

## **CHALCOTS WORKS GROUP (CWG) MINUTES AND ACTIONS 24.06.20**

### **Attendees**

Paul Urquhart (PU), Nigel Rumble (NR), Cllr Steve Adams (SA), Cllr Tom Simon (TS), Cllr Meric Apak (MA), Cllr Luisa Porritt (LP), Matt Jenkins (MJ), Hasan Shah (HS), Mandy Ryan (MR), Paula Schofield (PS)

LBC: Astrid Kjellberg-Obst (AKO), Abdul Khalique (AK), Graeme Beedham (GB)

Interim independent Chair: Oonah Lacey (OL)

### **1. Welcome and setting the scene**

- 1.1 OL welcomed all to the dedicated CWG meeting to explore and look at how together we can shape and deliver a Chalcots Engagement Framework. To help us we have GB, Head of Tenant Participation with us to give guidance and explain the national and Camden context for engagement. This will be followed by a presentation by AKO explaining the reasoning and approach that could be adopted. OL stressed that this is an opportunity for all to bring ideas, suggestions and solutions to help make a difference to benefit residents and the community. As we have leading tenant representatives your knowledge and experience is very important to us.
- 1.2 OL finished by asking all to take a minute to write down what one outcome that each attendee would like to get from the session today. The outcome written down to be shared at the end of the session.
- 1.3 OL handed over to GB.

### **2. Understanding the Camden Resident Engagement Strategy**

- 2.1 GB provided an overview of the strategic framework for Tenant Participation (which shapes and informs our approach in LBC) and considered how this could be applied and how we might work. GB stated the challenge is to keep it concise.
- 2.2 GB provided a short anecdote based on his experience at the Peabody Trust on how regulation and legislation around consultation and participation in social housing exists demonstrating a shift in the relationship between landlord and tenant from paternalistic to a more collaborative and consultative approach we see today.
- 2.3 GB - Tenant rights have been hard fought for and as a result are introduced and enshrined in primary and secondary legislation including housing acts and the social housing regulatory framework. The 1985 Housing Act under Section 105 sets out the obligation to consult tenants on matters of housing management and Leaseholder rights are broadly set out around consultation under the 1985 Landlord and Tenant Act.
- 2.4 In terms of the Social Housing Regulatory Framework (the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard), the Council needs to ensure that tenants are:
  - Open to a wide range of opportunities to be consulted and involved in the formulation of landlord housing related policies and strategic priorities
  - Engaged and shaping how housing related services are delivered?
  - Offered the opportunity to scrutinise the landlord's performance and putting forward for consideration recommendations on how performance might be improved
  - Consulted and help shape the management of repairs and maintenance services including commissioning and undertaking of a range of repairs improvements
- 2.5 GB stressed that it is crucial beyond the broad requirements of the legislation that landlords and residents sit down and agree how these obligations are discharged. The regulations are not prescriptive in terms of what and how the opportunities for consultation and engagement are delivered. However, the landlord must consult residents every three years on how they will consult and engage and produce a Resident Engagement Strategy detailing process and expected outcomes. The Tenant Participation team carry out wide consultations through surveys, focus groups and consultation with TRAs/DMCs.

