

October Meeting Notes

Date and Timing	Wednesday 30 th October 2024, 6pm-8pm
Location	City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, SW1A 6QP
Chair	Lareen Muhammad – Resident Chair
Cllr Attendees	Cllr Begum – Cabinet Member for Housing
WCC & Partner Presenters	<p>Sarah Warman – Strategic Director of Housing and Commercial Partnerships</p> <p>Zelda Wolfle – Director of Housing Services and Resident Engagement</p> <p>Hannah Witcombe – Youth Advocate</p> <p>Fatma – Young person & resident (designed event poster for the Meet & Eat)</p> <p>Janis Best - Strategic Lead Committee and Cllrs Cabinet Secretariat and Member Services</p> <p>Mark Banks – Head of Waste & Cleansing</p> <p>Annabel Kramrisch – Programme Officer Waste Strategy</p> <p>Janelle Rees - Principal Policy Officer (Environmental)</p> <p>Eleanor Fox – Contract Officer (Waste and Recycling)</p>
Residents who signed in	41 residents (35 in person/6 online)

The meeting was opened by Resident Chair Lareen Muhammad. She welcomed everyone to the Forum. Reminding that this is a Forum for service wide discussions and that senior officers were present and there was time at the end of the meeting for individual cases, if necessary.

Key Topics:

Housing Services Update

Due to the large number of new residents at the Forum for the first time, Cllr Liza Begum presented the various resident engagement channels and emphasised the importance of collaborative work with the Council.

- Engagement Channels: Cllr Begum highlighted the importance of resident engagement such as the monthly resident forum, resident

panel, and task and finish groups. These channels are designed to ensure residents can provide feedback and collaborate with the Council on service improvements.

- Repairs Task Group: Cllr Begum mentioned the completion of the repairs task and finish group, which focused on evaluating and improving the repair services. This group provided detailed insights and recommendations to enhance the repair processes.
- Upcoming Task & Finish Groups: The next task and finish group will focus on Complaints followed by Lifts. Cllr Begum emphasised the need for resident involvement in these groups to address specific issues and improve services related to the complaints process and lifts.
- Hybrid Meetings: Cllr Begum reminded residents that all meetings are hybrid, allowing residents to attend either in person or online. This approach aims to increase accessibility and ensure broader participation from the community.
- Housing Surgeries: To further engage residents, housing surgeries have been introduced in various estates. These surgeries allow residents to meet housing officers in their local areas, making it easier for them to voice concerns and receive assistance.
- Cllr Begum provided an overview of the housing improvement programme launched in June 2023 aiming to enhance housing services through extensive consultations and resident feedback and outlined commitments to residents.
- Repairs Charter: Introduced the repairs charter to set clear expectations for residents regarding repair services. The charter outlines the commitments of the housing service to ensure timely and quality repairs.
- Repairs Policy: The repairs policy was introduced to manage repair services effectively. It includes guidelines on handling mould, damp, repair priorities, and quality standards, with a focus on serving vulnerable residents.
- Contractor Collaboration: Working with contractors to improve repair services. They are piloting localised service models in various parts of the borough to enhance service delivery.
- Cllr Begum discussed the compensation policy introduced earlier this year, which aims to compensate residents for inconveniences caused by service failures. They stressed the importance of recognizing and addressing mistakes.

- Cllr Begum mentioned the launch of the leaseholders' charter at the annual leaseholders' conference, aiming to provide excellent customer service, accessible information, and value for money to leaseholders.
- Cllr Begum announced that the homelessness and rough sleeping strategy consultation has been launched.
 - The strategy is reviewed every five years. The new strategy was co-produced with Commission partners and individuals with lived experience.
 - The strategy emphasizes a whole Council approach, aiming to work collaboratively with people with lived experience and services such as the NHS, employment services, and other organisations to address homelessness and rough sleeping.
 - The strategy is dedicated to addressing the unique circumstances of each individual experiencing homelessness, ensuring personalized support and pathways to stability.
- Cllr Begum highlighted the opening of new housing service centres in the last 18 months.
 - Westminster Housing Services opened four new housing service centres, increasing the total to eight. These centres provide face-to-face services to residents, enhancing accessibility and support.
 - The new service centres are particularly beneficial for residents with mobility issues, allowing them to access services conveniently and receive direct assistance from housing officers.
 - Cllr Begum emphasised that housing staff are now embedded within the communities they serve, fostering closer relationships and better understanding of resident needs.
 - Westminster Housing Services aims to co-locate other Council services within the housing service centres, providing a comprehensive support network for residents in one location.
 - Cllr Begum noted feedback from the Resident Panel about the importance of residents knowing their housing officer and local estate office details. In response, she confirmed letters are being sent to residents setting out these details.

