

London Assembly Planning and Regeneration Committee – Wednesday 7 September 2022

Transcript of Agenda Item 6 – The Future of Planning in London – Panel Two

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Welcome back to the Planning and Regeneration Committee following our short adjournment. Many thanks again to the guests who joined us for panel one and we are delighted to have four guests joining us for panel two, one of whom is online. I will give all guests an opportunity to introduce themselves, the work that they do and any ideas that they want to bring to the Committee today, in one or two minutes. Please say your full name, your organisation you are from and continue with whatever else you would like to present to the Committee. Thank you for your time and welcome.

Yasmin Moalin (Youth Engagement Lead, Anti-Tribalism Movement): Thank you very much. My name is Yasmin Moalin. I am the Youth Engagement Lead at the Anti-Tribalism Movement. We are an organisation committed to promoting various societies and combatting prejudice and discrimination among Somalis in the United Kingdom (UK). We have been established for 12 years and we support Somalis in all walks of life. I do the youth leadership programme and we have different projects supporting Somali communities such as victims of hate crime. We work with schools to support young people in their leadership and placing them in boards and places where they can demonstrate their leadership. One of the recommendations that I want to speak about today is about the youth voice and making things accessible for young people and allowing them to present their perspectives. Thank you.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you, Yasmin. Christine, would you like to present next?

Christine Goodall (Network Coordinator, HEAR Equality and Human Rights Network): Thank you. I am Christine Goodall and I am the co-ordinator of HEAR Equality and Human Rights Network. That is HEAR, spelt H-E-A-R, but nothing to do with hearing. It is a rather clumsy acronym for human rights and equality. We are a pan-London, pan-equality network for voluntary organisations, community groups and, increasingly, individual people who are experts by experience, community campaigners and activists, and anyone in London working for equality, human rights and social justice. That is obviously really, really broad. Our members range from the large national equality-focused charities that are based in London but also work nationally, through to borough-based organisations, small grassroots and unconstituted groups and individual people with lived experience and people who are working as volunteers and community activists in their local community.

Many of the organisations and groups are specialists in a particular field such as disability, faith groups, women's organisations, communities across the board. Many of them are specialists in their area and we are not aiming to interpose on those specialisms. Our aim is to bring people together across all different protected characteristics, communities of interest and so on to work collectively together in a pan-equality and, importantly, intersectional way. Our members also include organisations that work on important themes such as homelessness, violence against women and girls, people who work with ex-offenders. It is a very, very wide remit.

We have a steering group and we have been a constituted charity since 2016 but we previously existed as an unconstituted group since 2004. We mainly focus on issues that are pan-equality that impact intersectionally and/or on many different groups of Londoners with different protected characteristics. Themes that we work on, we have done a large amount of work on health inequalities, for example, because that is obviously impacting across the board for Londoners. One of the issues that I would like to particularly speak about, and

to which we contributed in the Just Space plan, is around digital inclusion and exclusion. Those are two slightly different things that I can expand on. We have previously done lots of work on hate crime, again because that impacts on many different Londoners.

Just Space and HEAR Equality are mutual members. We are members of Just Space and Just Space are members of our network. We have worked closely with them for quite a number of years now, including contributing and supporting our members to contribute to the alternative recovery plan. We also work very closely with many parts of the GLA and the statutory sector in London, and public health. We are members of the London Recovery Taskforce and also the Digital Exclusion Taskforce and the London Health Equity Group. We work very closely with our colleagues in the statutory sector around those issues. I will leave it there for the moment but that is the background of our work.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you very much, Christine. Over to you, Francesca.

Francesca Humi (Advocacy and Campaigns Officer, Kanlungan Filipino Consortium): I am Francesca Humi, the Advocacy and Campaigns Officer at Kanlungan Filipino Consortium. I do immigration casework, campaigning and advocacy for undocumented Filipino migrants in London. Kanlungan, which means shelter or safe haven in Tagalog, is a consortium of 11 member organisations, which include the Filipino Domestic Workers Association, regional groups and different special interest groups and self-help groups that are mostly self-organised. As an organisation we provide access to free immigration advice through our legal clinics and workshops.

We have other workshops on confidence building, mental health and other issues that are important to the community, including violence against women, employment rights and access to healthcare for migrants. We also provide one-to-one and peer-to-peer support in terms of mental health and wellbeing for Filipino, Vietnamese and Indonesian women who are survivors of domestic abuse, human trafficking and modern-day slavery and other forms of gender-based violence. We also have more community engagement and cultural engagement activities. We are a London-based organisation and the biggest segment of the Filipino community is in London and is dispersed across different boroughs depending on occupation.

What I would like to address through this session is the need to take into account immigration policy and in particular the hostile environment policy in terms of planning, housing and regeneration in London, because with our community members, especially those who are undocumented or are in the legal process, that immigration status will completely define the way that they interact and access all of the services that should be available to them in London, in particular really focusing on how immigration policy is shaping those things and shaping people's access to housing. For example, with domestic workers, which is the occupation of a lot of our members, their living space and their workspace is essentially the same space for live-in carers and that is a need around housing and access to safety. That is really important and needs to be properly considered. Similarly, for survivors of gender-based violence, modern-day slavery and human trafficking, the need for emergency accommodation or even just affordable accommodation in London that they can be eligible for regardless of their immigration status.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you, Francesca. Finally to Pat, who is joining us online.

