



Annual General Meeting Report

November 2024 – November 2025

Our Journey: Where We Started, Where We Are Now, Where We're Going

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Executive Summary

This report presents CETRA's transformation journey from November 2024 through November 2025—a year of rebuilding, innovation, and community-led growth on Colville Estate.

In the face of governance challenges, financial irregularities, and the ongoing complexities of estate regeneration, CETRA emerged stronger, more transparent, and more deeply connected to residents than ever before. Under the strategic leadership of Gloria Dei (Head of Governance & Strategy) and Chair Nina, we transformed crisis into opportunity.

Our Year in Numbers

Achievement	Impact
Food Redistributed	13.5 tonnes 32,265 meals
Community Financial Savings	£19,800 – £27,000
CO₂ Emissions Prevented	27 tonnes
New Volunteer Residents	15+ households (first-time CETRA participants)
Paid Opportunities Created	Catering, decorating, cleaning, leafleting roles
Community Events Delivered	Big Lunch (£3,700), Margate Trip, monthly Turkish Breakfasts, Winter Gathering, Sunday Roasts
External Catering Contracts	Drive Forward Foundation, Friend Studio (4), Kier (4)
Food Safety Training	Nearly 10 residents trained (supported by Hackney Council)
Housing Advocacy Successes	Hot water/heating, fire safety, prepayment meter investigations resolved
National Policy Influence	Presented regulatory reform proposal at All-Party Parliamentary Group

This report is structured around our journey—where we started in crisis, how we transformed challenges into community-building opportunities, and where we're heading as we enter our next phase of growth.



"Empowering Colville Estate: Building a Brighter Future for Our Community"

Join us in transforming our estate through inclusive growth, innovation, and engagement. Together, we can create a stronger, more connected community.

About CETRA

CETRA (Colville Estate Tenants and Residents Association) is a community-led organisation based in the heart of Hackney, representing residents across 15 blocks on the Colville Estate. Established in 1998 and recognised by Hackney Council, CETRA advocates for better housing, meaningful regeneration, and community wellbeing. Run by a dedicated team of volunteers, CETRA champions transparency, grassroots participation, and long-term investment in local people. Through a range of initiatives from community meals and youth cycling to repair cafés and digital support CETRA is building a stronger, more connected estate where every resident has a voice and a stake in shaping the future.

Our Journey: Transformation Through Challenge

Where We Started: November 2024

When the current leadership team took office in November 2024, CETRA faced significant challenges that required immediate attention and careful navigation.

The Governance Crisis We Inherited

The new committee discovered financial irregularities, including vouchers without purchase dates, undocumented transactions, and improper account information sharing. The former treasurer had granted sole account access to a single individual without the required minimum signatories, leaving the organisation vulnerable and non-compliant with basic governance procedures.

These issues forced current officers to personally cover operational costs including public liability insurance, printing, and email accounts during the critical holiday season. An unauthorised meeting was called by a suspended committee member in January 2025, creating additional confusion and requiring swift action to protect resident data and clarify official CETRA communications.

Community Challenges on the Estate

Beyond governance, residents faced real hardships. Food insecurity was rising as prices increased. The ongoing regeneration process had created uncertainty and disconnection amongst neighbours. Buildings less than seven years old were experiencing persistent hot water and heating failures, with residents enduring days-long outages whilst Hackney's repair policy failed to prioritise these essential services.

The community hall sat underutilised. Trust in resident leadership was fragile. The estate was in regeneration, but the community itself needed rebuilding.

Our Response: Transparency and Action

Rather than hiding these challenges, we confronted them directly with residents, Hackney Council, and our partners. We appointed external auditors, established proper financial controls with new signatories, required all committee members to acknowledge CETRA's constitution and code of conduct, and committed to regular, transparent communication through newsletters, public meetings, and detailed updates.

We recognised that governance reforms alone wouldn't rebuild community trust. We needed to deliver tangible value to residents' daily lives—immediately.

