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Please quote reference on all correspondence

Grahame Park report back

I promised to write to you after my planned official visit to the estate, with Council Officers, and the Police.

In addition to my normal work calling on people on the estate, I have found that these formal inspections provide a real focus for taking up the issues which concern you – that's why I have done these every year – rain or shine – for the last 10 years, ever since I was first elected as your MP.

Can I first thank all those who took part in my pre-visit consultation. Letting me know of particular problems or questions in advance really helped me to put the Council 'on the spot', as we went round.

Residents who raised specific individual problems will get a specific reply on these points – this letter is designed to give everyone a report on the general issues I've taken up.

My estate survey

As well as asking for any specific points, I also raised more general questions. It didn't surprise me to hear that 97% of Grahame Park residents thought the Council had neglected the estate. And 84% believed the Council was taking far too long over regeneration. 92% of tenants and 100% of leaseholders thought the Council did not treat them fairly.

I believe the Council (not controlled by my party!) has been selling Grahame Park woefully short.

I'll now set out some of the things I have taken up, on your behalf.

Regeneration

After my inspection of the estate, I also met with 'Choice', to review progress on the regeneration. I believe this remains slow. The 'demonstration phase', the 32 new homes (including just 13 for rent) on the Old Chandos Lodge site, is finishing soon.

They applied for outline planning permission for the whole scheme last January 2007. The detailed applications for phase 1a, the park area round the pond, is expected to be submitted in September. If approved, building work would begin in September 2008, next year. This part includes 150 rented homes.

The compulsory purchase process for the next phase, on the south side of the estate is expected to take a year, from this September.

The whole scheme is due to take 18 years, from January this year – from when first thought of, about 25 years in total!

The new plans are different, compared to those which were originally proposed, many years ago. I believe the Council should ask residents again, by a new ballot, whether they approve the new scheme, as it has changed so much. Do you agree – I'd like your opinion: both on the new plans, and whether there should be another residents' vote.

Decent Homes Initiative

In the meantime, the regeneration has been used as an excuse by the Council, not to do any serious maintenance work. If the scheme is built to the proposed timetable (which inevitably must be questionable), it would be at least 25 years, since discussions started.

I do not think it is right or fair, for the Council to leave things so long. I have asked what plans they have to bring homes up to a decent standard in the meantime, especially those scheduled for the end of the regeneration programme. And, of course, a lot of the estate is to remain, so these properties must be attended to as well.

The Labour Government has given Barnet a substantial grant of £81million towards the Government's Decent Homes Initiative, to bring Council properties to a reasonable standard. I believe it is time action was taken on your estate to do so.

I have asked for budgets and schedules for this work.

Policing Issues

I was accompanied on my inspection by Safer Neighbourhood Team officers, to brief me on policing issues. This also gave me the chance to feed back your questions, too.

The Safer Neighbourhood Team has also extended their patrolling hours, as they now have extra officers: 7 PCSOs and 3 police officers – 10 in total.

Dogs

One of the major police issues that has come up, are fears about dangerous dogs. The police tell me they have seized 7 dogs this year, so far.

I have proposed to the Council that they should make the estate a Dog Control Area, which would give the police stronger powers to require owners to put dogs on leads, for example, and to look after dogs properly.

Grounds maintenance

The problem of weeds on the estate seems to come up every single year I have done an inspection for the last 10 years. Some of the weeds look as though they have been there for 10 years! I have questioned who is responsible for supervising the weed treatment contract and why this is not being done effectively. It is simply not good enough, to require the contractors to come back and do the treatment again a few weeks later. It should be done right in the first place. It is clear that large parts of the estate are simply being ignored or overlooked.

Grass cutting

Similarly in relation to grass cutting, there are large parts of the estate where the grass has clearly not been cut back. I have again raised this with who is responsible for supervising this contract, as the problem appears to arise every year.

Bushes and trees

Again, there is a significant problem of overgrown bushes and trees. I will refer later to some of the specific areas needing attention, but I have also asked what is going on generally, in relation to this issue.

Caretaking

Litter seems to be more under control, except there were areas towards the north-west side of the estate where litter seems to be arising.

Fly-tipping seems to be a perennial problem: 'no fly-tipping' signs seem to attract fly-tipping! I have asked what effort is being put into catching those who are responsible.

