



Residents' Conference Report 2016

Authors: Members of the Residents' Conference Planning Group
Residents: Maxine Bayliss, Ray Champion, Karen Miller, Annette Atherly, Jose Camano, Michelle Akintoye and Kim Shearer
LBHF Resident Involvement Team: Janey Carey and Tony Rodriguez

1. Scope

This report provides a summary of activities at the conference, gives details of Residents' feedback and addresses questions that were raised during the conference, to maximise the benefit of the conference for all residents.

2. Conference Aims

- Provide a conference that was accessible to as wide a range of Residents as possible
- Inform and engage residents about the proposed stock transfer to a Community Gateway Housing Association
- Increase the number of involved Residents
- Give residents opportunities to engage with Council services, community organisations and other local providers

3. Conference Outline

The Residents' Conference, organised jointly by a group of Residents and the H&F Resident Involvement Team, took place on Saturday 18th June 2016 at the Hammersmith Novotel Hotel. This venue was selected for its central location and accessibility.

The theme for the Conference was 'Our Homes Our Future' and followed on from last year's Tenants and Leaseholders Conferences to focus on the delivery of housing services and the report back of the Residents' Commission. A significant amount of the model that was developed for the Tenants' Conference in 2015 was used again for the Residents Conference, such as making the day as interactive and informative as possible.

The Conference was attended by over 400 residents and 150 stall holders, including LBHF staff. There were over 30 stalls providing information and opportunities to learn more about local services (see Appendix 1 for a list of invited guest, stall holders, and information providers).

All the speeches and the Question and Answer session were interpreted by British Sign Language interpreters and they were available at registration and during the workshops.



Our Homes Our Future
YOUR RESIDENTS' CONFERENCE

Following feedback from tenants who attended the Tenants' Conference last year, the booking and registration process was simplified.



On arrival each resident was provided with a programme, prize draw ticket and a canvas bag filled with information including the Resident Involvement pack. Residents were invited to post questions on a pin board for the afternoon Question and Answer session (see appendix 2 for a summary of the Q&A session).



Residents who had been registered were shown into the main hall where Karen Miller, a resident member of the Residents' Conference Planning Group, opened the Cconference and introduced the Chair, Councillor Lisa Homan (Cabinet member for Housing). Councillor Homan welcomed delegates and explained the background and purpose of the conference and outlined the timetable for the day.



The morning session consisted of guest speakers who delivered presentations covering the key themes of the day:

James Murray (London's Deputy Mayor for Housing) – The new Mayors vision for Housing. James spoke about the Mayor of London's plans to build more new and affordable housing and for developing new approaches to housing.

Kath Corbett (Director for Finance and Resources) – The Future of Council Housing.

Kath explained why the Governments' 1% rent reduction will have such a big impact on repairs and how stock transfer would mean planned works could still go ahead.

Tom Hopkins (TPAS) – What Stock Transfer means to you. Tom introduced TPAS and gave a summary of their role in the proposed stock transfer and explained how the proposed stock transfer would affect residents.

Pat Fordham MBE (Phoenix Community Housing) – The Phoenix Experience. Pat is a tenant and Chair of the Board of Phoenix Community Housing. She gave a very informative and inspiring talk about their stock transfer journey from Lewisham Council tenants and leaseholders to Phoenix Community Housing which is a Community Gateway Housing Association.

After the mid-morning break delegates attended one of four workshops:

- 1: Improvements to our Repairs Service (Mitie & LBHF Property Services)
- 2: How Do I Get Involved? (LBHF Resident Involvement Team and Residents)
- 3: The Neighbourhood (Pinnacle and LBHF Housing Services)
- 4: Our Leasehold, Our Future (LBHF Leasehold Services)



Our Homes Our Future **YOUR RESIDENTS' CONFERENCE**



Throughout the day there were over 30 stalls offering a range of information on local and Council services (see appendix 1 for a full list of stallholders). Residents also had the opportunity to discuss repairs, housing issues, get legal and financial advice and even have their blood pressure checked by local health and well-being organisations.

After lunch delegates returned to the main hall for the Question and Answer session, with the questions mainly based on the proposed stock transfer.

On the Q&A panel were Cllr Lisa Homan, Kath Corbett (Director for Finance and Resources), Mathias Kulubya (Resident Shadow Board Member) and Tom Hopkins (TPAS). The Chair was tenant Shirley Cupit who made sure the panel answered the questions and the session kept within the allotted time (see Appendix 2 for a summary of the Question and Answer session).