Pat Turnbull (Regional Representative, London Tenants Federation): I am Pat Turnbull and a regional representative for London Tenants Federation. We describe ourselves on our website as bringing together social housing tenant organisations from across London to act on matters that affect their homes and communities. What I want to remind people of is what this social housing community in London consists of. There are 659,689 social rented homes in London, plus 57,112 social rent supported homes for older people.

That includes the housing association homes and the council homes. Of course, that is not the end of the story, because OnLondon reported in April that there were over 200,000 households on the waiting list for a social home and about 400,000 households thought to contain a concealed household. That is a huge additional need for social rented housing in those figures alone.

Social rented housing is the only appropriate housing for at least half of Londoners and it is not being provided for them. The points that Portia [Msimang, Project Co-ordinator, Renters' Rights London] made on the earlier section about the situation in the private rented sector should be remembered here, because a lot of the people in the private rented sector are only there because they are not being provided with the social rented housing that they need.

To finally say what the London Tenants Federation would like from the London Plan, we would like a London Plan that meets the needs of all these people and more.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Fantastic, thank you very much, Pat.

I am going to jump straight in. Feel free to draw on any of the ideas or conversations in the previous panel as well. I will start with you, Francesca. What challenges have the communities with whom you work experienced during the pandemic and how would a London planning system rectify the environment that caused those effects?

Francesca Humi (Advocacy and Campaigns Officer, Kanlungan Filipino Consortium): The pandemic had a devastating impact on the Filipino community. We were overrepresented in terms of deaths from COVID-19, especially during the first year. That is because so many Filipinos are working in the National Health Service (NHS) and are working in care homes. To give you an idea, Filipinos represent about 3% of all NHS staff, but in spring 2020, one in four COVID-19 deaths among NHS staff were Filipino. That is a really disproportionate impact. We were seeing the same thing among other people in the healthcare sector, including carers and also including domestic workers.

The pandemic impacted so many people through their workplaces but also through their living situation. We knew that there were so many Filipino nurses who could not afford to live near the hospitals where they were working or could not afford rent, so they were resorting to bed sharing. If you are living during a pandemic and your whole household are other healthcare and social care workers and you are sharing beds because you cannot afford rent in London, that is necessarily also going to accelerate the impact. The reason why people cannot afford rent is obviously because wages are very low but it is also because migrants have to pay an NHS surcharge in order to access healthcare. They face huge fees when it comes to renewing their visa, instructing a solicitor, and also have no recourse to public funds, meaning that they cannot get assistance with housing, benefits, childcare. Their children are not eligible for nursery or for free school meals, for example. Therefore, the pandemic had a knock-on effect and it was being exacerbated by people's immigration status.

On top of that for people who were domestic workers or live-in carers who did not have that formal work setting, people were not eligible for the furlough scheme, for all of these Government support systems to make sure that people were able to stay home or people could self-isolate if they needed to or that people were even going on sick leave if they did get COVID-19. At Kanlungan we had a COVID-19 emergency response project, which was to deliver groceries and other essentials to households affected by COVID-19 across the country. That was to make sure that people were staying home and were self-isolating and making sure that they could afford to stay home. If you are undocumented or if your right to stay in the UK is dependent on your work, you are less likely to call in sick, to raise complaints, to have grievances against your employers. It

was important for us to then step in where the Government had basically taken a step back, and provide that care directly for the community.

It showed the vulnerability of live-in workers. There was an eviction ban during the pandemic, but that eviction ban was completely unrespected by a lot of these employers, who also do not see themselves as employers. They just see themselves as people who happen to be paying for someone to clean their house. They do not see themselves as being employers who have a responsibility towards their employees. We had case of a domestic worker who got COVID-19 and she was immediately kicked out from her employer's house and lost her job. Not only was she now homeless but she also did not have a job. It was up to community members to host her because she is not eligible for social housing because she has no recourse to public funds.

Going back to the London Plan from a planning perspective, making sure that people who are working can afford to live near their places of work and that the needs of people who are live-in workers or are domestic workers are taken into account, to have that emergency accommodation available for people. Obviously there is the hostile environment policy and there are laws in place and it is quite limited in terms of what local Governments can do, but maybe going through community organisations to support them in their provision of emergency accommodation, because it cannot be this perpetually under-resourced and overburdened community that is then providing essential support for the community in return. Therefore, thinking about the needs of the most vulnerable people and how we address them when legislation is literally forbidding them from accessing Government resources.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you for that very articulate answer, Francesca. I do not think planning is very often talked about in the context of how a migration status or the hostile environment has effects. Going forward, given the light that you have shone on in particular the domestic workers that you work with and how they were affected during the pandemic and the consequences that can sometimes be almost hidden, you have drawn them to light very effectively, thank you.

