

Appendix 4

2016-21 Housing Strategy



LONDON  
BOROUGH  
OF  
TOWER  
HAMLETS

## HOUSING STRATEGY CONSULTATION REPORT

Building new homes and communities in Tower Hamlets  
Housing Strategy 2016-2021

## Executive Summary

The *Towards a Housing Strategy* consultation was launched by Mayor Biggs in an article in *East End Life* on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2016, with a housing survey made available online. The consultation was split into two stages, with the first stage taking place between 16<sup>th</sup> May and 31<sup>st</sup> July, and the second stage taking place between 16<sup>th</sup> September and 10<sup>th</sup> October.

The first stage of the consultation included the publication of the document '*Towards a Housing Strategy*' which the public were asked to read and comment on and a detailed housing survey available online and in hard format.

The stage one survey saw 411 surveys completed – approximately 65% of these were completed during face to face consultations with officers in the Borough's markets, with the remainder completed on the Council's website.

The data below has been extracted from the survey data recorded. The data received from the survey cannot claim to be statistically accurate in representing the views of the majority of those living in Tower Hamlets; however it does provide a good insight into the key issues concerning people in the Borough which will be valuable for informing the development of the housing strategy.

It should be noted that prior to the consultation being held, the work of the Mayor's Housing Affordability Commission, Somali Task Force and consultation on the Local Plan in late 2015 and early 2016 also provided valuable feedback from across the Borough's communities on a wide range of housing issues.

The second stage consultation included further public meetings, a housing conference, a second survey which was published online, and the Council's draft strategy and actions which the public were asked to comment on.

The stage 2 survey had 55 responses. The statistics and concerns raised are on pages 11-13.

## Methodology

The questions in the first stage survey were primarily developed around the findings and recommendations from the Mayor's Housing Affordability Commission which ran from December 2015 to February 2016 and through wider policy discussions with the Lead Members for Housing.

Before the online survey went live, it was tested by Council colleagues in order to ensure it worked and surveys could be submitted without any technical problems arising. The paper survey questions were tested on colleagues who did not work day-to-day in housing, in order to ensure the questions were clear so that residents in Tower Hamlets could understand what they were being asked to comment on. As a result of this, the language used in some of the questions was simplified in order to make it 'less techy'. Survey results were examined in order to ensure they were representative of the demographics of Tower Hamlets.

The second stage survey was created following the key housing concerns people mentioned during the stage one consultation. This survey contained questions which arose following the 'draft actions'.

## **Events and Consultations**

As part of the consultation, Council officers held over a dozen events across the Borough. Officers carried out face to face surveys in markets, idea stores, residents meetings, as well as briefing colleagues, management teams and partners in internal and external meetings. Specific engagement included holding an All Member briefing event, attending the Children and Partnership Board, the Parent and Carer Council, the Interfaith Forum, meeting Housing Options partners, holding three internal staff events, hosting a stall in the reception of Mulberry Place, and attending the Tenants and Residents Federation open meeting. Officers also held a housing conference, and met with the Youth Council.

Notes were taken at each meeting and feedback was recorded. While the majority of feedback was in line with what the Council's proposals are in the publications, some issues were raised which were not. These issues were considered and taken into account in the updated version of the Housing Strategy.

Many other issues raised related to service delivery, operational and partnership matters. These have also been captured and will be used to inform further policy development and delivery of the action plan.

**Respondents' profiles – First Stage Consultation Survey**

*Please note that not all respondents completed the monitoring survey. Therefore, the stats headlines do not add up to 100%.*

- Gender of those completing the survey: 49% female, 36% male.
- Landlord: 24% LBTH, 25% HA, 16% PRS, 16% owners, 2% homeless.
- Ethnicity: 28% Bengali, 26% British, 4% white, 3% Black, 1.5% Somali.
- Age Group: 16-24 (6%), 25-35 (23%), 36-45 (24%), 46-54 (11%), 55-64 (10%), 65+ (8%)
- 40% of respondents live in the Borough, while 5% work in LBTH. For the remaining 55% the question was not answered.

