

Grenfell Community Assembly

Notes from Grenfell Community Assembly Held on 23 January 2020

Theme: Environmental Issues

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THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

Introduction

The Grenfell Community Assembly has been established to ensure that Grenfell related matters are openly discussed and provide the place for statutory and non-statutory partners to respond to local concerns.

An Assembly will take place approximately every eight weeks in North Kensington, bringing the conversation closer to residents. The Assembly is not a replacement for Grenfell Scrutiny, there will be ongoing scrutiny of Grenfell issues through the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and four Select Committees.

January 2020 Grenfell Community Assembly

The second Assembly took place on 23 January 2020 at The Curve Community Centre and was publicised to local residents, with a specific aim to attract residents who do not normally engage with the Council. This included a variety of methods, including: leaflets, social media and the Council's website.

The topic of this Grenfell Community Assembly was 'Environmental Issues'. The Assembly provided an opportunity for residents to discuss important topics that matter to them with relevant and responsible organisations who are best placed to respond and create services to meet local needs. Organisations represented included Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

A total of 26 residents attended, in addition to a number of local Councillors.

Assembly agenda

The Assembly took place between 5pm and 8pm, with the following agenda:

5.00pm	• Opportunity to visit stalls on local services
6.00pm	• Welcome and introductions
6.15pm	• Table discussions focused on key themes, followed by feedback
7.00pm	• Opportunity to visit a second table and discuss an additional theme, followed by feedback
7.45pm	• Next steps and closing remarks
8.00pm	• Meeting closed

Table discussions

As part of the agenda, residents had the opportunity to take part in table discussions covering the following topics:

- Air quality
- Soil
- Sustainable transport
- Climate change
- Parks and open spaces (including community kitchen gardens)
- Recycling and waste
- Open table – an opportunity to discuss any other environment issue

An external facilitator chaired the Assembly. Table discussions were facilitated by environment professionals with direct experience of providing services in the topic being discussed.

This report does not include personal identifiable data, and we have not published information that is sensitive or names of individuals that were put forward during the table discussions.

This document

This document contains a summary of feedback from the Assembly, as well as more detailed feedback generated at each table. We hope that this document is read by people who did not attend the event and encourages more people to take part in future Grenfell Community Assemblies.

We have included the detailed feedback notes of the comments and views expressed by individual residents at each discussion table, it does not necessarily mean that each comment is endorsed by the majority of attendees or the many residents who were not present for those discussions.

Next steps

In partnership with our colleagues in the environment sector, we are working on an action focused response plan that will be shared with the community by the end of February.

The response plan will include the actions we are already taking, the actions we have planned and potential new actions that have been identified by the community. The response plan will also include ways in which the community can be involved as well as ways the community can contribute to improving services locally. The Grenfell Community Assembly will review the response plan at the start of the next Grenfell Community Assembly.

As the Assembly becomes more established, we hope to train some local residents to facilitate table discussions to allow for greater resident involvement.

The next Assembly will likely take place in March 2020. The exact date, location and topic to be covered will be publicised via the Council's website and by other means.

Acknowledgements

The Council would like to thank everyone that attended and participated in the Grenfell Community Assembly and to all the partner organisations that attended, assisted and facilitated discussions.

Summary of discussions

This section of the report captures the key points of the discussions held on the seven themes at January's Grenfell Community Assembly. Full details of comments made in relation to each theme can be seen on subsequent pages.

Air quality

- Concerns expressed about the impact that traffic congestion, diesel coaches and idling vehicles have on air quality.
- Parents dropping and picking up children from schools, particularly the private schools in the area, is adding to pollution.
- Calls for air quality monitoring of pollution caused by the Westway.

Soil

- There was interest in the results of Phase One soil testing.
- Interest also in the tendering process for Phase Two, including what areas will be covered and how long it will take.
- Requests for simpler resident information on soil testing.

Sustainable transport

- Safety at night a barrier for some to walk more.
- Concern about the numbers of cars on the road and requests to reduce car ownership.
- Hire bikes seen as a positive step, but the dumping of hire bikes needs to be tackled.

Climate change

- Inconsistent messages, or a lack of information, is hindering recycling.
- Traffic congestion needs to be reduced and car ownership controlled.
- Incentives for lower emission cars were called for.

Parks and open spaces (including community kitchen gardens)

- The need for more greening of the area, particularly on housing estates. Parklets were also requested in North Kensington.
- Residents wanted to be more involved (including volunteering opportunities) and to have their say on planting in green spaces and parks.
- Requests for clearer information about parks and community kitchen gardens.

