



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 Wednesday 22nd January 2025

Staff: Margaret Onwuta, Amanda Carey, Ahmed Kabba, Eldezangela Gomes, Joshua Gottlieb

Attendees: 18

1. Welcome, Introductions & Apologies

Chris (SGTO Chair) introduced himself, welcomed and thanked everyone for coming.

Apologies x 6: Colin Harrison, Carol Vincent, Alexandra Parker, Althea Smith, Andrew Eke, Steve Evans

2. Minutes of the Group Meeting 4th December 2024 & Matters Arising:

Minutes were agreed as a true record

Proposed by Cris Claridge

Seconded by Sylvia Raven

Matters arising:

Chris advised that we had not received the Reorganisation of the Resident Structure from the Council as yet, but as soon as we do, it will be circulated to the membership. With regards to the New Grounds Maintenance & Estate Cleaning Scrutiny Panel, the Council were supposed to call a meeting, but have again, not provided any information on that, but as soon as it is made aware, information will be shared.

Actions:

- To send the Reorganisation of the Resident Structure to membership as soon as it is made available.
- To make available information once received on the New Grounds Maintenance & Estate Cleaning Scrutiny Panel.

3. Motion to SGTO – To Support SHAPE, by Tanya Murat

SHAPE motion (Southwark Housing And Planning Emergency)

Proposed by Tanya Murat

Seconded by Cris Claridge

The SHAPE coalition is to fight against developments within the borough, ie; The Aylesham Development and other developments with a pitiful percentage of social housing included and for a housing & planning policy that will be of benefit to the housing crisis, instead of making it worse.

It was noted that the December meeting included in the motion could be removed as now out of date.

The Group were informed that another couple of organisations had since joined:

- HASL – Housing Action Southwark & Lambeth
- Southwark TUC

There are call outs to promote and support SHAPE activities and being action points within the motion, some dates have now been arranged. The first being a demonstration on 8th February for ACA (Aylesham Community Action) in Peckham, rescheduled from 18th Jan. The main SHAPE demonstration is arranged for 1st March, with a protest outside Council Assembly on 19th March.

Flyers in A4 and A3 format are available, where distribution has already started.

SGTO offered to share through various platforms, website, WhatsApp etc., electronically to the membership and through providing hard copies at meetings attended by staff and with print requests carried out for various TRAs' across the borough.

For Aylesham, it was pointed out that the developer was initially offering 35% affordable housing, but are in the process of submitting an amendment to reduce their offer to 12%. This makes the development of national significance, as even if the Council reject the planning permission, it may then be taken to the Mayor or the Government for reconsideration, or they could appeal the Council's decision for it to be overturned. This will then set a precedence for other developments and will have an enormous impact on the availability of affordable housing in this current housing crisis. It is imperative that the Council refuse and fight these applications to ensure a minimum of 35% is sustained.

It was expressed that the SHAPE coalition is not only asking the 3 Councillors covering Rye Lane area, but other Councillors to join the fight to stop the reduction of 35% to 12% in the development. The 3 Councillors had already written to the residents advising that they were requesting a minimum of 50% social housing in this development as 35% was insufficient, so would definitely not accept 12%. The developers are only interested in profit and the Council should not allow homes for profit, above homes for people. It was pointed out that the council have a policy of 35% social housing for private developments, however, this can be overridden if it can be proven through an assessment, that a development is not viable (not profitable enough) without reducing the amount of social housing.

It was agreed by attendees the importance of SGTO being involved with SHAPE, as in our capacity, we can provide all information to the membership across the borough, the Campaign & Research Officer can provide regular updates and that the main objective of the organisation is to Campaign for Housing Rights and Council Homes. The detrimental effect it will have on social housing, if allowed to reduce from 35% to 12% highlights the main incentive for developers being profit led, and not community driven. An example was given on a recent build, where out of many flats, just ONE was provided as social housing.

With already limited social housing, another member suggested that we must find a way to support residents, as well as tenants who find themselves on the housing register

due to reasons out of their control, change of circumstances etc., for herself, it has been 19 years and she still battles to get updates, information, as it is not forthcoming. Data was requested by her from Southwark Council when attending the last North West Housing Forum, on providing a list of the different bands, along with timeframes spent on each bands. This data should be presented at the next Forum and will be provided to SGTO afterwards to share with membership.

