



## Panel meeting

10 June 2021, 10am-12noon *via Zoom*

### KEY NOTES AND ACTIONS

**Present:** Loretta Lees (Chair)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fiona Colley (Homeless Link)</li> <li>• Ilinca Diaconescu (London Gypsies and Travellers)</li> <li>• Fiona Dwyer (Solace Women’s Aid)</li> <li>• Anna Kear (Tonic Housing Association)</li> <li>• Phil Kerry (New Horizon Youth Centre)</li> <li>• Nigel Long (in a personal capacity)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sebastian O’Kelly (Leasehold Knowledge Partnership)</li> <li>• Greg Robbins (London Federation of Housing Co-operatives)</li> <li>• Melanie Sirinathsingh (Kineara)</li> <li>• Pat Turnball (London Tenants Federation)</li> <li>• Caitlin Wilkinson (Generation Rent)</li> </ul>
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**Apologies:** Derek Bernardi (Camden Community Law Centre), Eloise di Gianni (Children’s Rights Alliance for England / Just for Kids Law).

**In attendance:** Leila Baker and Mary Carter (Panel Secretariat), Manny Hothi (Trust for London), Jonathan Schifferes (GLA), Rohan Ranaweera (GLA), Vicky Pearlman (GLA), Scott Bryant (GLA), Joe Small, Principal Policy & Projects Officer – Housing & Planning, London Councils.

**The following joined part of the meeting:** Tom Copley (Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development), James Hall, (Senior Advisor to the Deputy Mayor).

### 1. Chair’s welcome

The Chair welcomed Tom Copley who was attending for most of the meeting and to discuss the Mayoral agenda; Jo Small from London Councils who is working with the GLA and the secretariat to take forward proposals from the TA Roundtable; and Vicky Pearlman and Scott Bryant from the GLA’s Private Rented Sector (PRS) team to discuss the Renters Reform Bill.

### Deputy Mayor on the Mayoral agenda and working with the Panel

Tom Copley began by explaining the GLA’s decision to only fund the Panel for a further nine months until the end of March 2022. He hoped that the Panel could cement its legacy, alongside the important work on temporary accommodation, to ensure community engagement and involvement is embedded in GLA policymaking and implementation.

The Mayoral manifesto (in **Dropbox**) contains 30 commitments in the housing section and there are 1,000 days to deliver.

- The top priority is the delivery of new Affordable Homes. For the next two years, we'll be running two Affordable Homes Programme, the existing one which was extended and has delivered record number of starts. The second AHP is not the size or scale we wanted it to be - 35% of the national pot rather than 50%. At the heart of this is delivery of council housing, councils are becoming a bigger share of the sector, the Deputy Mayor is confident that we're going to see an even bigger role for councils in the next programme.
- One of the first individual policies that the Mayor will be announcing is the Right to Buy Back Fund, it will be made available for councils to buy back former homes that have been sold under Right To Buy. Time-limited offer with funding through AHP – details within the next couple of months.
- There are important policies around the GLA family's delivery, establishing a City Hall based developer and looking at how we deliver homes across the whole group (including TfL and LDDC) to deliver the maximum amount of genuinely affordable housing.
- Leasehold: introducing 999 year leases on our shared ownership properties, we'll abolish ground rents on GLA land and we're looking to pilot commonhold.
- PRS: The Mayor will continue to lobby the government very hard for rent control and also around standards - there's a big opportunity with the Renters Reform Bill to improve standards and the whole experience of renting for tenants.
- Rough sleeping: A commitment to deliver 1000 units of move-on accommodation during the Mayoral term.

Jonathan Schifferes (GLA) picked up on some other manifesto commitments:

- City Hall Developer, which cuts out a stage of the process and allows the GLA to commission to its own specification;
- Retaining freehold where GLA is developing;
- A new registration scheme for short lets;
- Building safety commitments using devolved government funds – including the consultation on a Developers Tax;
- Environmental standards, performance and sustainability – including retrofit through the Decarbonisation Fund.

Comments on the manifesto from the Panel. Those around areas covered under other agenda items are included in those sections of the notes.

