

PRESENT

Committee Members

Cllr Claire Simmons (Chair)
Cllr Gregory Hammond (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Joanna Gardner
Cllr Will Lane
Cllr Lloyd North
Cllr Marie-Therese Rossi

Others Present

Cllr Sarah Addenbrooke, Lead Member for Communities and Community Safety
Cllr Sof McVeigh, Lead Member for Housing Management, Housing Safety and Building New Homes
Cllr Mary Weale, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Council Officers

Luke Curran, Governance Officer
Doug Goldring, Director of Housing Management (Grenfell)
Bella Jessop, Scrutiny and Policy Officer
Alison Olugunna, Head of Capital Delivery and New Homes
Gabin Sinclair-Constance, Head of Community Partnerships
Moira Ugoji, Director of Communities

MINUTES

72 SECONDS' SILENCE

All present observed 72 seconds of silence in memory of the 72 residents that lost their lives in the Grenfell Tragedy.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Dahabo Isse.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 GRENFELL COMMUNITY PROGRAMME

The Chair introduced the item and invited the Lead Member for Communities and Community Safety and support officers to take part in the discussion.

Members of the Committee were invited to comment or ask questions on the report. Members of the Committee:

1. Questioned the suggestion for select committee scrutiny of the Grenfell Projects Fund (GPF) Round 4 process after bids had been assessed and recommended for decision and before the decision on allocations was announced. Members felt that instead, the Committee had a legitimate role in scrutinising the structure of the process and designing the operating model for the allocation process, and in reviewing the entire process after completion of round 4.
2. Supported the decision to delay GPF Round 4 so as not to conflict with, and benefit from the findings of, the restorative justice consultation, but noted it would still conflict with Round 2 of the Community Leadership Programme. Officers assured the Committee that the two programmes could be delivered concurrently without conflicting.
3. Discussed the phrase 'five Grenfell impacted wards' used throughout the report and raised concern that the phrase did not appropriately or accurately reflect the true scale of the affected community, which had dispersed across - and in some cases out of - the borough in the years following the disaster. Officers advised the phrase was taken from historic documents on Grenfell Recovery to acknowledge what was said at the time and did not reflect current practice to acknowledge 'Grenfell affected communities'.
4. Commended the scale of support offered via the Programme, with 40 organisations in receipt of grants and over 7000 individual participants.
5. Received assurance that the allocation's process was appropriately monitored to ensure it was legally compliant.
6. Welcomed support the Council was offering during the recruitment process for membership of the Curve Legacy Group. The Committee agreed to explore ways of engaging with the Curve Legacy Group during future scrutiny of the Grenfell Community Programme.
7. Queried the basis of project categories, noted the imbalance in applications across categories in previous rounds, and expressed concern that this meant the fund might in the past have been used to fill gaps in core spending. Members called on the Council to (a) provide greater clarity to applicants on the type of projects needed to achieve a balanced programme relative to evidenced needs, (b) ensure project categories were developed in collaboration with residents and (c) ensure that where funding gaps were identified by project category imbalances, the relevant directorates of the Council were informed.

8. Suggested that the Grenfell Recovery Strategy was implemented top-down with little opportunity for resident engagement or codesign and cautioned against the Council re-writing history in claiming the approach to recovery was resident-led.
9. Called on the Council to explicitly acknowledge the ongoing suffering of residents when discussing the Grenfell tragedy and recovery strategy, including in the preparation of reports for Council business.

5 NEW HOMES PROGRAMME

The Chair introduced the item and welcomed the Lead Member for Housing Management, Housing Safety and Building New Homes and supporting officers to the meeting.

The Lead Member reaffirmed the Council's commitment to delivering new homes, and particularly new social homes, despite the challenges posed by the wider economic environment.

The Chair invited comments or questions from the Committee. Members of the Committee:

1. Discussed visits members of the Committee had made to homes completed and underway within the New Homes Programme, and highlighted the high standards of completed units, particularly the Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery units, and the fact that all developments were tenure-blind.
2. Noted that notice of a proposed Key Decision to increase the project budget for the development at Silchester Arches had been published on the Forward Plan of Key Decisions, and requested further information. Officers advised the project had been delayed by protracted negotiations with TfL over a strip of land adjacent to the site that was required for access. Officers advised the Council had updated its procedures programme-wide to avoid similar delays in the future.
3. Suggested the Council explore the possibility of acquiring homes off-plan at the proposed developments in Earl's Court and Kensal Green to help deliver the New Homes Programme and agreed to make a formal recommendation to the Lead Member to that effect.
4. Asked whether measures were being taken to mitigate the risk of market conditions worsening and further affecting the likelihood of the full programme being delivered. Officers advised rigorous financial modelling was carried out to stress-test the programme cost by up to 20% in addition to the effect of reduced rent levels.
5. Noted the proposed reduction in the number of homes to be built at Edenham Way and asked whether the 600 new home goal would be achieved. The Lead Member cautioned that whilst 600 new homes remained the objective, the Council needed to be realistic about what could be delivered on existing Council-owned sites. The Lead Member anticipated 600 homes would be delivered in the borough through a combination of council-led and developer-led programmes.

6. Welcomed the prioritisation of affordable and accessible homes in the development of the programme but queried the placement of some accessible homes on the first floor of buildings or higher to accommodate commercial spaces on ground-floor level.
7. Highlighted the need for safe charging facilities for electric wheelchairs or other transport equipment.
8. Asked whether the review of the Programme undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers had been valuable to the Council. Officers advised the review had been worthwhile as it had reassured the Council that the programme was progressing in the right way. The Lead Member added that the review was necessary in the context of the changing economic landscape.
9. Suggested the pausing of phase three projects would enable the Council to assess whether the types of homes to be developed in the Programme reflected the needs of residents on the Housing Register, in particular, larger homes with more bedrooms and accessible homes.
10. Questioned whether risks of the sites under development were appropriately considered in advance considering the delays that had affected the projects.
11. Received assurance from the Lead Member that the GP Surgery occupying the site of the Walmer Road development would not move until a facility had opened elsewhere.

The Chair summarised the discussion and the Committee's recommendation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Lead Member for Housing Management, Housing Safety and Building New Homes explore the possibilities offered by the two opportunity areas at Kensal Canalside and Earl's Court for complete delivery of the New Homes Programme.

6 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

The Chair introduced the item and invited the Committee to discuss the report.

1. Members noted the meeting scheduled for 30th April 2024 would be rescheduled so as not to take place during the pre-election period for the Mayoral and GLA elections and a new date would be confirmed when available.
2. The final report of the Hostel Working Group was to be added to the work programme.

The Committee AGREED the Work Programme with the addition of the Hostel Working Group's final report and recommendations.

a) Hostels Working Group Progress Update

Cllr Marie-Therese Rossi provided an update on progress made to date and future plans for the Committee's working group on supported accommodation in the borough.

b) **Repairs, Maintenance and Upgrades Conference Update**

Cllr Greg Hammond provided an update on the residents' conference on repairs.

The meeting ended at 8.05 pm

Chair

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