

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY, 21ST FEBRUARY, 2023** at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 1, Crowndale Centre, 218 Eversholt Street, London, NW1 1BD

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT

Councillors Samata Khatoon (Chair), Sagal Abdi-Wali, Kemi Atolagbe, Richard Cotton, Nasrine Djemai, Eddie Hanson, Nancy Jirira and Craig McLeish and Houria Pacha (co-opted members)

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT

Councillor Nanouche Umeadi and Dialloand Fatoumata Diallo (co-opted member)

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Meric Apak, Cabinet Member Better Homes
Councillor Danny Beales, Cabinet Member New Homes, Jobs and Community Investment (for item 8)

The minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting. They are subject to approval and signature at the next meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.

MINUTES

1. GUIDANCE ON HYBRID MEETINGS

RESOLVED –

THAT the hybrid meeting procedure set out in the agenda papers be agreed.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Nanouche Umeadi and Fatoumata Diallo (Co-opted Member).

3. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF STATUTORY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS, COMPULSORY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND VOLUNTARY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS IN MATTERS ON THIS AGENDA

There were none.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Broadcast of the meeting

The Chair announced that the meeting was being broadcast live by the Council to the Internet and could be viewed on the website for twelve months after the meeting. After that time, webcasts were archived and could be made available upon request. Those who had asked to address the meeting were deemed to be consenting to having their contributions recorded and broadcast and to the use of those sound recordings and images for webcasting and/or training purposes.

5. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DECIDES TO TAKE AS URGENT

There were none.

6. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 17th January 2023.

RESOLVED –

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 17th January 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

7. DEPUTATIONS

There were none.

8. NEW HOMES FOR SMALL SITES PROGRAMME - PHASE 1

Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet Member for New Homes, Jobs and Community Investment, which was presented Councillor Danny Beales, Cabinet Member for New Homes, Jobs and Community Investment, and by Neil Vokes, Director of Development, who both along with Huw Jones, Team Leader Regeneration, gave the following key responses to questions:

- The new homes for small sites programme offered the opportunity to deliver additional affordable homes on existing estates, without the need to rehouse residents or demolish existing homes.
- Officers had been speaking with residents on estates through door knocking and pop-up events. Officers had knocked on doors on estates, multiple times

where possible, to increase the reach across estates and contact as many residents as possible.

- Residents had been offered different ways to contribute to the engagement process which included feedback forms; through the post with a pre-paid return envelope; by completing an online survey; and also by completing surveys with officers at the door or at drop-in events on each estate. Residents were also given a map of their estate with the potential development site highlighted. At drop-in events, residents also gave wider feedback on their estate - what they liked or disliked and other areas they thought could be improved or developed. This information would be pulled together to form the estate improvement programme that would go hand-in-hand with the Small Sites Programme.
- The Council recognised that there were always a range of views about new development and was mindful of local concerns about disruption and loss of amenities. The approach for the next stage of delivery would include further engagement with residents on a whole range of design issues, as well as discussions on providing meaningful benefits back to affected estate residents.
- There remain a risk of uncertainty and concern due to lack of communication on estates. Stakeholder engagement had been a key element of the initial phase of this programme and engagement would be maintained through regular feedback with local people, updating them on programme and future works. Ongoing working groups would progress through the construction phases. There was a risk of continued local opposition to new homes being built on estates. To address this would require clear and regular messaging with residents and tailored strategies for individual sites to address specific concerns raised and to work to collaboratively with tenants and residents to alleviate them where possible.
- Increasing the supply of genuinely affordable homes remained a key Council priority, and the small sites programme provided a community led way to bring back vacant spaces into use through the provision of new homes and community facilities.
- The small sites programme would not be seeking to use green spaces as part of the vacant spaces being used to deliver the programme. Green spaces were something that local communities wanted to see preserved and enhanced, and the programme would see how this could be achieved through the estates improvement programme part of the scheme.
- Each specific scheme would have its own estates improvement budget and officers would consider developing a set of guiding principles regarding how the money should be spent.

ACTION BY: Director of Development

- The CIP sought to address the lack of Government funding for local authorities to delivery new community facilities as well as much needed housing. The small sites programme sought to deliver 73 affordable housing

Housing Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday, 21st February, 2023

units as part of phase 1 of the programme. In total the five sites could deliver up to 44 new social rent homes, for families on the housing waiting list, as well as 23 living rent homes for key workers and those struggling to afford to live in Camden. The Council would also deliver 6 council supported living homes, which would offer accommodation-based care to support adults with learning and physical disabilities and mental health conditions to live independently.

