

PRESENT

Members of the Committee

Cllr. Robert Thompson (Chair)
Cllr. Malcolm Spalding (Vice-Chair)
Cllr. Hamish Adourian
Cllr. Robert Atkinson
Cllr. Max Chauhan
Cllr. Marwan Elnaghi
Cllr. Greg Hammond
Cllr. Walaa Idris

Others at the Table

Cllr. Kim Taylor-Smith (Deputy Leader, Grenfell & Housing)
Matt Hogan (Site Project Manager, Grenfell Tower)
Maxine Holdsworth (Director of Housing Needs and Supply)
Jas Purewal (Head of Community Engagement)
Barry Quirk (Chief Executive)
Robert Sheppard (Head of Governance Services)

The meeting was attended by some 70 members of the press and public and representatives of other organisations.

PUBLIC AGENDA

72 SECONDS SILENCE

All present stood in silence in remembrance of those who lost their lives in the Grenfell tragedy.

CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the Committee's first meeting of the new Municipal Year.

He explained that filming was permitted at the meeting and that anyone not wanting to be filmed should sit in seating towards the rear of the room.

He continued by indicating how he planned to manage the meeting and the need to stick to timings for each agenda item, allowing for a concise presentation from officers, then questions from Councillors, then public contributions.

In addition to considering the four Leadership Team reports on the agenda, the Committee needed, importantly, to identify key areas for attention as part of its Work Programme for the period to May 2019.

The Chair explained that he was seeking nominations from the community for the four co-optee places on the Committee, and hoped that the Notting Dale Forum would be able to provide these at its meeting on 27 September*.

* **Note:** This meeting has subsequently been rescheduled to 26 September.

Cllr. Robert Atkinson reported that the Notting Dale Forum had met for the first time yesterday (23 July). No particular suggestions had been made on who should fill the co-optee places though there were requests for more co-optee places and greater councillor representation on the committee from northern wards. A range of other issues were raised but these didn't relate to the Committee's business tonight, apart from items for the Work Programme which he would raise later on the agenda.

At the Chair's invitation, those at the table introduced themselves one-by-one.

A1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND MEMBERSHIP

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Sof McVeigh.

A2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

A3. GRENFELL RECOVERY STRATEGY

Cllr. Kim Taylor-Smith and Robyn Fairman briefly introduced the report. Cllr. Taylor-Smith stressed that he welcomed scrutiny input to help shape decisions and policies. They introduced the '*Commitments to those affected by the Grenfell Tragedy*' that had been developed jointly with the NHS and informed by the Public Health needs assessment '*A Journey of Recovery*'.

Robyn Fairman explained that the Council was not presenting a final Recovery Strategy at this stage. Instead, the commitments are broad and open-ended and signalled the intention to continue dialogue with survivors, the bereaved and the wider community. She noted that the Council was still faced with challenges relating to the response but that progress had been made, especially on rehousing survivors. However, she noted that people's concerns are changing and that many are starting gradually to talk about the future. The commitments were part of 'doing the right thing' for North Kensington and showing communities 'a bit of love'.

One of the themes throughout the commitments is a clear acknowledgement of the lack of trust in the Council. The commitments acknowledge that the Council alone cannot meet all local needs and that it will need to work closely with a range of partners (especially central government, the NHS, Victim Support, the Police and other organisations).

Summary of questions and issues raised by Councillors

- (i) From what other disasters had lessons been learnt?

Response: Robyn Fairman encouraged Councillors and others to look at the needs assessment that formed part of tomorrow's Leadership Team papers and was available online. Officers had looked at the

Volendam fire disaster in Holland and the Lac-Mégantic disaster in Québec and were very mindful of the lessons of Hillsborough. All disasters are different and the scale and complexity of the Grenfell tragedy presented particular challenges, but the lessons for recovery are broadly similar: that communities have to feel they have control and that recovery has to include a positive vision for the future. This is why the focus on children and young people is so important.

- (ii) What pre-consultation has there been? Has the Notting Dale Residents Advisory Board been involved?

Response: Robyn Fairman indicated there had been some pre-consultation, but that the bulk of the consultation would happen over the summer. Jas Purewal explained that there would be workshops, a website and other channels to give the wider community, including both 'quiet voices' and organised groups, a chance to contribute. All feedback would be recorded, collated and made available to ensure maximum transparency.

- (iii) What are the top three risks for the Strategy?

Response: Robyn Fairman indicated these were: (i) community buy-in; (ii) the challenges of co-design whilst distrust remained high; and (iii) limitations on resources, which meant this had to be a partnership effort and something on which the Council cannot afford to over-promise.