Sarah Warman spoke about recent resident engagement activities where the housing service worked in collaboration with residents.

- Sarah shared that residents have been involved in recruitment processes for key positions, such as the Chief Repairs Officer and Clerk of Works. She encouraged residents to participate in future recruitment activities.

- Sarah discussed the importance of resident involvement in the procurement of our contracts. She highlighted the procurement of the repairs and major work contracts which end in August of 2027 is starting and we want residents to be at the centre of this process. Residents were encouraged to participate in workshops and discussions about the service and operating models for future contracts. This engagement will ensure that resident feedback is incorporated into contract management.
- Sarah announced the upcoming ASB Awareness Week, with various activities planned across the city in partnership with the police and public protection team. She encouraged residents to participate.

Improving your Neighbourhood

Zelda Wolfle introduced “improving your neighbourhood” as the key topic for discussion at the forum. She highlighted the Tenant Satisfaction Measure related to satisfaction that your landlord makes a positive contribution to your neighbourhood and talked through the various ways we ensure that neighbourhoods are safe, clean and well maintained. She also mentioned the importance of working with residents to contribute to well-being within neighbourhoods and connecting communities and provided examples of what has been achieved. She confirmed that all the items on the agenda related to improving neighbourhoods and that we were keen to get residents views.

- **Community Events and Ward Budgets:** Janis Best explained the ward budget programme, which provides funding for local projects and community events. She encouraged residents to apply for funding and shared examples of successful projects.
 - Ward Budgets: Janis Best explained that each ward receives £46,000 per year for local projects and community events. The funds can be used for a variety of initiatives, including community events, children's activities, and local improvements.
 - Application Process: Residents and organizations can apply for ward budget funding. Applications should be submitted in advance, and the Council provides support to help applicants prepare successful proposals.
 - Funding Examples: Examples of funded projects include community events, Santa floats, combination parties, and half-

term activities. These projects aim to enhance community engagement and improve local areas.

- At the end of the presentation residents were split into 3 groups in the room and 1 online to discuss the points below.
 - How can we better promote the programme amongst small resident led organisations?
 - How can we better support small groups to apply to the programme?

The feedback, suggestions and questions raised by Residents during the group discussion were recorded (see Appendix).

For more information about the ward budget and the application form please visit: www.westminster.gov.uk/ward-budgets

If you have any queries, please e-mail wardbudgets@westminster.gov.uk

- **Community Meets and Eats Event:** Hannah and Fatma shared their experiences about the Community Meets and Eats event, which aimed to bridge the gap between young people and adults in the community. The event was a collaborative effort involving multiple organizations and residents. Fatma is a young person and resident who got involved and designed the poster for the event.
- **Waste Management and Recycling:** Eleanor and Annabel discussed waste management and recycling on estates, highlighting the need to increase recycling rates and reduce contamination. They encouraged residents to participate in the resident survey and share their ideas for improving recycling.
<https://haveyoursaywastedisposal.commonplace.is/>

Residents split into groups again both in the room and online. They discussed the following:

- What they already know about waste and recycling.
- How the knowledge gap can be bridged.
- And any ideas they've seen elsewhere that they would like to see in their neighbourhoods.

The feedback, suggestions and questions raised by Residents during the group discussion were recorded (see Appendix).

Individual Issues

For the last 30 minutes of the meeting residents were able to discuss their individual issues with WCC staff members in the room. WCC staff in the room included the Strategic Director of Housing and Commercial Partnerships, Director of Housing Services and Resident Engagement, Head of Leasehold Services, Head of Resident Experience, Head of Operations (Repairs), Chief Customer Experience Officer, Head of Housing Management, Chief Surveyor, Chief of Repairs, Resident Engagement and Advocacy Manager, and Resident Engagement Manager.

Residents online were provided with an individual issues form which they were able to fill in to have their issue allocated to the relevant people/department for a quick response.

Actions

These actions will be updated at the resident Panel and we will bring back to a future Resident Forum.

Resident Engagement Team

- To follow up on and allocate the individual issues raised in the in the online form or recorded during group conversations to relevant colleagues.
- To produce and share a record of the output from the group activities (attached).
- To review feedback from Residents and colleagues and discuss that with the resident panel to continue refining the way we deliver Resident Forum meetings.

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- To review the feedback from the Forum and report back on the impact it has had on the way we manage ward budgets.
- To review the feedback from the Forum and report back on the impact it has had on the way we manage waste.
- To follow up on individual issues raised in the room with individual officers during the last 30 minutes of the session.

You can click on the following link to feedback on the Forum.

<https://forms.office.com/e/7Cg7qbwh0V>

Please respond by 5pm on Friday 15th November 2024.