**Note:** *Equalities data for the second stage survey were not collected*

**Top 10 Housing Concerns of Residents in Tower Hamlets**

The top 10 housing concerns below were recorded from the comments made to officers by the public during the face to face surveys, and from the online survey which gave the public the opportunity to add specific comments.

<b>1</b>	<b>Overcrowding</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Waiting List (too long)</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Expensive / high rents</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Local people should get housing priority</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Repairs (Poor quality / Take too long)</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Lack of parking</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Lack of affordable housing</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Lack of key worker housing</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Low household income</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Affordable rent is not affordable</b>

**Examples of Housing Concerns**

The comments below are a cross section of comments received during the face to face surveys and online. They are intended to give Members a feel of the type of comments being made by the public on key housing issues. A full list of comments is available for Members should they wish to look at them.

**OVERCROWDING**

*“Teenagers of the opposite sex sharing the same room. For example a teenage boy 16 sharing with a teen girl of 13.”*

*“I have four girls that all currently share a room. The Council should spend an evening in my home watching how hard it is for my daughters aged 13, 10, 8 and 2 to share one bedroom together with no private space for themselves!”*

**HOUSING REGISTER**

*“The waiting list is too long.”*

*“People jump the housing queue.”*

*“I think it is really important for the Tower Hamlets Council to strive to house those on the housing waiting list, as it is only fair as some families have waited years. So to try and build more housing which will accommodate for affordable rent will be ideal, so everyone can benefit from it.”*

**HIGH RENTS**

*“Many of us cannot afford to pay £250 - 300 per week so I would like to see more homes which is less than £200.”*

*“The average working family cannot afford a rent of £250-£300.00 per week.”*

*“The Council need to build new homes that we can afford as many of us do not earn more than £15,000 PA and we cannot afford to pay rent of £300 + per week. Priority needs to be given to those that have medical needs and need a ground floor property. There is a shortage of ground floor properties and these are being given to those who do not even need a ground floor. Old estates and buildings can be refurbished to save money than demolishing and building new build homes.”*

*“People on housing benefits should not be in prime area like zone 2!”*

*“Rent is very high and unaffordable. As someone who earns between 18-20k I struggle to pay the rent every month and have to scrape to get by. I find myself in situations where I am having to lean towards borrowing from the bank in order to make it through the month financially. The flat I live in is small and isn't even worth the money I pay for it.”*

**HOMES FOR LOCAL PEOPLE**

*“No outer Borough placements and homes for local people.”*

*“Properties bought by the wealthy as investments at the expense of residents - it is pushing prices up.”*

*“Only people born and bred in Tower Hamlets should get priority housing.”*

*“Local people don't get housed. People from the EU come here and get housing priority while we have to go private.”*

**REPAIRS**

*“Standard of homes is not good. Not modern.”*

*“Repairs are a problem - waiting too long and contractors not doing what they say.”*

*“Amount of time it takes THH to carry out repairs - not good enough.”*

*“Quality of housing association repairs and services is poor - they should be required to document and evidence management support.”*

*“Process for repairs is too long - limited options.”*

*“Make better use of empty properties.”*

**LACK OF PARKING**

*“No parking.”*

*“Public service areas should also be increased including GPs, schools, green spaces etc. - parking should also be considered, it is not enough to say a building is 'car free' - this does not seem to ensure that people cannot gain access to a resident permit, as there seems to be numerous 'work-around' this. The best solution would be to ensure all buildings have parking available at an affordable cost.”*

**LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

*“Affordable homes allow people to stay in, contribute feel part of their local area. Expensive small private houses and flats create transient, tense cramped areas in this city of ours. That will be the slums of the future.”*

**LACK OF KEY WORKER HOUSING**

*“How are local communities being supported with all the new housing such as schools, doctors surgeries and local services? These new apartments create problems with school places and push locals further from their school catchment areas. Why aren't there more key worker builds?”*