I am going to bring Pat in on this question as well.

Pat Turnbull (Regional Representative, London Tenants Federation): I think it exposed the desperate inequalities in London. You had overcrowded homes. People sometimes talk as if people who have social rented housing are fine, everything is fine. It is not fine at all because a lot of the people are living in overcrowded homes because there is nowhere for their families to move to. In the old days when your family grew and you had two children of different sexes, you got a bigger home. That does not happen nowadays. The family just keeps growing and still keeps living in the same space. You can imagine during the pandemic how easily, therefore, that enabled the disease to spread.

A lot of the people who live in social rented homes were not people who could work from home. They were people who were expected to go to work every day and were poorly protected in going to work and therefore caught the illness, brought it home and spread it to their families. To add to that, we are talking about recovery, but by what standards are we in the middle of a recovery? It has been touched on in the earlier session that rents are going up and fuel is going up but wages are not going up, so people are poorer and poorer.

The last point that I want to make - and I do not want to sound as if I am picking on my own borough but I happen to know it because I live there - last year more than 400 Hackney households were directed by the council into private rented housing because there were no social rented homes to meet their needs, and that is in the middle of a pandemic.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you very much for that contribution, Pat, that is helpful.

I want to ask a little bit about how the pandemic affected the communities that you work with. In particular I would be interested to hear from you, Yasmin, about young people and the effects of digital exclusion or digital poverty on young people.

Yasmin Moalin (Youth Engagement Lead, Anti-Tribalism Movement): We did quite a lot of research during the pandemic and we released multiple policy briefs on the impact of COVID-19 within the Somali community. In terms of young people and the idea of overcrowded homes, they were not able to focus on their school education, they fell behind in school and there were not enough resources for them to confidently excel in school. We also realised that in terms of the services that we were able to provide for them, they found it difficult. We found it difficult as well because there was a small disconnect that we would normally have outside of a pandemic. In terms of accessing services, I do not think they felt confident to access services. Another thing that we realised is that Somalis were disproportionately affected by the pandemic. We noticed this especially with young, Black Somali boys in terms of stop and searches, feeling safe outside. They were targeted in terms of their own safety and feeling safe within their community.

We did some roundtable discussions with the local community to understand how we can strengthen that relationship, but there was a lack of trust in that as well. For young people, they did not really feel like they were able to be supported. As well, in terms of familial responsibilities, they had to be responsible for their parents, doing translation services for their parents, supporting their parents when it comes to health and employment. Even though they were in school education or in higher education, they also were doing zero-hour contracts or jobs where they were becoming redundant and not being able to work properly as well.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you for that, Yasmin. I know that as the questions develop, we are going to be teasing out the contributions around how the pandemic has affected the communities you work with and how we can incorporate that into planning. For instance, just to reflect back on something you were saying around stop and search, something that, as a councillor, used to really frustrate me is the closing down of youth centres, because it does push young people out on to the streets. If you think about it in the context of planning, we could have a conversation about public space and how much public space exists in London and how do we protect it, because it has a direct impact on how young people feel safe in our city. Thank you for bringing that up to the front. Christine, over to you.

Christine Goodall (Network Coordinator, HEAR Equality and Human Rights Network): Thank you. Yes, as I mentioned, we work with a lot of different communities across the board, so not one particular one. The experiences that people had were very broad and encapsulate everything that my two colleagues here have already said and also my colleagues from the previous panel. I could agree and endorse and support everything that they have already said. What they have already said has been reflected in the experience of the communities that our members work with. I will develop a couple of those more and touch on some things that have not been mentioned at all yet, because that might be the most helpful.

One of the things that happened during the pandemic, in order to keep people safe and healthy, was a move towards means of more active travel: walking and cycling. That linked to wishing to have cleaner air in London. All those things are linked to the London Plan. They are things that we, as a network, engaged with during the previous Examination in Public (EiP). As is often recognised, those things have tensions between them, because the means of promoting more active travel and clean air, while really laudable as aims, can have an impact on certain communities.

We certainly saw that during the pandemic, because that move was accelerated, for example, the increase of putting in cycle lanes to promote more cycling. The appearance of, so called, floating bus stops, where you step off a bus and you suddenly find you have got loads of cyclists whizzing past you before you can get to the pavement has a big impact on disabled people, older people, people with small children and many other groups in the community. More people whizzing around on cycles and scooters and so on, on pavements. Those kinds of things really accelerated during COVID-19. They were happening anyway, but --- the introduction of the very contested low-traffic neighbourhoods as well.

All those things are difficult issues, because they have great benefits, but they also have a big impact on many, many people in the community. That is certainly something that has not been touched on yet and is very, very relevant to planning and certainly something we saw. Something that is very important in the *Just Space Community-Led Recovery Plan* and has also been mentioned somewhat previously is around community hubs and community spaces, which is also a very important part of the thinking in the GLA's work, particularly in the 'Building Strong Communities Mission', one of the recovery missions. We strongly support the policy that is there in the *Just Space Plan*.