- (iv) The needs assessment was a very good document indeed and made mention of youth and community grants. However Ward Councillors in northern wards had the same '*City Living, Local Life*' (CLLL) budget at their disposal as other wards, some of which did not spend their allocation – so could this allocation be increased? Also could the Council's procurement and 'buying power' be used to provide greater community benefit?

Response: Robyn Fairman confirmed that there were ways the Council could help to secure apprenticeships, access to supply chains etc. for local people and businesses, and there was a renewed appetite to use the Council's procurement code to create opportunities for local people and stimulate the local economy where possible. Cllr. Taylor-Smith indicated that Doug Goldring, Director of Housing Management, was exploring this in relation to housing repairs etc. contacts: he also confirmed that the Leadership Team were looking at use of unspent CLLL budgets.

- (v) It was clear that new local groups and partnerships were emerging. The revival of Ward Forums was also a good thing. The Council should support and help strengthen residents' associations across the Borough and to ensure they remain truly representative and democratic. In addition, the Local Strategic Partnership used to be a valuable consultation mechanism and included the Forum of Faiths and Kensington & Chelsea college. These needed to be included in the consultation exercise. And finally, given the various parts of the NHS is

also closely involved, who will 'own' this document and who will scrutinise it?

Response: Cllr. Taylor-Smith emphasised that the Council wanted to hear from, and listen to, every group who might want to offer a view. Robyn Fairman indicated that the commitments had been agreed by the CCG and CNWL. Each of the organisations would have its own strategy and delivery plans, but these would be closely aligned and would flow from the joint commitments.

- (vi) To what extent did the Strategy factor in young people's views?

Response: Jas Purewal indicated that the Council was using existing networks to map out what is already 'out there' in terms of youth groups. 43 such groups had been identified and efforts were now being made to engage, including agreeing with them the approach to engagement.

- (vii) What support did the Strategy offer the bereaved and survivors?

Response: Robyn Fairman indicated that the survivors and bereaved needed to know they had not been forgotten. Officers wanted to work closely with them now and on an ongoing basis to develop a dedicated service. The Council had been working closely with Grenfell United but would also write personally to all the survivors and bereaved. Support would adapt as time goes by to address changing needs.

Summary of questions and issues raised by members of the public

- (i) Further to the email sent to Councillors by the Notting Dale Residents Advisory Board, what groups had been involved to date in development of the Strategy?

Response: Robyn Fairman indicated that this was a starting point and the purpose now was to move forward with co-design, so the Council would now actively be seeking community input. The commitments were a starting point on which the Council wanted to consult. Jas Purewal added that the Council was 'reaching out to everyone'. All such contact and inputs will be documented and officers would move at the pace of the community.

- (ii) This was "yet another document", so what would be happening differently this time? The Council was starting at the wrong place and needed to build trust first rather than trying to "fob people off". The Council should find a way to co-opt members of the community into the Council as non-executive directors.

Response: Cllr. Taylor-Smith acknowledged that the Council was "in a deep hole but this was not as deep a hole as last year". The Council had reinstated the Tenants Consultative Committee and other consultative forums to help to rebuild trust. Housing management had been taken in-house from the TMO. The Council was here tonight emphasising that it is wishing to change.

- (iii) It had been claimed that the Council was consulting widely with youth groups but some – for example Kids on the Green and the Latymer Christian Centre (LCC) – had not had any such contact. Furthermore, on the Lancaster West Estate (LWE) there was nowhere to work with young people.

Response: Jas Purewal acknowledged there was more work to do to reach all youth groups and to establish who to talk to. Robyn Fairman had spoken to four members of the LWE Residents Association committee and meetings were also planned with LCC.

The Chair indicated the Committee would expect full details, by its next meeting, on which groups officers had talked to.

- (iv) It seemed ‘from the outside’ that the Council was making deliberate choices about who it was and was not speaking to. Lancaster West Estate was clear it didn’t trust the Council and probably never would - but it was willing to work with it. That said, the Council had to more demonstrably work with the community.

- (v) What is the strategy for increasing the stock of social housing?

Response: Cllr. Taylor-Smith indicated that the Council had ambitious plans to increase the stock of truly affordable housing which it would bring forward in September.

- (vi) A former Grenfell Walk resident asked why she was being asked by housing officers to produce 3 months of bank statements. The same resident asked also why residents were being hurried to make decisions about their permanent housing and asked for psychiatrists’ reports?

