

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **HOLBORN DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** held on **WEDNESDAY, 8TH MARCH, 2023** at 7.00 pm in the Hybrid: Meeting via Zoom and at The Beryl Allen Hall, Bourne Estate, Portpool Lane, London EC1N

REGISTERED DMC MEMBERS PRESENT

Peter Wright (Chair)	Gordon Mansions RA
Albert Beale	South Bloomsbury TRA
Geoff Bury	Gamages TRA
Jan Francis	Derby Lodge
Sarah Friday	Medway Court TRA
Carolyn Gelenter	Brunswick TRA
Candice Liebeck	Riverside (Birkenhead) TRA
Judith Milner	Langdon House RA
Charise Outram	Bourne Estate TA
Julia Pascal	Flaxman Court TRA
Roz Perrott	Brunswick TRA
Ian Schofield	Dudley Court TRA
Richard Walker	Red Lion RA
Zeena Zakaria	Powis Estate TRA

OTHER RESIDENTS PRESENT

Michael Bruscini	Gamages TRA
Nancy Mawere	
Kim Quinn	

COUNCILLOR OBSERVERS PRESENT

Councillors Julian Fulbrook and Sue Vincent

COUNCILLOR OBSERVERS ABSENT

Councillors Lotis Bautista and Stephen Stark

OTHER COUNCILLORS PRESENT

Councillors Meric Apak and Awale Olad

OFFICERS PRESENT

Susanne Afra	Head of Capital Works
Graeme Beedham	Head of Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement
Hugh Boatwain	Senior Tenant Participation Officer
Cheryl Hardman	Principal Committee Officer
Andrew Hinchley	Green Space Development Manager
Philip King	Neighbourhood Housing Officer
Stephanie Marsh-Aldis	Neighbourhood Manager
Dermott Mullan	Landlord Services Manager
Dilip Shah	Principal Caretaking Manager

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 Holborn District Management Committee and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.

MINUTES

1. REGISTRATION OF TENANT AND RESIDENT ASSOCIATIONS AND CO-OPTION OF REPRESENTATIVES

The DMC considered the list of registered tenant and resident associations (TRAs) provided by the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Team listed at Appendix A to the agenda and those TRAs whose registration had lapsed, which were listed at Appendix B.

The Chair noted that Gamage's TRA had held an AGM on 25 January 2023 and the Flaxman Court TRA representative noted that an AGM had been held on 10 December 2022 rather than 13 November 2022 as listed in the supplementary agenda.

ACTION: Hugh Boatswain, Senior Tenant Participation Officer

RESOLVED –

THAT the 'A' and 'B' lists be noted.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Faisal Ahmed (Gordon Mansions TRA).

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair noted that the Cabinet Member update, which was usually at the end of the agenda, had been brought forward due to raising important issues for discussion.

4. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

There were no declarations of interest.

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

The Chair announced that an emergency bid for funding from Medway Court would be raised under the Holborn DMC Budget item.

6. MINUTES

The Red Lion RA representative commented that he had information on alternative bike sheds. It was suggested that any information be emailed to Hugh Boatswain, Senior Tenant Participation Officer, who could circulate it.

RESOLVED –

THAT the minutes of the meetings held on 6 December 2022 and 11 January 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

7. HOUSING SERVICES REPORT

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Housing Management and Director of Property Services.

Housing Contractor Performance

The Langdon House TRA representative commented on repairs that had been scheduled for two separate neighbours. Having called the contact centre to suggest amalgamating the repairs, advice had been received that staff would then not get paid and would not have the necessary materials. Susanne Afra, Head of Capital Works, explained that staff were salaried and offered to follow up with the TRA representative.

ACTION: Susanne Afra, Head of Capital Works

The Head of Capital Works also agreed to follow up with the Langdon House TRA representative with regard to questions about heating systems.

ACTION: Susanne Afra, Head of Capital Works

In response to questions from the Chair, the Head of Capital Works explained that the Head of Repairs & Operations was developing a planned maintenance programme. The programme could be shared with the DMC and it was confirmed that estates would be advised of any planned maintenance.

