



Just Space

JustSpace.org.uk

15 June 2021

Open letter to the Mayor of London, cc: Deputy Mayors for Housing and Planning, and to Members of the London Assembly

Dear Mayor

London Housing Panel

On the day when we are all remembering the Grenfell disaster, we are shocked to hear that the Mayor of London is to abolish the London Housing Panel —the one instrument we have to ensure that tenants and residents have a direct input to policy making.

Just Space is a collaboration for mutual support among a large number of groups involved in London planning, who campaigned for many years to bring such a Panel into existence, were delighted when the Mayor set it up and who have been looking forward to working with the Mayor in his new term of office which, he said, would start with a strengthened system of community engagement.

The London Housing Panel had its first meeting in June 2019. Now the Greater London Authority says its work will only be funded up to March 2022 —less than three years from its launch. We are asking the Mayor to think again and asking the other recipients of this letter to do your utmost to convince the GLA to continue co-funding the work of this unique and essential panel.

The Panel was established to provide voluntary and community groups with a structured way of engaging with the GLA in relation to housing policy and vice versa. We are assured that the Mayor wants to make sure his housing policies are developed with the involvement of London's diverse communities.

The Panel developed the following principles:

1. There is an urgent need to build more social housing in London to tackle its housing crisis and we will always push for prioritising the building of and increasing the amount of social rented housing over other forms of tenure.
2. By understanding the needs and aspirations of all Londoners, including those who are living most vulnerably, we can ensure house building creates better longer-term outcomes for Londoners.
3. In addition to the building of new, stable homes at social rent, we want more action taken now to address homelessness.

In April 2020 the Panel called for commitment from the Mayor on these priorities:

1. Massively increase social housing supply
2. Support all Londoners to be heard and thrive

3. Take action on temporary accommodation

The Panel was set up with the following organisations represented:

Action on Empty Homes

Camden Community Law Centre

The Connection at St Martin-in-the-Fields

Generation Rent

Homeless Link

Just for Kids Law/Children's Rights Alliance for England

Kineara

Leasehold Knowledge Partnership

London Federation of Housing Cooperatives

London Gypsies and Travellers

London Tenants Federation

New Horizon Youth Centre

Solace Women's Aid

Tonic Housing Association

Reports on its meetings and activities can be consulted on the [London Housing Panel pages](#) of the Trust for London web site. Trust for London has match-funded the Panel with the GLA throughout.

At this time of greater housing insecurity for so many Londoners, we think the work of the Panel is needed more than ever. Given the central importance of housing and of retrofit as London battles the climate emergency and the post-Covid recovery, it cannot be wise or politically sensible to scrap such a crucial institution. Please do your utmost to ensure its work can continue.

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Note for editors:

1. **Just Space** is an informal network of community and campaign groups which formed in 2006 to amplify the voices of communities during the formulation of London's major planning strategies, particularly the London Plan. Its member groups now number around 80 and include Friends of the Earth, the London Forum of Civic and Amenity Societies, the London Tenants Federation and campaign groups such as Peckham Vision, Wards Corner Community Coalition in Tottenham and many other, mainly local, groups.
<http://justspace.org.uk/>
2. **Just Space** developed an alternative plan 'Towards a Community-Led Plan for London' over two years, published in 2016 and is now working on a post-Covid sequel.
<https://justspacelondon.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/just-space-a4-community-led-london-plan.pdf>

Contacts

Coordinator Richard Lee richardlee50@gmail.com 020 7701 0125

Editor Michael Edwards m.edwards@ucl.ac.uk 07813 19 44 01