

# WOODBERRY DOWN COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

### Minutes

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2024

7pm Zoom Meeting

**Attendance:** Kalu Amogu, Geoff Bell, William Sheehy, Andrea Anderson, Leonora Williams, Jackie Myers

**ITLA:** Roda Hassan, Emre Ozturk

**Apologises:** Adrian Essex and Oonagh Gormley

#### **0.1 Minutes**

Roda discussed an email she received from Adrian that questioned the accuracy of Section 1.31 of the Executive Committee minutes for the 23rd of July. He noted that his recollection is that what they actually spoke of was the abortive “50% representation” motion proposed and subsequently withdrawn by the board. He expressed the view that there were very strong underlying feelings/fears that gave rise to the proposal, and that there were almost certainly ways in which those feelings/fears without prejudice to the democratic process. Given that he does not have direct experience of the circumstances giving rise to those fears he wished to lend my support to ensure that the fears were not realised. He also noted that the action should read: Adrian, Jackie, and William will meet to discuss strategies to address the feelings/fears arising in the long-term residents’ minds that their voice would be lost.

**ACTION: Roda will review the recording from the 23rd July 2024 Executive meeting to verify the accuracy of item 1.31, following Adrian's email inquiry questioning its correctness.**

#### **0.2 Matter Arising**

0.21 Jackie asks if there have been any updates on the new letters and if they will be sent.

**ACTION: Roda to follow up on the summer newsletter.**

**0.22** Roda informed the Executive members that a presentation on the WD Communication approach took place at the Round Table. She also mentioned that Jackie, during the meeting, expressed her clear opinion that if the partners had discussions over the summer, the WDCO Communication representatives should have been included, as was agreed at the June Communications Strategy meeting.

**ACTION: Roda will share the communications presentation with the Executive members.**

### **1 Phase 3 community space**

1.1 William met with Isobel and Michelle in August to gain a better understanding of the current status of the WDCO office space. During the discussion, Hackney explained that the current WDCO office at 2c Rowan was never intended to be a permanent location. They also noted that the lease for the WDCO has now expired, and is currently on a rolling lease. WDCO moved to the current office after being relocated from Phase 3. The original lease was from 10th April 2014, leased by Berkeley to Hackney, which then subleased it to WDCO. Hackney has expressed that they are open to a joint proposal for the Phase 3 community space. They would cover the costs associated with the space, while WDCO would potentially manage it. If WDCO is interested in submitting a proposal, they will need to demonstrate how the space is currently utilised and how they plan to facilitate access for other groups in the other space. The Executive Committee has been offered the opportunity to visit the space. William advised Hackney that he would discuss this with the Executive and arrange a meeting with them after the upcoming Executive meeting and the site visit.

**ACTION: Roda will get some proposed dates to NHG for the site visit.**

1.2 Jackie raised concerns about the narrower pavement in the new Phase 3 space, especially as many residents bring their children along. Geoff agreed that there is no need to rush the decision to move and highlighted that the final decision rests with the WDCO Board. He emphasised that relocating the office to the other side of Seven Sisters Road might not be well-received. Geoff suggested it may be better to keep the office in its present location.

## **2. Partnership Agreement**

2.1 The Executive Committee reviewed the comments and proposed changes from partners regarding the partnership agreement. All partner feedback is detailed in the document provided by Hackney, and the Executive's comments have been added.

2.2 The Executive Committee previously suggested removing reference to “sense of pride” from the agreement. Delivery Partner response was: The Vision has been taken from the Masterplan. This was updated following extensive consultation with the Partnership, WDCO and Ward Councillors. Geoff expressed that the "sense of pride" might not be necessary, as everyone has a different perspective on pride. Jackie countered by emphasising that there should be a collective sense of pride in the Board's and the community's achievements. Geoff acknowledged that the Woodberry Down community indeed has a strong sense of pride, though it can be difficult to put into words. The Executive team agreed to leave section 3.1 unchanged.

2.3 During the last Away Day, it was agreed to add the objective to "Maximise the number of affordable homes." Adrian and Oonagh, who were unable to attend the meeting, provided written comments. Adrian noted that "the PDA is very clear on the number to be targeted, which adds confusion. Having been agreed upon at the outset between LBH and BH, WDCO should not attempt to modify this further." Oonagh argued that the point added at 3.23—"Ensure that truly affordable homes are provided for social rent and low-cost home ownership"—is not within the authority of any of the partners within WDCO. She stated it can be an aspiration but cannot be a requirement, adding that "mending the housing market is sadly beyond WDCO." The Executive members noted that they were never included in these discussions, were not part of the PDA, and that this point was not mentioned in the partnership agreement. Nonetheless, they agreed that this should not exclude the aspiration to maximise the number of affordable homes, emphasising that "affordable" should be defined according to Hackney Council's current standards.

