



# Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations

Campaigning for Housing Rights and Council Homes

*Bells Gardens Community Centre  
19 Buller Close, London  
SE15 6UJ*

## **Group Meeting Minutes from Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2023 – Online (Zoom)**

**Staff:** Margaret Onwuta, Amanda Carey, Ahmed Kabba, Joe Snazell-Holding, Ygerne Price-Davies

**Attendees: 18 incl. staff members**

### **1. Welcome, Introductions & Apologies**

The newly re-elected chair Chris Meregini welcomed the attendees. Joe (staff) listed the apologies:

- Jackline (Magdalen TRA), Huey (Bonamy & Bramcote), Henry Mott (Alberta), Tim Whelan (Mardyke), Sharon Baah (Brunswick Park), Damien Cheetham (Lant & Bittern), Josiah Lahai (Tabard C&S), Carol Vincent.

### **2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 27th September 2023 and Matters Arising**

Joe (staff) presented the minutes of the meeting for review. A few attendees were confused as to the purpose and confidentiality of the monthly group meeting. The Chair clarified that the monthly group meeting was for all residents of London Borough of Southwark and that the minutes and agenda are for the public information.

- Matter Arising from the Minutes of the AGM held on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Amanda (staff) confirmed that she had completed the action resulting from last month's AGM.

Minutes Proposed By: Cris Claridge

Seconded By: Althea Smith

### 3. Invitation to feed into the APPG Council Housing's inquiry – SGTO X Defend Council Housing's in-person Evidence Gathering Session – 18<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

The Chair introduced and explained the purpose of the APPG (All-Party Parliamentary Group) as a consultation with council housing residents and workers to inform future government policy on the subject. The Chair explained that SGTO, jointly with the Defend Council Housing, are hosting an in-person evidence gathering session for the inquiry at Bells Gardens Temporary Community Centre on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2023, 10am-1pm. He requested SGTO's campaign & research officer for a report.

Ygerne (staff) presented her report. She presented SGTO's flyer promoting the evidence gathering session and explained the current context of council homes being under threat, through disrepair, demolition, or sold off to private landlords or housing associations. With this context, she stressed the importance of the issue and the need to defend council housing, and hence the need for the evidence gathering session. She stressed the session is open to all stakeholders in council housing, including those who wish to live in social housing but never have done, along with those currently residing in and working for social housing.

Ygerne (staff) detailed that the APPG for council homes is to find out the current and future need for council housing, for the purpose of informing future housing policy. She invited all attendees to sign up for the event and linked a webpage with more detail on the APPG itself. SGTO have invited Paul Watt, the academic from the APPG, to come and speak at the event, along with other organisations. She explained that the central purpose of the meeting was to gather as many resident and stakeholder voices as possible.

Cris added that people interested can register to attend the event via Eventbrite at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/feedback-session-for-mps-council-housing-inquiry-tickets-737902224417>

Tanya (Defend Council Housing) stated there will be a representative from DCH who will deliver a speech at the event. She referred to DCH's 5-point plan to end the housing crisis contained in the link above. She mentioned that two Southwark MP's are members of the APPG, **with one being busy, and the other being Niel Coil MP**. SGTO will write a report following the session to submit to the APPG. Tanya mentioned that Citizens UK have previously hosted a similar evidence gathering session, and will be hosting another in east London in December 2023. Citizens UK focused largely on the disrepair in their preliminary report. Tanya mentioned a London-wide evidence gathering session, open to all London residents, date and time to be announced, possibly November or December 2023. She confirmed that a final report will be produced following these evidence gathering sessions. Finally, she re-emphasized the importance and timely nature of the APPG and how council housing has to be top of the agenda for current and future governments as the only real solution to the current housing crisis.

Ygerne echoed sentiment, and also added the current issues with children in Southwark living in temporary accommodation and being homeless whilst attending local schools. She proposed SGTO could invite some of the parents of said children and school workers to the evidence gathering session for comment.

Ygerne stated that inviting Niel Coil MP was a controversial issue due to previous accusations of racism. In light of how diverse the borough of Southwark is, Kyle (Magdalen TRA) stated that Mr Coil MP would not be an appropriate individual to invite until said accusations have subsided.

Tanya said that DCH had their own conversation about this issue and have voted to invite Mr Coil for their own events. She advocated for inviting the MP, as the MP is a member of the APPG and a MP representing Southwark as well. Cris added she had her personal reservations about Niel Coil MP, yet stated that if he was invited, he would most likely be well behaved and that Tanya has a point, but there are arguments for both sides. The Chair stated there is a possibility of bad publicity for SGTO if they are seen to invite an MP with a reputation such as Mr Coil's. He stated the need to investigate this issue further, thanked all for their contributions, and actioned the board will make a decision on whether to invite him or not.

