

WOODBERRY DOWN COMMUNITY ORGANISATION Board Meeting

MINUTES

**Thursday 18th April 2024
7.15 pm Redmond Community Centre**

Attendance

Kalu Amogu, Phil Cooke, Adrian Essex, Oonagh Gormley, Jackie Myers, William Sheehy, Dulce Laluces, Mina Faragalla, Jacquie Knowles, Elaine Gosnell, Gloria Obiliana, Ekaterina Andreeva, Maggie Lewis, Hilary Britton, Tina Parrott, Leonora Williams, Barbara Panuzzo

Guests Included

Isobel Pierce, Jaime Powell Anthony Green, Cllr Sarah Young, Nadia Youssef

Section 0 - Introduction

1. Welcome / Apologies for absence

Geoff Bell, Donna Fakes, Euphemia Chukwu Andrea Anderson, Omar Villalba, Kristina Zagar, Doreen Cox, Cllr Caroline Selman

2. Acceptance of minutes:

2.1. The March minutes were agreed and accepted.

3. Matters Arising / Action Tracker:

3.1. Isobel reported that Cllr Nicholson will be arranging a meeting with Mina and Elaine directly to discuss their individual case regarding the out-of-phase split household.

3.2. Jaime clarified that, as she understands it, any responses from statutory consultees should be documented in the committee report. Additionally, if there are comments from residents, they would be summarised within the committee report.

3.3. Isobel noted that the library services team have increased availability of staff at the WD library. There will be an external book depository at Stoke Newington Library and there are additional activities taking place at both Stamford Hill Library and in Clissold House, for example, rhyme time sessions. Residents are welcome to email the library service team directly for more updates at ourlibraries@hackney.gov.uk.

3.4. Roda emailed Clare following the Board's request, inquiring about the Design Committee Masterplan workshops and when the outcome of the Public Consultation will be discussed with the Design Committee. Berkeley confirmed that the Design Committee meeting on 6th March was the last one, but there is a Consultation

Sub-Committee workshop arranged to discuss the outcome of the Public Consultation.

Action Tracker

- 3.5. **Windows report (pending):** Jaime advised that Trevor provided an update at the Liaison meeting. Roda will circulate the update once the minutes are finalised.

ACTION: Roda will circulate the update from the last Liaison meeting.

- 3.6. **Housing numbers:** Isobel noted that the presentation will be on the agenda for the May Board meeting and Cllr Nicholson will be in attendance.
- 3.7. **Service charge:** Roda reported that Omar has requested the Board hold off on closing the action. He has been trying to contact James Glass (Director of Places & Estates) to obtain an update on the service charge actuals for the last three previous financial years and to establish a timeframe for when the service charge refunds will be provided.
- 3.8. Sarah also noted that the Cllrs, NHG and R&R are due to meet to discuss service charges for Hartington Court and Willowbrook.
- 3.9. **Feasibility study prepared by Arup (DHN):** Isobel updated that Expedition are reviewing key documents, including the energy strategy for the masterplan and the Arup feasibility study, in order to present this back to the DHN Working Group. A date has not yet been agreed for this meeting, but will be scheduled to take place in the next few weeks.
- 3.10. **Out of Phase split households:** Isobel has reported that Senior officers in the Benefits and Homeless Prevention Service, Regeneration and Housing are working through the ramifications of a split households policy on the demand for homes to meet homelessness and severe overcrowding and are in the process of working up a number of options that might meet the ambitions of WDCO going forward. This policy work is underway and advanced; however, the options are still being worked on and have not been presented to elected Members yet. It is anticipated that, at the WDCO Board meeting scheduled for July, the draft report will be available for discussion, pending internal discussions and approval.
- 3.11. **Service charge working group:** Anthony reported they do not yet have a complete service charge budget, and they are currently determining the best time to schedule the Service Charge Working Group meeting, which will likely take place next month.
- 3.12. Roda asked if NHG had made a decision about whether they would be using a managing agent for the social rented block in Phase 3. Anthony noted that this is still under consideration but they need that budget for that process.