- The Council would retain ownership of 100% of the homes built and all homes would be built to the highest standards of design and sustainability.
- The small sites programme had to be self-financing as the Government was not providing resources to fully fund these schemes, and the Council's Housing Revenue Account no longer had the capacity to fund projects such as this through borrowing.
- It was proposed that the Council would transfer the social rent homes to the proposed Camden Living Registered Provider (which the Council would have nomination rights to, so Council tenants on the waiting list, could benefit from these new homes), and the transfer of intermediate homes to existing Camden Living Company (which could benefit key workers or children of existing tenants, who were unable to afford private rented accommodation).
- A Construction Management Plan would also be produced and would stipulate how noise, dust and deliveries, and works would be managed to minimise disruption to residents.
- The New Homes for Small Sites Programme would provide opportunities for Small and Medium-size Enterprises and community or self-build developers.
- Each scheme would need to be fully worked up after extensive consultation, along with having to go through the formal planning application process. As part of this process consideration would have to be given regarding planning policies relating to height, density, types of homes, deliverability, as well as community and environmental concerns. All these issues would need to be considered and balanced before a final decision was made to progress a scheme.
- Following all CIP schemes a review was undertaken to see what lessons could be learned and these would then be applied to future schemes.
- Officers agreed to provide an update on the progress of the small sites programme to the scrutiny committee in six months' time.

ACTION BY: Director of Development

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted

9. WE MAKE CAMDEN: STATE OF THE BOROUGH REPORT

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Strategy and Policy Design, which was introduced by Michal Shinwell, Strategic and Evidence Lead, and she along with Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management, gave the following key responses to questions:

- Officers would send members the link to the response to the complaint's data available on the Council's website, along with developing proposals for a housing summit to take place later this year.

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management/Director of Housing

- Officers would give further consideration in future reports regarding issues around black children's attendance and food affordability (cheap easy accessible food, against the need to eat healthy but more costly food).

ACTION BY: Director of Strategy and Policy

RESOLVED –

THAT the contents of the report be noted and the final version of the report be referred to Council for consideration.

10. SUPPORTING ROUGH SLEEPERS IN CAMDEN

Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet Adviser on Supporting Rough Sleepers, which was introduced by Councillor Richard Cotton, Cabinet Adviser on Supporting Rough Sleepers, and he gave the following key responses to questions:

- The response to helping Rough Sleepers during the Covid Pandemic had shown how the issue could be dealt with when resources were fully available. Here the Council had used the Britannia Hotel in Hampstead as a Covid-protect site to accommodate up to 107 single homeless residents. The project was supervised by a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) comprising the Housing charity, Single Homeless Project; UCLH (University College London Hospital) discharge nurses who were triaging residents; a Camden and Islington Focus Homeless team undertaking mental health assessments; Camden's Substance Misuse Service who were providing drug and alcohol assessments; the Camden Health Improvement Practice (CHIP) GP practice conducted video and face to face assessments; a Local Authority Move on Coordinator, to help people move on to more suitable accommodation and reconnecting people to home areas; a UCLH Find and Treat Team to undertake Covid testing as well as HIV, Hepatitis and TB screening and a

Housing Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday, 21st February, 2023

Pharmacist delivering methadone on site to those not in treatment with Camden & Islington NHS Trust. The project was a near total success with only one person from the whole cohort becoming infected. A new national and London wide approach was required, which needed the funding levels provided during the Covid Pandemic.

- Faith groups and the voluntary sector played an important role in seeking to help rough sleepers and all public agencies involved had to work together to get the best outcome for individuals.
- Most rough sleepers did not chose this life style and it was noticeable that most people living on the streets had suffered some sort of personal trauma that had led them to where they were now. The impact of personal trauma was something that had to be considered as part of any future programme of support.
- Rough sleepers suffered abuse, mental health issues, hygiene poverty and these issues also needed to be taken into account in seeking to help them.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted and that the recommendations outlined by the Cabinet Adviser on Supporting Rough Sleepers, which would be reported to Cabinet by the Cabinet Member as set out below, be endorsed by the scrutiny committee:

- Noting the success of the approach adopted in the pandemic, to continue to press central government for the necessary levels of funding to eliminate rough sleeping for good;
- Supporting preventing homelessness before individuals get to the point where they must rough sleep. This included increasing awareness among communities as to who they could go to if they felt they may be made homeless so that early intervention could take place;
- Explore ways to address hidden homelessness across the borough;
- To continue to drive forward the Homeless System Transformation, bringing system partners together to deliver a more integrated approach for rough sleepers, working alongside the Housing Service Transformation;
- Ensure that all those working with people experiencing rough sleeping were trauma-informed and provide the necessary training for this;
- To provide a building similar to the Solidarity Hub in Islington that could be run by voluntary sector organizations with different voluntary organizations (e.g. Streets Kitchen, C4WS) responsible for running it and having a presence on different days of the week. If this was not possible, Camden should work with voluntary and community organisations to make use of the RTS Hub;
- To look at ways of minimizing bureaucracy and minimizing the number of assessments a rough sleeper had to go through, for example by increased use of 'trusted assessments' between partner agencies;
- The recent announcement of an extra nurse for the health care team was welcome but the fortnightly clinics in homeless hostels should ideally be rolled

out to all rough sleepers, and not just to those already in hostels. This would assist rough sleepers in navigating the health care system.