Recycling and waste

- The need for enforcement of those not following recycling rules.
- More consistent messages about what can and cannot be recycled.
- Requests for food waste collections to be extended to other areas.

Open table – for other environmental issues

A number of the points raised reflected discussion on other tables.

- Residents would like to see greening in the borough, including parklets.
- Pollution caused by traffic congestion and idling engines was an issue for many residents.
- Residents raised safety concerns about electric bikes being left on pavements.

Table discussions: Themed discussions

Themed discussions

This section of the report puts forward detailed notes from each of the themed table discussions.

The detailed feedback notes capture the comments and views expressed by individual residents at each discussion table, it does not necessarily mean that each comment is endorsed by the majority of attendees.

Air quality

Discussion points and comments made/questions raised by individual residents in attendance

- **Levels of pollution:** Some areas of the borough are so polluted that exercising or being out in that environment feels bad for your health. For example, cycling down Lancaster Road. Particular issues included:
 - Private schools in that area: children are being dropped off in cars (many times in SUVs), with high levels of congestion being brought into the area; for exercise they are being taken to the Westway in diesel coaches which add to the pollutants in the area. These schools are harder for councils to engage with regarding sustainable travel and the Transport for London (TfL) STARS programme as they are regulated separately.
 - Children are going to the Westway for exercise and this area is one of the worst ones for air quality – ironic and sad. Quite often school pupils are transported to the Westway in privately hired diesel coaches and never at full capacity.
 - Idling engines; this includes delivery lorries outside houses, but particularly in respect to schools. Parents/carers waiting for children. This is having a detrimental effect on children.
 - A lot of the traffic/pollution in the borough isn't created by the residents, but passing through traffic, impacting on residents.
 - Grenfell cough – what is being done about the air quality around Grenfell? The Grenfell cough still exists, and little is being done about this.
 - Concern that a third private school was about to open in the Ladbroke Grove area, for which there was no consultation with either residents or internal Council departments due to overarching government D1 Regulations. Due to the planning legislation being from central government the Council does not have the power to overturn the decision. This is likely to increase levels of congestion and pollution for residents in the area.
 - Why is there no joined up working between planning departments, schools and air quality teams? Appeared that different departments were working in silos (planning, air quality).
 - Idling engines: more enforced penalties, more presence of enforcement officers.
- **Additional questions included:**
 - What monitoring is there of the air quality in Notting Dale re: fire effluent?
 - What monitoring is there of air quality and risk to health specifically arising from the Westway?

Table discussions: Themed discussions

- TfL and Department of Transport have a responsibility to mitigate or limit the traffic they insist and allow to go through our community.
- Are the changes in pollution levels mentioned today, statistically significant?
- **Suggestions for the way forward included:**
 - Around schools, cars should be given passes to go through limiting the amount of traffic. Colville school does something similar, blocking the road off for vehicles – ‘School Streets’ initiative.
 - Private school coaches should be requested to be electric/more appropriately sized i.e. it was noted that the coaches are quite often only half full of students and as such do not require such a large vehicle.
 - Idling engines: greater promotion of the idling engines projects, where children educate their carers and enforcement officers knock on windows to talk to parents and carers. Larger banners should be put on the front of the schools and banners should have ‘shocking’ statistics/information about the impact idling engines are having on their children.
 - Need to have enforcement officers more visible during school drop off and pick up times.
 - Enforcement of idling engines by Council: currently there is no way of taking account of repeat offenders. Officers should keep a note of cars/driver details ‘as a caution’ otherwise there is very little impact.
 - Information provided shows that the level of pollution created by construction is increasing. Can the Council introduce a levy on construction companies to pay towards the pollution they are creating in the area, this money could then be invested in projects to improve air quality within the borough.
 - Urban forest machine which sucks out the pollutants in the atmosphere and also monitors air quality in the local area. Could we invest in these? This initiative is called ‘City Trees’ undertaken at two locations in Waltham Forest.
 - School streets initiatives; school travel plan, walk to school weeks and getting the Council to use some of their ‘softer’ powers.
 - Introducing more sensible speed restrictions in the area.
 - Current application for a school move, where the arrangement would suggest a car-free school. With the school to enforce a ‘three strikes and you are out’ policy for parents not conforming to the rules. Will be mainly run via coaches from local bus stops. New pioneering initiative which would be one of the first in the country. Could pave the way for other schools.
 - Idling engines: wardens to be given power to give penalty notices.
 - RAP23 initiative; Reduce Air Pollution 23.