Section 1 – Presentation

Partners Updates

- 4.1 Written responses from Berkeley, MHDT, and Hackney Council were circulated at the meeting.
- 4.2 Anthony provided a verbal update on the written question to NHG. Regarding the WGN sewage, he has not yet received a full update from Samuel Betts and will follow up.

ACTION: Anthony will provide a further update once he receives the information from Samuel Betts, Head of M&E.

4.3 Regarding the Vital issue, Anthony mentioned that he received a draft response from the billing team, which needs to be confirmed before being included in the FAQ for residents. The Board members felt this was not a satisfactory response. Tina raised concerns about the inaccuracies in the Vital Energi bills, such as incorrect tariff charges and estimated start bills. Despite attending the Vital drop-in session organised by NHG, there remains a significant number of issues and a lack of clarity surrounding the billing. She noted that overall, the handover process from Insite to Vital was poorly managed. This was also raised by residents who attended the Public Forum.

4.4 Cllr Sarah Young proposed that the head of the Heat and Billing team should either attend the next Board or Operational meeting to address the concerns. Adrian suggested that decisions were taken at a high level to change from Insite to Vital and that something went wrong in this process.

ACTION: NHG to explain why the decision was made to move from Insite to Vital Energi and to clarify what went wrong in the process (including identifying issues with the handover). The Board has asked for this to be provided by Monday 22nd April.

4.5 Anthony also noted that by the end of next week, NHG (Jada Guest) will be able to confirm the timeframe for providing the service charge actuals (previous financial years 20/21, 21/22, and 22/23).

4.6 William raised a question about the solar panels in specific blocks that have never been connected. Jaime stated that they should be connected, but she couldn't confirm. Roda shared the update received from NHG at the Operational meeting, indicating that the solar panels have never been commissioned.

ACTION: Berkeley and NHG will investigate the issue of the solar panels and provide an update.

4.7 Hilary sought clarification on Phase 4's schedule for the Planning Committee and why it wasn't on the agenda in March as previously indicated. Jaime clarified that the Phase 4 application is scheduled for decision at the May Committee meeting. She explained that although it was initially planned for the March then April agenda, it was postponed due to the committee report not being ready.

4.8 Elaine raised concerns about the 200 social rented homes deficit in the masterplan, noting that she had previously brought up this issue in a Board meeting. Isobel assured that there would be a comprehensive update on this matter during the May Board meeting.

4.9 Oonagh queried the MHDT report, highlighting that the kitchen usage was reported as 11,340 minutes, equivalent to 6 hours per day, which she found unrealistic. Nadia from MHDT clarified that these figures represent kitchen bookings. She also clarified that the reporting perhaps is not clear but highlighted that the centre is well used. Oonagh suggested the presentation of these figures needs to be more meaningful.

4.10 Adrian shared that the trustees have requested enhanced reporting, and he noted that the London Development Trust (LDT) has recently introduced a new method for reporting the centre's usage. He expressed his approval, mentioning that the template they have been presented with is highly commendable.

4.11 Sarah suggested that Adrian, Jaime, and she take an action item to bring back a report from MHDT, as they receive detailed figures on community usage at the LDT Board meetings.

ACTION: Sarah, Jaime, and Adrian will liaise with LDT and provide a report on the utilization of the Redmond Centre.

4.12 Jackie raised concerns about NHG's decision to engage with MHDT regarding the management of the community space in Phase 3. She worried that this could potentially result in duplicating and an extension of services similar already offered at the Redmond Centre. Anthony explained NHG does not intend to charge for the space; however, there are associated service charge costs. MHDT seems to be the logical organisation, given its community-based nature and longstanding reputation. It needs to be financially sustainable, as NHG cannot cover the service charge costs. Discussions are ongoing with MHDT regarding how to make the space financially viable, and some business planning is needed around that, which is fundamental to the discussions being had.