Where We Are Now: Building Through Action

Over the past year, CETRA transformed from crisis management to community building. We didn't just fix problems—we created opportunities for residents to connect, contribute, and earn.

Food as Community Infrastructure

Our partnership with The Felix Project became the cornerstone of CETRA's transformation. Between February 2025 and February 2026, we redistributed 13.5 tonnes of food equivalent to 32,265 meals across 18 deliveries. This prevented 27 tonnes of CO₂ emissions and diverted waste equivalent to 32 households' annual food waste from landfills.

More importantly, 50+ households (200+ residents, representing 10% of the estate) directly benefited, with over half returning regularly. The average weekly saving of £9.50 per household added up to an estimated £19,800-£27,000 in total community savings.

But food redistribution was just the beginning. The community hall transformed from a simple collection point into the heart of estate life. Residents now come for breakfast clubs, Cook & Eat sessions where neighbours share meals and cultures, monthly Turkish breakfasts (with CETRA covering food costs so resident cooks can earn), Sunday roasts, and regular community meals that bring people together. During half-term breaks, Chef Dave provided lunch for families, ensuring children had access to nutritious meals.

We built a volunteer team of 15+ residents who had never previously engaged with CETRA. These were new faces, new energy, new connections being forged across blocks that had become isolated during regeneration.

From Volunteers to Wage Earners

CETRA's breakthrough came when we recognised that residents didn't just need food assistance—they needed income opportunities. We began creating paid work within the estate, transforming community participation from charity to enterprise.

Catering became our flagship. Chef Remi prepared CETRA's first external catering job for Drive Forward Foundation's Open Day at The Dock Shed, Canada Water. Despite equipment failures (our grill quit at 4am) and a transportation crisis (Addison Lee cancelled when they saw we had food), the event was a huge success. Corporate representatives asked for our details, and the food was devoured in 45 minutes.

This opened doors. Friend Studio commissioned bi-weekly catering (4 jobs to date), Kier contracted us for 4 catering events, and we continue delivering monthly Turkish breakfasts where resident cooks earn directly from their work.

We also created other paid opportunities: a decoration team for weddings and funerals (£30 per job, with 2 weddings and 1 funeral to date), a cleaning team with residents from five different blocks paid £15/hour, and a leafleting team whose first external client was Hackney Food Bank (distributing over 7,000 leaflets).



Nearly 10 residents received Food Safety Hygiene training through Hackney Council's FSA programme, building skills that translate into employment opportunities beyond CETRA.

Major Community Events

The Big Lunch on September 13, 2025 demonstrated what CETRA could accomplish at scale. With a budget of approximately £3,700, we brought together residents, council representatives including Councillors Adams and Tinaz, Hackney's regeneration team, and partners including Kier (who stepped in at 6am when our gazebos failed to arrive). Despite two sudden downpours, the event was a triumph—guests arrived in waves throughout the day and many simply didn't want to leave.

Our Margate Trip in August filled two coaches (91 seats, 89 sold at £5 each) with residents from Colville and other Hackney TRAs, strengthening borough-wide connections. The total trip cost £1,405 after contributions. A winter gathering, Sunday roasts, and regular food clubs kept momentum building throughout the year.

January 2026 brought emotional moments as well: we said goodbye to Mrs. Adekunbi (Mama Alayo), one of Colville's longest-standing residents, with a wake at the community centre that brought together former residents from across London. The hall proved its value as a space for mourning, celebration, and collective memory.

Housing Advocacy and Resident Support

CETRA developed a systematic approach to housing advocacy that goes far beyond traditional TRA activities. Through detailed investigations, legal research, and multi-stage complaint processes, we've established ourselves as effective intermediaries between residents and services whilst holding Hackney Council accountable to proper standards.

