

**WOODBERRY DOWN COMMUNITY ORGANISATION
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**Minutes
Tuesday 21st January 2025
7 pm Zoom Meeting**

Attendance: Jackie Myers, Oonagh Gormley, William Sheehy, Leonora Williams, Andrea Anderson, Adrian Essex

Visitors included: Roda Hassan, Ameera Hassan, Omar Villalba

Section 1 - Introduction

0.1 Welcome / Apologies for absence

Kalu Amogu

0.1 Minutes of meeting 7th January 2025

0.11 The minutes were checked for accuracy and agreed.

1. Phase 3

- 1.1. Hillary was not able to attend the Executive Committee meeting due to other commitments and was not aware that she was invited to the meeting.
- 1.2. There was a letter sent from the ward councillors to the NHG CEO which raised the same issues that WDCO have been raising since October. At the meeting on Thursday 23rd January the WDCO reps are aiming to see what NHG is proposing and want to hear what NHG intends to do with the rents.
- 1.3. Omar added that the council tax is now in motion, the service charge has 20% taken off due to the corrections made, and there will be a discussion on rents at this meeting. Omar had a discussion with Hillary and William with regards to changing the dialogue by stepping up the language and urgency as they have now hit the deadline this week and people are still moving without knowing what the outcome of the rents are.
- 1.4. Adrian reviewed the minutes from the last meeting and recalled that the decision to go public was to be made after receiving the next response. He asked if this would be addressed in the upcoming meeting later in the week. The Chair confirmed that there is a meeting on Thursday and suggested that WDCO first hear their response. If WDCO disagrees with their position, they should then announce their intention to go public.
- 1.5. Oonagh agrees that WDCO are at the point to take more action and suggested agreeing a plan and have this written down so if there is no progress at the end of Thursday's meeting to put this decision on the table. This should be agreed tonight as opposed to Thursday.
- 1.6. Roda added that the Chair made specific demands in the last letter that there was significant reduction to rents and for them to come back with a proposal and an extension of the timeframe. If they come to the meeting with neither or none of those proposals, then WDCO should tell them their Plan B and have a plan in place to execute this Plan B.

- 1.7. Oonagh asked if WDCO got a response about the rents. Roda responded no and that they are hoping to get this on Thursday.
- 1.8. Oonagh emphasised that there have been no service charge reductions; rather, WDCO has only corrected errors. Roda added that the gardening budget had been overestimated at £90k and was subsequently reduced to £25k. Also, block staffing cost and the security cost were removed.
- 1.9. Omar then inquired about the next steps for escalation. The Chair asked whether WDCO wanted to escalate the issue to the public domain. Omar suggested first sending the two ministerial letters and waiting for a response before involving the media. The Chair, however, noted that a response could take weeks, potentially missing the deadline for Phase 4. She stressed that Phase 4 residents should be the priority, as they have no choice in their relocation, whereas Phase 5 residents are not yet in urgent need to decant.
- 1.10. Roda agreed with the Chair that Phase 5 is not currently in the decant phase technically but noted that residents in Phase 5 might still feel they have no choice but to move.
- 1.11. Oonagh asked what WDCO's specific objective was, pointing out that most council tax charges appear to be correct, the service charge is unlikely to change significantly, and rent remains the primary unresolved issue.
- 1.12. The Chair responded that fairness should be the guiding principle—there are very few original tenants left, and they should not be penalised simply because they are in a later phase. If a conversion rate is being applied to one phase, why can't it remain consistent until all original tenants have been relocated?
- 1.13. Omar countered that the convergence rate is so gradual that it is barely noticeable. He noted that Sarah had mentioned a two-year timeframe during the meeting, but Shifra and Liv had expressed doubt that income levels could be increased sufficiently to align with that rate.
- 1.14. William added that convergence might be the only system the council and NHG would consider implementing.
- 1.15. Oonagh pointed out that WDCO's best approach would be to request the same deal as previous phases (phase 1). If earlier phases had a 10-year convergence period, then Phase 3 should receive the same. However, she also cautioned that raising this argument could potentially lead to rent increases for other phases.
- 1.16. Omar emphasised the need for more data on the remaining residents in Phases 4 and 5 to better understand their circumstances. In addition to sending letters to ministers and the MP, he asked what further steps should be taken.
- 1.17. Adrian outlined the current plan, which included sending letters to MPs, the regulator, and two ministers. He also suggested using the WDCO website, WhatsApp groups, Facebook groups, Board members' circulation lists, and the upcoming partner Awayday to raise awareness.
- 1.18. Oonagh questioned whether WDCO would be satisfied if NHG agreed to a convergence period matching that of previous phases. She cautioned that escalating the issue to the press prematurely might backfire if WDCO had not formally requested this from NHG first. Omar agreed that they should push for the same deal as Phase 1 and ensure equal treatment across the estate.
- 1.19. Omar added that those attending the Awayday should emphasise the urgency of the Phase 3 rent issue to partners and senior representatives, making it clear that this was WDCO's top priority. The Chair pointed out that the same stakeholders attending the Round Table on Thursday after the Phase 3 meeting would also be present at the Awayday. Therefore, WDCO did not need to wait

for the Awayday to raise their concerns. Omar agreed, stating that WDCO should confront partners at the Thursday meeting and issue a final warning.

