



# 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 28<sup>th</sup> May 2025 - zoom

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

**Attendees:** 20

### 1. Welcome, Introductions & Apologies

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

**Apologies:** 5

Steve Evans (Millpond), Colin Harrison, Brendan O'Brien (Bermondsey Street), Alison (Southwark Travellers Action Group), Saidat Oketunde (Astley Cooper)

### 2. Minutes of Group Meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2025 and Matters Arising

Minutes were agreed as a true record:

Proposed by Johnson McCaithy

Seconded by Cris Claridge

#### Minutes of 26th February

**Action:** To provide information from Marc Cook about Gateway and Plentific once received.

**Update:** Nothing received to date from Marc, will circulate as soon as received.

**Action:** To receive information from SHAPE and publish in the newsletter for future events.

**Update:** Information has been received on SHAPE events and being shared through various platforms.

Tanya thanked everyone for attending public meeting in Peckham, which consisted of around 100 people which is leading to another demonstration called Peckham Takeover for people against developers, calling for 50% council homes against all private on new builds.

The council has refused one development which was only offering 12% council homes, where the developers have raised an appeal which will now be decided by the Government. Peckham Heritage were quoted in Southwark News for calling this proposed development as

'bleak'. This will take several months with an inquiry and people are able to apply to provide their comments to put their point across. SHAPE require a Solicitor to build a case against the development to put to the planning inspector and will start a fundraising campaign soon for this purpose.

There are a lot of poor choices being made across the borough with regards to developments, new and existing with very little being made available for the communities.

Campaigners fight for Aylesbury protest against Phase 2B, will be held at 6pm on 4<sup>th</sup> June as not enough social rented housing included in proposal.

Peoples Assembly Against Austerity is a national demonstration outside BBC Portland Place, being held at 12noon on 7<sup>th</sup> June. This is a demand against disabled and winter fuel cuts etc. We want this to be a big event so welcome all disabled, pensioners, families with children who have had their benefits cut, frozen or removed.

**Action:** SGTO to help and advise residents seeking legal housing support.

**Update:** Residents are consistently being offered help and advice, especially from Research Officer. Our doors are open to guide as much as we can and to signpost where we cannot to ensure everyone gets the support they need.

Sylvia gave a Big Thank You to Joshua for helping one of their residents who was in crisis. All very grateful and appreciate the support provided and will be utilising SGTO assistance for other cases they have.

**Action:** SGTO to circulate new structure of Council departments once received.

**Update:** Jessica Leech has only been in position for just over a week, so she will be working through and once settled in, will be able to share the new structure with us once finalised. It's important that we know who is working and where, who is new and who's leaving/left, so we know who to approach when needed.

### **3. Draft Resident Engagement Strategy**

Chris invited Althea to take the chair to explain the Resident Engagement Strategy draft circulated with the membership and how residents need to respond.

Althea highlighted that this is a draft open to consultation until the end of July and that it is for individuals, associations to read and make their own decisions, we cannot guide people on how to respond as the officers want to hear views of the residents. Residents need to read, note what they don't like, need to query and respond before it is turned into a policy. In the document it states funds allocated to do residential work, promote resident associations, federations etc. which we need to ensure these funds are spent for the resident and not moved to cover other council resources.

The document mentions the shortage of officers in various departments within engagement, which we must highlight as this has a knock-on effect to residents with the lack of involvement and support needed.

Finally, I cannot tell you what to say but encourage you to speak with your tenant association, get as many individuals as you can to complete the questionnaire, and be truthful about how you feel about what's happening with Southwark housing. Have your say as the policy will be valid for 4 years.

#### Meeting attendee comments

##### **Comment:**

It was mentioned at Tenant Forum, that more consultation time was needed before implementation, where 3 months extension was proposed with a counter offer of 2 months proposed which was said was not sufficient time. Looking at volunteer remuneration being one, as council officers get paid. The document as a whole is vague in not mentioning actual departments, saying it wants to put residents first, but that is not the case. Maybe SGTO can take the lead and assist those unable to or have the capacity to correlate their responses. It is going to be worthwhile if you all can contribute.