After the Question and Answer session, Councillor Steven Cowan (Leader of the Council) gave a rousing speech explaining the reasons behind the proposed stock transfer. He then performed the final activity of the day by conducting the lucky Prize Draw.

4. Resident feedback

Delegates were handed a feedback form on entry, the form consisted of a series of simple tick box questions and the opportunity to submit further comments and suggestions. Following the final session delegates were asked to return their completed feedback forms. Overall, 88% of residents expressed a high level of satisfaction with the Residents' Conference.



Popular comments from feedback submitted:

Positive:

- A well-organised and informative event in a good location with good access and comfortable surroundings
- There was a good variety of information stalls and support where residents could speak to providers, particularly face to face, and have questions and queries clarified
- The guest speakers and Q&A panel members were informative, the workshops were excellent, friendly, and very informative
- A good opportunity to meet fellow residents, council staff and contractors with direct access to decision makers
- A great platform and opportunity to give opinions and hear views
- Residents felt that they received a much better understanding of the benefits and impact of stock transfer

Areas for improvement:

- There were some concerns over the limited number of chairs available at lunch time
- Although the quality of food was generally good some delegates felt that the offer was too bread based, some delegates expressed that the tea and coffee offer was quite basic and they would've also liked biscuits and fruit juice
- The standard of sound quality in the main hall was variable, making it difficult to hear what panellists and speakers were saying at times
- Some delegates would have liked to have attended more than two workshops across the day
- It would have been helpful to receive an agenda or conference programme in advance
- Although the Q&A session was informative, some delegates felt that it was a little stage managed and there could have been more time for additional questions



5. Recommendations/ideas for the future:

- Circulate an agenda or programme to attendees in advance
- Some residents felt that the main room was too large to host a workshop
- Some residents felt that it might be useful to state TRA membership/ location on name badges
- The Residents' Conference should be a regular event; at least every two years.
- Some residents expressed a preference for information stalls to remain open past 3pm





Appendix 1: Conference contributors

The 2016 Residents' Conference could not have taken place without the support and involvement of a large number of people and organisations. We thank them on behalf of all the residents who organised and attended the Conference.

- **GUESTS AND LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH and FULHAM**

Administration

- Councillor Mercy Umeh: Mayor of Hammersmith and Fulham
- Councillor Stephen Cowan: Leader of the Council
- Councillor Lisa Homan: Cabinet Member for Housing

Guests

- James Murray: London's Deputy Mayor for Housing
- Pat Fordham MBE: Chair of Phoenix Community Housing Residents Board
- Tom Hopkins: Lead Advisor TPAS

Residents

- Mathias Kulubya: Resident and Shadow Board Member
- Karen Miller: Residents' Conference Planning Group and Compere
- Shirley Cupit: Resident and Shadow Board Member

The Resident Involvement Team

- Janey Carey
- Tony Rodriguez
- Daniel Miller
- Sianline Crawford
- Michelle Samuel
- Dami Segun

Publicity and printing

- Communications Division
- HammerPrint

- **VENUE**

- The Hospitality Team at the Hammersmith Novotel Hotel
- The Audio-visual Team at the Hammersmith Novotel Hotel



- **SPONSORSHIP**

Conference costs:

- MITIE
- Pinnacle PSG
- Quadron

Prize draw

- Eventim Apollo
- Ray Champion & Family
- Fulham Football Club
- Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith
- Mitie
- Queens Park Rangers Football Club
- Vue Cinema
- Wilko

- **WORKSHOP HOSTS**

- LBHF Leasehold Services
- LBHF Resident Involvement Team and Residents
- Mitie and LBHF Property Services
- Pinnacle and LBHF Housing Services

- **STALL HOLDERS**

- Action On Disability www.actionondisability.org.uk
- Age UK www.ageuk.org.uk/hammersmithandfulham
- Better (Leisure Centres) www.better.org.uk
- Bishop Creighton House www.creightonhouse.org
- British Legion www.britishlegion.org.uk
- Citizens Advice (CAB) www.citizensadvicehf.org.uk
- Credit Union www.londonpluscu.co.uk
- Cross Light Debt Advice www.crosslightadvice.org
- Fire Brigade www.london-fire.gov.uk
- Fuel Poverty
- Groundwork www.groundwork.org.uk
- Insurance
- Law Centre www.hflaw.org.uk
- LEASE www.lease-advice.org
- Mitie
- People First www.peoplefirstinfo.org.uk
- Pinnacle Estate Services