What we saw during the pandemic was the closure of many, many different types of community spaces. Some, only temporarily, because of COVID-19, but then the result of that was many did not reopen or opened in a different way, and this had huge impacts on people, for example, the closure of libraries. That links to what I wanted to say about digital exclusion. As we all know, during COVID-19 everything went online, which was fine, if you are able to access services like that, but so many people are not. The reasons why are so many and varied. Lots and lots of people, largely for economic reasons, but also for support needs as well, were accessing digital services, where they were accessing them, through things like libraries and other community spaces.

That had a huge impact. We had one of our members, who was an older lady, well into her 80s, lived alone and still very, very active in the community. She was a trustee of a number of local charities, still doing lots of work, she would attend our events pre-COVID-19 in person, all over London. She travelled on public transport to get to them. She was digitally able to use email and other things online. She did all of that in her local library, because she could not afford to have broadband at home. She used to go to the local library, almost like going to work, to fulfil all her community functions. At a stroke that was completely gone. It was not just that she was not able to fulfil all those community functions, but that she was completely isolated from everything that she had done before.

There is a lot said in the *Just Space Plan* about both the need for community hubs and spaces. Digital poverty is a huge thing; we do tend to always assume that people have access. One of the things that we would like to point to as well, linked to the *Just Space Plan*, is thinking about providing more places where people can get on to free Wi-Fi through things that are going on around planning. Croydon Council are developing an idea, I believe, around making it a requirement that if people want to pay for digital advertisements at bus stops, they also commit to paying for a free Wi-Fi zone around that bus stop, so that people know that they can go to a bus stop and access free Wi-Fi. Ideas like that are really important.

Very bullet-point and brief, something I do not think has been touched on is the importance of the provision of green spaces in planning. Again, there were lots of things during COVID-19 about, "Oh, isn't it lovely, we can spend loads of time sitting in our garden", but how many people in London do not have gardens or even balconies? I speak as someone, myself, who lives in a social-housing flat with no access to any outside space at all. The importance of green space was really, really highlighted during the pandemic. Some of the facility of those was closed off, because of COVID-19 measures, for example, for the period when we were not allowed to sit down on a bench in the park.

Benches were sometimes physically removed or physically taped off, so that you could not sit down, which meant that older and disabled people who did not have gardens were not able even to go out into the park and sit down, because you were not allowed to sit on the bench. Green spaces are absolutely vital. There is a lot more I could say, but I will stop there for the moment.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you, Christine. That was rich in suggestions. I like the idea of making sure that there are more public spaces where you can access free Wi-Fi, so thank you for bringing that to the table. I am going to pass over to Assembly Member Best, our Deputy Chairman of the Committee.

Emma Best AM (Deputy Chairman): Thanks, Chair, and good afternoon everyone. I was going to ask Pat, if there were any specific London Plan policies which you think need to be reviewed?

Pat Turnbull (Regional Representative, London Tenants Federation): First of all, I ought to give a few points about the problems with the current London Plan, because that in a way is the basis for what we should be looking for as a better London Plan. So, for example, you have the concept of good growth, but then we need to look into what that has actually meant and who it has actually been good for. Then running through the London Plan you have this concept of densification and intensification. Again, we need to ask ourselves: is this producing a London that is good to live in? Christine just mentioned green spaces. That is just one aspect of this densification question. Then the third one is the emphasis on the large numbers of homes to be built, most of which turn out to be market homes, which are investments.

Therefore, we need to ask ourselves, emphasising the large numbers of homes: does that produce the kind of homes and neighbourhoods that people need? The final area I want to specifically home in on is the Opportunity Areas, because now we have 47 of them. They have grown so fast. We have never analysed what those Opportunity Areas actually produce. We do not even have figures of how many social rented homes are produced by these Opportunity Areas. If you look at the tables of the Opportunity Areas, they are very incomplete. Nineteen of those Opportunity Areas we do not even know how many houses it is producing or how many affordable homes, to use that questionable term, it is producing.

We need to ask ourselves why we have these 47 Opportunity Areas and are they producing the homes and the jobs that people need. Those are things that we want changed within the London Plan. We have a whole series of suggestions. I will just pick a few of them out. The best thing is if we send our suggestions in in writing afterwards. So, for example, we think that the London Plan should set a higher target for social rented homes and this should be more tightly monitored. The last evidence-based assessment of housing need in London was in 2017. Well, that is quite a long time ago. Even that assessment showed that there was 163,000 backlog of need for social rented homes. That had increased from 60,893 in 2013, which was the previous Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).

We need to have a new one. Then having got that SHMA, we need to act on it and work out policies that are going to produce the kind of things that that the SHMA points us toward. I have just got to mention one more of our proposals, which is that the London Plan should demand that public land is used exclusively for delivering social rented homes and supportive social and community infrastructure, which is certainly not the case at the moment. Maybe I will just mention one more, because it is very relevant to a number of the points that have been made already. The London Plan needs to set out targets for three, four, five and six-bedroom social rented homes, to address this question of overcrowding, which has become so noticeable, so publicised in the period of the pandemic.

