



Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations

Campaigning for Housing Rights and Council Homes

*Bells Gardens Community Centre
19 Buller Close, London
SE15 6UJ*

Group Meeting Minutes from Wednesday 24th May 2023 on zoom

Staff: Margaret Onwuta, Amanda Carey, Ahmed Kabba, Joe Snazell-Holding, Ygerne Price-Davies

Attendees: 18

Apologies: Colin Harrison, Kiri Pieri, Beverley Graham, Carol Vincent

1. Welcome & Introductions

Chris welcomed everyone to the meeting and opened platform for two staff to speak. Ygerne introduced herself as the new Campaign & Research Officer, followed by Joe, who introduced himself as the new Tenants & Residents Officer for the North of the borough.

2. Peckham Festival - Guest speakers Jules Hill & Chloe Elie

Chloe and Jules explained that Peckham Festival is sponsored by Copeland Park and that they have been running now for 7 years. It is an inclusive festival, so they reach out to as many different sectors as possible, being schools, faith groups, choirs etc. This year's festival runs from Friday 15th to Sunday 17th September and is split into various sections. A roller-skating rink to encourage younger residents to attend, a stage where people can perform, whether that be playing a musical instrument, or other forms of entertainment, various food traders, to showcase their culinary delights, open studios to form the makers market for makers to exhibit their creations and community hub section for various community groups to have a stall to promote awareness of their organisation within the borough.

The theme this year is identity, which covers a broad spectrum, and the purpose is to fill spaces/stalls with local people doing local things.

If you want to get involved:

Email: oi@peckhamfestival.org, or select your interested category by visiting

Website: <https://www.peckhamfestival.org/>

A suggestion was proposed that the 12 local TRAs' to the venue work collaboratively together with SGTO to make one showcase stall, rather than all individual. Ahmed will coordinate this and bring all together for discussions.

Contact Ahmed: info@sgto.co.uk

3. **Minutes of Group Meeting** held on 22nd March 2023 **and Matters Arising**

Agreed as a true record.

Proposed by Cris Claridge

Seconded by Saidat Oketunde

Matters Arising from 22nd March

Action: Dario to send Paul Eccles detailed notes on unadaptable heating systems in blocks where people cannot regulate heating output.

Dario confirmed that this is a work in progress which was reported at the SGTO Board Meeting.

Action: Cris to get permission from Ina on sharing information. To then, if approved, send to SGTO to circulate with membership.

This has been approved and emails containing complaint information about the rent increases will be shared with the membership. Ina has welcomed for anyone to contact her direct with any questions or comments they may have.

4. **Report back on the meeting with the Repairs Improvement Resident Board**

The council have set up a steering committee to support them with issues surrounding repairs this consists of 12 people, formed by residents and council staff.

An organisation called Open Communities is also on board, who work with local authorities and will assist in finding solutions. The committee are to liaise between to tenants and the Council. They have only just started and various information is currently being gathered in order to make a gameplan going forward.

The call centre was a topic for discussion at the meeting on 22nd May, for the Council to understand the frustration felt by tenants when trying to communicate with the call centre. A visit by the committee to the call centre is to be arranged, so they can see first-hand how it operates.

Chris, Cris, Sam and Althea, are part of this committee, so will report back to the group with updates.

Action: Chris to obtain and electronic version of the Terms of Reference for the Repairs Improvement Resident Board, which is then to be circulated to the membership by SGTO office.

5. **Update from the meeting held with the Leader of Southwark Council on 22nd May.**

A letter was sent to the Leader of The Council, sent from Chris Meregini – as Chair of SGTO, and signed by Cris Claridge – as tenants' representative to Scrutiny Committee, Althea Smith – as Chair of Tenants Council, Bassey Bassey – as Chair of TMO Group and Ina Negoita – as Chair for Homeowners Council.

The letter outlined what is not happening in terms of participation and a meeting requested.