Response: Maxine Holdsworth indicated that the Council was no longer requesting bank statements. Robyn Fairman stressed that the Council didn’t want in any way to make people feel under pressure. Cllr. Taylor-Smith emphasised this – he noted that although the Council was getting criticised in some quarters for not rehousing people quickly enough, ultimately it didn’t want to cause any distress. Contrary to any rumours or emails suggesting otherwise, housing officers were not working to performance targets.

- (vii) What is The Curve for? One local group had revealed that it was unable to get services from The Curve. It is simply not providing the services it says its providing.

The Committee’s recommendation

The Committee invited the Lead Member and officers to take fully into account the above comments in undertaking the consultation over the coming months.

Action by Robyn Fairman, Executive Director of the Grenfell Team and Michael Clarke, Director of Communications & Community Engagement

A4 HOUSING OPTIONS AND SUPPORT FOR SECURE TENANTS OF THE WALKWAYS, TREADGOLD HOUSE AND BRAMLEY HOUSE IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

Cllr. Kim Taylor-Smith and Maxine Holdsworth briefly introduced the report. In simple terms, the Council wanted to support residents to return to their homes on the Lancaster West Estate for a range of reasons. This was part of the Council's overall plans to improve and revive the Estate to make it a great place to live. The reopening of Kensington Aldridge Academy would contribute to this. At present one third of the Estate's properties were empty. The current situation could not go on for ever.

Summary of questions and issues raised by Councillors

- (i) How did you arrive at the 30 September date and what will happen the following day to anyone who does not reach a decision?

Response: Maxine Holdsworth explained that the original date identified for the end of current support arrangements for secure tenants of the Walkways, Treadgold House and Bramley House in temporary accommodation had been 30 June, but people had said that the 'wrapping' of the Tower was a key milestone, so the Council extended that period. Also people often go away during the Summer, so 30 September emerged as a reasonable date. Clearly, however, this timescale doesn't reflect the circumstances of every one of the 99 households in question, but staff are already starting to make contact with each. There was one (short notice) drop-in session last week and there will be more of these. No decision will be made by officers on 1 October, but a resident not returning to their LWE home would in such circumstances, from 1 October, become liable for the rent in their temporary accommodation.

- (ii) Although people understood what the Council was trying to achieve, it don't want to give the impression that it might make people homeless and place them under unreasonable pressure, so a firm deadline like this is most unhelpful, as is the inference that people risk losing their secure tenancies.

Response: Maxine Holdsworth explained that quite a number of the 99 households wanted now to return home – though some still don't of course. At some point, if they don't want to return home then these homes need to be made available for other local people who have a housing need. It's a balance the Council needs to strike somehow. The Council cannot absolutely guarantee like-for-like tenancies but it can seek this from housing associations, and past experience suggested that they will be quite receptive.

Summary of questions and issues raised by members of the public

- (i) The financial implications for the Council of doing this at a slower pace weren't great in the context of the amount being spent on lawyers by the Council.

Response: Maxine Holdsworth confirmed that nobody would be asked to pay two rents. The primary Leadership Team decision was to extend the period for which temporary accommodation would be funded by the Council to 30 September. The report also proposes that people pay rent

(capped) for the accommodation they are living in. That said, it was true that the Council had not presently budgeted for people staying in temporary accommodation for a long period. Cllr. Taylor-Smith sought to explain this another way - the Council was trying to help and encourage people to return to their homes if they so wished. Furthermore, the Council would rather spend money on improving the Lancaster West Estate than keeping people in temporary accommodation, but for those who don't want to return the Council was factoring-in options.

- (ii) It was important that this decision did not cost residents more. They should only pay what they'd be liable for had the Tower not burnt down. With the benefit cap some would be disadvantaged. This is not fair and equitable. Furthermore, there's no evidence that any Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been undertaken, yet these are traumatised people, with impaired ability to make decisions and choose, and the Council has no idea how this will impact on them.

Response: Maxine Holdsworth confirmed that an EIA on the wider rehousing policy, of which this was a part, had been undertaken. The Council too was concerned about affordability, but much depended on the decisions individuals made. The Council wanted to ensure it had really good data around equalities and had done needs assessments by household. It was important not to forget the needs also of those on the wider housing register. That said it might be possible to factor in some safeguards into the final Leadership Team report.

- (iii) An 'assured lifetime tenancy' was not the same as a local authority 'secure tenancy'. It was important that the distinction was made clear to residents.

Response: Maxine Holdsworth confirmed there were differences, though the Council would work with other providers to seek to mirror existing tenancy terms in any new tenancies where possible. She had been in contact with housing association in relation to former residents of Grenfell Tower and Walk, but not yet in relation to Lancaster West.

