

MAYOR OF LONDON

Sian Berry AM
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
More London
London SE1 2AA

Our ref: MGLA061118-7029

Date: 07 JAN 2019



Re: Housing Committee report – Hearing resident voices in social housing

Thank you for your letter of 6 November 2018 outlining the findings and recommendations of the Housing Committee's report into hearing the voices of people living in social housing. My response to these recommendations is outlined in the enclosed appendix.

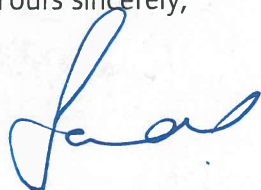
As your letter notes, the fire at Grenfell Tower raised very serious questions about whether social housing residents' concerns are listened to and acted upon. I have been clear that residents must have a greater say in decisions that affect their homes, and I welcome the work that you and the Committee have undertaken on this issue during the course of your investigation.

I particularly welcome your decision to involve residents' groups in developing your report's recommendations, as it aligns with my approach as Mayor to developing new policies. My Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development, James Murray, and his team routinely meet with groups representing residents, tenants, leaseholders and private renters in the capital.

For example, in responding to the Government's social housing green paper, James and officers met with six groups representing social housing residents to listen to their views. These meetings were instrumental in informing my response to the green paper, which also reflects many of the issues you raise in this report. In their ongoing meetings, James and officers also discuss with groups how their input into our work could be strengthened even further in the future.

Thank you again for writing to me, and for your work investigating these issues.

Yours sincerely,



Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London

Enc.

MAYOR OF LONDON

Appendix: Response to recommendations in *Hearing resident voices in social housing*

Recommendation 1: The Housing Committee supports the Government's call for KPIs to assess the performance of social landlords. The key performance indicators on resident engagement should be changed to help bring about engagement that is meaningful for tenants and managers and follow the good principles identified in this report.

I agree that resident engagement must be meaningful – a rejection of tokenistic engagement was one of the strongest messages my team heard from the groups they engaged with. In my response to the Government's social housing green paper I made it clear that I believe that residents should have access to information on the performance of their landlord. I believe that any key performance indicators (KPIs) should be informed by detailed consultation with residents and landlords. Given the breadth of social housing providers across the country, and given their different management styles, stock types and structures, KPIs should be used intelligently rather than aggregated into a single league table. Where a landlord performs poorly, they should be obliged to provide an explanation for this poor performance to the Regulator. In order for KPIs to be effective, the Regulator must have a clear set of penalties available to take action against poor performance.

Recommendation 2: The Mayor should appoint a London social housing commissioner tasked with encouraging social housing landlords to promote participatory and meaningful ways of involving residents in decision making. The London social housing commissioner should be a champion of social housing residents' interests and encourage good practice in resident engagement across the sector.

Recommendation 3: The London social housing commissioner should sit on the Homes for Londoners board to drive forward the accountability and transparency agenda in the sector.

I agree that it is essential that social housing residents' views are heard and acted upon and that is why I have called for the creation of a national Commissioner for Social Housing Residents. This person should be an individual independent of Government with a statutory remit to act as a watchdog for social housing tenants, leaseholders, and freeholders. Modelled on the Children's Commissioner for England, the key role of the Commissioner would be to champion the views and interests of social housing residents, including by making recommendations for future Government policy and legislation. I have made clear this individual should be a social housing tenant themselves.

I was pleased to see that the Government has recognised that social housing residents require stronger representation at a national level, reflecting my proposal for a Commissioner, and that the Committee too recognises the need for improved representation. It is important that this role is a national one, to ensure that the Commissioner has the required influence on national policy and legislation.

MAYOR OF LONDON

Recommendation 4: The Mayor should ensure that landlords who have contracts with the GLA for developing new affordable homes improve transparency and management, as conditions introduced as part of future funding programmes. These should include compliance with Public Sector Equality Duty and Freedom of Information principles and, for example, simplifying management structures.

Social housing residents should have a stronger voice to challenge their landlords to improve performance. I believe that funding partners should be as open as possible with their residents and the public more widely and I strongly support moves toward improved transparency in the social housing sector. I am pleased to note the work that the G15 and National Housing Federation are undertaking to look at transparency by housing associations and will support this where possible.

As my Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development, James Murray, has noted in previous correspondence with you on this issue, all Investment Partners are expected to act fairly and in a transparent manner. In addition, the Greater London Authority's (GLA) standard grant agreements for the Affordable Homes Programme 2016-21 contain clauses dealing with the issue of confidentiality and note that the GLA is subject to legal duties which may require the release of Information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The GLA is already in contract with a range of housing associations and other partners to deliver commitments in the Affordable Homes Programme 2016-21, so any changes to contractual conditions would require consent from the counterparty, otherwise the GLA may be perceived to be unilaterally imposing a new condition into an existing contract. While this means that new requirements cannot be introduced into the current programme, I will ask my team to investigate options for how to support increased transparency in future programmes. In light of this, when designing the next Affordable Homes Programme, we will review current arrangements, and engage with the Housing Committee and social housing residents to understand their views on these issues and consider whether to introduce further transparency requirements.