When estate residents experienced persistent hot water and heating failures, CETRA conducted a comprehensive technical investigation. We interviewed residents, repair staff, communal heating experts, and sought legal advice. Our research uncovered systemic failures: boiler issues dating to 2019, lack of maintenance (gas metres unserviced in 4-5 years), communication breakdowns, and Hackney's inadequate repair prioritisation policy. We documented everything in detailed technical reports and worked as an effective intermediary between residents and services until the problems were resolved.

Following a fire alarm incident that prompted a four-engine response from London Fire Brigade, CETRA escalated persistent fire safety concerns to the LFB directly. This resulted in a detailed building inspection by LFB's regional head, who confirmed significant fire safety issues. A comprehensive report was submitted to Hackney Council, and within weeks, the council assigned a dedicated Building Safety Advisor to address the concerns. Swift resolution of internal door-related safety issues followed, with communal repairs completed before year-end—a rare rapid response for buildings of this size.

CETRA also investigated prepayment devices installed in Heat Interface Units that restrict residents' heating and hot water access when credit depletes. We challenged whether these restrictions comply with the Water Industry Act 1999, which prohibits disconnection of household water supply for non-payment. Our formal complaint raised questions about lack of tenant consultation, disproportionate impact on low-income residents, and absence of formal safeguards for vulnerable tenants. The investigation escalated to Stage 2 of Hackney's complaints process, demonstrating CETRA's willingness to pursue complex legal and policy issues on residents' behalf.

Beyond major investigations, CETRA now assists individual residents with submitting formal complaints to the council—from contractor damage to balconies, to hall booking disputes, to false claims of contact attempts. This resident support service ensures that even vulnerable residents who might struggle to navigate complaint processes have professional advocacy backing them.

National Recognition and Strategic Influence

CETRA's transformation attracted significant external recognition. In May 2025, Gloria Dei represented CETRA at the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for London, presenting a groundbreaking proposal for a national regulatory body to support Tenants and Residents Associations across the country.

Drawing on CETRA's first-hand experience with governance challenges, regeneration complexity, and volunteer capacity constraints, the proposal outlined how a national infrastructure could provide TRAs with governance guidance, leadership transition support, digital access, standardised signposting to council services, training opportunities, and pathways to investment and funding. The presentation generated significant interest from parliamentarians and borough representatives, with follow-up conversations underway with APPG members and GLA housing representatives about a potential cross-borough pilot framework.

This national platform work positioned CETRA not just as a local success story, but as a model for resident-led governance that could influence policy at the highest levels. Councillor Anya Sizer praised the work, noting it should be shared with Hackney's Cabinet lead. Modi Abdoul, Head of Resident Participation at Hackney Council, called it 'a really positive and important step forward.'

ELBA invited Gloria Dei to speak on their International Women's Day panel in March 2026—CETRA's first piece of external recognition beyond housing policy circles. Additionally, Gloria was selected as an assessor for Hackney Grants, a particularly significant appointment given CETRA's ongoing advocacy for better access to community funding. This demonstrates our commitment to not just identifying problems, but positioning ourselves to provide solutions from within the system.

Strategic Delivery Manager Abby Hauver from Hackney Council's cost of living team reached out to connect CETRA with the Hackney Food Network after learning about our food redistribution impact, opening doors to expanded partnerships and resources.



Partnerships Strengthened

Our partnerships deepened throughout the year. PPCR continued supporting regeneration work with invaluable guidance. Kier provided crucial practical support beyond their contracted obligations, from emergency gazebo assistance at the Big Lunch to setup support for Mrs. Adekunbi's wake. The Hackney TRA Network offered ongoing peer support and resource-sharing. An impromptu meeting with MP Meg Hillier on Hillman Street opened new political connections.

Local businesses Bon Bon News and Zeynep Tailors, both facing regeneration challenges, remained steadfast community champions. We're also preparing for CETRA's first art exhibition by a Colville resident in February 2026, and working with local entrepreneurs including Certi Shop and JAQKODi.