ACTION: Susanne Afra, Head of Capital Works

Concern was expressed regarding the proforma reporting channels that caretakers are required to use to communicate repairs. It was noted that for less common repairs there was not a simplified route for reporting. The Head of Capital Works agreed to discuss this with the relevant team and respond back to the Flaxman Court TRA representative.

ACTION: Susanne Afra, Head of Capital Works

The Powis Estate TRA representative highlighted ongoing challenges with resolving the minor repair of a communal tap. There had been multiple visits from the repairs team and a lack of communication. The Head of Capital Works agreed to follow up the issue and report back to the Powis Estate TRA representative.

ACTION: Susanne Afra, Head of Capital Works

General concern was expressed regarding communications from the repairs service which results in problems such as contractors unable to access rooms because the caretaker is not aware and present.

Landlord Services Update

In response to a request, Dermott Mullan, Landlord Services Manager, agreed to investigate when the advice bus might be able to visit the Bourne Estate.

ACTION: Dermott Mullan, Landlord Services Manager

Representatives discussed the apparent disproportionate provision of services such as the advice bus scheduled to visit the north of the borough. It was noted that the south of the borough was more expensive, while estates such as the Bourne were among the most deprived in the country.

In response to questions, it was explained that the aim was for Neighbourhood Housing Officers to visit all tenants with whom there had been no recent contact but vulnerable tenants were prioritised. Most tenants had welcomed the contact but some visits had led to concerns being identified such as hoarding which required further engagement. Contact details and next of kin would be updated as part of the visit.

It was suggested that vulnerable tenants could be provided with information about the TRAs during the visits. The Landlord Services Manager noted that many services had requested that information be provided during the visits and it was important not to overload people with information. The proposal could be considered further.

ACTION: Dermott Mullan, Landlord Services Manager

A representative highlighted the lack of response from the Council to letters and queried whether they would be logged. It was suggested that the Council might not be able to rely on its records on recent contact with the Council. Officers noted that Housing had lots of systems on which contacts from tenants were recorded.

It was confirmed that the Cost of Living Crisis Fund was for urgent need and not to pay for rent arrears. There were alternative ways to support tenants with rent arrears. In response to questions, it was confirmed that tenants were advised of the WaterHelp scheme from Thames Water where financial hardship and problems paying for water bills were raised.

The Head of Capital Works informed the DMC that home energy advice had previously been outsourced. It was now provided in-house and approval to recruit a second adviser had been received.

The Chair suggested that terminology regarding vulnerable tenants should be aligned across services.

Concern was expressed that the Council required photo identification to be shown at the Post Office to receive benefits. It was suggested that this would affect the most vulnerable residents and was not required in other boroughs. The need for photo identification would also be a problem at the elections in May 2024.

Housing Transformation Update

The new service heads would not be in place until May 2023 but it was confirmed that the new position holders would be advised to DMC representatives. It was clarified that 'Income' in Income and Leaseholder Services referred to tenant rents. The Housing Solutions service would cover areas such as homelessness and hostels.

Housing Regulation

The Chair clarified that the new regulator was for social housing tenants but that a leaseholder satisfaction survey would be issued separately. Graeme Beedham, Head of Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement, explained that the Regulator of Social Housing expected to receive data by the first quarter in 2024. A telephone survey of a sample of tenants would take place in September and October 2023. A company had been commissioned to carry out both the tenant and leaseholder satisfaction surveys. The company was also conducting the survey for other London boroughs using the same methodology. This would enable comparisons to be made in the analysis. The survey results would be published online. A number of additional questions would be considered for the satisfaction surveys in consultation with the DMCs.

Concern was expressed about the use of landlord's data to measure repairs completed within target timescale. It was suggested that the Council's records may not match tenants' views on whether repairs had been satisfactorily repaired within the timescale. The Head of Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement responded that Regulator of Social Housing would be inspecting all large social landlords at least every four years against the consumer standards. It was also suggested that if a mismatch appeared between the measure of satisfaction with repairs and the measure of repairs completed within target timescale this would be identified by the regulator.