*“How are key workers being supported in the Borough? What about key workers who live in overcrowded conditions for example? What incentive is there for them to continue to teach in London? How are those with median incomes able to pay rising rental rates in tower hamlets or afford homes? They are unable to do either.”*

*“Housing for key worker staff should be a priority.”*

**LOW HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

*“Too many homes feels like those on low income pushed out.”*

*“The majority of Tower Hamlets is full of families on very low income and those living in poverty. the last thing the Council could do is encourage more higher earning individuals to come and live in this Borough as that will inevitably lead to the social cleansing of the majority of residence that have lived in Tower Hamlets for the entirety of their lives.”*

**AFFORDABLE RENT IS NOT AFFORDABLE**

*“Define affordable housing, whom is it affordable too, based on what calculations?”*

*“These affordable rents are too high for family's to afford. I myself refused a 3 bed flat of £203 a week because we couldn't afford it. Also stop offering family's 9th floors with young babies. It's dangerous and not safe.”*

**Housing Survey Statistics – Short Survey**

The questions below were asked in order to gauge the level of support for the broad proposals of the *Towards a Housing Strategy* document. The survey results reveal that a majority residents support the direction of travel set out in the document.

Survey Question	% of Respondents who think this is 'Very Important'	% of Respondents who think this is ' Important'
Building new Council and housing association homes with rents that people can afford to pay.	82.6%	10%
Building new homes on its own estate for median income households (e.g., a single person or two people) who earn between £30,000 and £45,000 per year - before tax.	46.5%	26.7%
The Council works with housing associations in LBTH to make them more transparent and responsive, to improve the quality and management of housing association homes and will intervene where possible to improve services.	61.9%	22.7%
Using Council land to build new homes as well as modernise Council estates.	67%	20.8%
The Council to work with private landlords to improve the quality and management of private rented housing and take action against bad landlords.	61.9%	23.7%
The Council providing homelessness services to people who are not legally defined as homeless, but who the Council think it is important to give advice and support to.	46.7%	31.3%
Continue to give priority to people in most housing need on the housing register.	66%	19.6%

**Long Survey Data:**

In addition to the data included in the short survey responses above, approximately 140 people (34% of all respondents) went on to complete the longer version of the housing strategy survey on the LBTH website. Support for the proposals was more mixed than in the short survey particularly in relation to developing homes outside the Borough and some aspects of the proposed changes to the allocations scheme.

**Question 1 – The cost of Council and housing association affordable rented homes**

	<b>More homes at higher rents</b>	<b>Fewer homes at lower rents</b>	<b>No view</b>
The Council may have to make the difficult decision of deciding whether to have more rented homes at higher affordable rents (closer to the Government's affordable rents which are up to 80 per cent of market rents) and in the region of £250 - £300 per week for a two bed flat or have fewer homes at rents closer to current Council social rents or (closer to the Council's social rents) and in the region of £110 - £150 per week for a two bed flat.	<b>33%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>10%</b>

**Question 2 – Should we build new homes in lower value areas**

	<b>Building new homes in lower cost parts of Tower Hamlets</b>	<b>Build new homes at cheaper rents outside Tower Hamlets</b>	<b>No view</b>
The Council may have to make the difficult decision of deciding whether to build more rented homes at rents close to current Council rents in either lower value areas or perhaps outside of the Borough. Which do you think is most important	<b>60%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>5%</b>

**Question 3 - A new rental product for median income households**

	Agree	Disagree	No View
The Mayors Housing Affordability Commission has recommended that the Council should consider developing homes at higher rents on its own estates for median income households e.g. a single person or two people who earn between 30000 and 45000 - before tax. These homes would be let on a separate waiting list and be built alongside homes at lower rents for people in greater need. Do you agree with developing new homes on estates with a mix of rents which are affordable to local people on different income levels:	58%	37%	5%

