

# MAYOR OF LONDON

**Shaun Bailey AM**

Chair of the London Assembly Housing Committee  
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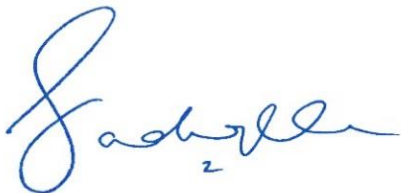
**Our ref:** MGLA030523-6272

**Date:** 14 August 2023

Dear Shaun,

Thank you for the recommendations received in the letter from your predecessor Sem Moema AM in relation to the London Assembly Housing Committee's recent investigation into resident voice in social housing in London. My response to each recommendation is provided in the annex below.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sadiq Khan', with a small number '2' written below the name.

**Sadiq Khan**

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## Annex

### **Mayor of London's response to the recommendations of the London Assembly Housing Committee's investigation on resident voice in London**

#### **Recommendation 1**

The GLA should establish a Social Housing Commissioner or Champion for London who would be responsible for championing tenants' rights and interests. A similar recommendation was made in 2018. Given the changing nature of London's housing market, we believe this is still required.

The Mayor has long agreed with the Committee that the creation of a Commissioner for Social Housing Residents would help ensure residents of social housing have their voice heard. The reasons given in 2018 as to why this should be a national Commissioner, rather than a Commissioner for London, still stand.

It is primarily the duty of the government to improve the standard of existing social housing in London. However, the Mayor is exerting influence through his capital restriction policy, under which funding can be withheld from investment partners who are in breach of regulatory standards. So far three investment partners have had their funding frozen under this policy. The Mayor lobbied for the creation of a Commissioner through the Social Housing Regulation Bill, but this has not been included. Other calls, such as to require the Regulator's Advisory Panel to be chaired by a social housing tenant, were also rejected by the government.

The remit of the Regulator of Social Housing is England-wide, and many providers in London also have homes across the country. A London-only Commissioner would not sit on the Regulator's board. Without the inclusion of resident voices at the board level of the Regulator, resident voices will not be properly represented.

#### **Recommendation 2**

As the initial results of the 2021 Census have now been published by the Office for National Statistics, with plans to release the remaining results by the end of this year, the Committee recommends that your officers review and revise the Strategic Housing Market Assessment to determine the extent of social housing need in London. The results should be reflected in the next Mayoral housing strategy, London Plan, and negotiation of future housing targets. The Committee notes these actions are likely to be in the next Mayoral term.

The Mayor agrees with this recommendation. The work will be done in the next mayoral term. The results will form a key part of the evidence base on which future policy is made.

#### **Recommendation 3**

The GLA should undertake research with social landlords and tenants on the impact of the seven per cent cap on social rent rises in London. This should explore the impact on social landlords' ability to build new homes – and any impact on the Affordable Homes Programme – as well as their ability to maintain and improve existing stock. Additionally, the research should seek to understand the impact on tenants of increased rents during a cost-of-living crisis.

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The tradeoffs between different levels of social rent-setting at a time of high inflation and a cost-of-living crisis were carefully considered by the Mayor in his response to the government consultation on the social rent cap last year. It is noted that the rent cap does not apply to first lets on newly developed social homes, and that the seven per cent cap is a limit on rent increases of existing tenancies; providers may choose to increase rents by a lesser amount.

The Mayor engages with providers regularly, in settings such as the Homes for Londoners Board, on how sector conditions are impacting the delivery of new homes and the maintenance of existing stock.

## **Recommendation 4**

The GLA should regularly publish a list of all social housing providers stripped of their investment partner status and/or funding under the GLA's Affordable Homes Programme 2021-26, as a result of regulatory violations, so that Londoners can identify social landlords in breach of regulatory standards.

Londoners are able to check which providers have breached the Consumer Standards through the [Regulator's regular reporting](#) published on the GOV.UK website.

## **Recommendation 5**

Social housing providers in London should be encouraged by the GLA to conduct reviews of their complaints systems, to identify and address any shortcomings, and develop policies that can be implemented to shift blame away from tenants for housing problems that are a reflection of inadequate maintenance.

Recommendations 5 and 6 will be responded to together, below.

## **Recommendation 6**

The GLA should encourage boroughs to work with social landlords on a clear complaints process for social housing tenants. This should include themselves if they are a landlord. Boroughs should also provide social housing tenants in London who have complaints but have received an unsatisfactory service from their landlords' complaints process, advice on how to navigate the complaints system through all levels up to, and including, the Housing Ombudsman.

Social housing providers who systematically fail to take account of the diverse needs of tenants, treating them with fairness and respect, will be in breach of the Regulator's Consumer Standards. In such cases, providers will work urgently with the Regulator to review their processes and address their issues. But in addition to this, and noted in the letter from the former Housing Committee Chair, Sem Moema AM, the Mayor can also respond when providers breach consumer standards. If at any time a provider is not compliant with a regulatory standard, such as the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard that covers complaints – then where it considers it to be appropriate and proportionate to do so – the Greater London Authority (GLA) reserves the right to withdraw Investment Partner (IP) status, or restrict IP Status by withdrawing it save in relation to a specific set of projects.

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## **Recommendation 7**

The Committee encourages the GLA to work with the National Housing Federation and the Chartered Institute of Housing to understand how the recommendations from the Better Social Housing Review can be implemented in London, and to report back on actions taken to the Committee.

The Better Social Housing Review (BSHR) was welcomed by the Mayor. It was followed in May by the BSHR Action Plan. The Action Plan outlines the next steps that the National Housing Federation (NHF) and Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) will take to enact the recommendations in the sector. The Action Plan does not propose actions to the Mayor or GLA; however, the GLA supports the outcomes of the BSHR and will continue to work with CIH, NHF, boroughs, registered providers and others where beneficial. Regular and productive officer-level engagement with these organisations is already part of the Housing and Land Directorate's business as usual work.

Through their ['Delivering for Tenants' framework](#), published in April 2023, London Councils and the London Housing Directors' Group are leading work to illustrate the principles, actions and practices that should support effective delivery of local authority landlord services in London.