##### **Comment:**

When completing the survey, don't just use it as a tick box exercise, but use the comments section as broadly as you can to express your feelings and concerns thoroughly to enhance the reason for your tick, which is valuable feedback.

Hard copies should be made available for those without internet, email access or not computer literate as this is a huge amount of people not included.

##### **Comment:**

Suggested that TRAs' gather as a group to sit and read through together, so everyone gets opportunity to read, hear and understand proposals along with opportunity to provide feedback. The language used in the documents isn't always clear, if you've not been involved in the tenants movement, so having someone else to explain can be beneficial and help in making decisions.

##### **Comment:**

Q. States that a specialist independent tenants & residents advisory service is to be appointed. Has this been done, who are they? How do they receive these groups and why isn't there any feedback from them.

A. It has not been mentioned to us directly, so we do not know the answer yet.

##### **Comment:**

It was mentioned that the council want to equip residents with knowledge, skills and training to be able to play an active role in shaping Landlord Services and local decision making. Therefore it is imperative that this is clear within the strategy and that all committee groups receive a welcome pack highlighting training available for current and new volunteers. The council is paying membership for various training but not allowing direct access. Instead, you must email what you want to do, and they will then allocate to you, whereas you're supposed to be able to see what's available and access yourself. At the moment, nobody can access the platform, so money being spent on memberships and not being utilised. Also, what has happened to the budget set aside for training and volunteers, as it can't have been used, as no one in the council knows how to access, so no one could have done any. These funds with how much is spent and on what and balance should be made available for all to see to ensure that the funds are not being used for other resources.

Example: if £20,000 was spent on training, to highlight on what and for who.

##### **Comment:**

Comments were made that many people do not have email, IT skills or means to scan QR code, so there is a large proportion of people being missed. It would be helpful if hard copies

were available to be able to reach everyone so the responses would increase. To generate more awareness, a suggestion was made that the council should be holding events, coffee mornings, in different areas for people to attend and have it explained, shown and assistance in completing, this would help many people and would engage with many who wouldn't necessarily be able to. They could also brief libraries as somewhere we can signpost people to for assistance, many hubs available, but not being used.

Also, is SGTO have having an event this year or other TRAs' that are having fun days etc. there could be an information point to alert people to what is happening and to help them understand the implications, what needs to be done and complete forms/surveys with them, another way of reaching more people.

SGTO needs to promote and push it to TRAs' to engage their tenants and residents in providing responses.

### **Motion/statement to be sent to Jessica Leech's Team**

To request that the Council plan, as a matter of urgency, a program to engage more people to be involved and to be able to respond.

Chris agreed.

Proposed by Andrew Eke

Seconded by Cris Claridge

Chris highlighted that anyone can call on SGTO to assist with this process, we're here to support everyone to be able to say exactly what they feel about this report.

**Action:** SGTO to help those who require assistance with providing their response during consultation period.

**Action:** SGTO to promote and push survey to TRAs', for them to take back to their tenants and residents.

**Action:** Motion/statement to be sent to Jessica Leech for Council to create a program to engage with more residents to increase responses.

## **4. Tendering Update**

Chris advised that there was no further update on who the Tender has been awarded to. SGTO were advised that the panel is still dealing with the process and would inform when reached an outcome. There was an extension until the end of April and a further to the end of May mentioned, but nothing received from the Council so far.

As soon as we hear, the information will be shared.

It was mentioned that a subcommittee of residents were going to be brought in to assist with the decision of the Tender, which is quite odd considering this was after the deadline. Lets see how quickly they can put this new panel together to begin the process for an outcome.

## **5. Any Other Business**

There was not any other business.

Meeting Closed 8:30pm

**DATE OF NEXT GROUP MEETING: WEDNESDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2025**

## **ACTIONS**

### **Item 3. Draft Resident Engagement Strategy**

**Action:** SGTO to help those who require assistance with providing their response during consultation period.

**Action:** SGTO to promote and push survey to TRAs', for them to take back to their tenants and residents.

**Action:** Motion/statement to be sent to Jessica Leech for Council to create a program to engage with more residents to increase responses.