**Question 4 - Repairing and improving council stock or building new homes on Council estate land**

	Repairs and improvements to existing housing stock	Building new affordable homes on Council estate	A mix of both improvements and new homes	No View
Due to the Government's decision to reduce rents by 1 per cent for the next 4 years, the Council will have less money to spend on Council housing, which means there are difficult decisions about where to spend the money that is available. In respect of the Council's housing managed by Tower Hamlets Homes, which of the three options do you think the Council should prioritise?	13%	19%	64%	4%

**Question 5 - Improving private rented housing**

*More tenants than ever before now live in the private rented sector. The Council is introducing a private sector licensing scheme to register private landlords in the east of the borough in the autumn, with the aim of improving services and rooting out bad landlords. What kind of changes would you like to see in accommodation provided in the private rented sector?*

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>No View</b>
Longer tenancies. Currently most private tenancies are usually for between six months and a year and may not be renewed	<b>71%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>17%</b>
More action on bad landlords, for example, landlords who do not carry out repairs or who harass tenants	<b>88%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>8%</b>
License private landlords of houses in multiple occupation in the Borough	<b>71%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>16%</b>
Have a standard of service, like the London Rental Standard, promoted by the Mayor of London	<b>76%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>16%</b>

**Question 6 - Meeting homeless households' needs**

*Homelessness continues to be a major issue in the borough. The Council has a legal duty to meet certain homelessness people's needs – usually the most serious based on the Common Housing Register Allocation Scheme - which may be met using Council or housing association accommodation or using private sector housing.*

*Others may just be entitled to housing advice. While the Council delivers many new affordable rented homes a year, we still cannot build enough homes to meet everyone's needs. Private rented housing in the Borough is too expensive to house homeless people who are on low incomes. This is likely to mean some homeless people will be placed outside Tower Hamlets on a permanent basis. This means we need to consider radical solutions. The Council is also considering other ways to provide temporary accommodation for homeless people. To meet these needs:*

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>No View</b>
Should the Council build and / or buy temporary accommodation in the Borough	<b>57%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>18%</b>
Should the Council build and/or buy temporary accommodation outside the Borough	<b>46%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>13%</b>
Should the Council use suitable private rented housing (and Council and housing association temporary accommodation) to end its Council's homelessness duty?	<b>50%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>16%</b>

### Question 7 - Allocating council and housing association homes to households from the Housing Register

*The Council is also consulting on changes to the Housing Allocation Scheme in as part of the consultation on the draft Housing Strategy. The Scheme sets out the rules that decide whether an applicant can join the Common Housing Register and what priority band they receive. We are looking at a number of changes. These include:*

*The Council currently operates a 10 per cent quota for Band 3 applicants who are not in housing need, given the housing demand from other applicants on the register. Do you think we should consider:*

	Agree	Disagree	No View
Remove the quota entirely	34%	41%	26%
Reduce the percentage quota to 5 per cent or less which will increase the lets available to higher priority applicants, including homeless families	39%	42%	19%
Reduce the quota and restrict them to 1 beds only which will increase the lets available to higher priority applicants, including homeless families	33%	47%	20%

	About right	Too long	Too short	No view
On the three year continuous residence rule, do you think the length is	50%	15%	24%	11%

	Agree	Disagree	No View
Should we, retain the residency requirement but create a sub-band in Band 2 for cases in housing need but have not lived in the Borough for 3 years continuously.	31%	48%	21%
Should the Council only allow room sharing if children of opposite sex are under 10 years of age	51%	34%	15%

The results from the longer survey demonstrated broad support for the proposals in the *Towards a Housing Strategy* document, however there were mixed responses to the allocations question on Question 7, which have been taken into consideration for the allocations report.

**Stage 2 Consultation Survey**

The answers given during the first round of consultation were used as a foundation for the questions below. The second stage survey was published on the council's website, with 2,000 postcards distributed across the Borough with the website where the survey was located. The questions also link in with the draft proposals in the housing strategy which was launched alongside the questions below.

