement events and contacts that is GDPR compliant. This data is used to keep engaged stakeholders informed of progress and also to identify those stakeholders who are seldom heard.

In May 2020 Lewisham Homes held an animation project to engage the younger people living on the Achilles Street estate during Covid19 lockdown. Some of the young residents were feeling confined in their homes by the lockdown, but Lewisham Homes engagement team heard from calls to the estate residents at the time that they enjoyed drawing as a way of reducing their anxiety. The aim of this project was for young people to work with an animator employed by Lewisham Homes to teach the young residents how to story board and create an animation of what the regeneration story is so far on the estate and also what is important to them as part of the regeneration. This animation was shown to the Lewisham Young Mayor, Councillors,

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estate residents and the architects. The four young residents aged from 6-16 years old turned their vision in to an excellent animation, with narration by some of the group that is published online. This can be viewed at <https://www.lewishamhomes.org.uk/achilles-estate-young-peoples-animation-project/> or [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=auQn\\_mDku0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=auQn_mDku0s)

## Recommendation 12

### 5.13. *Residents should be involved in evaluating engagement plans.*

For the Achilles Street estate redevelopment the Resident Steering Group (RSG) has been developing together with Lewisham Homes engagement team the engagement plan. A key item that came out of the engagement plan, was the need to ensure that the RSG meetings are transparent, as such the minutes are on the Commonplace website so that all in the community can know what is discussed and also add comments through the Commonplace portal of items they would like the RSG to cover in future meetings. The RSG are also involved in selecting the communications consultant team who will support the engagement proposals and get the wider community involved in the project.

Feedback was given to the engagement proposals for Valentines Court that there is a preference for an 'in person' event to be extended further into the evening to accommodate people who have family/work commitments. This has been implemented.

## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1. The Building for Lewisham programme is delivering modern, genuinely affordable, new homes. These homes will be available to residents on the Housing Register – residents that would otherwise be homeless or in need of a new home that meets their assessed needs. The potential impact on residents who live on or near the sites being developed for new homes is not underestimated.
- 6.2. The Council, Lewisham Homes and other housing partners have been leading the way on resident engagement over many years. The Council carried out a resident ballot on redevelopment proposals for the Excalibur estate years before the GLA requirement to ballot residents, a Resident Charter for Estate Regeneration has been adopted, there has been a successful outcome to the Achilles Street estate ballot and officers have adapted to the additional challenges from the pandemic to continue to engage with our residents.
- 6.3. Lewisham Homes are considering recommendations from the Social Housing White Paper, The Charter for Social Housing Residents and other approaches to engagement in partnership with community groups.
- 6.4. Officers want to continue to develop and improve on how we engage with residents before, during and after housing development and thank the Housing Select Committee for their research and subsequent recommendations.
- 6.5. As set out in this report, officers have considered the 12 recommendations made by the committee and responded on what has already been actioned and what is shortly to be actioned.

## 7. Financial implications

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

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## **8. Legal implications**

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

## **9. Equalities implications**

- 9.1. 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.
- 9.2. 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.

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

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

## **11. Crime and disorder implications**

- 11.1. There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

## **12. Health and wellbeing implications**

- 12.1. There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.

## **13. Background papers**

- 13.1. More information on the previous Mayor and Cabinet and Housing Select Committee reports are available on the Council's website at <https://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/>

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## **15. Comments for and on behalf of the Executive Director for Corporate Resources**

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## **16. Comments for and on behalf of the Director of Law, Governance and HR**

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