

THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA
HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE – 26 APRIL 2021
REPORT OF DAN HAWTHORN
(EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HOUSING & SOCIAL INVESTMENT)
GRENFELL-RELATED HOUSING ISSUES

This report provides an update on:

- the development of two Council-led Grenfell legacy projects in relation to Housing (for the Committee to consider and make any comment or recommendation); and
- progress with the rehousing of households affected by the Grenfell tragedy (for the Committee's information).

Scrutiny of services

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report describes progress on two Grenfell legacy projects in the field of Housing, which were agreed at high level by the Leadership Team in December 2020 as part of the Grenfell Recovery Resourcing Framework. Those projects are:

- The Housing Legacy Fund, which involves Council tenants and households in temporary accommodation in Notting Dale ward in a participatory budgeting process for the allocation of £1m in funding for legacy projects.
- The Grenfell Legacy Rehousing and Allocations project, which aims to build upon and embed lessons from the Grenfell Tower tragedy relating to the allocation of suitable social housing by improving the resident experience of the rehousing and letting process, to personalise our engagement and empower residents to make fully informed decisions.

1.2 This report also gives updated information on the Council's progress in rehousing households affected by the Grenfell tragedy.

2 RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- a. consider the Council's emerging proposals for two Grenfell legacy projects in housing, and make any comment or recommendation in relation to their continued development and implementation); and
- b. note progress on the rehousing of households affected by the Grenfell tragedy.

3 QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

3.1 The broad scope of the two Grenfell legacy projects was agreed by Leadership Team in December 2020, and the Housing Legacy Fund proposals are currently the subject of a resident engagement exercise. For that reason, rather than considering the overall scope of the projects, Committee are instead invited to explore and comment on the specific proposals, for example:

- the specific objectives and outcomes for the projects (recognising the fact that the Legacy Fund proposals are already the subject of resident engagement)
- the approach to involving the community
- any other elements of the methodology

3.2 The information on rehousing is presented for information only. It is not appropriate for the committee to discuss this information in the meeting because of the high risk of identifying individual households, given the small numbers of outstanding cases.

4 INFORMATION ABOUT THIS REPORT

4.1 This report has been prepared and submitted because of the Committee's ongoing close interest in the work of the Council's Housing and Communities functions in learning the lessons from the Grenfell tragedy, and in supporting the bereaved, survivors and residents with their recovery.

4.2 The issues covered by this report are rooted in several previous key decisions – including the decision to approve the Grenfell Recovery Resourcing Framework in December 2020. As stated in the report, there is likely to be a key decision on the Housing Legacy Fund later in 2021, and the Rehousing and Allocations project will likely inform the Council's revised Allocations Scheme which will also be presented for approval via a key decision.

5 MAIN REPORT

5.1 The Grenfell Recovery Resourcing Framework, agreed the Council's Leadership Team in December 2020, included proposals for two new legacy projects in the field of Housing. These are the Housing Legacy Fund (focused on the Council's role as a landlord), and the Rehousing and Allocations Project (focused on the Council's role as a statutory housing authority). Funding for these projects (£1m for the Legacy Fund, and £200k for the Rehousing and Allocations project) has been made available from a budget previously used to support the costs of temporary accommodation for a small group of Wider Grenfell households.

The Housing Legacy Fund

- 5.2 The Council has recently launched a consultation with Council tenants and residents in temporary accommodation on a new Housing Legacy Fund. This fund aims to secure a positive impact for a wider group of residents in Notting Dale, while continuing to ensure a focus on Housing, in recognition of the fundamental link between housing and the Grenfell tragedy. Of the two legacy projects focused on housing, this one has a particular focus on the Council's role as a landlord, and is therefore intended (among other things) to complement the Council's major programme of investment in Council homes, and the new approach to tenant and leaseholder engagement.
- 5.3 The proposals for the Fund are based on discussions with, and incorporate feedback from, residents' associations across the ward. These discussions have been taking place since late 2020, and are ongoing. With their help, we have also identified some initial ideas for key Grenfell legacy issues in Housing (issues like ensuring residents' voices are heard, promoting diversity and inclusion, increasing economic opportunities and championing environmental sustainability).
- 5.4 The key elements of the proposal which have already been established are:
- A focus on residents living in Council properties, including those placed in temporary accommodation by the Council within the Notting Dale ward, in recognition of our unique duty to them both in the context of Grenfell and in our capacity as the landlord of these estates.
 - To allocate funding on a per property basis to groups of properties, based on the number of properties within the group. For those living within estates (including those in temporary accommodation) the estate will form the property group. For those living in street properties (including those in Temporary Accommodation), we will use the consultation period to gather views on their preferred grouping.
 - A participatory budgeting process to ensure residents have direct control over a localised budget.
 - Plans to codesign a set of criteria and parameters with residents of Notting Dale which would act as a framework for the types of initiatives the funding can be used for. The consultation currently underway asks residents which priorities are most important to them and will be used to shape the final proposal.
 - Plans to engage with Housing Associations to ensure their residents are made aware of the full breadth of our recovery initiatives and to invite interested Housing Associations to consider taking on a similar project or contributing to this one through a mechanism such as match funding.