4.13 Jackie inquired about the Water Sports Family Open Day and the distribution date of the event's advertising leaflets. She also inquired about the accessibility of the event for young children with additional needs.

ACTION: Anthony will follow up with Jackie regarding these two questions.

4.14 Elaine inquired about the update on split households provided in the report. She noted that the out-of-phase split household situation has become increasingly more conditional. The report mentioned "as well as split household moves, void properties are also used for temporary accommodation and inter-estate/housing management moves. There is therefore pressure on both availability and use of voids." Elaine emphasised that families seeking to benefit from the split household arrangement are currently limited to Woodberry Down, whereas other inter-estate moves and temporary options could be considered elsewhere. She believes this is a significant benefit and incentive that many have had to forfeit. Elaine asked if Woodberry Down could be prioritised in this regard. Isobel explained that they will provide a more detailed update in July, while also acknowledging that this needs to be viewed in the context of the severe housing crisis they are trying to navigate through.

4.15 Jackie inquired about any updates regarding the dates for community events such as the Funday. Additionally, she highlighted that decisions appear to be made without any discussions with WDCO. There has not been a Communication Working Group meeting for a long period of time, and no newsletter has been circulated since Christmas. She suggested that it would be beneficial to re-establish these communication channels.

4.16 Jackie also enquired if there had been much interest in the Business start-up course funded by NHG.

ACTION: Anthony will report back on the level of interest they have had in the Business start-up course funded by NHG.

5. Board Discussion without partners

5.2. Adrian shared with the Board the outcome of the Public Forum which is available on the WDCO website, noting that there were 40 attendees. The first topic

discussed at the Public Forum was Play Facilities. Adrian suggested a list of all the play facilities in the area should be made available on the WDCO website.

ACTION: Oonagh volunteered to compile a list for the website.

5.3. He also highlighted that Block D and Community Space were discussed at the meeting. The Board briefly examined whether there was a need for more community space and the cost of the existing community space, with different perspectives being shared. Adrian asked if printed updates on the outcome of the Public Forum could be shared with some of the attendees.

ACTION: Roda will send out hard copies to the attendees that didn't provide email addresses.

5.4 There was a brief conversation about the relocation of the artificial football pitch from its current location to a new position beside the Children's Centre.

5.5. Vital Energy billing was another topic discussed at the Community Forum. The Board also briefly considered a way forward on this issue. They highlighted that NHG made the decision to change the billing company, specified how that change took place, and supervised its implementation. Given that NHG drove this change, they should correct the situation. The Board proposed several corrective measures for NHG:

- Suspending all current bills issued by Vital Energi, with no further action taken to pursue outstanding amounts. Each affected resident should be individually informed of this.
- Ensuring that every meter billed by Vital is read, and starting a completely new billing cycle from that reading. All bills should be based on this new reading.
- Checking all tariffs to ensure that all new bills are accurate from the new baseline onwards.
- Examining each bill already issued for accuracy and reissuing if necessary.
- Promptly issuing refunds.
- Ensuring that all residents are shown the location of their meter in their homes and given the capacity to read the meter as necessary.

ACTION: Roda, Adrian and Jackie will raise the Board's recommended corrective measures with NHG.

5.6. Adrian provided further updates on the matters raised at the Public Forum, including cyclical work, pest control, and the upcoming WDCO elections. The Board engaged in a debate regarding the elections and the necessity to review the constituencies. It was suggested that Phase 3 should be included as residents will soon be moving in. While there was a suggestion to consider all units in Phase 3, Adrian highlighted the challenge of defining theoretical constituencies for unfinished blocks. There was a proposal to reserve spaces for Phase 3 residents expected to move in within the next year, although some Board members disagreed with this recommendation. Roda clarified that the Returning Officer (ITLA) would review the constituencies within the guidelines of the WDCO constitution and would present it to the Executive Committee for initial approval. Subsequently, the proposals will be presented to the Board in May for final approval.

ACTION: Roda will present the proposed constituencies for the WDCO elections at the May Board meeting.