Ground Maintenance and Tree Management

Andrew Hinchley, Interim Head of Green Space, informed the meeting that the grounds maintenance contract with idverde was due to end in March 2025 and the

Council was in the early stages of recommissioning. An online survey would be open until the end of April 2023 and details would be circulated to DMC Members.

ACTION: Andrew Hinchley, Interim Head of Green Space

There would be further engagement on the recommissioning later in the year and also visits to play areas to directly connect with users.

The Interim Head of Green Space agreed with Councillor Julian Fulbrook that climate change was having an impact on Camden's green spaces. The service was adapting by planting more resilient species and diversifying the tree stock.

Representatives requested that the new contractor would engage with TRAs. The Interim Head of Green Space agreed to respond to the Flaxman Court TRA representative on the lack of engagement from idverde.

ACTION: Andrew Hinchley, Interim Head of Green Space

It was confirmed that, alongside some multiple choice questions, the online survey included some free text opportunities.

In response to queries about the use of planters to replace parking spaces, it was suggested that the Healthy Streets website would have information. There was a discussion about responsibility for maintaining planters. The Interim Head of Green Space noted that support was needed from the community.

The Bourne Estate TRA representative informed the meeting that Think and Do had planted a number of trees on the Bourne Estate and employed teenagers to maintain the trees, teaching them responsibility and connecting them to nature. Officers agreed that it was a successful model and was being expanded with further trees planned through this initiative.

It was noted that the residents with time to support the maintenance of green spaces often did not have the physical ability. This could lead to plants and trees failing, wasting council resources. The Interim Head of Green Space highlighted the need for clarity over whether a project was to be maintained by the community or the council. Councillor Awale Olad noted that the Quiet Garden on the Bourne Estate was to be managed by the Council. The Interim Head of Green Space agreed to respond to the Bourne Estate TRA representative with regard to council maintenance of the Quiet Garden.

ACTION: Andrew Hinchley, Interim Head of Green Space

In response to a query about agreed funding for a project eight months previously, the Riverside (Birkenhead) TRA representative was assured that the purchase orders had now been authorised. The Interim Head of Green Space agreed to follow up on the communication issues.

ACTION: Andrew Hinchley, Interim Head of Green Space

In response to questions from the Chair regarding council maintenance of improvement projects agreed by DMCs, the Interim Head of Green Space explained that there was limited capacity to deliver and maintain lots of improvement projects beyond the baseline. Further insights on the engagement process were welcomed via the online survey or by emailing the Green Space Development Manager directly.

The Interim Head of Green Space agreed to investigate why idverde had chopped down a mature tree on Red Lion Square.

ACTION: Andrew Hinchley, Interim Head of Green Space

Capital Works Update

The Bourne Estate TRA representative commented that the TRA had been informed the Phase 3 project would start shortly. The Head of Capital Works explained that a delay had been caused by the need to bring consultants on board. The procurement paperwork was being finalised and the project would go out to tender during March. It was hoped that some of the work would start in the summer. The Project Manager would be asked to update the TRA.

ACTION: Susanne Afra, Head of Capital Works

CCTV & Responsive Security Patrol

The Chair highlighted the online updates on the CCTV upgrades specific to estates and blocks. The Chair requested that TRAs be told if their estate had been identified as a priority.

ACTION: Graeme Dyson, Head of Security

There was a discussion about a notice left in blocks saying that there was CCTV in operation although the CCTV was not working.

In response to a request for information on how a TRA could support a vulnerable person whose front door had been broken down by Police, officers commented that the Police and Council may not be able to share certain information. Officers could pass on an offer of help to the vulnerable person and the TRA could approach them independently from the Council.

In response to concerns that the Responsive Security Patrol call back residents to update them during the night on call outs, waking them up, officers assured representatives that they could request for no call back. Councillor Fulbrook requested that officers do feedback to the Responsive Security Patrol that a text would be a preferable way to update and that instead of driving around the Brunswick Estate, they should patrol through on foot.