- 1.20. Oonagh added that if WDCO had not explicitly requested a convergence timeline matching Phase 2, they risked looking unprepared if they escalated to the press and NHG responded by asking what WDCO had requested. She stressed the importance of having a formal proposal that NHG had refused before taking the matter further.
- 1.21. Omar countered that the WDCO Board had already made a proposal via letter, which formed the basis of the Phase 3 meeting. The Chair noted that NHG had not responded to the letter, which could be addressed at both the Phase 3 meeting and the Round Table discussion on Thursday.
- 1.22. Roda clarified that Phase 1 was the only phase with conversion rent, meaning residents initially paid the same rent as they had under Hackney, with only small annual increases in line with government regulations. There was never an agreement that this would last 10+ years; rather, the rent increased annually based on the prescribed social housing limits. In contrast, Phase 2 rents were set at target rent, which was lower than Phase 3 due to factors such as property value.
- 1.23. Roda also pointed out that the last letter, drafted by Hillary, clearly set out WDCO's demands regarding rent. The letter followed a meeting with Sarah Young on Thursday, where it was agreed that WDCO had exhausted all possible corrections regarding service charges, and no further changes were realistically achievable. The focus was now on rent, with WDCO demanding a similar deal to earlier phases—specifically, Phase 1's conversion rent. The expectation was that while there would be a slight increase, it should not exceed 30%. The letter also asked NHG to come back with a proposal, stating that if they failed to do so, the matter would be escalated—without specifying what that escalation would entail.
- 1.24. The Chair then asked Roda how many original residents were still awaiting rehousing.

ACTION: Roda will circulate to the Executives the figures of how many original residents are left to be re-housed/decanted.

- 1.25. Oonagh mentioned the councillors letter summarises WDCO's demands and provides a deadline by 23rd January so WDCO need a response to this letter.
- 1.26. William stated that there are people moving in to Phase 3 daily and asked if residents even know what the rents and service charges are and if they do then NHG must be giving residents the facts before they move in. Roda agreed and mentioned that residents are still complaining about how information is being shared with them and expressed concerns around NHG's communication and that people are signing tenancy agreements without being given a breakdown of service charges. The councillors also raised the lack of communication in their letter. Omar also mentioned that he knows families in Phase 5 who are actively delaying moving in to the new blocks because they want to stay on the lower rent for longer and save up to pay for the new rent.
- 1.27. Adrian looked through the letter and mentioned there is a section at the end of the letter which sets out the demands and there is a deadline which is the same day that the meeting is taking place. Adrian raised that the next step is to let the MP know and the two ministers of the state. Omar added that it is not just about the rent increase but the way people have been treated by NHG.

- 1.28. Omar stated that the course of action would depend on the outcomes of both meetings. Adrian added that WDCO should proactively outline potential next steps based on different possible outcomes.
- 1.29. The group noted that if NHG does not agree with WDCO demands, this will be escalated and a letter will be written to the housing minister, Matthew Pennycook. Omar asked if the Mayor will be included in the letter. The Chair replied that the Deputy Mayor of planning and regeneration, Jules Pipe, could be included as he knows Woodberry Down. The Chair also recommended the London Assembly member who is also the Chair of the housing committee and a member of the planning and regeneration committee. Oonagh mentioned that they should escalate this above Hackney as they have a vested interest in keeping the issue quiet as it does not reflect on them. The Chair responded that Jules Pipe is the Deputy Mayor of planning and regeneration in London. Oonagh suggested Angela Rayner as she is the Secretary of State for housing communities and local government.
- 1.30. The Chair raised that WDCO should write individual letters to each person as opposed to a collective letter so they are more likely to answer.

ACTION: Roda will provide the notes/minutes of the meeting.

ACTION: Depending on the scenario that there is no proposal or change, the Executives will write a letter individually to Angela Rayner, Jules Pipe, Matthew Pennycook and David Lamey.

