

Final judgement on response to wider council recommendations

02.12.24

Background

The purpose of this paper is to deliver a final judgement as to whether or not the consultation on Grenfell Future support meets the requirements of restorative consultation. We required further plans and evidence from the council to demonstrate that the restorative steps developed and taken through the consultation process are not a one-off (which would create further harm in itself), but are instead a starting point for future restorative practice across the wider council.

In our final consultation report in September 2024, we asked for commitments from the wider council to address issues in three areas:

1. Improvements to the way the Council connects with and trusts residents
2. Improvement to the experience of service delivery in the round from residents
3. Improvements to the way the wider Council connects with and supports the Grenfell Partnerships Team

The Grenfell Partnerships Team (GPT) sent a draft response to the External Scrutiny Team's recommendations for the wider council on 21st October 2024. This document was a point by point response to many of the recommendations we made, based on early discussions with the Council's Executive Management Team.

During late October, the EST had conversations with the GPT about their response. We provided an interim judgement on 8th November, including guidance on how the council could strengthen its response to the recommendations.

In late November we received a response to our interim judgement, and here we present our final judgement on the council's plans for implementing our wider recommendations.

In addition to the September report wider council recommendations, having reviewed the council's initial response, we also recommended the following in our interim judgement report:

1. An overarching framing of how the Council's senior management and leadership will engage with this work
2. A plan towards the creation of a vision
3. Some prioritisation of activities and a sense of which are most likely to have impact
4. Realistic assessment of ambition and sequencing

The sequence of reports referenced above:

1. [September 2024 - EST Final Scrutiny report on the Grenfell Future Support consultations](#); giving our judgement on whether the consultations overall were fair and restorative, and making recommendations for the wider council.
2. [October 2024 - Council initial response to EST wider council recommendations](#) (Appendix 2)
3. [November 2024 - EST Interim judgement on response to wider council recommendations](#)
4. November 2024 - Council response to the EST interim report (Appendix 4 – LT report dated 11 December 2024 on the implementation of Future Grenfell support) .
5. December 2024 - EST Final judgement on response to wider council recommendations (this report)

Our final judgement on the council's wider plans for change

We recognise that only time will show whether or not the wider council is willing and able to support residents and council staff to continue with and augment restorative practice beyond this consultation and continue to repair and build positive relationships.

However, in our role as external scrutiny team we are required to make a judgement at this point about the intentions and plans provided by the council. To make this judgement we have looked at the councils plans in response to our September 2024 report for wider recommendations, and we have also reviewed the councils response to our November 2024 interim judgement. **We are now satisfied that the Grenfell Partnerships Team and the wider council see this consultation as not a one-off improvement, but instead a starting point for future restorative practice.** We are satisfied that the future plans, as shared in the leadership papers, describe an effective approach to build restorative practice and strengthen relationships between the council and residents. Of course, the implementation of these plans is the critical piece here.

Strengths of the approach

1. The commitment to independently facilitated workshops as a starting point for establishing a shared understanding of the council's overarching mission and also a shared reflection on key concerns, barriers and wider pressures, with open and honest dialogue. It is particularly critical that these include the Executive Team and so we are pleased to see this commitment that they will be attending.
2. The commitment to integrating learning from the Inquiry report, the future support consultation, and EST recommendations, into the council's wider work.
3. The commitment to specific restorative and trauma-informed training for officers and elected members, as well as offering restorative practice training to residents and community leaders to build a shared approach and common language. Followed by regular use of restorative approaches where relationships with residents break down, including use of independent facilitation and mediation.

4. Commitments made to work alongside residents to review the Charter for Public Participation, looking at its effectiveness in influencing practice, and considering mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and oversight of the Charter.
5. Establishing an independent review of culture.
6. Bringing together an overall narrative (currently four thematic areas) of places for learning and improvement, along with a list of current and further actions, which can be used to hold the council to account on specific achievements.

Some weaknesses or points to further emphasise moving forwards

1. We note the council's acknowledgement of this work as an **adaptive challenge** (a term coined by Ronald Heifetz), which will be an important framing to succeed in this work. We defined adaptive challenges in our previous recommendations as challenges that require learning, experimentation and new practice. We said that addressing these problems often requires people changing in some way - through mindset, behaviour, and values, and recognising that some of the people holding the problem are part of the problem, and also part of the solution. It will be important moving forward to see this work as a longer term change management process towards a better relationship - keeping focused on this work as an adaptive challenge and not slide into seeing it as a series of technical challenges. This will require setting goals and expectations through an iterative process of discovery and testing, combined with accountability for working in new ways, and a way of measuring progress that supports ongoing learning and improvement.
2. The plan gives a hopeful and positive outlook on how the work will progress including lots of commitments to change. The sort of overall cultural change and individual (mindset and behaviour) change committed to in this plan will be challenging and **not without setbacks and feasibility challenges**. We reiterate that the council will need a "Plan B" - for those times where plan A above is not feasible or is too much at once, there should be commitments to smaller cycles of 'test and learn', so that the council leadership can be held to account for making steady progress. There are some activities which could act as pilots and we would suggest some contingency planning for how the 'what is possible now' can be used to catalyse further activity, for instance the Legislative Theatre case study from Housing Needs, and the shared restorative and trauma informed training for residents, community leaders, officers and elected members. If change is built up via different pilots, how can it be all brought together to a sense that the council is moving in the right direction?

Next steps - wider council changes

The plans that we have seen, particularly the 6 commitments above, and conversations that we have had with members of GPT, indicate to us that the council is moving toward seeing the challenge of improvement as adaptive and are committed to creating space for council colleagues, including executive members, and residents to work together more openly and honestly and toward stronger relationships.

As we have now received a final set of plans for wider council changes with response to our recommendations, our scrutiny of the Grenfell Future Support consultations is now complete.

Next steps as an External Scrutiny Team

This report concludes our scrutiny of the Grenfell Future Support consultations.

Over the coming weeks we will collate our reports from across the consultation scrutiny period and make these available for publishing in one central location so that they are accessible to residents. We will write to residents with an update to let people know that our consultation scrutiny role is now complete and provide details of how residents can continue to be involved through the ongoing monitoring and scrutiny mechanism.

The role of the External Scrutiny Team now transitions to finalising recommendations and implementation guidance for monitoring and scrutiny of delivery of the Future Support Programme.

We understand that the council will be tendering for an Independent Scrutiny Function in early 2025 to carry out ongoing scrutiny and monitoring of the programme. Our understanding is that the council will be running the procurement process alongside bereaved and survivors and residents – including Notting Dale Councillors – as well as the claimant's lawyers. A wide group being involved in the procurement process will be important to ensure that the appointment is robust and does not undermine the independence of the future Independent Scrutiny Function's work.

With regard to the **areas of weakness/focus** mentioned above, we recommend that the council provide a **response to these areas at regular intervals, for example every six months, to the future Independent Scrutiny Function**, to ensure that residents are clear on how the feedback has been acted on.

The council's Oversight and Scrutiny Committee has also agreed to play a role in reviewing the Council's progress against these commitments - they could also receive the six monthly reports and scrutinise progress.