He added that TRA's have a wealth of data from residents regarding this issue of council housing, and suggested this event would create a platform for SGTO to gather potential content to present to the APPG.

The Chair pointed out those who are not able to attend the evidence gathering session in person are encouraged to submit their evidence in writing to SGTO via email to [info@sgto.co.uk](mailto:info@sgto.co.uk). Ygerne reiterated the importance of TRA's as potential sources of information and is to circulate a form designed for people to send in their written contributions. Ygerne will contact Kyle for further discussion as well as circulate the online submission form for the evidence gathering. All other organisations that work for or alongside council housing are invited to attend the session as well.

#### **ACTIONS:**

- SGTO will write a report following the session to submit to the APPG.
- Ygerne will look to invite parents and teachers of temporarily housed Southwark children to the evidence gathering session.
- Ygerne will liaise with Kyle on the details on TRA submissions for the APPG.
- Ygerne will circulate SGTO's online submission form for the APPG.
- Chris (Chair) & the board will investigate on the issue and decide whether to invite Mr Niel Coil MP to the evidence gathering session.

#### **4. LTF Campaign on current energy Bill**

- Minutes of the AGM held on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2022 & Minutes of Group Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Althea (vice-chair) attended an LTF meeting on the 05/10/23 regarding the current energy Bill and sent the report of said meeting to Margaret (staff) to circulate. She explained the LTF campaign was to prevent residents being evicted for unpaid energy bills in the context of the cost-of-living crisis. The Chair invited those that received the report to give feedback on it to the staff.

Additionally, as part of the LTF meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> October, they discussed that the LTF have produced a submission for the Regulator of Social Housing Consultation on revised consumer standards in Social Housing, which can be found here: [https://londontenants.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/RSH-Consumer-Standards-Consultation-submission\\_Final.pdf](https://londontenants.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/RSH-Consumer-Standards-Consultation-submission_Final.pdf)

#### **ACTIONS:**

- Joe (staff) to re-circulate the LTF's Energy Bill Report.

## 5. Update on SGTO & Tenants' Conference 2023

Althea stated there were no updates for the Tenants' Conference as the next meeting will take place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023. She stated the conference will hold on the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 10am-5pm at William Booth College, SE5 8BQ. The promotional leaflet and agenda will be finalized and circulated by the conference working committee. Invitations have been sent out with the registration details.

Sign up for the conference here: <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/housing/resident-groups-forums-and-training/southwark-tenant-conference-2023>

### ACTIONS:

- Ahmed and Ygerne will create and publish the promotional flyer for the event. They are tasked to design and order the merchandise for the event.

## 6. SGTO Fun Singing Group—(charity fundraising)

Cris proposed that a SGTO Singing Group could be formed to encourage people from all generations to come together for a social and fundraising exercise. Peter Holmes stated the group currently has six registered members and encouraged more people to join. The aim of this group is to raise money for people in need in the London Borough of Southwark.

Ahmed will draft the younger people on board this singing group. He requested for any donation of instruments from the residents/attendees for the group's use. The group has the potential to join the SGTO Youth Forum.

Please contact Peter Holmes on 07956 613767 if you would like to join.

### ACTIONS:

- Ahmed will design & circulate a flyer advertising the Singing Group.
- Ahmed will liaise with the Youth Forum & Lordship Lane TRA to get younger people involved in the Singing Group.

## 7. Any Other Business

### SGTO's Tenants' Rights Training 24/10/23

Joe & Ygerne noted the success of SGTO's Tenants' Rights Training held on the 24/10/23, hosted by Magdalen Hall TRA, with over 20 residents in attendance. Based on the success of this session, residents are suggesting SGTO to hold quarterly training sessions to train on different subjects on housing matters.

Meeting Closed at 20:30pm

**DATE OF NEXT GROUP MEETING: 29<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2023**

## **ACTIONS:**

### **ITEM 3)**

1. SGTO will write a report following the session to submit to the APPG.
2. Ygerne will look to invite parents and teachers of temporarily housed Southwark children to the evidence gathering session.
3. Ygerne will liaise with Kyle on the details on TRA submissions for the APPG.
4. Ygerne will circulate SGTO's online submission form for the APPG.
5. Chris (Chair) & the board will investigate on the issue and decide whether to invite Mr Niel Coil MP to the evidence gathering session.

### **ITEM 4)**

1. Joe (staff) to re-circulate the LTF's Energy Bill Report.

### **ITEM 5)**

2. The conference working committee will design and circulate the promotional flyers.

### **ITEM 6)**

3. Ahmed will design & circulate a flyer advertising the Singing Group.
4. Ahmed will liaise with the Youth Forum & Lordship Lane TRA to get younger people involved in the Singing Group.