- Sebastian O'Kelly (Leasehold Knowledge Partnership) drew the Deputy Mayor's attention to the forthcoming demonstration of leaseholders around footing the bill for cladding removal which will be held outside Parliament on July 15<sup>th</sup>. **The Deputy Mayor and Mayor were invited to attend. The Deputy Mayor confirmed he could be there and promised to make enquiries as to the Mayor's attendance.**
- Sebastian also reflected that the Developer Levy is trifling compared to what is required and how much they've earned.

- Greg Robbins (London Federation of Housing Co-operatives) highlighted the potential for unintended consequences to accidentally rule out communal ownership and cooperative models in the welcome commonhold pilot proposals.
- He also raised that in Tower Hamlets Buy Back properties were being used for temporary accommodation, including some in tenant management organisations (TMOs) where it's not clear if TA residents are allowed to be part of the TMO. Greg offered to work with the GLA on both issues and **the Deputy Mayor asked him to email with his comments/concerns.**
- Fiona Colley (Homeless Link) offered the collaboration of Homeless Link members around move-on housing for rough sleepers. **The Deputy Mayor will get the Rough Sleeper team to contact her.**

## 2. Workshop: GLA priorities over the coming year

The GLA have picked out four areas that are in the sweet spot of the policymaking, policy development cycle and where the GLA are going to be something in the next 6-9 months. Reflecting the Panel's aim to be involved in the earlier stages of policy development, they are areas where the Panel have experience, but are not a done deal in terms of what and how they will move forward. The four areas of interest, circulated in a paper in advance of the meeting, are: Renters Reform Bill, Gypsy & Travellers Accommodation Needs Assessment, Service Charges Charter and Community-Led Housing. The Renters Reform Bill comments are included in the workshop notes, below.

### 2.1 Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Needs Assessment

From the GLA paper:

- Key evidence to shape provision of and planning for sites in London this decade, led by boroughs.
- Scoping is underway; community engagement often fails to reach relevant households.
- Panel expertise relevant (principally LG&T) including general raising the profile of London's GRT communities.

This is the first major needs assessment in 13 years. The GLA acknowledge that people have been let down in the past and welcome tips from the Panel – how to be powerful in that context.

Ilinca Diaconescu (London Gypsies and Travellers) commented that the most important aim of the needs assessment alongside providing the evidence for accommodation is to build the capacity and relationships with the gypsy and traveller community across London, so people are able to participate in a meaningful way. LG&T has sent an ideas paper to the Housing and Land team around how it could work and the different roles and structures needed, including:

- A reference group of community members, organisations and stakeholders – Panel members included.
- Policy and research oversight role – convene boroughs, ensure accurate data collection;
- Network of community outreach - sector is smaller and more under-resourced than last assessment in 2007-8, including with fewer LA roles.
- Opportunity for a model of good practice.

Points raised:

- The majority of Gypsies and Travellers are in housing, so harder to find than when on sites.
- Nomadic families require shorter term engagement exercise (within a month) – requires good relationships on the ground.
- The Police and Crime Bill is a direct attack on the gypsy and traveller way of life – political context of needs assessment exercise and reinforcing trying to do something different in London which is inclusive of needs.
- Land is no longer being made available for sites by law – what are the prospects for the GLA make sites available to the community feel listened to?

**GLA committed to engage with Ilinca and LG&T.**

## **2.2 Service Charges Charter**

From the GLA paper:

- A range of concerns for Londoners, especially those in shared ownership, and increasing mainstream/media attention (in part due to experience of leaseholders in relation to recladding/building safety costs).
- Work underway to engage Londoners and partners to update, deepen and broaden the GLA's 2017 Charter.
- Panel expertise potentially relevant in how to structure exercise so as to drive institutional change at commercial partners with limited enforcement options.

GLA keen to undertake a piece of work with Has to commit to transparency – want to go further in refresh and bring in resident voice. How to present that resident voice so it's compelling and representative and constructively critical?