2. **Matters Arising**

- 2.1. Leonora followed up with Kalu about setting up a WDCO credit card. Kalu explained that past attempts failed due to frequent treasurer changes, making bank updates difficult. Currently, Hackney Council deposits funds into one account, which Kalu transfers to another—an approach Leonora feels is outdated.
- 2.2. Oonagh noted that treasurer changes are common and suggested asking the bank directly about online updates. She also questioned whether WDCO needs a physical card. Adrian highlighted ongoing reimbursement issues and suggested Leonora advise Kalu, given her banking experience. Leonora added that while Hackney is content with the current system, she believes it needs updating to allow easier payment authorisations.
- 2.3. Oonagh stressed the need for a process that benefits the Board and reimburses members like Adrian promptly. She suggested that the Executives recommend Leonora explore options while Kalu is away. Oonagh warned that if Hackney audited WDCO, they might be surprised by the lack of adherence to budgets.
- 2.4. The Chair suggested a discussion between Kalu, Leonora, and Hackney to resolve the issue. Adrian argued that WDCO should not need Hackney's permission for banking decisions, as long as they manage the grant responsibly and provide required reports.
- 2.5. Roda clarified that Leonora's concern was about Hackney's delayed grant payments, which Molly followed up on, confirming the funds were transferred on December 24th. She also noted that the finance committee had previously recommended updates to WDCO's financial processes. Leonora pointed out excessive bank charges for cheque payments, which could be avoided with transfers. Adrian added that these issues were discussed with Kalu at the last finance meeting, but little progress had been made.

ACTION: Leonora will discuss with Kalu on how to move things forward.

- 2.6. Adrian offered in helping Leonora in getting details from Kalu and handing over control of the bank accounts for Leonora to operate. Leonora noted that she will discuss this with Kalu on how to move things forward and will inform Adrian if she needs assistance.

ACTION: Roda will invite KSS3 Resident Association to the meeting.

ACTION: The Board will discuss the role of NHG at the March Board once there is an outcome on Phase 3.

- 2.7. Andrea will liaise with Roda regarding strengthening relationships with RAs.
- 2.8. With regards to strengthening relationships with stronger RAs, Oonagh suggested that this should nominally be put in for March/April and that a paper should be prepared for the Board with thoughts to frame the conversation at the meeting.

ACTION: The Board will discuss strengthening relationship with stronger RAs for March/April Board. Andrea will liaise with Roda and provide a written update at the Board.

- 2.9. Roda emailed Hackney on Friday following the January Board and advised Hackney on WDCO's decision. Roda shared with the Board that Hackney are not forcing WDCO to move, which Hackney reiterated.
- 2.10. Paul had discussions with Jackie and Kristina for the WDCO Awayday.
- 2.11. Simon spoke to Young Hackney regarding screens for any PowerPoints presented at the WDCO Awaday.
- 2.12. Leonora checked with Kalu regarding the food budget for the WDCO Awayday.
- 2.13. Simon provided bullet points for Paul on the important objectives for the partners this year and context on the regeneration at Woodberry Down.
- 2.14. Simon emailed Sarah and arranged a meeting on Tuesday 14th January, which Shifra and Liv also attended.
- 2.15. Simon drafted the January Board agenda and circulated this to the Executives before circulating to the Board.

Section 1 - Major Topics

3. January Board outcomes

- 3.1. Adrian felt that the January Board was a 'happier' meeting where they were able to get members to agree to do things
- 3.2. William mentioned that Hillary asked about the coffee mornings and asked if Oonagh is interested. William asked Simon Donovan who said that he is happy to have coffee mornings at the Redmond Centre and that there is coffee available to use. Adrian talked to Finn and Miriam at MHD who are also in agreement on the coffee mornings.

ACTION: Adrian will talk to Finn on choosing a day to start coffee mornings at the Redmond Centre.

- 3.3. William mentioned that an email was sent from the development of the Holloway site who are asking to come to the WDCO Board and for WDCO members to attend their board meetings to exchange ideas on social housing, private housing and shared ownership. Adrian asked if there is anyone who is keen to attend the Board meeting and William volunteered to attend.

ACTION: William will attend the Board meeting at the Holloway site.

ACTION: Roda will circulate the actions from the January Board to the Executives tomorrow.

4. Awayday: what do WDCO want to get from the partners' Awayday (see attached email from Adrian)

- 4.1. Jackie, William, Hillary and Andrea will need to arrange a meeting to discuss outside of the Executive Committee meeting and Adrian will provide his notes.

ACTION: Roda will arrange a meeting for Thursday after the Round Table or Friday afternoon and will send an email today to see if people are available to meet.