Emma Best AM (Deputy Chairman): Thanks, Pat. I do not know if you can hear clapping, but there was clapping here from my colleague and I was internally clapping as well for that answer, so thank you. Just to build on that, in 2018 the London-wide family housing target was taken away. Do you think that going forward we do need a London-wide family housing target?

Pat Turnbull (Regional Representative, London Tenants Federation): I can only say, yes, I agree with that.

Emma Best AM (Deputy Chairman): Amazing. You have basically hit the nail on the head enough, so I will not go on. The points around the SHMA and even on 2017 levels we are not matching the need in terms of family and larger housing. Do you think, at the risk of agreeing again, that we need to do more, especially considering the amount of people working from home, to focus on growing those numbers of affordable larger family-sized houses?

Pat Turnbull (Regional Representative, London Tenants Federation): Yes, I was very sad when I went to look at one of the developments on the former London Olympic site at Chobham Manor. It was a few years ago and they are built now. There were a lot of family homes on that development, but there were very, very few even affordable homes. There were no social rented homes on it at all. It made me sad, because I know that there were loads and loads of families who would have welcomed those homes, would have loved to live in them, but could not afford to. We need to do something different, so those needs are met.

Emma Best AM (Deputy Chairman): Thanks, Pat. I did have more questions, but you just smashed it out of the ballpark for me in answering everything, so thank you.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you very much, Assembly Member Best. I am going to hand over to Assembly Member Baker now.

Elly Baker AM: Thank you very much. My first question is for Francesca. It is about the socioeconomic duty of Section One of the Equality Act, which is one of the actions from the London Recovery Plan. For those who do not understand, it is basically trying to implement impact of low incomes on equivalent to other equality impacts. What are your thoughts on how that could be incorporated into planning? How can we more effectively equalise the impact of people on lower incomes?

Francesca Humi (Advocacy and Campaigns Officer, Kanlungan Filipino Consortium): From an immigration perspective, it is not just looking at people's literal income that is coming into their bank accounts, but looking at all of the additional costs that they are going to face. If you are a migrant worker and you are on a Tier Two visa and you have no recourse to public funds, your income might be £30,000 - £40,000. Then if you need to pay the NHS surcharge that is £650 per year. If you have a partner and children, then you are going to pay the surcharge for them every year. If you are going to need secondary health care, you will also be charged. If you need to renew your visa that year for you and your family members that you are sponsoring that is probably going to be several thousands of pounds and then on top of that you are going to pay solicitor's fees.

Therefore, you might be spending a total of £5,000 - £7,000 or even £10,000 if there are a lot of applications to be made. Or, let us say your child is now eligible for registration as a British citizen, then that is £1,100 that they are going to need to pay. Even if on paper their income is average or median or what we might consider medium in London, the real income that they have, the real expendable money that they have is going to be really low. On top of that, again speaking from the Filipino community, a lot of people are sending remittances

back to the Philippines and are actively supporting family members back home. It is not just income that is supporting their household in London, but it is also income that is supporting their household back home.

After all those costs are taken into account, people's average or low income is reduced to an extremely low income. On top of that, they do not qualify for social housing. It is acknowledging, especially in this context of cost of living crisis, what are the real incomes of people and what are all the costs they are going to have to face? What can we do to regulate or reduce those costs? Applications to the Home Office should not be costing thousands and thousands of pounds. Because we know that through the current immigration policy, little can be done in terms of lifting the no recourse to public funds condition in this immediate moment. What are the other ways that we can bring down costs that people are facing, so that they can have access to safe, high-quality, affordable housing in the communities of their choice and near communities of care that they rely on and that they need and have built.

Emma Best AM (Deputy Chairman): Thanks. Sorry to effectively replay this back to you, because obviously sadly while I agree with what you are saying, planning will not solve all those issues, but what you are saying is effectively giving people spaces to not only have decent and affordable housing, but also to support each other as well. That is reflected in previous answers as well. Is that fair to say?

Francesca Humi (Advocacy and Campaigns Officer, Kanlungan Filipino Consortium): Yes, definitely. We see it with people that we support who have been trafficked into the UK or are being exploited in the UK and then they might be offered accommodation as part of the offer of support. However, that accommodation is completely outside of London, completely removed from those communities that they rely on. A lot of the, again I am going to use the example of domestic workers, because those are a lot of the people that I work with, if they are given the choice between emergency accommodation up north in a town where maybe they do not even know where that is in England, or staying in London and potentially sharing a living room with friends. They will take up that offer, because you have access to all of the other things that make life enjoyable and all of the other things that communities need in order to thrive.

At Kanlungan, we do not necessarily have that community space, but we have been able to build centres of care and centres of community support across London to meet community needs. It is really important that we keep having those spaces and ensure that those communities are well resourced. Again, skirting the question around planning, but also how can we make sure that community organisations are receiving the funding that they need in order for their services to be sustainable in the long term. That is not just project funding but also core funding; meaningful, long-term, sustainable funding that people can count on.