- 2.6 At the local level in a specific geographical area or block, the approach to participation and consultation may be agreed locally to suit those specific circumstances and needs whilst being compliant with the regulatory requirements detailed in the Resident Engagement and Empowerment Standard.
- 2.7 GB confirmed that the landlord remains the ultimate decision maker but residents can and do have an opportunity through meeting with the landlord to inform and influence decisions and play a very important role. Consultation is the mechanism established to ensure the landlord makes the ultimate decision but is not insensitive to resident's views, wishes and preferences.
- 2.8 The delay in the major works does offer an opportunity to re-evaluate the approach to consultation going forward. The Covid-19 crisis and the longer-term impact does mean that we will all have to approach things differently. We have already adapted during the pandemic to using technology as an engagement and communication approach and may continue.
- 2.9 GB asked the CWG to think about the following points when considering the proposal to help shape and deliver the Chalcots Engagement Framework: -
- a) Opportunity offered with the delay with the major works to re-evaluate the approach to engagement and potential for offering opportunities to involve all residents to support their community
  - b) The impact of Covid-19 now and going forward on residents and how engagement may be enhanced
  - c) Opportunities to build on the existing valued participation framework
  - d) Camden is committed to broadening engagement opportunities
  - e) The strategic review by Camden confirmed that 73% of residents want to deal directly with Camden regarding issues rather than going through their TRA representatives
  - f) Community investment opportunities to enhance estates and the lives of residents are an important and key way forward to facilitating residents to make a difference in their communities
- 2.10 OL invited questions from the members.
- 2.11 PS asked whether the regulatory framework and agreed consultation rules could be changed with agreement. GB explained that there are different levels of consultation and making decisions open. For example with major works consultation around preferred colour choices for kitchen cabinets can be a decision by the resident however wider issues related to design has a wider level of accountability and responsibility and consultation will be provided for residents but the ultimate decision rests with the landlord.
- 2.12 SA asked for GB comments on Page 64 Point 4.5 of the Hackitt Report – Residents need to understand the safety systems in place for their buildings and to do this they require access to a wide range of information relating to safety. Residents need to be involved in the decision making process for the work that could impact the safety of their homes and they deserve a guarantee that their voices will be heard if they raise concerns. Where issues arise and cannot be resolved with the landlord, building manager or duty holder – residents should have a clear route to escalate their concerns through an independent body. Residents also have an important role to play in maintaining and safeguarding the safety systems in their buildings. SA stated that the Hackitt Report must be the bible for major works and residents are part of the process.
- 2.13 GB confirmed that he fully accepts the view and recommendations of the Hackitt Report.
- 2.14 AKO confirmed that residents being actively part of the decision process are absolutely key to success. It is about seeking views and responding to concerns but that doesn't mean there will be a referendum style decision making.
- 2.15 SA stated that he suspects that '*where issues arise and cannot be resolved with the landlord, building manager or duty holder – residents should have a clear route to escalate their concerns through an independent body*' hasn't been considered in this major works process. There is a need to know what is the provision/process included and offered to residents directly with the major works contract.

- 2.16 AKO explained that there are ways for residents to escalate issues if they wish using the corporate formal complaints process or bringing concerns to councillors etc. What this statement in the Hackitt Report refers to is the experience of residents raising concerns about long standing repairs and maintenance issues at Grenfell and not being listened to and not receiving a response. This is specifically related to being able to go somewhere when there is not a response in terms of service requests or things being checked in a 'home' where these concerns can go to for an additional review.
- 2.17 AKO confirmed that she would double check the agreed process because usually unresolved complaints are referred to the Housing Ombudsman for an independent review and determination.

### **3. Community Resident Engagement and Communication Model presentation**

- 3.1 AKO outlined the Community Resident Engagement and Communication Model including a reflection of the current position and potential opportunities for the future.
- 3.2 Emphasis is on listening to all different sections in our community and ensuring that the voices of all residents are represented. Especially as highlighted through Covid-19 and the movements following George Floyd's death, there is still a social divide and we need to do all we can proactively to engage with all parts in our communities. We also need to be inclusive across the estate – we cannot have representation from just three blocks in an estate wide group. This is not at this time an estate wide representation of all 5 blocks.
- 3.3 Integrity and respect. AKO raised her serious concerns about recent behaviours where on a number of occasions, there has been disrespect towards officers, AKO, OL, councillors and residents in email exchanges that are unnecessary and don't help working together constructively. This goes against the code of conduct of the CWG or any group for that matter.

### **4. Resident Engagement Framework Draft Proposal**

- 4.1 OL presented an overview of the Resident Engagement Framework.
- 4.2 OL stressed that the draft framework has emerged from feedback from residents participating on webinars and verbal and written communication with AKO. In addition, PU raised a very important point in a recent email asking, "What are we doing to help residents after the contract was delayed to show that Camden can gain trust again".
- 4.3 The key points made included:
- Opportunity to offer a choice of working groups/task and finish
  - No barriers to being involved – open to all residents
  - Providing new opportunities to learn new skills, knowledge and experiences
  - Engage and meet with residents across 5 blocks
  - Each activity has a specified scope, role, outputs and start and finish timescale
  - Resident led supported by Camden officers
  - Suggested groups, Estate improvements, communication and feedback, health and wellbeing, procurement, community activities and service reviews.
  - Project team group of officers and residents
  - Accessing external funding where appropriate
  - Consultation with CWG, TRA'S and resident webinar and survey led by residents
- 4.4 TS questioned the layout of the engagement framework and relationships represented. OL answered this is only the first draft, it isn't set in stone and it was a matter of spacing and fitting it all in one page. The key point is showing that all residents can be involved but it does not prevent TRA/CWG members from participation – open to all.
- 4.5 NR stated that it should be all five blocks that are leading on the framework. It is unfortunate that only three blocks are represented on the CWG. That is a problem. We need full block representation across the CWG. It is recognised that a wider engagement approach is necessary but should be through the elected TRA's. A few residents at recent

webinars have shared views that are different to those highlighted by resident representatives.