- Pinnacle Housing Services (South)
- Quadron
- Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)
- LBHF Services <http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/>
 - Adult Social Care
 - Employment & Skills
 - Estate Support & Security
 - Garages
 - Homebuy service
 - Housing Improvement Programme
 - Housing Management Teams - North and South
 - Leasehold Services
 - Neighbourhood Wardens (LBHF)
 - Parking Services
 - Planned and Capital Works
 - Property Compliance Team
 - Resident Involvement Team
 - Rental Income Support
 - Sheltered Housing
- **QUESTION TIME PANEL MEMBERS**
 - Cllr Lisa Homan (Cabinet Member for Housing, H&F)
 - Kath Corbett (Director for Finance and Resources, Housing Department, H&F)
 - Mathias Kulubya (Resident Shadow Board Member)
 - Tom Hopkins (TPAS)

Our Homes Our Future
YOUR RESIDENTS' CONFERENCE





Appendix 2: Afternoon Question and Answer Session - Summary

Panel:

Cllr Lisa Homan (Cllr LH)– Cabinet Member for Housing

Tom Hopkins (TH) – Lead Advisor TPAS

Kath Corbett (KC) - Director for Finances and Resources

Mathias Kulubya (MK) – Resident and Shadow Board Member

Compere: Shirley Cupit (SC) - Resident and Shadow Board Member.

Questions that were chosen from resident attendee suggestions throughout the conference are shown in bold italic. Those accompanied by a letter are from the floor during the Q&A session.





1. Will I lose any of my rights as a tenant? How will leaseholders' rights differ from existing rights?

TH: You would keep all your key rights, including housing benefit.

Your Secure Tenancy would change to an Assured Tenancy, but you would still have security of tenure.

Only Local Authorities can grant secure tenancies but all key rights would be transferred e.g. Right to Buy (RTB) and Succession.

The only difference for leaseholders would be the name of the freeholder on the lease.

a) Could you give an example of rights that would be lost if we vote for Stock Transfer?

TH: Residents would lose the right to manage. A Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) is only allowed in local authority.

Peter Bevington (Independent Member of the Residents Commission): The rules of the Community Gateway allow for TMO's to be recognised. This would be included in the governance of the proposed new organisation.

b) There are different grounds for possession between secure and assured tenancies, what will happen under the Community Gateway.

TH: Grounds 8 & 11 of the Housing Act will not be used by the new landlord.

c) I am a leaseholder in a street property divided into two flats, will we have to manage the property?

Cllr LH: Current management arrangements will continue under the Community Gateway.

KC: You always have the right to buy the freehold, this is called enfranchisement and this right would continue under the Community Gateway but it is only if you want to.

2. I'm a leaseholder, will my service charges go up?

KC: Leaseholders can only be charged what we have paid to provide a service.

Some expenses will be subject to VAT.

Large planned works will not incur this extra charges provided we get agreement for a VAT shelter.

3. If it becomes a resident led Housing Association, does that mean that I have to work for the Housing Association?



MK: No, being resident led doesn't mean residents would replace paid staff who provide services.

The new not for profit landlord would be a Community Gateway Housing Association which you and other residents would jointly control.

Involvement as residents will be more focussed.

Residents will be in charge at Board level and at strategic level

- a) ***I am both a resident and a councillor and firstly I would like to thank both the Residents Commission and all those involved in organising the conference today. I have concerns regarding the proposal and whether we will be given guarantees that the proposed Community Gateway will not go the same way as Old Oak which was bought out by a larger Housing Association. Will there be any mechanism to return to the Council if the Community Gateway is not a success?***

Cllr LH: The Labour Council wishes to protect council homes for the future. We do not want more situations like West Kensington and Gibbs Green where the residents did not want the redevelopment and are now being forced out of their homes.

Old Oak was set up as a community based Housing Association with its own Board owned by a larger Housing Association, Family Mosaic. The proposed arrangements for the Community Gateway are totally different.

TH: None of the associations set up following Stock Transfer have failed. Housing Associations are regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

4. What happens if the money runs out? Can the Council or the new organisation go bankrupt? Would the banks take our homes away?

KC: The council can't become bankrupt in law, they would simply stop spending and only deliver an emergency service.

TH: A Housing Association can technically become bankrupt. However, this will not be allowed to happen as the Social Housing Regulator, the Homes, and Communities Agency (HCA) acts when a Housing Association is beginning to show any signs of failure.