**ACTION: Roda will confirm whether both "Maximise the number of affordable homes" and "Ensure that truly affordable homes are provided for social rent and low-cost home ownership" were agreed upon at the Away Day.**

2.4 Roda highlighted that the phrase "Ensure that the physical masterplan for Woodberry Down is adhered to" accurately reflects the current wording in the agreed partnership agreement. Hackney, however, proposed changing this to "Ensure that the principles of the masterplan for Woodberry Down are adhered to." While Adrian expressed concerns, noting that the proposed change doesn't make sense because the Masterplan itself can't be "built out," the Executive members agreed that Hackney's

wording is acceptable. They suggested that the principles of the Masterplan should be followed and that the Residents' Charter should also be incorporated.

2.5 Hackney has suggested updating the wording in 4.1 bullet point 6 to "Identify, analyse, and capture lessons learned and ensure that they inform the design of future phases". All the Executive Committee members appear to be in agreement with Hackney.

2.6 Hackney has proposed revising bullet point 3 in section 4.1 to "Work towards agreement, taking a problem-solving approach" instead of the original "Work towards agreement by consensus, through taking a problem-solving approach." Adrian, in his comments, found Hackney's proposed wording acceptable and supported removing "agreement by consensus," as Berkeley suggested. However, the other Executive members discussed the point and felt that striving for consensus should still be emphasised. While consensus may not always be achievable, there should be a commitment to at least work towards it. They also noted that this approach has not always been adhered to by all partners.

2.7 Hackney has proposed changing bullet point 5 in section 4.1 from "Make decisions that have regard to the Vision for Woodberry Down, built upon a shared understanding of the issues" to "Consult on decisions that have regard to the Vision for Woodberry Down, built upon a shared understanding of the issues." Berkeley suggested removing this comment, which Adrian supported. However, the remaining Executive members argued that using the term 'consult' weakens the original intent. They emphasised that the phrase should remain "make decisions", noting that regardless of which partner is making the decision, all should adhere to the Vision for Woodberry Down, ensuring clarity and avoiding ambiguity. Therefore, they recommended revising the wording to "Make decisions that adhere to the Vision for Woodberry Down."

2.8 "We will endeavour to resolve issues and make key decisions at a local level using the liaison meetings, escalating to the Round Table if necessary." Roda noted that during the Awayday, WDCO emphasised that section 10.2 of the partnership agreement already states: "the dispute will be referred in the first instance to the Executive Liaison meeting to attempt a local resolution." However, WDCO did not suggest that key decisions should be made at the local level through liaison meetings, as certain issues fall outside the scope of these meetings. The Executive members recommended that this addition should not be made, and that the original wording in the partnership agreement should remain unchanged.

2.9 Hackney proposed revising section 6.1, bullet point 3, to state: “The partners will endeavour to send out documents for meetings a week in advance to ensure sufficient time for review.” However, the Executive members argued that the term "endeavour" weakens the commitment. They suggested strengthening the language to: “Partners will send out documents for meetings a week in advance by email, or by post if required, unless otherwise agreed by all partners.”

2.10 Hackney proposed amending section 6.1, bullet point 3.2, to: “Meetings should be arranged, when possible, at times that allow working residents to participate, such as late afternoon or early evening. Some meetings may also be virtual or hybrid.” The Executive members were all in agreement with the proposed change.

2.11 The delivery partners have suggested that in terms of section 10.1, 10.2 and 10.4, the governance work needs to be concluded so it is clear what the appropriate escalation/decision making route is. Adrian noted in his comments why, after so much time, there is still no clarity on this.

2.12 Paragraph 10.4 of the partnership agreement states, “Where any dispute arises, the Partners involved will attempt to resolve the dispute among themselves. If this is not possible, they will refer the dispute, in the first instance, to the Executive Liaison meeting to seek a local resolution, with a recognizable timeframe and process that is agreed upon and communicated.” Roda noted uncertainty regarding who suggested changing "for resolution" to "for further discussion/consideration," emphasising that this was not a proposed change from the Executive Committee. The Executive members agreed that the paragraph should remain unchanged.

2.13 The group did not get an opportunity to discuss Geoff's 2 suggested additions to the partnership agreement which are outlined below.

- o The partnership recognises that since the original Partnership Agreement serious flaws in construction, fire safety, governance and community consultation have been highlighted in the general regeneration and construction industries and the overseeing of these at a local level.