Cllr. Darren Merrill and Kieron Williams were in attendance, and they were made aware that the current structure is not working and were asked how we can collectively evaluate to improve structures to make them fit for purpose. Currently, those attending the meetings are as an individual and need to be representative of their TRA. Also, that since Covid, there are many TRAs' struggling to exist which need help from those functioning to strengthen them. They welcomed comments and agreed that a schedule would be

circulated for when the first meeting will be held, within the next 2 weeks, and instigated that other community groups involving tenants would need to be invited.

It was highlighted that the previous forums were tenant led, offering the opportunity of participation, but this was no longer happening as agenda items were set without tenant involvement, and minutes not shared.

They suggested employing consultants, but that was rejected, as the ideas, opinions, comments need to come from tenants, not a group of people who would have no awareness on what is going on and how it affects people,

Cllr. Merrill will be liaising to move forward on redesigning the current framework and to provide a timetable where members will be updated.

Action: Schedule of next meeting with Cllr. Darren Merrill on Participation Structure should be received by 5th June '23.

6. How can SGTO support TRAs' that are not active?

This is an ongoing issue with TRAs', but a service that SGTO provides to support those who are struggling.

Without making assumptions, how do we identify TRAs' that need assistance without appearing intrusive, but to simply want to offer our support. They will generally have the officers in place, or just a couple of people left, but not a full committee to share workload and to take things forward.

Covid has played a huge part in this, as committee members have stepped away and now, we need to find ways to engage new and younger tenants to get involved and other means of meeting as people are not always going to be willing to trapse to a hall for a meeting.

A member enlightened the group of the free gift incentive they offer to get people to come along, items of low cost – small packet of seeds, bulbs for example, but works, as everyone likes a freebie.

This however may not entice younger people as would not, possibly, be of interest.

Technology may be the way forward, as most of the younger generation are glued to their phones, so virtual reality would interest them, which Damien could possibly assist with, or maybe even a talent competition.

Another member spoke of how they have engaged with the young on their 70 homes block, by employing a youth worker to engage in various activities with them (and the old, if they feel up to it). The relationship building between the adults and teenagers has been positive and because the young want to expand the facilities available to them, they are attending meetings and despite finding the meetings boring, they know they must attend if they want to have their case heard to progress. An open, clear space has made them feel appreciated, welcome, and part of the community. Money well spent for this positive outcome.

Another member said that their endeavours to engage the young had not worked, through organising outings (they did not turn up), food tasting sessions, opening computer room where they designed the schedule for the meetings but since Covid, they have now disappeared, and no one has ventured back. If the parents have lost interest, how can we expect the young to get involved.

It was pointed out that not one size fits all and therefore we need to collate different ideas collectively, to move forward and to trial.

It was also noted that with each TRA, there are different reasons as to why they are no longer functioning, so the first thing to do, would be to establish the reasons why, as it could be due to a conflict, which would need to be handled differently, as the resolution of that would need to be addressed first.

Suggestions were made to have a joint meeting for TRAs' struggling to get younger people involved, so they can join forces to come up with ideas of engaging. Another was to approach schools to engage with young people that way, or to take the meeting to them, so if they are playing football, you meet with them on the pitch for 10-20 minutes to get their ideas and to give them responsibility. This would give them a feeling of acceptance and importance within their community and help them later in life, as can be included on their CV.

SGTO have in the past, before Covid lockdown, concentrated on the football tournament and summer fest to engage young and old, and will hopefully, funding permitted, be able to resume such events again as a huge success.

It was confirmed by Ahmed, that having kept in contact with the youth forum, will be looking to reignite and get things started up again.

The outreach staff, Ahmed (South) and Joe (North), will work alongside TRAs' and offer support and guidance and arrange any necessary meetings/workshops to assist TRAs' with this venture.

Action: Ahmed to reignite the SGTO Youth Forum

7. Any Other Business

Parking and Hall Issue

Q) An issue was highlighted in Tabard Central with regards to parking. There were 3 TRAs, Tabard North, South and Central. Tabard South is currently not functional, and Tabard North has separated from Tabard Central. This now means that if you park in Tabard North, when you live in Tabard Central, you will receive a parking fine, but it is all part of the same estate, how can this be correct and how can you know where to park safely without receiving a fine. The hall was run by the 3 TRAs', but with Central struggling and South not operational, the only TRA active is Tabard North. The council set stringent rules to open hall post covid, that they haven't been able to adapt to. An email was sent from Council advising Central to join forces with South, but they are not active. How can they move forward from this. People go to their TRA with an issue, but nothing is resolved.