Points raised:

- Sebastian O'Kelly (Leasehold Knowledge Partnership) talked about the injustice that the cladding bill is being dumped on shared ownership - you may own 25% of the flat but you pay 100% of the bill defect costs. Concern around those not covered by government loans (blocks less than 18m, non-high rise and where defects aren't covered). Estimated that £10bn won't be covered.
- Loretta Lees added that this is not confined to the cladding crisis – e.g. leaseholders who bought through Right To Buy and the block is refurbished can face £20-30k bills as well.
- Pat Turnbull (London Tenants Federation) commented that the nature of shared ownership is fundamentally unsatisfactory, so it's disappointing that it's included as meeting affordable housing requirements. Consistent raising of service charges on HA shared ownership makes them unaffordable.
- Greg Robbins (London Federation of Housing Co-operatives) – important to question shared ownership as an option - LFHC has a couple of co-ops setting up as mutual home ownership societies – there are alternatives to shared ownership where people can get back their equity when they leave. Could involve them in comparative work?

- **LKP have been discussing with Trust for London about how to get a representative forum going – will get back to JS.**
- **Anna Kear (Tonic Housing Association) reiterated that there is a collective voice and the willingness to work with the GLA.**

### **2.3 Community Led Housing**

From the GLA paper:

- Manifesto commitment to “build on the work already started to expand the number of community-led homes in our city”.
- Community Housing Fund has significant funding to allocate, notwithstanding broad pipeline (orgs engaging with CLH Hub) and successful allocation for Tonic (LHP member) at Bankhouse.
- Potential for Panel to give feedback on the reach and potential barriers of accessing/disbursing CHF, better engagement with community-led sector.

Points raised:

- Anna Kear (Tonic Housing Association) has had experience of accessing the Community Housing Fund – lengthy process, often not knowing what comes next. Work needs to be done to provide transparency on process and expectations to add value and remove frustrations from community organisations.
- Greg Robbins (LFHC) – Community Led Housing Hub engaging more – should discuss ways of taking out some of the risks. Also reassuring council officers that it isn’t so new – 80,000 units in resident management across the capital. Very glad and positive with GLA approach that we can do something together.

Pat Turnball (London Tenants Federation) finally was disappointed that the GLA’s paper didn’t include lobbying government for more social rented homes and volunteered to work on this.

### **3. Workshop: GLA plans for lobbying around the Renters Reform Bill**

The Bill was announced in the Queen’s Speech and is only set out at a high level. From the workshop on GLA priorities for working with the panel, the GLA paper set out:

- Key lobbying agenda for GLA.
- Legislation drafting likely underway – publication Autumn/Winter.
- Need to ensure that improvement in rights/entitlements includes those in the most vulnerable positions within PRS.
- Panel expertise relevant (eg Camden Law Centre, Generation Rent).

A paper circulated in advance of the meeting set out details of the GLA’s three high level objectives from the Bill: greater security through scrapping Section 21 evictions; greater certainty and support for renters and landlords through reform to possession grounds and increased tenancy sustainment support; and identifying and minimising the risk for unintended consequences.

- GLA is keen to ensure that scrapping of S21 evictions doesn’t incentivise use of other grounds to spuriously evict tenants.

- GLA also proposing tenant relocation payments (equivalent of a month's rent) if landlords want to use no fault possession grounds, recognising practical and emotional impact of unplanned moves.

Points raised:

- Manifesto seems to be saying it's a good idea and fair reason to allow landlords to evict tenants because they want to sell the property. Isn't it something we want to avoid? Years ago properties were sold with sitting tenants. GLA responded that they recognised the risk and any system should ensure this is properly evidenced with recourse where the ground is abused.
- Phil Kerry (New Horizon Youth Centre) urged the GLA not to forget young people – growing numbers accessing PRS, likely to grow in years to come. Toynbee Hall have done a good research report on young people struggling to access PRS. **GLA will follow-up with Phil.**
- Caitlin Wilkinson (Generation Rent) has published proposals for a tenancy system following the abolition of Section 21. There's five parts: introducing indefinite tenancies, longer notice periods, relocation payments, scrapping Section 8 Ground 8 and forcing landlords to use Ground 10, and introducing in-tenancy rent restrictions so a landlord can't use a rent increase to force a tenant out.
- Nigel Long reflected that the old fair rent system required landlords to go the statutory body before they raised rents. The briefing paper talks about first tier tribunals – should there be a regulatory body that looks at rents; or discussion about the process for setting rents? Rent setting used to be linked to quality – higher rents, better quality and security. GLA responded that while rent controls are out of scope of the Bill, they believe more work needs to be done on this.
- Greg commented that if a social landlord refurbishes the property, tenants are decanted and the landlord offers a suitable alternative.