Many residents have raised the need for recycling. Although there are recycling bins around the estate, I have asked why the Council does not operate a doorstep recycling service, as it does for the rest of the Borough.

Maintenance issues

Generally, there were problems with a number of pavements, and I found far too many drains were blocked, a serious issue in the light of the recent bad weather!

Car Parks

I received complaints from residents generally about the problems of untaxed and abandoned cars, and car dealing on the estate and around the outside of the estate. I have asked for this to be looked into.

CCTV

I passed on residents' requests for the CCTV system to be extended on the estate.

I'll now turn to issues I've raised affecting particular blocks or areas on the estate.

The Concourse

A number of drains are blocked, causing flooding.

Weeds outside the community centre were particularly bad.

There are large numbers of loose bricks on the Flight Approach footpath which need to be removed.

Beatty

There is a blocked drain, and filth is accumulating as a result. Residents were also concerned about rubbish accumulating in the area.

The paving also needs fixing around there.

Blackthorn

Residents have particularly asked what will happen in relation to the refurbishment of this block under the decent homes initiative.

The drains are also broken around Blackthorn. It has been flooded with raw sewage and the leaves have been left from last year. The trees are seriously overgrown and blocking light. I was told this would be attended to, in 6 weeks time!

Belevedere Strand

Residents complain that the refuse bins are filthy, and the culverts and gulleys need cleaning out.

Bristol

Weeds are particularly bad here, particularly on the 'egg box' surfacing.

Blenheim

There is a blocked drain here.

Camm

Blocked drains again, and there were also complaints of abandoned cars in the car park and a 'car showroom' on Grahame Park Way, here.

Dessouter

There is a blocked gulley, causing flooding.

Firefly

There were serious problems from the size of the trees, and a long standing water leak.

Folland

There was a problem of trees hitting windows here. There is a blocked drain pipe which means the balconies get flooded.

Fairey

The pavement needs attending to, and there is a broken drain hole cover. There is a problem of fly-tipping of rubbish and tree remains. A tree is seriously overgrown.

Farman

There is a blocked gully here. The residents would also like to know when under the decent homes initiative their windows will be attended to.

Gresswell

Again, residents would like to know when their windows will be attended to, under decent homes. They are also concerned about the quality of caretaking.

Gauntlet

There were also concerns about internal cracks in the buildings.

Guilfoyle

The security door is not working, and this is causing significant problems for residents inside.

There is also a significant problem of weeds, and the pavement nearby also needs fixing.

Halifax

Similar problems to Guilfoyle.

There is also a tree which is blocking the light and hitting against the windows. The block also has a broken main door which needs fixing.

Hampden

The lights have been out for three weeks.

Hamel

There is a fly-tip here, which needs removing.

Hector

There are concerns about the security in the block, and drug abuse.

Kemp

Residents are concerned about the security of this block.

Lysander

There are concerns about a water leak here, which needs sorting out.

Mercury

There were complaints about the disrupted water supply. I am told this has now been resolved.

Pixton

A large tree and its roots are a problem.

Prodger

Residents tell me they were promised last year, that their windows would be fixed and this has not been done. They would like to know what is going on. They also want to know what is happening in relation to kitchens and bathrooms.

Rainham

There is a problem of a fly-tip developing opposite here. The car park surface needs attending to, for the car park at Rainham/Partridge.

Flightways roof

There is a large accumulation of rubbish on top of Flightways roof, which needs removing.

I hope you find this report of interest. I will write again, when I have the Council's response to these various issues.

No doubt I have missed some points – that's inevitable no matter how detailed my inspection. So, if there is anything else you want to raise with me, either about the estate or more generally, please let me know – either complete the enclosed questionnaire, or email me at: updates@hendonlabourparty.com,

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Dismore
Member of Parliament for Hendon

PS. I also have to tell you the House of Commons authorities have dramatically cut the postage and stationary budget available to MPs to write to constituents and to keep you up to date with developments. In future, I may not be able to write to you by post.

If you have an email address, I would like to write to you in this way, as it will help keep costs down and will also be quicker. So if you do have email, could you please let me have your email address, by emailing me at updates@hendonlabourparty.com together with your name and postal address and the reference number at the top of this letter, so I can continue to correspond with you about your concerns.