Governance Rebuilt

Throughout this operational transformation, we steadily rebuilt CETRA's governance foundations. We established committee meetings with published schedules, created transparent financial processes with proper signatory controls, and developed the first-ever process for accessing Colville Estate Special Project Funds—a historic breakthrough that opens new funding pathways for community initiatives.

Regular newsletters kept residents informed, and we maintained constant touchpoints with committee members and key stakeholders through detailed updates and transparent communication. We recognise that our website updates have been inconsistent—an area for improvement in the year ahead—and we're committed to strengthening both digital and face-to-face engagement channels.

By November 2025, CETRA operated Monday to Saturday (9am-late) as an open community space where residents could relax, connect, access the pantry, enjoy refreshments, and feel genuinely at home.

Where We're Going: The Next Chapter

CETRA's transformation over the past year has proven a fundamental principle: community isn't rebuilt through regeneration alone. It's rebuilt through people connecting, contributing, earning, and taking ownership of their shared spaces.

The Food Enterprise Roadmap

Food will remain central to CETRA's strategy, but we're evolving from redistribution to enterprise. Our three-year roadmap shows how we'll turn community support into sustainable income and local employment.

Year 1 focuses on bringing the community back together through food access, health initiatives, and trust-building. We'll continue and expand breakfast clubs, Cook & Eat sessions, community meals, food redistribution, and volunteer engagement. This provides affordable healthy food, reduces isolation, increases hall usage, and builds skills in cooking and food safety.

Year 2 turns skills into paid opportunities by introducing paid resident cooking roles, expanded community catering, monthly supper clubs, kitchen hire to small businesses, and revenue from food events. Residents gain real paid work, hospitality experience, and new career paths.

Year 3 establishes a community-owned food hub with a permanent CETRA food brand, resident-run food businesses, regular catering contracts, structured training pathways, and income funding community services. This creates stable local jobs, strengthens estate connections, enables residents to run their own businesses, provides youth employment pathways, keeps money circulating within the estate, and funds community activities through our own success.

Strategic Partnership with Michelin-Recognised Chef

CETRA has secured a confirmed partnership with Michelin-recognised chef Nuno Mendes to support our resident cooking programmes, menu development, and professional skills training. This partnership, currently in planning stages with our first event scheduled for late March 2026, represents major external validation of CETRA's food enterprise credibility.

Chef Mendes will mentor residents through a structured development pathway, providing hands-on training in commercial food preparation, food hygiene and safety, menu design and quality control, and kitchen operations. The strongest participants will progress into paid roles supporting our catering activities and planned retail operations.

This partnership will support our proposal to activate the Mono Towers commercial unit—a historically difficult-to-let space with cooking restrictions—by using it as a retail outlet for food prepared in the new CETRA fully compliant commercial kitchen. This model transforms unused regeneration infrastructure into sustainable community income whilst creating direct employment pathways for residents.



Community Spaces Reimagined

The community hall renovation remains a top priority as regeneration progresses. We're advocating for professional kitchen equipment that supports our growing catering enterprise, flexible spaces that accommodate co-working, cultural events, training, and social gatherings, and infrastructure that enables the hall to generate sustainable income whilst serving community needs.

Residents have told us clearly what they want: a community café, breakfast clubs for children, opportunities to learn about food and health, training that leads to employment, exposure to cultural dishes from around the world, lunch clubs to reduce isolation, and games nights with dinner. Our plans reflect these priorities.

Empowering Local Entrepreneurs

CETRA will expand support for resident entrepreneurs through micro-business incubation, equipment access (we've already purchased processing machines to help small businesses improve skills and test product ideas), connection to customers and markets, and business development support. Whether it's a side hustle or a full venture, CETRA provides space, resources, and connections to help ideas grow.

Our leafleting team, catering collective, and event services model shows how resident-led enterprises can thrive with CETRA's backing.

Supporting Local Businesses

We'll continue championing established local businesses like Bon Bon News and Zeynep Tailors who serve the estate with resilience and dedication despite regeneration pressures. CETRA will create opportunities for pop-ups, makers, and small shops to connect with residents, recognising that when local businesses thrive, the whole community benefits.