5.5 This funding is specifically targeted at those estates in the area around Grenfell Tower, and the Council is keen that the projects are driven as much as possible by local people. The only requirements are, broadly, that they have a connection to housing; a connection to the legacy of the tragedy; and will have lasting impact. Examples of potential projects are given in the survey recently sent to residents, and include:

- Projects that promote residents having their voice (such as a local radio station or a local website)
- Projects that promote inclusion and accessibility (such as helping residents access technology or ensuring services are culturally appropriate)
- Community safety projects
- Projects that increase economic opportunities for residents
- Projects that focus on sustainability

5.6 The key milestones in the project as agreed so far are:

- 29 March saw the start of a six-week consultation to decide key themes to set the criteria for proposals and to decide the mechanism for the allocation of funding for those living in street properties. This consultation includes a questionnaire sent to all eligible households in Council properties and TA in Notting Dale (attached as Appendix 1) and virtual drop in sessions where our team will provide background and answer questions on the Fund. The consultation will be open for a period of six weeks and officers are working with Residents Associations and others to ensure we hear from as many eligible residents as possible.
- During April and May, RBKC Housing Management is working with Residents Associations to provide information on how residents can put forward proposals through workshops.
- In June/July 2021, we will recommend a key decision on fund to be taken by the Council's Leadership Team. After this decision, implementation will begin, with residents supported to submit proposals for public vote, which is likely to be on an estate by estate basis.

Grenfell Legacy Rehousing and Allocations Project

5.7 The Grenfell Legacy Rehousing and Allocations Project aims to build upon and embed lessons from the Grenfell Tower tragedy relating to the allocation of suitable social housing. The key objective of the project is to improve the resident experience of the rehousing and letting process, to personalise our engagement and empower residents to make fully informed decisions. To achieve this the project aims to understand and learn from residents' experience of the rehousing process to date (Grenfell and non-Grenfell

related), and to ensure that residents help shape new and improved rehousing processes.

5.8 To support the objectives and outcomes the project proposes to:

- survey and understand in depth the Grenfell rehousing experience by speaking to survivors, dedicated housing staff, and advocates
- review current rehousing processes that offer a more personalised and engaged service to certain groups of residents.
- form of *Resident Reference Group* that will help to oversee and help shape the project and its final recommendations
- commission research to review the resident experience of rehousing support, engagement with the Council, and the allocations process.

5.9 It will be important to clearly articulate the project's boundaries, the most obvious of which is the limitations in the volume and type of housing supply. The project will not aim to increase social housing supply which is addressed by other Council programmes, and in any scenario is likely to remain highly constrained in the foreseeable future.

5.10 This project is closely linked to other significant work underway at the Council, including:

- The revision of the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme, and early independent resident engagement and ideas shaping that will inform it.
- Independent research (funded by Public Health) into the causes of homelessness, the experience of hidden homelessness and the experience of RBKC homelessness and housing advice services (and associated equalities implications) in Kensington and Chelsea.
- Transformation of the Council's Housing Needs Department, which is redesigning housing and homelessness services to deliver person-centred, resolution-focused advice and support at the earliest stages of intervention. For example, a Homelessness Forum has been established and there are ambitions to create a standing resident forum. A comprehensive relaunch of publicly available information and data (and a digital resident Housing Need portal) will be needed to support this work.

5.11 The key milestones in the project as agreed so far are:

- April/May. Identification of dedicated staff resource which will be required to deliver this project, and perhaps support the delivery of the Grenfell Legacy Fund. The specification of this resource is being designed ahead of recruitment.

- Also during April and May, we are sense-checking the project proposal with survivors and Notting Dale Community Groups. The purpose of this exercise is not to re-shape the proposals but to sense-check whether there are any key aspects missing from the brief.
- At the commencement of the project, we will establish a Resident Reference Group. Its composition will need to be carefully drawn from a range of sources – including those with direct personal experience of the allocations and rehousing process, as well as advocates and others with relevant experience of the system.
- In May/June (assuming staff resources are in place) we will start the project in earnest, by reviewing lessons and best practice based on input from survivors and dedicated rehousing staff. Reviews of lessons and best practice from staff and advocates do not have to be undertaken at the same time. Also in May/June, officers will commission the independent research.

Rehousing of households affected by the Grenfell Tragedy

- 5.12 Of the 201 households from Grenfell Tower and Grenfell Walk, 195 households have moved into their permanent home and six households remain in high quality temporary accommodation.
- 5.13 Of the 89 wider Grenfell households who chose to move to temporary accommodation whilst they continued their search for an alternative permanent home, 13 currently remain in temporary accommodation.
- 5.14 For all households in these two categories not yet in long-term settled accommodation, the council continues to work closely with them to find a permanent home that meets their needs, at a pace which suits them

6 TIMESCALE FOR CONSIDERATION

- 6.1 There are no particular deadlines for input from the Committee on the two legacy projects, though, as is clear from the milestones described above for the projects, we are at a critical stage now in shaping the detailed plans for implementation, so this discussion with the Select Committee is well timed in that sense. It is important to note, however, that engagement with residents is already underway on the Grenfell Housing Legacy Fund, so input from the Select Committee in relation to that project should take account of the terms of that engagement exercise in relation to those elements which are fixed and those on which determinations are yet to be made.

7 FURTHER INFORMATION

- 7.1 **Appendix 1.** Housing Legacy Fund survey sent to all eligible households in Council properties and temporary accommodation in Notting Dale.

Dan Hawthorn (Executive Director, Housing & Social Investment)

Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

KD05767 Grenfell Recovery Resourcing Framework, agreed at [RBKC Leadership Team on 20 December 2020](#).

Contact Officer: *Dan Hawthorn (Executive Director, Housing & Social Investment)*
dan.hawthorn@rbkc.gov.uk