Question	Yes	No
1. When the Council proposes to build new homes on estate land, should it consider building homes for market sale to help fund the development of the Council homes for social rent?	32	22
2. On new private developments, the Council has always sought to ensure that both private and affordable housing is developed alongside each other. In exceptional circumstances, the Council can accept a cash payment to build the affordable homes elsewhere, particularly for new build in expensive areas such as Canary Wharf. Do you think the Council should consider accepting cash payments in order to develop more new Council homes in other less expensive parts of the borough and on existing Council land?	29	24
3. Where new Council homes are built on Council estate land, should people who live on the estate get special consideration for smaller homes when they can give up a larger home (note: all applicants will need to be registered as under-occupying on the common housing register)	50	4
4. The Council wants to increase the number of homes for rent and ownership available to working people on incomes (before tax) of between £30,000 and £45,000: should the council give higher priority to key workers such as nurses, teachers, and social workers?	37	18
5. The Government will be introducing regulations that will mean that all Council housing tenancies in the future are likely to be for fixed terms rather than the lifetime tenancies which are currently issued. This is to ensure properties meet the needs of tenants as needs change over time. For example, a tenant might need a three bedroom house for their children but when their children have grown up and/or moved out, the tenant can then live in a smaller house. The 3 bedroom house can then be used for another family with children. If the Council has to introduce fixed term tenancies, do you think a tenancy length of up to 10 years is about right? (Note: For families with children, tenancies could last up to 19 years).	34	20

**Public Comments raised with the Survey Above:**

Although surely many nurses, social workers, care professionals earn under £30,000?
Due to the high level of graduate unemployment and the level of unemployed graduates in the borough of tower hamlets. Particularly those of ethnic background, the tenure may not be long enough. As to save to move or purchase a home will be very hard and a deposit may take over 30 years to save for.
Fire fighters, NHS workers not just nurses,
I feel that this could mean other, non-key workers, some of whom provide valuable services to the community, remain 'at the bottom of the queue'.
I think we should have priorities according to waiting time and according to registration date. We all are human and we all got the same right.
It is so difficult for our young people to afford a private rented property in Tower Hamlets let alone buy anywhere here. We need to do all we can to keep young families in Tower Hamlets so all options should be explored. This is especially true for key workers. We need them to stay in London so that they can work in inner London boroughs and have a vested interest in the area where they work. Key worker properties can help to keep employees in vital services. I do believe that key worker services should be extended to include ancillary workers in the emergency services i.e. support staff in schools, health care assistants, etc.
Key workers should include, dustmen, recycle workers, bus drivers, underground and train employers, police, sewage workers, Thames water employers etc. Anyone who works to make it possible for London to run smoothly. Anyone working in London with an income below £45,000 should be given priority. Apropos no 5 London private rent is so expensive. Children in a Council flat should be allowed to stay until they are working and earning above a certain amount and want to move, also the Council should give them a home in the area they grew up in if they have to leave. 10 years is definitely not enough if you are going down that road it should be between 30-40 years and they should have the option of staying in their own area. My daughter left school at 18, studied architecture, which is 7 years study, she was 24 when she had finished. I think the whole idea of moving people from their homes is appalling, you are deciding how people run their lives, no room for grandchildren to stay etc. Also it will create other social issues, mental issues, more homeless etc. amongst younger people. Also meanwhile people are living in their home knowing that one day they are going to be asked to leave by the powers that be. I can't believe this is even being talked about.
On 1 market sale is probably inevitable but TH needs to be strict. And I know many developers lie through their teeth about building affordable housing only to retract it in return for cash later in the process, so again being really strict here is key. And, again, if people can be rehoused within their estate that seems ok to me but it must not be allowed to drive people elsewhere - so enforcement should be strict.