- Commission a worker to cater for the particular needs of the LGBTIQ+ community, perhaps in partnership with other London boroughs.
- To look at the impact of gambling as an additional contributory factor causing homelessness along with drug and alcohol abuse. It was also an addiction yet there had been little study of its impact on homelessness;
- Seek government funding for initiatives to improve the way the public makes referrals when they see a person sleeping rough (something the government says will be available). Most people want to help but do not know how to. Many do not know about the App and Telephone numbers. A public information campaign could include advertising at bus stops, doctors' surgeries and libraries and a campaign could be run with the local press. This would help include the wider public in helping people experiencing rough sleeping; and
- Review the way the numbers of rough sleepers were counted as there was a significant difference in the numbers found in bi-monthly street counts and those identified on the Streets Kitchen outreach.

11. CABINET ADVISOR REPORT ON THE ESTATES MISSION

Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet Adviser on Estates Mission, which was introduced by Councillor Eddie Hanson, Cabinet Adviser on Estates Mission, and he along with Ododo Dafe, Head of Innovation and Improvement, and Marcus Shukla, Portfolio Lead, gave the following key responses to questions:

- Tenant and Resident Associations (TRAs) played a valuable leadership role in the local community but they also needed to be more open to change, reflect the local community, and be willing to listen to views being expressed by all members (including young people). Where necessary appropriate training should be offered to TRA chairs to enable them to fully undertaken their role.
- TRAs were fully aware of the support that was available through the Council's Tenant Participation Team, though further work could be about sharing information to other tenants and residents, especially for estates where there was no TRA.
- A number of estates had a community hall that was being managed by the TRA and further work could be done regarding improving the way that they managed these premises to ensure that they maximised the community benefit.
- The Estates Mission programme being run by the Council would be looking at how community assets (including tenant's halls) were being used, along with how the process could be made more streamlined and user friendly regarding participatory budgeting. Further information on this initiative could be considered by the scrutiny committee at a future meeting.

Housing Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday, 21st February, 2023

- As part of the audit of garages and shed consideration could be given to use vacant ones as bike racks or storage areas.
- TRAs could consider how unused space on the estate could be used to benefit the local community.
- The Council was seeking to provide tenants and residents with best practice examples of how TRA's should be run, and how they could make use of local budgets to enhance their community.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted and that the recommendations set out below as outlined by the Cabinet Adviser on Estates Mission, be endorsed by the scrutiny committee:

- **Consider an audit on the garages and sheds we have on estates.** Some residents wait for a long time, but then report there are abandoned sheds they could be using on their estates. The Council can allocate them to be used and even start collecting rent for them. As part of this process consideration should be given to vacant garages and sheds to be used as bike racks or storage spaces.
- **Engage with and listen to local businesses on the high street, not just the big businesses.** This was what I heard from the majority of the businesses I spoke with.
- **Be honest, fair and consistent with residents.** The Council need not prejudge residents, so that residents will feel confident to have a trusted relationship with the Council. Enhanced staff training should be offered on respecting and treating residents on estates with dignity and not on a prejudicial basis. Officers should not use their powers to penalise residents who disagree with them by labelling the residents to other officers as, e.g., “ones to watch out for.”
- **Be seen to be completing tasks to its best and fullest capacity.** The Council should reply to resident queries in a timely manner, communicate with residents more effectively, listen to residents. And Council officers should communicate more effectively with other Council officers, especially between departments.
- **Do more to assist disabled residents and residents with special needs who may require special assistance.** Only then will we allow them the ability to fully participate, which is their right.
- **Consult with residents when housing officers visit them.** Ask them how they want to improve their estates: this information needs to be gathered and investigated with the trends of responses, and then acted upon by the Council. Other Council staff from different departments should meet and get

to know residents on estates.

- **Educate residents about their influence to make change through working with the council and co-working relationships.** This is especially important when bringing in new agencies to help their estates. It cannot be that estates residents are seen or believed only to be “on the receiving side of charity” or that they “must accept or take whatever they are given.”
- **Provide training for residents on estates on how the council works,** including resident involvement on panels when recruiting new staff and having residents involved in decision-making that affects them and their estates.
- **Offer training to Chairs in TRAs and other community groups;** provide mentoring opportunities to help them flourish in their role and to be the best they can be in supporting their residents.
- **Promote awards for volunteers in Camden.** This should be done even to the extent of e.g., Royal or National awards such nominating for the honours system (e.g., OBE, CBE), especially in recognition of important work done by TRAs/DMCs.

12. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR BETTER HOMES

Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet Member Better Homes, which was presented by Councillor Meric Apak, Cabinet Member Better Homes, and he along with Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management and Danny Waite, Head of Repairs & Operations, gave the following key responses to questions:

- The Council was aware of the concerns regarding the misuse of blue badges on the Maiden Lane Estate from people not living on the estate and officers would be publicising the effective enforcement that was being undertaken. Local tenants and residents who concerns about who was parking on the estate should contact the respective team who would investigate any suspicious activity.
- There had need a small number of cases where the misdiagnosing of a water leak had occurred, and officers had put in place further processes to ensure that such occurrences were kept to a minimum.
- The Council was aware of the impact that a leak could have on a tenant and resident on their home, along with if it was left undealt with to the structure of the building, and the approach being undertaken to deal with damp and mould would also include how leaks should be addressed.
- The Repairs Service had recently gone through a restructure that would now lead to the setting up of team that would seek to tackle all types of leaks. The Council would be seeking to revise its approach to dealing with what it the past was considered a containable leak. This would mean that the timeframe for dealing with them was reprioritised. This would lead to urgent priority

(genuine emergency e.g. causing damage to electrical or immediate structural issues) being dealt with quickly and anything else would then be identified to the new leak hub, which would mean that they would be dealt with within 3-4 days.

- The Council had taken a very proactive approach to seeking to address damp and mould issues for all tenants and residents. In December, all tenants and residents were advised to contact the Council regarding whether these issues were impacting them. The Council had achieved 84% response rate to all cases within 10 working days, and the information arising from the reported cases were that 82% of them were deemed as low risk mild cases. Also, this information provided the Council with a very good picture of where damp and mould was across all its homes, which meant that a plan could be put in place to seek to tackle this over before the autumn/winter seasons start along with, medium to longer term solutions if necessary. Initially the plan would focus on properties with highest risk and levels of mould. On very limited occasions, a tenant may need to be moved out of their home to enable the work to be done.
- The Council now had all the damp and mould repair issues being serviced by an in-house team of operatives, though on occasion's specialist surveyors contractors have had to be used. The resources over the last year used to support the team had been increased in recognition of the prioritisation the Council had given to seek to tackle this issue. Arising from the spike in reported cases, the Council has had to adjust its systems and working patterns to meet this demand. In future the Council would be seeking to advise all tenants and residents on how damp and mould build ups in homes along with how this could be prevented, and taking a proactive approach on homes that required more intervention. When a high-risk case had been reported, operatives would aim to be with the tenant within 24hrs. If it was not highlighted as part of the original triage process as being high-risk, then a 10 working days timetable would apply. If then as part of the inspection it was deemed a high-risk case then it would be re-prioritised. If this meant that the tenant had to be temporarily moved then officers would put in for a repairs move, though due to the limited availability of Council homes this may not always be available as a temporary solution. Within the 24 hours engagement, operatives would immediately undertake mitigation works (e.g. mould marshal undertaking a mould removal wash) which would seek to address the most hazardous concerns.
- The Council had to shift the way that tenants and residents reported repairs request to enable resources to be reprioritised to the provision of services, rather than just call handling. This shift had led to an increase in repairs being reported electronically, better access to the call handling service for vulnerable tenants and residents, and call handling targets being met throughout the Council's busiest period.
- Officers were producing a note that would be sent to all tenants and residents regarding how they would be able to identify who their neighbourhood officers, service manager and caretaker were.

Housing Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday, 21st February, 2023

- The Council did not offer a 24/7 caretaking service and where urgent issues needed to be dealt with over the weekend then tenants and residents should report them through the call centre, who would pass them through to the mobile team for them to pick up. Consideration would be given as to whether further work in publicising this out-of- hours service needed to be undertaken.

ACTION BY: Director of Housing

- Consideration would be given as to how more black and ethnic minority communities could be more actively involved in TRAs, and a response would be provided to the scrutiny committee on how this could be taken forward.

ACTION BY: Director of Housing

- Officers agreed to provide a summary of the issues arising from the meeting with housing association representatives.

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted

13. WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Housing

The meeting had identified that they wished to see an update provided in six months' time regarding the Small Sites Programme.

Yet to be programmed

- Allocations Policy (Policy review and service redesign)
- Leaseholder services
- Landlord Licensing Scheme update
- Camden Housing Strategy
- **Small Sites Programme update (six months' time)**

RESOLVED –

THAT the report work programme be revised as outlined above.

Housing Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday, 21st February, 2023

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There were none.

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm.

CHAIR

Contact Officer: Gianni Franchi

Telephone No: 020 7974 1914

E-Mail: gianni.franchi@camden.gov.uk

MINUTES END