Additional points from the Air Quality Stall before the Assembly:

- People of Lancaster West Estate are concerned about the combined effect of the carcinogenic fumes from the fire and the pollution from the Westway. They would like to see measures put in place to protect them like green infrastructure, and more help for those suffering adverse health effects from the fire.
- Work with RAP-23 to improve air quality in North Kensington.

Table discussions: Themed discussions

- TfL need to reduce the number of polluting vehicles which pass over the Westway every day. Direct action against the pollution from the Westway needs to be taken, not enough being done.
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Soil

Discussion points and comments made/questions raised by individual residents in attendance

- Participants were interested to find out information about the Phase One soil testing and to ask the Council and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's opinion on whether the soil was contaminated. Participants were reassured by the information and advice provided.
- Some participants were keen to know more about the testing and results, particularly as they had children, who play in the garden of their home and in the parks in the area.
- There were questions relating to the area covered by the soil testing.
- One participant wanted to know whether sampling had been undertaken in all directions and requested that the area be extended to cover Holland Park, where there was a centre and ponds where children play.
- Participants also questioned what substances the soil was tested for.
- Participants were interested to know whether the impact of historic uses of the land on soil contamination had been considered.
- One participant understood that there was no evidence that the soil contamination was worse than before the fire, but felt that the soil was contaminated before the fire (e.g. from pollution the Westway).
- One participant asked what would happen if soil contamination was found and whether it would be cleaned up.
- Participants were interested in details relating to the Phase 2 tendering process, which aspects and areas would be covered and how long the tendering process and subsequent works would take.
- Participants were particularly interested in the maps at the table detailing soil testing sites, where debris had been reported following the fire and the direction of the smoke plume.
- One participant asked whether private land was also going to be tested, not just public land.
- Participants asked about the depth that soil is tested and some were interested to learn that they could watch samples being taken if they wished.
- Raised away from the table and by participants, there were questions about whether testing would be undertaken in residents' communal gardens where food is grown.
- Participants with school aged children were interested to understand which schools would be tested.
- Participants thought it was essential to get the message across about the safety of the soil.

Table discussions: Themed discussions

- Some participants indicated that the information and communications so far had been very long and complex and said that they would prefer something basic, that was short and to the point, to tell them everything they needed to know and with links to more detail so that they could get more information if they wanted it.
 - Away from the table discussion, one resident indicated that they were concerned about soil contamination as a local group had been leafletting the area to say that contamination is a problem - information from the Council hadn't been received. So mis-information is also an issue.
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Sustainable transport

Discussion points and comments made/questions raised by individual residents in attendance

- **Attendees were asked how they travel and why.**
 - All residents responded by saying they primarily walk.
 - They were "lucky" – to have local amenities and schools close by.
 - A range of taxi services also offered cheap alternative transport.
 - **They walk because:**
 - One indicated that they encourage themselves to walk. Having been in temporary accommodation following the Grenfell Tragedy and having a small child they had gained weight due to the stress and the inactivity.
 - Health benefits are noticeable.
 - It is a preventative method: against diabetes, heart disease and obesity.
 - Good for children to be walking.
 - Residents knew about the 10,000 steps recommended daily amount.
 - One of the residents uses a step counter.
 - **They use a taxi because:**
 - More convenient and economical for large families.
 - It feels safer at night.
 - **Residents were asked what was stopping them from walking more:**
 - Safety issues e.g. at night.
 - Residents suggested and agreed group walks would be beneficial.
 - **Residents were asked if they had considered cycling:**
 - One had trained with Westway Trust – they had found it difficult to balance. Lacked confidence and eventually stopped.
 - Safety is an issue – cars and narrow paths and lack of cycle routes.
 - Hire bikes were seen to be positive having discussed the advantage of not having to commit to buying/storing/insuring your own bike.
 - 'Dumping' of electric bikes seen to be an issue e.g. in Shepperd's Bush.
 - **Suggestions/solutions put forward:**
 - More electric buses. Currently only around one per cent are fully electric.
 - More trains that are cleaner and less noisy. Trains are overground and more visible and noisier in poorer areas.
 - Fewer cars on the road.
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Table discussions: Themed discussions

