WDCO Discussion for Partnership Board
NHG & WDCO Relationship and Operational Oversight

Introduction
WDCO has requested a discussion at the Partnership Board regarding the relationship between NHG and WDCO.

Although it is clear that we (all the partners) have not re-signed the Partnership Agreement, which should be done every three years, it remains a standing agreement with key principles that govern partnership working. These principles continue to provide the framework for collaboration, transparency, and joint problem solving between all the partners. This discussion is particularly important in light of repeated operational failures and concerns over NHG's management of the new blocks.

WDCO's Role as a Partner in Regeneration
The Partnership Agreement establishes WDCO as more than a standard Residents' Association. WDCO is a formal partner in the agreement alongside Hackney, Berkeley Homes, Genesis Housing (NHG's predecessor), and MHDT. Section 2.1 of the agreement outlines the purpose of the partnership:

- Build trust between partners and operate in an open and transparent manner.
- Ensure clear communication between partners.
- Encourage collaborative working across partner organisations.
- Address challenges arising from regeneration collectively.

The agreement requires all partners to use problem solving approaches and to escalate unresolved matters to the Round Table (Partnership Board) for joint resolution. These are not optional courtesies but formal principles that go beyond the remit of a typical Residents' Association.

The Residents' Charter reinforces these obligations, stating that regeneration must be undertaken in the interests of the existing community, and that community involvement is central to both management and design decisions. Meeting the requirements of the Residents' Charter was a key criterion in selecting the housing association, and WDCO was fully involved in that process.

Furthermore, Genesis' bid, which secured NHG's predecessor's role at Woodberry Down, was explicitly premised on empowering a community based organisation to have "status, recognition, and autonomy as an equal partner" in neighbourhood management. Genesis committed to "placing people first" through a model of community empowerment, including resident led oversight of management and maintenance services.

WDCO's governance role includes the right to raise, monitor, and escalate operational failures that affect regeneration outcomes and residents' quality of life. NHG is required to respond substantively to issues raised by WDCO, providing clear timelines, defined actions, and named accountability. Section 11 of the Partnership Agreement provides a dispute resolution framework, requiring matters to be addressed first through Executive Liaison

Meetings and, if unresolved, escalated to the Round Table. These mechanisms should be standard practice, not replaced by the complaints procedure for individual residents. Where agreed channels fail, WDCO expects NHG Directors to personally engage and respond. This level of senior engagement aligns with the Partnership Agreement's principles of transparency, collaboration, and shared responsibility and is essential to rebuilding trust.

Principles for Partnership Going Forward

WDCO remains committed to constructive partnership, but this must be meaningful. To fulfil the governing documents' vision, NHG and WDCO must:

- Treat each other with fairness, respect, and dignity (Partnership Agreement, section 4.1).
- Share information openly, including delays or constraints, and explain these promptly.
- Involve WDCO in shaping operational responses, not merely escalating complaints.
- Recognise WDCO's democratic mandate and formal governance role in regeneration oversight.

Key Operational Failures

The following examples illustrate longstanding operational failures where WDCO had to intervene due to NHG's lack of timely action, despite structured engagement:

1. Vital Energy Billing: Delays and errors in billing were only resolved following persistent intervention by WDCO and, ultimately, one of NHG's directors, causing considerable frustration among residents. WDCO held multiple meetings with NHG on this issue and reasonably expected that lessons would be learned; however, it is clear that the same failings are recurring.

   The current transition from Vital Energy to Insite has again exposed serious operational and communication shortcomings within NHG. These issues closely mirror those seen during the previous Vital transition, including inadequate planning, poor coordination, and ineffective communication. NHG has not demonstrated that any meaningful lessons from the earlier transition have been implemented.

   These repeated failings present a significant reputational risk to NHG, erode resident confidence, and highlight ongoing operational weaknesses—particularly in the management of the blocks and oversight of service provider transitions.

2. Phase 3 Rent and Service Charges: Delays and lack of clarity continued to be a significant issue in Phase 3, underscoring the need for NHG to engage proactively with residents and partners. There was insufficient planning, preparation, or transparency throughout this process. WDCO only became aware at the final stages that NHG intended to appoint a managing agent for their block, a significant change from the established approach to social housing at Woodberry Down. This decision was never discussed with partners, despite being a material change.

   While the ultimate choice of managing agent rests with NHG, such a shift required proper consultation with WDCO and other partners. This failure, combined with

lengthy delays in providing rent figures and inaccuracies in service charges, further exacerbated resident frustration and undermined confidence in NHG's operational oversight.

3. Phase 2 Shared Owners: Residents in Phase 2 and the Willowbrook House Residents' Association (RA) have raised several ongoing concerns regarding service charges and communication with NHG and R&R. Key issues include delays in sharing information between NHG and residents, such as late notifications of estimated service charges and unexpected balancing charges. There has also been frustration over residents being treated as tenants rather than shared owners, with many having to go through the RA for approval on information requests. Furthermore, the frequent turnover of NHG Property Managers and slow response times to queries have contributed to a lack of clarity and delayed resolutions. Many residents have raised concerns about discrepancies in their service charges, with some being charged significantly more than the initial estimate without clear explanations. In response to these ongoing issues, residents and the RA requested greater transparency in the process of scaling shared ownership apartments and clearer information on how budgets are managed and adjusted. Residents were also seeking a better understanding of the timeline and process for receiving service charge figures from R&R, as well as regular meetings to review service charge accounts. A collaborative meeting involving NHG, R&R, and the RA has been suggested to improve communication and address these long-standing concerns. This issue was initially raised with NHG in August 2024, but the problem remains unresolved. It should not be the responsibility of WDCO to facilitate a response for the RA; however, NHG's failure to act promptly has necessitated further escalation through WDCO.