Elly Baker AM: That is really helpful. Although, yes, planning cuts the cost of a lot of stuff, what I certainly hear is that planning needs to take into account communities and the different ways people lead their lives and not just sort of the same thing all the time. It is a bit cheeky, because that is me saying it, not you.

Christine, if I could move to you. In your view, to what extent do Londoners you work with have trust in the planning system and are there opportunities in a future review of the London Plan to enhance public trust and participation in the planning system?

Christine Goodall (Network Coordinator, HEAR Equality and Human Rights Network): Yes, thank you. Sadly, largely the level of trust in the planning system is pretty low, which people base on past experiences of engagement. Saif [Osmani, Founding Member, Bengali East End Heritage Society] mentioned in the first panel that during COVID-19 lots of things continued to happen around planning, but the communication out to community, let alone engagement with it, was very poor or non-existent. The processes, meetings and so on, were moved online, which automatically made them more accessible to some

people, but certainly less accessible to others. Whether it was accessible or not, we had feedback from our members that people did not know what was happening.

There were no communications. Things were just going along in the process without communities necessarily even knowing anything about what was happening. A lot of people obviously find the complexity of planning systems quite difficult, but there is always that assumption, "oh, it is very difficult, so people will not understand, so we will not try and explain it to them, poor things". There is quite a low level of trust. We took part last year in the month-long GLA event called the Festival of Ideas. As part of that, we ran our own event for our members, who were all speaking for their own communities, around trust and confidence.

It was also at the same time that the Action Plan for the GLA was being developed. The wording is somewhat changed now, but trust and confidence in public services was very much one of the headline categories. What came out of that for our members was that, including in the planning process, which was discussed specifically, and in other public consultation areas, that people were very insulted by what they felt was a prevailing atmosphere or almost received wisdom that if they were not able to engage for any reason in the planning process or other statutory systems like that, it was because they were apathetic or could not be bothered or not interested or incapable of understanding or thought it was irrelevant, rather than the systems were not accessible or simply, which is what a lot of people said, that their lives are so hard and difficult and complicated.

Someone mentioned earlier someone working several jobs, looking after family members, caring responsibilities; however much you might want to engage in things, sometimes it is incredibly hard to do so. Not because you do not want to, but because it is incredibly hard and there are no mechanisms put in place to make it easier. What was mentioned before in the previous panel about going to places where people are anyway, the builders' canteen was mentioned, a lot can be learned from that kind of approach. Good academic research, not tick-box academic research, but good academic research in the community, will take place in places like that.

My own PhD research, which I did not do in London, it was in Stoke-on-Trent, which was looking at trust, meant that in order to speak to people I had to go to mother and toddler groups, Residents Association meetings, groups that the YMCA held for the young people that were staying in their accommodation. It is taken for granted that in good academic research that that is what you will do to be able to reach people without them having to change what they are doing. It means that you give much more respect to their experience, because you are not asking them to put themselves out for you, you are going to them. People get very, very weary of being asked over and over again for their experience.

Agencies say, "Oh, we really value lived experience. Lived experience is really important. Give us your lived experience". But what do the people get in return? Nothing. It was mentioned previously about financially recompensing people for taking part in things, which is a really good idea, especially if you are looking at small community groups with very little money and you keep asking them over and over again to contribute their expertise for nothing; that is not recognised at all. That is really, really important, actually valuing people's expertise properly. Also, a proper -- I will not even call it a feedback loop, because that sounds too easy. When people contribute, there being a proper mechanism for them to hear back what has happened about what they have said.

It is not just them contributing, but it is about what happened to that without people having to keep going to the person who asked them and keep asking, "What happened about this? What happened about that?" It should be an automatic process that respects people's contributions. Even if it is something that people might

not want to hear, “Well, thank you, but on this occasion, we were not able to do anything about that. We will keep trying”. People need to know. They will just stop contributing otherwise. Sorry, that was a bit of a rant.

Elly Baker AM: No, it is a really important issue, so thanks very much, Christine.

I am aware we are running out of time, so I am going to ask my next question, which is going to go to Yasmin and Pat. How can approaches to planning in London be used to address social and economic inequalities?

Yasmin Moalin (Youth Engagement Lead, Anti-Tribalism Movement): We have a Housing Champions Programme in our organisation, where we train women in White City or affected by regeneration to join boards and advocate for them and give them the skills and tools to do so. The main thing is having access and having choice and being able to feel confident enough to describe what their experiences are, how they feel, and also knowing that if things do affect them, what are the processes that will be happening afterwards. One of the key issues is that there is a disconnect with the community and they do not know how to work with that. The main thing is giving them a choice, giving them the support, and emphasising the community element in the planning process and prioritising them at the same time. It is very easy for them to feel like they are not being supported or appreciated. That is one of the key things that you guys should consider.

Elly Baker AM: That is really helpful. Pat, would you like to come in?