5. Agenda items for February Board

- 5.1. Oonagh noted that at the last Board meeting, Roda had offered to identify any outstanding actions that had not been carried over to current agendas, including the Delegation of Powers paper. She asked if Roda could review the December minutes to ensure nothing had been missed. Roda confirmed that she would go through the December Board minutes and added that the Delegation of Powers document would be scheduled for the February Board meeting.

ACTION: Roda will review the December Board minutes to identify any outstanding actions.

- 5.2. Adrian suggested consulting Board members on agenda items for the next meeting and ensuring that priority tasks have clear timelines. He also proposed discussing whether these priorities should be shared on the WDCO website. Additionally, Adrian recommended establishing a WDCO communications plan, including a WhatsApp community. The Chair agreed that these suggestions should be brought to the Board for further discussion.

ACTION: Board members will be asked for input on agenda items for the next Board meeting.

- 5.3. William spoke with Trevor about inviting apprentices to the February Board meeting. Trevor confirmed that apprentices would attend to explain the

apprenticeship program. Oonagh suggested setting a time limit, and William estimated the discussion would take a maximum of 15-20 minutes.

ACTION: William will coordinate with Trevor to arrange for apprentices to attend the Board meeting for a brief discussion.

- 5.4. Roda received an email from NHG requesting that Board agendas be sent further in advance to allow them to arrange for the appropriate attendees. Roda responded that she would discuss this with the Executive Committee and noted that all agenda items were outstanding issues rather than new ones. The Executives agreed with Roda's response, stating that NHG should manage their scheduling, as these items have long been under discussion. Roda suggested that if WDCO requires NHG to address specific actions at the Board, they could formally request these in advance.
- 5.5. William asked if R&R would be sending a representative to the Board, as some members might have questions. Roda clarified that R&R is managing Phase 3 in the same way as Phase 2, KSS1, KSS3, and KSS4. Since any issues are handled through NHG, R&R has never needed to attend Board meetings.
- 5.6. Adrian proposed that, as part of the new "house in order" approach, a designated Board member should be responsible for forwarding specific items to NHG in advance to obtain preliminary responses before the next Board meeting.

Agenda item request from KSS1 RA (an email will follow shortly)

- 5.7. Roda shared an email from Nicolas Attalides regarding the KSS1 2020/21 accounts, highlighting a disputed amount of approximately half a million pounds for which they have not received adequate explanations. Despite reviewing invoices and discussing the matter with Berkeley, they have been unable to resolve the issue and would like to bring it to the Board.
- 5.8. Oonagh questioned why this issue should be brought to the Board, expressing that it may not be an appropriate agenda item. She noted that KSS1 is disputing these charges differently.
- 5.9. Adrian proposed adding the item to the agenda to discuss its implications and determine whether similar matters should be addressed at the Board level in the future. Oonagh disagreed, stating that if KSS1's dispute were discussed, she would feel compelled to bring a similar item from the KSS3 RA to present their perspective.
- 5.10. The Chair agreed with Oonagh, emphasizing that RAs should discuss the issue first before escalating it to the Board. Oonagh further clarified that while initial conversations have taken place with KSS1, KSS3 does not align with their approach and has not yet begun analysing the figures, as they are waiting for all the accounts to be available.

ACTION: The Executive Committee agreed to include the KSS1 agenda item in the February Board meeting.

6. A WhatsApp community for the Board with groups for tasks

ACTION: Setting up a WhatsApp community has been added to the agenda for the February Board meeting for discussion.

7. Vice Chair vacancy

- 7.1. Roda asked whether the Vice Chair vacancy would be discussed at the February Board meeting. Adrian inquired if another election would be held and whether an agenda item should precede the election to allow for discussion.
- 7.2. Adrian emphasised the importance of discussing priorities before proceeding with an election, as this would help the Board learn from past experiences. The Chair noted that new Board members had recently joined and that Board members must serve for at least one year before becoming eligible for the Executive Committee. Therefore, it would be necessary to determine how many members qualify before moving forward. The Chair proposed discussing this as an agenda item at the February Board meeting, with the election taking place at the March Board meeting.
- 7.3. Adrian suggested preparing a paper outlining the responsibilities of the Executive Committee and the role of the Vice Chair.
- 7.4. Additionally, there are vacancies for the Constitutional Working Group, Service Charge Working Group, and Design Committee.

ACTION: A discussion on the Vice Chair vacancy will be held at the February Board meeting, with the election scheduled for the March Board meeting. Interested candidates should inform Roda ahead of the March meeting.

ACTION: Roda will include vacancies for the Constitutional Working Group, Service Charge Working Group, and Design Committee in the February Board agenda for discussion, elections to follow in March.

8. AOB

- 8.1.