4. Historical Service Charge Review: The review of historical service charges has been a long standing and unresolved issue. It was first raised by local TRAs (Tenant and Resident Associations) and subsequently escalated through Liaison Meetings with partners before being brought to the attention of the WDCO Board. WDCO then escalated the matter further to the Round Table/Partnership Board in line with the agreed governance structure. Despite this clear escalation process, NHG failed to meet its own stated deadlines on four separate occasions over the course of two years. These repeated delays caused significant frustration among residents and have materially weakened confidence in NHG's ability to manage key operational matters in a timely and effective manner.

We have highlighted below a number of other issues which, although now resolved, took a long time to resolve and were only addressed due to WDCO escalation.

1. Doors and Entry Points: Persistent faults in bike store, bin store, and main entrance doors were not promptly addressed, despite years of raising the issues. These were only resolved after escalation within the partnership.
2. WGN Sewage System: Ongoing sewage issues persisted for nearly 14 years. Repeated complaints were ignored until WDCO escalated them, causing prolonged inconvenience and reputational damage to NHG.

Risks to Regeneration

If NHG's management of new blocks and handling of operational failures does not improve, there are significant risks to the Woodberry Down regeneration:

- Continued operational failures, delays in resolving issues, and a lack of transparency risk seriously damaging NHG's reputation with both residents and the wider community, undermining trust in the partnership. Many residents remain in Phases 5, 6, 7, and 8 and are prospective NHG tenants, and ongoing operational issues may make them hesitant to move to a NHG property.
- Resident Experience: Poor management could lead to repeated service failures, billing errors, and delays in maintenance, directly impacting residents' quality of life and confidence in NHG.
- Strategic and Operational Risk: NHG's recent organisational downgrade raises further concerns about their capacity to manage new blocks effectively. Existing operational weaknesses, if unaddressed, may be compounded, affecting NHG's ability to meet its contractual and partnership obligations.
- Impact on Regeneration Delivery: Persistent operational failures and declining resident confidence risk reducing engagement in regeneration initiatives, affecting delivery timelines, participation, and overall programme success.

It is therefore critical that NHG demonstrates substantial improvement in operational management, engages proactively with WDCO, and ensures timely and effective resolution of issues to mitigate these risks and protect the integrity of the regeneration programme.

Appendix 1
Day-to-Day Operational Issues and Partnership Escalation Issues

To clarify what WDCO recognises as day-to-day issues within NHG's management remit, and when these become matters for the partnership to address under the Partnership Agreement and the Residents' Charter.

Day-to-Day Operational Issues (NHG landlord responsibilities)
These are routine tasks that NHG is expected to manage directly and efficiently for residents. Examples include:

- Repairs and Maintenance:
  - Fixing faulty doors, lifts, lighting, or communal entry systems.
  - Clearing blocked drains or resolving minor leaks and defects.
  - Grounds maintenance, cleaning communal areas, waste management.
- Estate and Service Management:
  - Preparing, issuing, and reconciling service charges on time.
  - Responding to individual resident queries or complaints.
  - Managing day-to-day anti-social behaviour (ASB) cases through established processes.
- Tenancy and Leasehold Administration:
  - Managing arrears, rent/service charge queries.
  - Processing mutual exchanges, permissions to sublet, or other routine applications.
  - Carrying out home visits and tenancy sustainment activities.

Expectation:
NHG must handle these promptly and proactively without requiring WDCO involvement.

When Day-to-Day Issues Escalate to Partnership Matters
An issue crosses into the partnership's remit when:

- It remains unresolved despite being raised multiple times through the agreed operational channels.
- It impacts multiple residents or the estate wide service (e.g. systemic service charge errors, recurring infrastructure failures).
- It undermines confidence in the regeneration process, service standards or commitments under the Residents' Charter.
- It requires senior decision making or cross partner coordination to resolve (e.g. WGN Sewage)

Examples of Escalated Issues:

- Historical Service Charge Review – delayed over two years and multiple missed deadlines despite repeated escalation.
- Long-term infrastructure failures – e.g. WGN sewage issues or persistent entry system failures.

Expectation under the partnership agreement:
Under Section 11 of the Partnership Agreement, these matters should be:

1. Raised at Executive Liaison Meetings,
2. If unresolved, escalated to the Round Table/Partnership Board,

However, what remains unclear is what happens once an issue has been escalated to the Partnership Board. Many of the matters we have highlighted have been raised at the Round Table / Partnership Board without clear timelines, resulting in further delays. Some of these issues have been under discussion for several months. It is essential that we agree a clear, structured process for how matters are managed and resolved once presented to the Partnership Board.

WDCO proposes that we agree a clear further escalation route for such cases. For example:
Step 1: Operational issue raised → NHG estate management addresses
Step 2: If unresolved, issue is escalated to Executive Liaison Meeting.
Step 3: If unresolved, issue is tabled at the Round Table/Partnership Board for joint resolution.
Step 4: If still unresolved after a defined timeframe, WDCO expects:

- A formal written response from an NHG Director or senior executive, outlining actions, timescales and accountability, or
- Agreement that the matter will be escalated to NHG's Executive Leadership Team or Board level for decision.

NHG's responsibility is to ensure that routine operational issues are resolved before they affect regeneration outcomes. WDCO's role, as a governance partner, is to escalate and hold NHG to account when operational failures persist or impact the wider community. This approach is consistent with the Partnership Agreement, the Residents' Charter and the original commitments made in the Genesis bid.