Pat Turnbull (Regional Representative, London Tenants Federation): Yes. The first important thing is the precondition for the entire process of consultation. Do the people consulting really want to know what the people they are consulting think? Do they want to know that? Once they know what the people they are consulting think, are they going to act on it or is it just a process to be able to say, “We have done this consultation”? Are they going to do what the people they have consulted want them to do? Very frequently that is not what happens. That is our experience, for example, of estate regeneration.

Communities are supposed to be consulted, but they are not fully informed about the implications of what is going to happen to their community through this estate regeneration, where it will end up. They are given a rosy picture to try to persuade them to agree to something that in the end is not going to be in their interests, in the great majority of cases. They are not given the full range of options. The questions they are asked and the options they are given are narrowed down to the ones that are acceptable to the questioner, often a local authority or it might be a Housing Association. That is why it ends up often with a result that does not correspond with what the people who are being consulted wanted.

To finally end with how you actually can get to people more easily, the points that other people have made are very important. Go to existing organisations. It amazes us frequently how Tenants and Residents Associations, for example, which are our organisationa of particular concern, are ignored when it comes to local consultations by councils. There they are. They exist. These organisations are there. But they are bypassed. They are not consulted. The ideas people have given from mother and baby clubs, all those different things, meeting in local community halls, there are so many ways that you can go to people and get them involved. I go back to what I said before, if you want to get them involved, you have to be doing something that is going to be in their interests and they will all come or they are going to become disaffected and they will not want to be consulted, because they know it will not mean anything.

Elly Baker AM: Thanks very much.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you, Assembly Member Baker. Assembly Member Best.

Emma Best AM (Deputy Chairman): What can we learn from the formation of mutual aid groups during the pandemic, in terms of the strength of community networks? Can this be used in planning?

Francesca Humi (Advocacy and Campaigns Officer, Kanlungan Filipino Consortium): Yes, so at the start of the pandemic, Kanlungan was helping with a lot of mutual aid groups and ensuring that people in the community and -- by in the community, that is a very kind of expansive view of the community, so basically anyone who was a Filipino or East or South-East Asian migrant and needed our help. What it showed was that community members were available to support and were there to answer the calls of other community members. That also the resources and the support systems that should have been the responsibility of the state were clearly failing and had clearly been cut back, that people had to step in and provide it for each other directly.

In the context of the Filipino community, it is the double effect of both austerity and of the hostile environment policy, where social support and that social safety net and state welfare has been cut back and then on top of that there are policies that are targeting migrants and their access to state support. It is, again, a case of community organisations stepping in where the local government and the national government have taken --

Emma Best AM (Deputy Chairman): Sorry, Francesca, just because we only have a couple of minutes, the question is specifically around if there was anything from that mutual aid, the way in which communities came together, that could be applied to planning?

Francesca Humi (Advocacy and Campaigns Officer, Kanlungan Filipino Consortium): It was building off existing community groups and existing ways for people to work together. Reflecting back on what has been said by other people, it was happening through mediums and channels that community members were already using. It was not necessarily setting up a whole new infrastructure, but going off of things that were already in place. In terms of planning, what we can learn from that is making sure, and again reflecting on what has already been said, that if you want to consult organisations that you are attending activities and events that are already taking place, that you are creating ways of engagement that are flexible and are not necessarily traditional, like Zoom meetings at a fixed time, and making that more flexible.

Also, having ways of engagement that are going to be mutually beneficial, not just in the long-term, because obviously it is mutually beneficial for people to take part in participating in planning, but also beneficial in the short-term. What can be shared at that very immediate level? Something we do with academic researchers is making sure that there is a skill sharing approach and that people who participate get some kind of financial compensation and also that there is skill sharing and community empowerment embedded in the consultation process. With the mutual aid, there were a lot of people from that who were then able to say, "I assisted and volunteered with a mutual aid group" and then able to put that as work experience or voluntary experience.

Emma Best AM (Deputy Chairman): Yasmin, Christine, was there anything you wanted to add very briefly?

Yasmin Moalin (Youth Engagement Lead, Anti-Tribalism Movement): Jumping off what Francesca said, creating champions and advocates, providing soft skills and developing people's base skills to build on what they have. In terms of planning, it is really good to educate, train and give them the ability to support one another, which also hones in on the element of community as well.

Emma Best AM (Deputy Chairman): Thank you, Yasmin. Christine, was there anything that you wanted to add to that?

Christine Goodall (Network Coordinator, HEAR Equality and Human Rights Network): The only thing I would add is reaching people through it [mutual aid] - I do not immediately see the link between the planning policy itself, but more around the engagement of the community and planning, which is what we have been talking about. Mutual aid groups have the ability to be in contact with people who are not linked to any formalised groups or even more informal groups, where they might attend community spaces and so on. They might be more engaged in a community development way with people who have perhaps got mobility problems or are isolated in their homes and do not see many people, by the very nature of their engagement with the mutual aid network, where they are supporting people who need the support.

A lot of them have not continued as strongly since COVID-19, although some have. More than mutual aid just on its own, it's about a community development approach, about recognising that people are not necessarily always linked to an organisation, even an informal one. Those people have a right to a say as well. Often their needs are the ones that the planning system really, really needs to address, because they are possibly some of the most disadvantaged.