It was highlighted that the Council need to also reject planning for new developments if the requirements for larger properties are not included. The 'Bed Needs' must be taken into consideration and that provisions for 4 and 5 bedroom properties are incorporated so that all resident needs are met.

It has been suggested by Homes for All for years, that the Council collaborate with other Councils, along with tenants and residents to try and fight for council housing, for proper funding for council housing and to not allow homes for profit above homes for people and to not accept the current regime. If we all join together, we should be able to stop developments such as the Aylesham, and fight for required funding to ensure properly maintained council homes as well as acquiring more council housing through buying on the open market or by building more council homes. We are in a gentrification nightmare, and if we do not fight and encourage the council to join, we are going to be pushed out with no homes available for us who live here.

The Aylesham is 16 blocks of up to 20 stories with 88% non-affordable housing. This is just one development, so imagine what state Social Housing will be in, if this happens across the entire borough, where it already is in some areas. It needs to stop, so we need to fight and get all councillors onboard to join. It is not the developers land, it belongs to the community, viable profit and necessity for residents should be equal, so should be 50% social housing throughout.

Breakdown provided:

- Join SHAPE coalition
- Send representatives to SHAPE organising meetings
- Invite SHAPE speaker to next SGTO group meeting
- Support further actions and promote/publicise SHAPE activities amongst SGTO membership

SHAPE Motion agreed by 100% of those in attendance

Action: Tanya to provide flyers to SGTO office to distribute and email electronic version and any future flyers to info@sgto.co.uk

Action: Keri to provide data received on Housing Bands and times when she has attended the next Housing Forum.

Action: To invite SHAPE speaker to next SGTO group meeting

4. Update on TUPE proposal

Chris spoke of the TUPE letter, where SGTO services would end 31st December, and portal to register for tender open. We have registered, but nothing further has been made available. Our funding has been extended to March with no formal written notification as there is no replacement for Nat Stevens as yet, who has moved to a different department and with Cheryl Russell leaving. As soon as we receive any information or updates, this will be shared with the membership.

Members expressed their concerns with regards to SGTO staff morale, through uncertainty of funding and not knowing what is happening. They also raised concerns with the state of Southwark Council and fears of bankruptcy. Cutbacks have been noticed: staff moving positions, directors leaving, 6 month contracts and agency staff, these are classic signs of an organisation in trouble.

5. Any Other Business

Tenants Conference:

Following a question raised on the SGTO Support WhatsApp, it was noted that no notification, invite, or information had been circulated by Southwark with regards to a Tenants Conference on 22nd February. Althea had responded and confirmed on WhatsApp, but was not in attendance at the meeting to get clarification or any further details. SGTO have previously played a great role in the Tenants Conference, but this time, have not been approached, involved or even informed of the occasion, as with the tenants.

Events & Campaign Committee:

It was asked if the membership were going to be involved in/informed of feedback from the Event & Campaign Committee meeting. Members were previously able to join as an open meeting where TRAs could send a representative to share thoughts and ideas

Action: SGTO to try and find out details of Tenants Conference and share with membership.

Action: Chris will liaise with Althea (Chair of Events & Campaign Committee) and respond accordingly in members being able to be involved.

MEETING CLOSED: 8.20pm

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 26th February 2025

Actions

Item 2. Matters Arising

Actions:

- To send the Reorganisation of the Resident Structure to membership as soon as it is made available.
- To make available information once received on the New Grounds Maintenance & Estate Cleaning Scrutiny Panel.

Item 3. SHAPE

Actions:

- Tanya to provide flyers to SGTO office to distribute and email electronic version and any future flyers to info@sgto.co.uk
- Keri to provide data received on Housing Bands and times when she has attended the next Housing Forum.
- To invite SHAPE speaker to next SGTO group meeting

Item 5. Any Other Business

Actions:

- SGTO to try and find out details of Tenants Conference and share with membership.
- Chris will liaise with Althea (Chair of Events & Campaign Committee) and respond accordingly.