They regulate on a quarterly basis and were there have been issues they have taken measures e.g. replacing Chief Executives or Board Members.

There are approximately 1700 Housing Associations but only 250 of them manage over 1000 properties.

Any stock transferred from a Local Authority by law must transfer to a Housing Association.



a) I live in White City, what would happen if the Housing Association went bust? We were told that estates would be sold off?

SC: No, estates would not be sold off without the majority of residents' approval.

Cllr LH: There appears to be confusion around regeneration. It would be in the residents' hands if they wanted to regenerate estates.

5. How can we be sure the residents on the board or assembly of the new Housing Association really would work for the benefit of all residents and not just for their own estates or areas?

MK: There is a rigorous recruitment process, elections, scrutiny, accountability, wide representation.

All Board members will be expected to act on behalf of all residents whether they are a leaseholder or tenant, an estate resident or resident of a street.

The Board can be held to account by the Representatives Assembly, the TRA's and the Forums.

SC: Checks and balances will be put in place.

Anyone recruited to the Board will have genuinely shown a commitment to all tenants and leaseholders.

The Board will be scrutinised by other resident forums.

The reason I am doing this is I do care about all residents of Hammersmith & Fulham.

6. When will the ballot be? And if it's a 'YES' vote, when will the actual transfer take place?

Cllr LH: We are working with the Government to finalise the financing of the Transfer and we will come back to you later in the year on this point. The Stock Transfer Manual is currently being updated by the Government and we are awaiting this. We need to get the offer right.

a) A lot of information about going over to the Community Gateway but we need to know what will happen if we stay at the Council?

Cllr LH: The financial situation would be vulnerable. The Labour administration wishes to protect you and your homes for the future. We do not want to see estates being sold off against the wishes of the residents.



SC: The reason I am here today is I lived in Temporary Accommodation for many years being moved from place to place. When I got a secure council tenancy I thought no one can make me move as long as I keep to the rules.

In 2009 the Council wanted to hand my estate, (which is by the river) over to private developers, that's why I got involved.

The residents of West Kensington and Gibbs Green have had their homes sold from under them.

b) Is there a risk with the Housing Association of losing our home?

SC: It will be written into the governance that the board cannot sell off homes unless the majority of resident members agree.

Regeneration needs to be reclaimed as a positive.

c) We were told previously that the Community Gateway would take over by 2017 but we haven't even voted yet. What is the delay?

SC: That was the original timeline and the delay is due to the Government changing the rules.

d) Would the new Housing Association be able to build new homes and would the Right to Buy (RTB) receipts go towards the new homes.

KC: Yes, we would be able to build new homes.

We will be negotiating to retain RTB receipts as part of the Transfer.

MK: Return to points of staying with the council:

The council cannot apply for external funding and the debt cap does not leave any room for additional borrowing.

The Government have also said that Councils must reduce their rents by 1% for four the next four years.

Savills have carried an independent Stock condition survey and there will not be enough money to maintain the Stock.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is ring-fenced.

Changes of administration could lead to changes of policy.

e) Lots of people aren't here today how do you warn them of the risks if they vote to remain in the council?

SC: There will be a series of meetings and door knocking activity to give the facts. It is hoped that there will be a ripple effect where if you speak to your neighbours and tell them the facts, then they can make an informed decision when it comes to the vote.



f) Will the current debt transfer across with the Stock Transfer?

KC: We are currently working with financial advisers and government regarding the debt but the debt will not Transfer.

g) Is the Transfer to do with David Cameron cutting funds to the Labour Party?

Cllr LH: No, it is solely about protecting council homes.

7. What are the benefits of staying with the Council?

TH: A landlord you know, you know how they work and how decisions are made.

Elected Councillors.

Why should I vote to leave? – focus on housing, voluntary Board of management, existing staff will Transfer to new organisation, tenants and leaseholders will direct the organisation.

7a. Will RTB allowance increase by the same amount as for Council Tenants?

KC: Yes, it will stay the same as Council tenants.

7b. If the debt is not paid off will the Transfer go ahead?

KC: We are currently looking at other solutions but the Transfer could be stopped if the debt can't be managed.

Cllr LH: The rules regarding Stock Transfer have changed and we are awaiting information from the government.

Cllr Coleman: There are lots of issues that need to be addressed. Our election pledges were to stop selling off council homes and to protect council homes for the future. Since we came to power not one has been sold off (except under RTB). We are not privatising homes but plan to give them to you to run via the Community Gateway Company.