GLA concluded that they're really keen to continue this discussion with the panel and to contact them with any further. Next steps are that the government have committed to publishing a White Paper in the autumn, with a Bill to follow in due course. **GLA would like to come back to the panel at the point the White Paper is published.**

#### **4. Roundtable on temporary accommodation: update**

There is lots of interest and energy around TA at the moment; and a prospective Households in Temporary Accommodation All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG). The Labour Housing Group have done some FoI work around numbers being placed out of borough.

Joe Small (London Councils) and Rohan Ranaweera (GLA) and provided updates on how their respective bodies are looking at taking forward ideas from the roundtable separately and together.

Joe Small:

- The scope is large and there's a good piece of work that can come out of this and there's a commitment to being open ended and open minded.

- The first workstream is addressing broader structural issues affecting the housing market including in the PRS - having an understanding of how that context is going to change in the next five years and developing a shared story and shared lobbying position, with cross-party support.
- Another workstream is for increased preventative measures, that's the most underdeveloped and we're right at the start of it – more to follow.
- A specific issue for improving housing conditions and service quality, is to take forward digital inclusion in temporary accommodation. We went to our partners in LOTIN (London Office for Technological Innovation) - in order to access funding from the Digital Inclusion Fund they want a piece of discovery work: what the issue is, who the people are, what their situation is and why they are digitally excluded. Joe would welcome panel members as part of the working group.
- **Looking to have a conversation around what would a more holistic approach to delivering housing option services look like from a borough perspective? Keen for panel to be involved.**

Rohan Ranaweera (GLA):

- Prevention: Looking at lobbying around discretionary housing payments, in light of reduction in allocations compared to last year. We're working out a lobbying strategy and who best to talk to and how best to do that.
- Promoting an enhanced funding avenue for the 2016-23 Affordable Homes programme - right to buy buy-back – as accommodation for homeless households. Recognise the priority is to find settled and permanent accommodation but we also realise some of the practical and financial benefits that boroughs can realise if they own more of the TA stock themselves. This will be based on the Decent Homes Standards.
- Digital inclusion: As covered by Joe. It's promising as it's been prioritised to be one of the main projects under the Mayor's Digital Inclusion Fund.
- Rohan has been shadowing some of the TA boards and TA action groups which have been set up, I've been attending the one in Hackney, to understand how they operate and how they aim to amplify the voices of residents in TA. We'll continue working with Shelter and London Councils to see how that forum might be used to bring residents' experiences to decision makers, which should underpin all the work we're doing in TA.

**Secretariat will liaise with London Councils and GLA and pull together headlines of what's happening.**

## **5. Action log**

**EDI and Affordable Homes Programme** – verbal update from Jonathan Schifferes, GLA:

- The feedback from the workshop was built into the final guidance document and that's now been published.
- We've worked on some internal guidance to support our colleagues in how to push investment partners on going over and above contractual requirements in the Affordable Homes programme in relation to EDI requirements.

- We've done some spreading the message sessions with area managers and will be doing that soon with the wider investment partner sector, for example, the National Housing Federation London Leaders Forum and Housing Diversity Network.
- We'll have feedback soon on discussions with the investment partners and report back on the take-up of the guidance and EDI requirements in the Affordable Homes programme is going in a few months' time.

**Homes for Londoners Board – response about data on social rented homes – See paper**

We've now got data on social rented homes, do the panel want to pursue further to disaggregate local authority rent, council rent from other forms of social rent?

The panel agreed to pursue.

**6. Dates of meetings in 2021/22**

Tbc for mid-September, early December, early March