ACTION: Dermott Mullan, Landlord Services Manager

Camden Housing & Property Residents Panel

Concerns were raised regarding the Panel and a response requested to several questions:

- Who were the Panel members?
- How were they representative of residents?
- What was the appointment process followed?
- What was the Panel doing and what was the intended outcome?
- Could the minutes of meetings be shared with the DMCs?
- What was the cost of the Panel?

The Head of Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement agreed that a paper could be brought to the DMC responding to the questions.

ACTION: Scot Reid, Head of Property Customer Services and Engagement

Heating Pool Update

Representatives highlighted that residents were calling them about the letters regarding the heating pool charge increases. There was confusion over whether the maths was correct and fear over how increases would be paid for. It was also unclear why charges were increasing when gas prices were going down. The Cabinet Member for Better Homes commented that an email had been sent to Gamage's TRA regarding these concerns and this could be shared with the DMC.

ACTION: Hugh Boatswain, Senior Tenant Participation Officer

The Cabinet Member agreed with a suggestion from Councillor Fulbrook that heat metering be investigated. Officers were asked to look into the options.

ACTION: Susanne Afra, Head of Capital Works

The Cabinet Member confirmed that the heating pool increase was 125%.

The Chair noted that everyone understood the difficult situation faced by the Council.

RESOLVED –

THAT the DMC noted the report and gave feedback as summarised above.

8. UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR BETTER HOMES

Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet Member for Better Homes.

In response to a question about whether a smart meter could be installed in an electrical cupboard at Langdon House, the Cabinet Member commented that there needed to be a good connection for data being transmitted. This could be investigated.

ACTION: Sharon Calvey, Head of Estates Management

Concern was expressed about officers working from home and the use of online forms rather than residents being able to set out their concerns fully in emails. The Cabinet Member highlighted problems with the use of emails to contact officers including breaks in contact when that person is sick or on leave. It was an inefficient way to report repairs and most residents get used to one of the online channels to access the Council. The new WhatsApp and video facility had been successfully launched. By shifting to online reporting, it was easier to get through on the phone for those without internet access.

The Head of Capital Works agreed to follow up on an intermittent fault with a lift at Medway Court.

ACTION: Susanne Afra, Head of Capital Works

The Cabinet Member noted that the officer being chased by email about the fault was off sick and the other officers copied in may not realise that, believing the issue was being dealt with.

The Cabinet Member agreed that officers would provide an update for the Bourne Estate on the proposed TMO. The Bourne Estate TRA representative requested speed bumps to be installed as soon as possible given the lack of pavements. The Cabinet Member agreed that a response on this would be included in the update.

**ACTION: Sharon Calvey, Head of Estates Management
Peter Mardell, Head of Parking Operations**

It was noted that responses from Council officers were particularly important for residents with mental health issues. The Cabinet Member agreed that a response would be provided on when the mental health team was established.

ACTION: Dermott Mullan, Landlord Services Manager

There was a discussion about face to face channels of communication. Officers noted that residents could speak with customer service staff at 5 Pancras Square, who could support them with accessing other officers by telephone. Appointments could be made to meet Neighbourhood Housing Officers at different locations.

It was suggested by a resident that the installation of smart meters allowed electricity companies to turn off the supply remotely. Without a smart meter, not paying a bill was a method to force the company to speak to a resident.

RESOLVED –

THAT the DMC noted the report.

9. HOLBORN DMC BUDGET

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Programmes, Housing and the supplementary agenda.

In response to a query over whether any external contractors had been approached to quote for the proposed Trentishoe Mansions work, officers explained that for works under £10,000 the Council's in house contractors were contractually preferred.

The Chair announced that there had been an emergency bid for funds from Medway Court TRA. This was to repair a roof for a garden shed that had fallen in.

RESOLVED –

- (i) THAT Trentishoe Mansions TRA be granted £5,000 to improve the paintwork surrounding the main entrance door; and
- (ii) THAT Medway Court TRA be granted up to £1,000 to repair a garden shed roof.

10. ACTION POINTS UPDATE

RESOLVED –

The update was noted.

11. LOCAL ISSUES

There were none.

12. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The dates were noted.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 9.40 pm.

CHAIR

Holborn District Management Committee - Wednesday, 8th March, 2023

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MINUTES END