Engagement That Delivers Value

CETRA is building new engagement models that go beyond traditional meetings. We're developing member benefits including discounts, training opportunities, perks from partners, and access to events that add tangible value to everyday life. Engagement isn't just about showing up to meetings—it's about receiving real benefits from CETRA membership.

Our evidence-based engagement strategy, which reached over 120 residents (25%+ of households) across all 15 blocks, demonstrates our commitment to truly tenant-led decision-making. We've established clear participation thresholds: 10% for testing ideas, 15–20% for estate feedback, and 25%+ for major decisions.

Sustainable Funding

Whilst we continue pursuing grants and external funding, our long-term sustainability strategy centres on earned income. Catering contracts, hall bookings, enterprise services, the Mono Towers retail operation, and the food hub will generate revenue that



funds community programmes. This reduces dependence on grants whilst keeping CETRA truly community-owned and controlled.

In the year ahead, we're committed to improving our regularity of face-to-face committee meetings whilst maintaining our strong track record of regular updates to key stakeholders.

What Partners and Stakeholders Say

CETRA's work has been recognised by councillors, housing officers, and community partners who've witnessed our transformation first-hand. Here's what they have to say:

"For me one of the highlights of the work I do as a local councillor is seeing communities in Hoxton East and Shoreditch come together to make their neighbourhood the best it can be. There are many good people doing such work on the ground but the work of CETRA truly stands out as an example for us all of community spirit in action. Whether it is providing delicious Turkish breakfasts, opportunities for table tennis or a place for residents to truly be a vital part of the local redevelopment scheme, CETRA does this and so much more.

I would like to highlight the work of the committee who genuinely work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure every voice is heard and every neighbour can be involved. Often working long hours behind the scenes, the committee really is the heart of CETRA and all it achieves. So thank you CETRA for all you do and I look forward to the next year and all we can achieve together."

— Councillor Anya Sizer

Hoxton East and Shoreditch
Deputy Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years and SEND

"I know CETRA is doing a good job across the estate, because I get fewer complaints."

— Segun Kenku

Housing Officer – Shoreditch
Hackney Housing and Neighbourhoods

Conclusion: Building Community, Not Just Buildings

This year taught us that regeneration changes buildings, but community is rebuilt by people. We started in crisis—facing governance failures, financial irregularities, and resident disconnection. We responded with transparency, immediate action, and a commitment to delivering real value.

Food became our vehicle not because it was the obvious choice, but because it worked. Everyone needs it, everyone understands it, it crosses cultures naturally, it creates daily connection, and it builds trust. People who might never speak now cook together, eat together, volunteer together, work together, and build businesses together.

We distributed 13.5 tonnes of food, created dozens of paid work opportunities, delivered major community events, resolved multiple housing crises through systematic advocacy, influenced national housing policy, secured partnership with a Michelin-recognised chef, and built partnerships that extend CETRA's reach far beyond the estate. We did this whilst simultaneously rebuilding governance, establishing financial controls, and maintaining transparent communication with all stakeholders.

To our residents: This is your CETRA. Your ideas shaped our direction. Your participation made it real. Your trust—rebuilt slowly through consistent action—is what we value most.

To Hackney Council: We ask for continued support, timely approval of initiatives, and recognition that resident-led organisations like CETRA deliver exceptional value when properly resourced. Our work complements council services whilst building community capacity that no external agency can replicate.

To investors and partners: CETRA represents a proven model of community-led development. Your investment doesn't just fund programmes—it enables resident enterprise, creates local employment, and builds community wealth that stays on the estate. The returns are measured in lives changed, skills developed, and social bonds strengthened.

We started by helping each other eat.

We built a community around food.

Now we're building opportunity, jobs, and a stronger future through food—together.

Gloria Dei

Head of Governance & Strategy

CETRA – Colville Estate Tenants' and Residents' Association

February 2026