- Car-free or resident-only roads.
 - 'Car pollution is not from local residents.' Mainly from cars passing through e.g. Lancaster Road.
 - Buses – turn them electric.
 - What about incentivising not owning a car e.g. higher Council Tax rates for car owners.
 - Can the Council contribute towards cycle to work schemes or at least towards costs of safety gear? E.g. for lower income families.
- **Other issues raised:**
 - Poor or lack of lighting is a big issue e.g. unused arches opposite Latimer Road Tube Station.
 - Local road lighting is generally serving road traffic and does not benefit pedestrian foot paths – 'more lights for pedestrians'. Older residents affected more by dim lighting.
 - The Bus Stop serving the 295 and 316 on Bramley Road has had the light out for some time.
 - A lack of a traffic crossing/zebra crossing near The Space is a danger for school children.
 - Roads are not always suitable for cycling e.g. traffic, pot holes.

Climate change

Discussion points and comments made/questions raised by individual residents in attendance

Recycling

- Residents felt there was a conflict of messages in regard to recycling, which is correct?
- There are many incidents of conflicts in communication regarding recycling. For example "Aerosols can be recycled" one month and next "Aerosols cannot be recycled".
- If there are amendments, then it should be communicated effectively timely and seamlessly.
- Residents discussed the importance of standardising what can be collected (as it is different in other councils and is confusing for people).
- A resident indicated that they recycle their own food using the composting method and uses worms to do so.

Parking/Transport

- There are a couple of houses in a particular street who have four cars per household which is a residential street with minimal space. How is this fair for the residents who live in the same street who have one car per household? There's not enough parking for the residents of that one street especially as there are a number of properties with multiple gas guzzling cars.
- What are the incentives to have low emission cars or is this a possibility?
- Near schools there is always traffic it will only be a matter of time before a child gets seriously injured.

Table discussions: Themed discussions

- Parking outside schools has an effect on the air quality, children and their health.
- There seems to be no one to enforce the 20mph driving speed limit and therefore people do not adhere to it.
- Bike lanes, there seems to be millions of pounds being poured into this. How will that help the environment if we are destroying trees and digging up roads?

Communication

- A resident indicated they had not received anything via the Royal Mail from the Council or any borough Newsletter as in previous years.
- A resident indicated that they had no email or mobile phone how are the Council catering to their communication needs?

Other points

- Where is the Mayor? Why has he not attended the meetings?
 - Climate change does not feel as if it's an emergency. Construction and developments happening daily in and all over the country. What is going to be done to ensure works are completely ethical and also what will be implemented in the environmental design such as solar panels?
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Parks and open spaces including community kitchen gardens

Discussion points and comments made/questions raised by individual residents in attendance

- An "empty green space" is a problem.
- Grass and flowers can be like a desert if the garden has poor facilities, slippery surfaces and lack of accessibility.
- Grass is not enough.
- Lancaster West Gardens are "very boring".
- "It's sad to stare at green spaces not being able to interact with them".
- Residents should have their say on the plants in a garden.
- Council needs to hear what people want and what they will use.
- Parks need playgrounds.
- Social housing estates need more green and less grey.
- It's hard to make greening a top priority amongst residents of housing estates.
- The Council should facilitate engagement and collaboration of residents between themselves and provide opportunities for dedicated funding for greening (so the money doesn't get spent on other priorities).
- Link greening with education.
- A learning engagement through gardening.
- Raise awareness on the importance of "community pollinators", on how to create habitats for pollinators on parks and balconies.
- More community cultivation.
- Increased opportunities for volunteering.
- More parklets in North Kensington.

Table discussions: Themed discussions

- More easily accessible and clearer information about kitchen gardens and parks.
- All information about parks, gardening and opportunities for engagement in one place.
- Residents wanted to know how to get a plot in a community kitchen garden. One requested community kitchen gardens in Lancaster West, next to Camelford Walk.
- Planning schemes and greening.
- One resident did not want to see SPID Theatre build on Kensal House Community Garden.
- Improve emptying of recycle bins.
- Other comments related to communication, including:
 - Leaflets did not reach everyone.
 - Website was confused. The previous assembly called more attention than the current one.