<p>Policeman, fireman, junior doctors. Please give honours to the working people of our community. Support the ones who support the community by their work, by paying tax. Stop selling Council homes, right to buy is damaging our community by decreasing available social homes for key workers.</p>
<p>The income should be lesser considering the national minimum wage and the types of jobs many people are now into. The Council should put the interests of low income earners and those willing to make regular payment towards their rent and support families with more demand and sometimes financial debt</p>
<p>The right to buy on housing association properties is very hard to come by but is a vital way for many people to get onto the property ladder. We should be doing more to work with our housing associations to convince them to extend the current right to buy initiative across Tower Hamlets. With the current increases in property prices in Tower Hamlets even with a full reduction someone with the right to buy is still likely not to be able to afford to buy their home. The maximum reduction on right to buy properties should be increased and it should be considered reducing the length of time it takes to qualify for the right to buy. We should be offering a reduction in property prices and rent for long term local residents particularly if they take up employment in the borough and give back to the economy. This will encourage people to up skill themselves as well as attracting skilled workers and entrepreneurs to live and work in TH's.</p>
<p>There is a dearth of open spaces near Whitechapel / Brick Lane area. This needs to be addressed. More people should be allowed the option of moving outside of the Borough, some want to move out, this should be made easier.</p>
<p>Those working within the service and public services industries which are key to the successful functioning of the area, for example security, transport or administration.</p>
<p>Key workers are important as are community workers who are typically on even lower incomes, but also provide important services to the Borough and its residents. They should be prioritised too.</p>
<p>Care workers but not certain that preference can be justified. All roles offer some value and other local people will feel excluded if priority is given to those in the public sector.</p>
<p>Queen Mary University of London (QMUL) consider that an additional 'worker' category should be added to the Draft Housing Strategy to reflect the requirements of specialist staff employed in research and academic roles. These workers are invariably critical to the research, teaching and development undertaken by the Faculties of Humanities and Social Science, Science and Engineering and School of Medicine and Dentistry at the University that benefits the wider community and London's economic base and diversity. Many of these staff are employed for specific research and other purposes who are attracted by the quality and global standing of London's Universities and specifically QMUL. A large percentage of the academics employed at QMUL fall within the defined key worker income bracket, along with a large number of the other key staff employed by the University. QMUL believe that the 'Key Worker' definition should be expanded to encompass this important sector. Indeed, the Greater London Authority, in the last Examination in Public to the London Plan in response to evidence presented by QMUL, acknowledged that specific types of University staff and Researchers would be considered as 'specialist' workers but that support for these sectors should be promoted through local need having regard to local Borough housing strategies. Additionally considering the aspirations of the London Mayor to promote London's Med City and to develop a Life Sciences hub in Whitechapel, together with his recognition of the importance of attracting world leading academics and researchers to London as a global city, the inclusion of this category of workers would help to support these overall aspirations and enhance QMUL's global identity and with it that of Tower Hamlets too.</p>

## **Youth Council**

On 21<sup>st</sup> September 2016, 31 young people (including Members of the Youth Council) attended a briefing and engagement event in Mulberry Place. The youngsters were split into four teams and there was a general housing quiz, and then a group activity about where each person wanted to be in 5 and 10 years, along with whether they think they would still be able to live in Tower Hamlets (if that's what they wanted). This engagement was particularly useful as it enabled officers to hear the housing concerns about the next generation of tenants in the Borough. The majority of attendees expressed concern that they would be unable to have a house in the Borough due to the high rental / purchase cost, and general high demand due to projected population increase. Young people genuinely enjoyed living in Tower Hamlets and saw their future as remaining living in the Borough.

## **Housing Conference**

On 1<sup>st</sup> October 2016 a special housing conference was held at the Spotlight Centre. The purpose of this conference was to brief residents on the housing strategy and our proposals, and to let them have their say on the draft actions we have listed.

Almost 100 people attended the conference (including LBTH Officers), and 60 of those stayed until the end. This high level of public turnout on a wet Saturday morning is testament to the importance and concerns people have about the future of housing in Tower Hamlets. As well as discussing the draft Housing Strategy and Housing and Planning Act resident took part in a piece of interactive theatre presented by Card Board Citizens.

## **Housing Conference Feedback**

In each delegate pack handed out to attendees at the housing conference there was a feedback form which attendees were encouraged to complete at the end of the conference. This form was completed by 21 people. The feedback received is detailed below, and is useful as it will enable us to plan future housing events better.