Emma Best AM (Deputy Chairman): Thank you. I do want to ask one more question with a couple of supplementary questions. The first question I was going to ask is if you could, in perhaps one word, one sentence, give us what your priority for the review of the London Plan would be? Then I wanted to ask if you would be in favour of the London Plan including a Statement of Community Involvement? That is a question my colleague asked to the previous panel, if you were here earlier. Finally, would you be in favour of the London Plan including a means through the requirements of consultation to make that more accessible? Perhaps through a set of recommended questions that every consultation should have, to simplify the language and have an accepted common language we use in planning that people can easily access.

Francesca Humi (Advocacy and Campaigns Officer, Kanlungan Filipino Consortium): In terms of priority, I would say making sure that the content and the process round the London Plan is made accessible to people across London regardless of their backgrounds and regardless of the communities they are from and that real efforts are made to disseminate that and that it can be easily understandable. Going back to what was said earlier about making things accessible in community languages, especially. Yes, I would be in principle in favour of a statement around community consultation. It would depend on what that consultation would look like. Is it just a statement or is it really going to happen?

In terms of consultation, I cannot quite remember what the specific question was but, yes, more community consultation that is adequately resourced and supported from the communities would be really good and making sure that it is not over-draining resources for people.

Emma Best AM (Deputy Chairman): Thanks, Francesca. Christine?

Christine Goodall (Network Coordinator, HEAR Equality and Human Rights Network): The first thing is, an overarching thing for the London Plan would be proper, robust, real Equality Impact Assessments, that ensures that the equality impact is addressed properly, which I do not really think was the case previously. There were certainly problems with it from our point of view. Yes, a statement around community consultation would be very important, but it is no good as has just been said, "Oh, we are going to make a statement that we will consult the community". That would be completely useless. There has to be some standards around it and some way of ensuring it actually happens.

A bit like when we in the sector apply for funding, we cannot just say, "We are going to involve the people who our project impacts on", we have to show how we are doing that throughout the time that we are getting the money. That would be really important. Finally, yes, something about accessibility and inclusion, it is not just

about language and explaining the process. That is really important, but it is also about all the other ways you can make engagement, involvement, and the planning system accessible. That is a wide range of things including accessibility for deaf and disabled people. I would be thought very remiss by our members if I have not mentioned, which has not been mentioned before, accessibility for deaf people, which is a different type of accessibility and is around all kinds of aspects of information and has been raised many, many times by our members around the planning process.

Also a resource bank where people who were setting up any activity around planning that included involving the community could find out from experts in the voluntary sector and people with lived experience, how to make processes accessible and inclusive for that particular community.

Yasmin Moalin (Youth Engagement Lead, Anti-Tribalism Movement): A priority for me is resources and also attracting people in the community who would not normally be aware of planning processes. That goes back to accessibility as well. Yes, I am in favour of accessibility and consultation. That is what my priority is as well.

Emma Best AM (Deputy Chairman): Amazing. Thanks, Yasmin. Finally, Pat, online.

Pat Turnbull (Regional Representative, London Tenants Federation): The priority is a plan that meets the real needs of the majority of Londoners and consultation has to mean real democratic involvement.

Sakina Sheikh AM (Chair): Thank you very much to the panellists. Again, apologies to Assembly Member Best, I know your question time was squeezed, given the fullness of the meeting. Just given the ending note, I wanted to also just bring to the Committee's attention and those who are watching that Jane Wilmott was due to join us for this panel. She is a deaf and disabled resident from Hammersmith and Fulham. She chairs a disability forum planning group. I met with Jane yesterday one-on-one online and one of the contributions that Jane was going to make was around inclusive design, which is in the London Plan. Jane wanted to highlight that inclusive design in councils does not often get the emphasis that it needs to and there are some councils that do not have an access officer.

One thing that Jane and I discussed that came off the back of that conversation was perhaps the GLA should look at auditing councils to see what level of technical expertise they have. Whether that is in the form of an access officer or otherwise in the planning departments that can help them integrate inclusive design in their assessment of planning applications and the audit might open up questions about whether the GLA wants to think about funding or seconding that expertise where it does not exist in London. Guests, thank you so much for your time and the rich contribution. There was one question that was overarching all our questions, which was about planning and what we want from the planning system.

This Committee will be putting out specific outputs for what we want from the planning reforms in Parliament. If there are things you want to follow up in writing, from this panel or the previous one, that would be fantastic. We have really enjoyed your expertise. Thank you so much again for your time. We were so well served to have your time and your expertise brought to us today to help us expand the conversation about how we make a planning process in London work for all. A real, real warm thank you again. I also at this moment want to thank again Planning for London for coming to observe the Committee today to take on board our contributions from the guests. On that note, many thanks again to our colleagues at Just Space for being so fantastic in their contribution and the discussions before this meeting to help us think about the framework and how we develop coproduction in our institutions and also in our spaces when we engage with people across London.