A) Chair requested that email be shared with him and that they would take the matter further to try and find a resolution for the issues raised. It was also mentioned that the council only make recommendations and that if Tabard Central wish to remain alone, they do not have to merge with Tabard South, it is just a suggestion, not an action. Also, if the committee feel that the officers in position are not performing well, it is open to new votes by committee to elect a new.

Action: Josiah to forward email from council indicating that Tabard Central are to merge with Tabard South.

Controlled parking zone

There is a proposed parking zone coming in for Queens Rd Peckham and Nunhead, around Meeting House Lane, where a controlled parking zone is scheduled. People living in these areas will now have to pay to park, as will their visitors.

There is a campaign ongoing indicating how this will affect residents etc. and they can get involved and to also take into consideration that even with paying for a permit, you cannot guarantee being able to park outside of home, as it is not allocated parking.

When rolled out in Mitcham 3 years ago, the cost was initiated at £230, but has since increased to £550, so people need to know all the implications and get involved to put a stop to this.

This was opposed and successful when campaigned against it around 6 years ago, so are looking to stop this again.

There is a website that people can visit if they want to find out more information, or to get involved. The organisers have divided the areas and set up different WhatsApp groups which you can apply through the website to be added to the relevant group to join discussions in your vicinity. Each group will have their own meeting and then the organisers will collate all information and feedback to the membership.

An information meeting held by the Council provided forms for people to complete, but it didn't give an option to oppose, only to select what level of permit you choose. Unfortunately, the 5 councillors from the zones think it is a good idea and are not listening to anything people are saying as they indicated that they have been employed to do a job and not represent their constituents'.

A letter has been compiled, where people will be asked to sign as we have until September to put in the objection. The battle was won before, but it was not at this level.

Website: <https://opposethecpz.org/>

National Housing Day of Action

People were made aware of the Housing Day of Action on 8th July, which has been called by various housing groups. The different groups will be holding various events which are relevant to them, which stands at around 12-14 groups so far. There may be an online event in the evening, but that is yet to be decided.

The theme of the day is 'refurbish, don't demolish', 'the importance in keeping our council homes', 'fire safety' and some groups may be discussing the increase in service charges, higher rents etc.

The Southwark Group, there will actions concerning the Aylesbury Estate, where an extremely well-attended exhibition has already been held. It will highlight that some of the estate is still standing, but threatened with demolition with the new substandard buildings they are being replaced with. One of the new towers on Heygate have fire issues and parts of the new build on Aylesbury, bricks are falling off and some properties are already suffering from damp and mould.

It was suggested that we show the short video at one of the SGTO group meetings, which was made of the Aylesbury Exhibition, as it tells a story that we all should see.

Tanya to share details of meeting with Cris, so SGTO can attend and see how we can get involved on the day if the Board feel it suitable.

If you want to get involved with the Southwark Group on 8th July, contact Tanya who will provide details.

Email: tanyamurat@hotmail.com or

Phone: 07792 786192

Action: to show exhibition video of the Aylesbury Estate at a SGTO group meeting.

Action: Chris agreed that Tanya to share details of meeting with Cris, so board can decide if the SGTO can get involved in the Housing for Action Day.

Meeting closed: 9:00pm

Date of next meeting: 28th June 2023

Actions

Item 4.

Action: Chris to obtain an electronic version of the Terms of Reference for the Repairs Improvement Resident Board, which is then to be circulated to the membership by SGTO office.

Item 5.

Action: Schedule of next meeting with Cllr. Darren Merrill on Participation Structure should be received by 5th June '23.

Item 6.

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Controlled Parking Zone – Objection

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National Housing Day of Action 8th July

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