- 4.6 GB – The scale of this project suggests that there needs to be an agreed approach. The expectation that TRAs should be there to carry the load on this – it's a huge amount of work and we have to respect the voluntary role of the TRAs and what has been built in is an effort to engage in a much wider sense and bringing support to the TRAs which the TRAs can benefit from in the longer term. The issue is finding a role for the TRAs. At the moment the framework is being considered at a strategic level and questioned whether it was needed at this stage to be talking about the detail? Members are today being consulted about the local estate engagement strategy and the implementation and operating process will be developed with consultation with TRA's and residents. This will be a more sensible approach and much better use of TRAs time.
- 4.7 MA emphasised that there has always been tension between individuals including democratically accountable elected structures like TRAs and the Council does need to seek the view of the wider audience.  
MA highlighted an example in his ward where a TRA member requested CCTV for an estate and just before the purchase was placed for the CCTV camera one-ward colleague said lets consult all residents on the estate. After consulting with the entire estate, one of the residents said it was an infringement of civil liberties and that the Councillors didn't go through the proper process of analysing this and were in breach of Home Office guidance of whether that this was needed or not. Had the councillors just relied on TRAs, it would have caused issues afterwards.
- 4.8 AKO – There is no intention to exclude any group. This model is showing a widening of inclusiveness and to give residents the opportunity to engage. There are some residents who don't engage with the TRA because they do not feel represented and we all know this. We owe it to the wider resident population to create something where people can be involved in a way that suits them.
- 4.9 PU objective from the beginning of the meeting, which he stated as being 'either have an evening meeting or stop talking about the other two blocks'.
- 4.10 HS – LBC will need to speak to every representative from Taplow and Blashford and ask who can attend mornings and who can attend evenings. It is always one or two representatives who are refusing engagement for the entire block.
- 4.11 LP – Stated that it would be a good starting point even if it is a one off so everyone can discuss this proposal openly and agree a way forward? OL said the Engagement framework this would be discussed in the next webinar followed by a resident survey to seek views and ideas open to all residents
- 4.12 NR said that the only way to unblock the deadlock is for Camden to host and lead. AKO happy to facilitate and lead on an evening meeting if it means it brings all five blocks to the table. OL asked for clarity whether the request for leading the CWG was only for the special meeting with the 5 blocks, NR stated that there have been so many problems for 2 years and that Camden need to facilitate meetings.
- 4.13 SA made plain that in order to discuss works there should be works to discuss and at present there are none.
- 4.14 PU stated that a CWG meeting is organised at 7pm or we don't talk about this.
- 4.15 NR proposed name and remit of CWG be changed or considered to be changed, that meetings are led by Camden and only construction works to be on the agenda.  
AKO said that as officer, she cannot make such a decision on a resident led group. AKO stated she would be happy to work in the way proposed and agreed that there would be a need to establish an alternate way for other estate issues to be addressed maybe through a working group in the wider engagement framework.
- 4.16 PU asked to have a vote on the proposal.
- 4.17 NR highlighted the meeting is no longer quorum. OL confirmed that no vote could be taken as there are only 3 tenant representatives from 2 blocks present because HS, MR and MJ have left the meeting.

4.18 AKO confirmed that a letter would need to go to all TRA elected officers and CWG members to seek views on the proposal. This was agreed. AKO also reconfirmed that Camden would need to seek at the same time views on the way forward from their perspective but are supportive of the proposal put forward.

### Action Summary

	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Date Raised</b>	<b>Anticipated completion date</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
<b>Action: AKO will double check escalation process of complaints.</b>	AKO	24/06/20		08/07/20
<b>Action: AKO will write to all TRA chairs and CWG members to consult on the proposals made</b>	AKO	24/06/20	With feedback 3/7/20	08/07/20