- (iv) The neighbours of the empty properties would also like to see them filled, but Grenfell Walk is due to be demolished, and this is attached to the properties numbered in the 300s.

Response: Matt Hogan stated he was unaware of any plans to demolish Grenfell Walk. However it remained within the Police cordon and could not be occupied in the foreseeable future. As such there is no prospect of any of those residents returning home.

- (v) Will new housing association tenancies include a right-to-buy?

Response: Maxine Holdsworth confirmed that if a tenant was interested in right-to-buy then a housing association property won't suit their needs. It was all about individual circumstances and large families, for example, will have a strong case to stay in a local Council property as it comes available. Council officers would talk to families on a case-by-case basis.

The Committee's recommendation

Having heard the points raised, the Committee **resolved to recommend** that the Leadership Team remove the 30 September 'hard' deadline and indicate clearly that, mindful of the trauma and disruption still being experienced, the Council:

- (i) will work with each family or individual concerned to identify an appropriate timescale within which they might reasonably make their final decision on whether or not to return to their home;
- (ii) will not force anyone to give up their home against their will; and
- (iii) will work with social landlords to, where at all possible, replicate the terms of existing secure tenancies in any tenancies with other social housing providers - and if this is not possible to explain clearly to prospective tenants what rights they will lose if they take up an alternative tenancy with another social landlord.

Action by Maxine Holdsworth, Director of Housing Needs & Supply

A5 TECHNICAL HEALTH AND SAFETY ADVICE AND SUPPORT TO THE COUNCIL

The Committee noted that the site was independently managed and this appointment did not alter current arrangements. The contractor would simply be ensuring that the building was safe for people to come and go and for operations within the Tower. Barry Quirk indicated that he could not envisage circumstances under which the Council would manage the site again.

A6 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GRENFELL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S FUND

Etiene Steyn highlighted the headline themes that had emerged from this exercise: that young people wanted more of a decision-making role themselves; that they wanted the funds to be administered by an organisation independent of the Council and that they saw the benefit in a reduced administration fee. There was also a wish to join-up these funds with others to create a sustainable legacy over a 5-year period.

The Committee also noted representations that some local youth groups – such as Kids on the Green and young people at the Henry Dickens Estate - had not been consulted as part of this exercise. It was important to work with the traumatised kids on the estates.

A7 THE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2018/19

The Chair explained that the purpose of the Work Programme was for the Committee to take the initiative and be proactive in identifying policies, services and issues it wanted to explore further – rather than just responding to, or being driven by, the actions of the Leadership Team. Such topics could be included on future agendas or addressed by review groups, possibly jointly with other scrutiny committees, information-gathering focus groups or other suitable mechanisms as appropriate.

Proposals made for consideration in 2018/19, in no particular order, included the following:

- (i) The Curve and an evaluation of its success or otherwise. What does it do now and what it could it might do in the future? This exercise might also look at 'The Space' and the services offered there.
- (ii) The range of support available for children traumatised by the fire, which has been anecdotally reported as somewhat 'uneven'. What are schools doing and what's the overall picture about what's in place?
- (iii) Mental health provision, the immediate and long term mental health issues and any particular needs or issues in relation to BAME communities. The duty of care to families in deep distress. Some people remain very seriously ill and need to have opportunity to talk to someone other than housing officers.
- (iv) Developing a 'joined-up' approach to planning in the Notting Dale area, and how the Council and community can be best 'sighted' on planning applications and 'regeneration' proposals from housing associations and the private sector.
- (v) Air quality and soil quality (engaging with Healthwatch, Public Health England etc.) – with a view to reassuring residents that this is adequately being monitored and that they are, as far as possible, being protected.
- (vi) Rehousing statistics – especially clarity on the numbers displaced. A regular breakdown should be circulated and reported to the Committee

A8 THE COMMITTEE'S ACTION TRACKER

The Committee agreed the proposed action tracker format.

A9 MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 18 JANUARY AND 23 MAY 2018

The minutes of the meetings held on 18 January and 23 May 2018 were both confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

The following issues were then raised on the Minutes of the 18 January meeting:

- Ward Councillors were now picking up a lot of casework relating to private sector tenants on the Lancaster West Estate. Private tenants should have been included in the Walkways Rehousing Policy as requested.
- One resident had questions about property viewings. Maxine Holdsworth offered to discuss this with her after the meeting.

A10 ANY OTHER ORAL OR WRITTEN ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

No such matters were raised.

A11 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no private matters for discussion so no such resolution was required.

The meeting ended at 9.50pm

Chairman

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