These have been highlighted by The Grenfell Inquiry. While not suggesting that all the mistakes highlighted by this inquiry have been present in the regeneration of Woodberry Down, all partners to pledge to strictly adhere to all recommendation of the Grenfell Inquiry as they are at all relevant to the regeneration. A process for ensuring this should be agreed by all partners as a matter of urgency.

- o The partnership recognises that since the regeneration began there has been an acceleration of the recognition of for the need for a greener, healthier Hackney and the need to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change. Accordingly, we agree to a) adopt and abide by the Hackney Climate Action Plan (2023) and, b) investigate ways of reducing the carbon footprint of the regeneration.

**ACTION: The Executive Committee will review the two proposed additions at the next meeting.**

### 3. Liaison meeting

3.1 In an email, Adrian proposed that the Executive Committee consider the following suggestions:

- o That each Liaison meeting require only one of the partners to submit a report/be present
- o That no verbal report be required from the partner except on tasks completed since the last board meeting, or of significant slippages in timetabled items.
- o The partner would be granted leeway to report on other topics not listed here but which they consider to be "significant"
- o That the partners be approached to gain their views of these proposals

3.2 The Executive members acknowledged the need for improvements to the Liaison meetings to enhance their effectiveness. However, they agreed that reducing the number of partners attending each of these meetings is not the solution. The Executive recalled that this was the approach taken a few years ago, which led to issues; when committee members met with partners individually, there was a lack of accountability, and partners often shifted responsibility for tasks onto each other. Consequently, it was decided that the Executive Committee should meet all partners together at the Liaison meetings. Additionally, the Executive felt that a brief verbal update on significant developments since the last meeting would be sufficient from the partners. A written report was deemed unnecessary, as they are already required to submit one for the Board, and preparing an additional report would create an undue burden.

3.3 Jackie proposed reverting to the previous schedule for the Liaison and Executive meetings, which were held on the first and second Tuesdays of the month. She expressed concerns that meetings often run too long and finish late when scheduled on the same day. To address this issue, she suggested splitting them into two separate

meetings on different nights. The Executive members agreed to this change from November and decided to return to the previous format of holding meetings on separate days (first and second Tuesday of the month).

3.4 Oonagh requested that the next board meeting clarify which vice chairs should take responsibility for specific roles. Jackie, and Geoff that the role for Vice Chair on Individual Case should be eliminated, as it seems unnecessary and falls outside of WDCO role. They expressed concerns that residents might not feel comfortable discussing personal issues in this setting, highlighting potential confidentiality issues.

#### **4. AOB**

4.1 Roda noted that Oonagh suggested when all members attend the next Executive meeting to discuss the roles of the Vice Chair and determine which Vice Chair will be responsible for each priority. Jackie and Geoff proposed that the Vice Chair role for Individual Cases should be eliminated, as it appears unnecessary and falls outside the scope of WDCO. They raised concerns that residents might not feel comfortable discussing personal issues in this context, emphasising potential confidentiality issues.

4.2 William raised concerns about the fire safety testing in Watersreach, noting that the windows did not open during the test. This situation is particularly alarming, especially after being informed that the windows are meant to open by Berkeley, which contradicts information provided by NHG. Geoff suggested incorporating the Grenfell recommendations from the after-action report into the building's safety features. Andrea emphasised that Executive members should stay informed about fire safety protocols.

4.3 Jackie reported that she met with Omar, who expressed concern about the lack of progress NHG has made on the service charge review, which residents have been awaiting for over two years. He noted that NHG has not shared any information and has indicated that they have identified unallocated costs without clarifying the implications for residents. Omar has drafted a letter to the CEO of NHG and requested that the Chair send it on behalf of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee approved this action.

4.4 Jackie also mentioned that she and other Board members have serious concerns about the affordability of social rent homes in Phase 3. Residents have reached out to express their worries that their rent and service charges will be double what they currently pay. In response, Roda and Jackie have drafted a letter to the Head of

Regeneration at Hackney and Mayor Woodley, urgently requesting clarification on the basis for the rent figures provided and asking for the following information:

- o What formula was used for setting the rent levels in Phase 3?
- o When was Hackney Council notified of the proposed rent figures for Phase 3 and what role did Hackney Council play in checking and ensuring rent levels are set in accordance with Rent Standard and are properly social rents?
- o When were residents given their rent and service charge figures?
- o How do the rent levels for phase 3 compare with rent levels in Hackney new build blocks?
- o How do the rent levels in Phase 3 compare with those in Phase 1 and Phase 2?
- o What happens to residents who are unable to afford the new rents in Phase 3?

The Executive Committee has approved the request for Jackie to send this letter on behalf of the Executive Committee.