

Updated from working groups and meeting since the January Board meeting

Strategic Management Board (Attended by the WDCO Chair): There were updates provided on the following items at the SMB meeting:

Requirement for an agreed strategy & budget for the future maintenance of Landscaping & Public Realm (open spaces): Discussion are ongoing between BH and LBH but there is no solution at this moment but they are working on it and will continue discussions.

West Reservoir Project update to be provided: They have been out for tender for the appointment of contractor and a report will be presented to the Council's Procurement committee in March for approval and contract award. Works are expected to begin in late spring.

Solutions to reduce parking across the estate to be explored: This has been discussed as part of the masterplan and agreed parking number have been submitted within the masterplan.

MUGA / Artificial Football Pitch to be relocated from Phase 5: Planning permission was obtained in September. BH has stated that they need a clearer understanding of the Phase 5 programme, including when the pitch will no longer be in use and how this aligns with Phase 2. Additionally, there are ongoing management and maintenance matters that BH and Hackney need to resolve.

Metropolitan Open Land 2 (MoL2) Transfer: LBH provided BH with a list of snagging issues for the MoL2 transfer. Remedial works are set for completion by late February/early March.

Satellite Community Facility: ITLA updated partners on WDCO's decision regarding the space. NHG has confirmed that the space will be completed during the week commencing 10th February. NHG also is in discussions with MHDT to see if they were interested in the space.

SMB ToR and Meeting Review: As part of the away day, all meetings will be reviewed, with the SMB being specifically examined to determine if it should be retained. Key questions include whether the meeting is duplicating other meetings, if the issues are being addressed in smaller working groups, and what the role of this group is. The group briefly reviewed the terms of reference and agreed to revisit them. LBH will look at the SMB meeting further and report back to the group. ITLA noted that the group should review the ToR to identify which working groups are addressing the specific matters intended for discussion and ensure that no key issues are overlooked.

Seven Sister Road: LBH reported further delays with TfL. In late 2023, LBH wrote to the TfL commissioner, raising the project on the agenda. This time last year, three different teams were working on the scheme, and TfL had committed to several milestones for 2024, including attending the Round Table to engage with stakeholders. However, LBH has now learned that a restructure within TfL is introducing uncertainty about who will be leading the project.

In response, LBH has drafted a letter to the commissioner, signed by the mayor and the lead member, outlining their expectations and urging TfL to follow through on their commitments. LBH is still working to get TfL representatives to the Round Table

in March, but they have yet to see the designs or feasibility studies (the preliminary work that TfL is funding). While TfL has assured LBH that this has been commissioned, no details have been shared so far.

Service charge working group meeting (Attended by 4 WDCO reps):

Following a review of the Phase 3A service charges, corrections have been made, reducing costs by 31-46% (£660-£1,767 annually) for the social rented blocks. Since the January Board meeting, the group has held two further meetings to review the final budget. Despite this, errors were still identified, and NHG was asked to provide a final, approved, and corrected budget, which has now been shared with the group.

NHG also advised that the 2025/26 budget would remain unchanged, despite anticipated cost increases. WDCO members and ITLA raised concerns about these cost increases and have requested a breakdown of which costs will rise from April 2025 to gain clarity on the expected adjustments.

Additionally, WDCO members have requested access to the Phase 3 private block budgets, but Berkeley has stated they will not share this information with the working group. WDCO members are challenging this decision.

A draft cost (rent and service charge) position letter has been shared with WDCO representatives. However, WDCO found the letter lacked clarity on the reasons for the changes, did not clearly explain the service charge breakdown, and had issues with the supporting documentation. WDCO is now awaiting a redrafted version.

Partners Awayday (Attended by 3 WDCO reps):

The Away Day focused on reflecting on achievements, identifying areas for improvement, and setting priorities for the future. Key discussions revolved around the vision for the partnership, governance structures, meeting effectiveness, communication improvements, and decision-making transparency.

The key themes were:

- **Achievements:** High-quality homes, strong community involvement, and successful regeneration efforts.
- **Current Challenges:** Lack of clarity in overarching programme timelines, need for better communication, and inconsistent governance structures.
- **Future Focus:** Streamlining meetings, improving communication, and defining clear roles and responsibilities within the partnership.

The Away Day report will be shared with WDCO once finalised.

Phase 3 Rents meeting (Attended by 5 WDCO reps):

The Phase 3 rents meeting on 23rd January, focused on updates regarding allocations, affordability concerns, and communication issues.

Out of the 75 total units, 70 were pre-allocated, with 31 residents having moved in, 12 in the process of signing up, and 7 awaiting move-in dates. However, 15 units remained unallocated, and five residents had not responded. Also, two nominations were under review, and one resident failed the affordability assessment, which is currently being reviewed by LBH. Resident refusals totalled 14, with five citing affordability concerns, while others declined for various reasons.

NHG at the meeting announced an anticipated 6–7% reduction in rent for one- and two-bedroom units but no change for three- and four-bedroom properties (emailing from NHG confirming this was circulated on 6th February by the ITLA). They also reported that when combined with service charges, overall housing costs are expected to decrease by 11–15%.

NHG extended the decision deadline to January 31, following the meeting this was then further extended until 14th February. NHG has also shared the rent evaluation report.

The meeting also addressed concerns about inconsistencies in rent policies across different phases. While Phase 1 tenants were given lower rent deals, later phases have not received similar adjustments. In response, Cllr Nicholson proposed a phased rent increase model to gradually align rents with affordability standards. NHG, however, stated that such an approach would not be financially viable without external grants due to inflation and rising costs.

There has also been a response to the Cllr's letter regarding Phase 3 rents (this was circulated to the Board on 12th February). The WDCO Executives and Shifra, Omar and Hilary had a brief discussion at the Executive Committee meeting and agreed to write to Hackney emphasising the need for total equality across the estate as there is significant disparities in housing costs across different phases, arguing that residents in Phases 3 to 8 are facing much higher costs than those in earlier phases, despite assurances in 2007 that all residents would have access to affordable homes.

WDCO is going to presents several key requests. First, they call for fair treatment for social rent tenants, ensuring that earlier agreements for affordable rents apply equally to current and future phases. They propose a phased rent increase approach to allow residents time to adjust financially, a measure that Hackney Cllr's have already expressed support for. They also request that NHG freeze rents in April 2025, arguing that social housing providers have the discretion to do so under policy guidelines.