**Housing Conference Feedback**

<b>What was your main reason for coming to this conference?</b>	
To hear the Council's proposals in the housing strategy	15
To have your say on the new housing strategy	7
To find out about the new Housing and Planning law	6
To ask the Mayor and housing panel any questions	4
To network with others interested in housing	4
To contribute to the panel discussion	1
To attend the break-out sessions	4

<b>Overall, how would you rate the conference? Excellent = 4, Good = 3, Average = 2, Poor = 1</b>	
4	9
3	11
2	
1	

<b>Do you think the Council has chosen the right themes in the strategy?</b>	<b>YES: 17</b>	<b>NO: 0</b>
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<b>Where did you hear about this Conference?</b>	Email	Cllr Islam / Blake	TRA	Poplar Harca email	Leaflet in local housing office	Resident engagement invitation	Spitalfields HA	Website	TH Fed	TH Law Centre
	6	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

<b>Overall were you satisfied with the briefing on the housing strategy?</b>	<b>YES: 16</b>	<b>No: 2</b>	<b>Not Answered: 1</b>
<b>If not, please state why</b>	Council should do more to limit planning permissions granted to companies building private, expensive accommodation in TH.		
	Not completely clear what is going to be done - I'll read the strategy		
	Q+A was only on the housing act and not on general affordable housing.		
	It was patronising. Break-out sessions were useful, but talking about how nice the Council is and how tied your hands are when enough has not been done.		

<b>Overall were you satisfied with the breakout discussions?</b>	<b>YES: 13</b>	<b>NO: 1</b>	<b>Not Answered: 3</b>
	More positive explanations on what can and should be done rather than the constraints and limitations		
<b>If not, please state why</b>	It was a bit of a grievance airing session - would have been good to find out what's going to change		
	Too little time on the break out discussion		
	Not clear what to discuss		

<b>Were you satisfied with the cardboard citizens' performance?</b>	<b>YES: 18</b>	<b>NO: 0</b>
	I think it took away from the practical bit and questions on the strategy	
<b>If not, please state why</b>	Excellent and representative of real situation. People need to have an advocate to help and support them.	
	What was the point?	

<b>Overall were you satisfied with the briefing?</b>	<b>YES: 15</b>	<b>NO: 3</b>	<b>Not Answered: 1</b>
	The Council representative did not present their plans to oppose and work around some of the areas where they have options		
	Too short to fully understand it and then to be able to ask any relevant questions		
	There is no definitive act yet		

## **Housing Conference Breakout Groups Issues Raised**

### **Group 1: Delivering affordable housing, economic growth and regeneration.**

- Local capacity – How much can we really build?
- Self-build – What is the Council's approach to site allocation?
- Estate regeneration – Concerns over process, decants, levels of affordable housing returned and disruption
- Development viability – Mistrust of system that allows affordable housing volume to be reduced on the basis of financial viability
- Planning ghettos
- Decent homes then regeneration – Poplar Harca and LBTH – Concern about what the next stage of regeneration will involve
- Economic growth – concern that local people may get left behind
- Keeping hold of land – ensuring the Council is not forced to sell sites here it could build Council housing
- Small sites – Value the contribution that infill developments can bring.

### **Group 2: Meeting people's housing needs.**

- Session concentrate on homelessness and heard first hand from people who are affected by the shortage of suitable housing
- Consideration of the Council's response to tackling homelessness, particularly around quality and location of temporary housing and how long people will remain in it.
- Consideration of allocation scheme and the way households are prioritised for housing
- Recognition of the needs of other groups and the Council's efforts to meet their needs

### **Group 3: Raising private rented housing standards.**

#### **Licensing**

- Licensing is a good idea (this from a landlord) – but has been appallingly implemented. We only got a letter last week. It's not been designed for small accidental landlords like us – we don't have enough expertise or information to answer questions like "who does your repairs" – and £500 up front is a lot, too much – we should be able to spread it out over the years.