Recycling and waste

Discussion points and comments made/questions raised by individual residents in attendance

- Residents who joined this table discussion described themselves as 'recycling enthusiasts'.
- They strictly follow all the rules for recycling so found it 'disrespectful' that others were just putting 'all sorts' into the communal orange bins.
- In both sessions there was a sense of residents being 'fed up' that their recycling efforts were going to waste due to others' selfish waste disposal.
- Residents recognised that recycling on estates can be a real challenge. Suggestions to tackle this included:
 - CCTV cameras in bin areas.
 - Fining those not recycling properly.
 - Make contaminating recycling an offence. It was mentioned that pigeon feeders will be prosecuted so why not those dumping rubbish or contaminating the recycling?
 - Large notices by communal bins asking residents to be respectful of their neighbours and the environment.
 - Could encourage children (aged 12+) to be recycling champions. Encourage them to protect their future by educating their families about the need for recycling.
 - Positioning of bins, putting recycling and general waste bins in separate locations.
 - Creation of mini recycling centres on estates, co-designed with residents.
 - Make recycling bins more attractive and easier to use.
 - Introduce a recycling reward scheme.
- Concern was raised that refuse collectors were mixing waste and just putting recycling into general waste so 'what's the point?'
- Lack of awareness – what level of contamination is acceptable, what are refuse collectors trained to do?

Table discussions: Themed discussions

- Identify refuse trucks separately (general waste/recycling) so residents can be reassured waste is going into the correct truck.
- Recycling leaflet makes no mention of any penalties if recycling not done correctly. Could there be a stronger message on these?
- Leaflets also need clear labels and visuals to make it absolutely crystal clear which items should go where.
- There needs to be more consistent messaging about what can and can't be recycled.
- Leaflets should also be dated so that you know you have the most up to date information.
- Questions were raised about what happens to food waste. It was suggested that compost bins could be introduced to estates.
- It was suggested there should be both food and green waste collections for estates.
- One resident questioned whether it was necessary to collect waste on a twice weekly basis and couldn't the waste collection resources be re-distributed to include weekly food collection and free garden waste collection.
- There was demand for food waste collection.
- It was felt that as residents are encouraged to recycle more, there was more of this kind of waste than general waste so collections could reflect this.
- Recognition that there needs to be continuing education about recycling etc.
- Currently in general waste 40-60 per cent compostables including nutrients for soil so a real need for a different bin for composting.
- Garden waste going into the black bins as people can't afford to pay the extra for garden waste collection.
- Felt there were too many time pressures on refuse collectors which lead to mistakes. Residents felt that there should be more publicity on what the Council does to incentivise its crews to ensure recycling is handled properly and how they are trained. Residents need some reassurance that their recycling efforts are making a difference.
- There was surprise at the amount of single use plastic at the Assembly. It was suggested that there should be a tax on plastics.
- Nowhere close to dispose of electrical goods.
- Residents of North Kensington would possibly like a civic amenities site (as nearest one is Wandsworth).

Open table – for other environmental issues

Discussion points and comments made/questions raised by individual residents in attendance

- Greening Westway, Earl's Court and in general more greening in the whole borough.
- On Shepherd's Bush roundabout towards Holland Road and Holland Park Avenue there are so many buses, vans, taxis and other vehicles coming from Westfield Shopping Centre. This causes excessive pollution and also safety issues for cycling and mobility scooter users.
- Electric bikes left on pavements cause safety hazards for pedestrians and those with mobility issues.

Table discussions: Themed discussions

- More parklets needed across the borough, similar to those built in Kensington High Street.
- Concerns raised regarding car engines left running outside schools during drop off and pick up times, causing pollution around schools. Healthy street policy to be explored around schools (no cars around the schools, policy during school run hours).
- Volunteers to be coordinated from the community in order to maintain the environment.
- Cars parked blocking pavements where mobility and buggy users are prevented from accessing (parking enforcement to be proactive in issuing penalty tickets).
- Air quality monitors to be explored for home use.
- Windows that filter air coming through residents' windows.
- Funding to be available for residents to grow indoor plants to purify the air.
- Free cycling training is available across the borough; however many residents are not aware of this service. All services to be promoted more so residents can access them.
- Community Champions scheme to be explored for 12-18 year old young people to volunteer and participate in environmental issues and also to be rewarded and recognised (maybe they can put their experience on their CV).

Table discussions: Topics for future Assembly meetings

Topics for future Assembly meetings

Following the table discussions, it was proposed that the next Assembly might focus on either 'Community Safety' or 'Skills and Employment'. A number of residents were in support of Community Safety as a theme, but were invited to suggest other themes. Themes included:

- Housing/social housing or housing and the environment
- Opportunities for volunteering
- Activities for young people
- Anti-social behaviour
- Fire safety

The next Grenfell Community Assembly will likely take place in March 2020. Details of the topic, date and venue will be publicised via the Council's website and via other means.