#### **Rogue landlords - and agents**

- Agents are much more the problem than landlords. Agents causing problems.
- Managing agents overcharge tenants – asking £100s just to renew tenancy agreements.
- Agents cause chaos for landlords. Council causes problems by advising tenants to stay until the bailiffs come – makes it hard for landlords to do the right thing.
- It's always a battle dealing with managing agents – no fixed regulations, no oversight.

- Agents give tenants stress, poor service, mis-selling.
- Landlords are stuck with bad agents as much as tenants.
- The new regulations are positive – and nobody knew about them - but they don't go far enough – they can still charge you what they like.

### **Social Lettings Agency**

- Everybody was very supportive of the Council setting up a social lettings agency – start small and then scale up – this is how private business would do it – there are landlords out there who are sick of high fees and would support ethical letting – put it in an agency that just aims to cover its costs – tie it in with wider strategic approach e.g. to CPOs, EDMOs, even consider renting out high value sales to cover costs of Housing Act – we want a good market rent lettings agency, it's OK to start small and it will grow.
- GLA could lead this by franchising social lettings to the Boroughs – GLA could develop the software, infrastructure, overheads and reduce costs like that.

### **Engaging Private Tenants**

- The private rented sector in Tower Hamlets and inner London is increasingly made up of younger people – sharing flats, not registered, not paying bills, not engaging with local community, more churn. Engaging with tenants would be a good thing but young people don't want to give up their time, they just want things fixed and done. And young people live on line – so you need to use that if you want to engage.
- Tenants need more education.
- You need to aim at the websites used by renters - e.g. spareroom.com – you can target on-line ads and Facebook advertising by postcode or "Tower Hamlets" – you could publicise rights and contacts through that and it wouldn't be expensive
- Educating landlords is very important and positive.
- You could offer incentives to RTB landlords – for example allowing them to buy into renewal works such as bathrooms.

### **Insecurity**

- Tenants have to move constantly – I'm trying to be involved in my community but I can't afford to buy and I need a guarantee that when I rent I can stay somewhere for 10-15 years.
- Community Land Trust has been good – but has only been able to help a very small number of people

### **Airbnb**

- Airbnb is a problem causes antisocial behaviour in my block – would be good to do something about it, need to enforce.

### **Changes to strategy as a result:**

- Increase emphasis on working with and regulating agents as well as landlords

**For consideration operationally and in action plans**

- Amend application process for small landlords
- Consider spreading licensing costs for small landlords
- Look at targeted advertising to promote tenant and landlord awareness
- Engage tenants through online groups
- Feed into considerations of social lettings agency

**Group 4: Effective partnership working with residents and stakeholders.****Tenant Rights**

- There were some concerns by attendees about tenant's right in general – particularly if there were mergers.
- There was concern from some residents that when housing associations merge, tenants are kept in the dark. It was felt by some that their needs as residents was going ignored. One person said the large housing associations are not accountable to anyone.
- There was general support to improve the Tenant and Resident Federation, and to assist communities in setting TRF up.

**Rents and Accountability**

- 1% rent reduction – need to sell void properties and give the money to the Government rather than investing in housing.
- One man said he would like to see Tower Hamlets Homes holding its AGM on time, rather than just relying on public drop in sessions for residents to talk about any THH problems they have.
- One individual said they wanted to see something in law so that landlords could not increase their rent suddenly by a large amount.
- The big saving for the Government would be on housing benefit if they built homes at social rents

**Stock**

- Some residents expressed their concern at social housing stock being sold off and not replaced.
- RP attendees stated that everybody needs to balance the books and for some that may mean selling off higher value stock.
- The Mayor said he has constantly tried to seek money from the Government and City Hall so that he can build affordable social housing in the Borough.
- Better management of estates was mentioned.

**Partnerships**

- Concern regarding Poplar Harca privatising the Balfour Tower to fund social housing – residents expressed the need to work better in future.
- One member of the public said the TH Common Housing Register was a unique and solid example of partnership and one which private landlords should consider signing up to.
- The Mayor said he believed Government policy was pointing towards more mergers of housing associations. And work is being done to improve partnerships.