

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **KENTISH TOWN DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY, 28TH NOVEMBER, 2023** at 6.30 pm in the Kennistoun and Willingham TRA Hall, Willingham Terrace, Leighton Road, London NW5 2UY

REGISTERED DMC MEMBERS PRESENT

Derek Jarman (Chair)	Kennistoun & Willingham TRA
Jane McWilliams (Vice-Chair)	Brookfield Estate TRA
Momota Khatun (Vice-Chair)	St Pancras Way Estate TRA
Steve Barton	Holly Lodge Residents Association
John Cowley	Camden Square TRA
Petra Dando	Camden Association of Street Properties
Helen Duff	Ingestre Road Tenants Association
Greg Hattingh	Torriano Estate TRA
Joanna Hill	Maiden Lane TRA
Helen Jack	Lissenden Gardens Tenants Association
Victoria Jago	Whittington Estate TRA
Kevin Lawler	Ingestre Road Tenants Association
John Loughran	Ingestre Road Tenants Association
Tim Morgan	Torriano Estate TRA
Andrew Pierce	Camden Association of Street Properties
Agnieszka Slominska-Karachuk	Whittington Estate TRA
Pauline Stafford	Maiden Lane TRA
John Webb	Kennistoun & Willingham TRA

OTHER RESIDENTS PRESENT

Brendan Gleeson	Holly Lodge Residents Association
Ian Grant	Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum

COUNCILLOR OBSERVERS PRESENT

Councillors Meric Apak and Richard Cotton

COUNCILLOR OBSERVERS ABSENT

Councillors Camron Aref-Adib, Sylvia McNamara, Andrew Parkinson, James Slater and Anna Wright

OFFICERS PRESENT

Hannah Ashley Fraser	Head of Asset Management
Emma Cardoso	Team Leader (HRA & Capital Projects)
Tara Cookson	Neighbourhood Manager
Ododo Daff	Head of Innovation and Improvement
Moyosore Ojo	Community Presence Team Leader
Lydia Roberts	Strategic Lead
Abdilatif Shidane	Neighbourhood 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 Kentish Town District Management Committee and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.

MINUTES

1. REGISTRATION OF TENANTS' AND RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS AND CO-OPTION OF TENANT REPRESENTATIVES

The 'A' and 'B' lists were noted.

2. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Josh Cedar (Holly Lodge TRA).

Hugh Boatswain, Senior Tenant Participation Officer, advised that he was unable to attend the meeting.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair announced that Hugh Boatswain, Senior Tenant Participation Officer, was retiring. The DMC commended Hugh for all the work he had done for the Kentish Town DMC and the residents of Camden and thanked him for his service.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS ON THIS AGENDA

There were no such declarations.

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

There were no notifications of urgent business.

6. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting of the last meeting.

RESOLVED –

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 5th September 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

7. KENTISH TOWN PROGRESS REPORT - ACTION POINTS UPDATE

Consideration was given to the actions arising from the previous meeting.

Duties of Chair and Vice-Chair

The details provided were noted, however additional information was sought on training and development opportunities that were available for DMC Chairs and Vice-Chairs. This was an important consideration as a new Chair and Vice-Chairs may be elected next year. The meeting requested that this information be provided to a future meeting of the DMC.

ACTION: Tenant Participation

All DMC Special Meeting – Voids

Jane McWilliams, Brookfield TRA (Vice-Chair) had attended the deep dive meeting that had taken place on 8th November 2023 and reported back on some of the key points raised at the meeting.

The Vice-Chair reported that information on repairs, voids, mutual exchange and downsizing were provided at the meeting, which had proved very useful and informative. The Vice-Chair noted that the meeting had been a beneficial opportunity to gain further understanding of various housing processes and it was hoped that further sessions would be held in future.

DMC Members made the following comments:

- If a tenant moved out of a property works were repair and improvement works were undertaken before a new tenant moved in, however if a property was mutually exchanged the resident would have to take it 'as is' which seemed unfair.
- It would be useful for clear guidance on policies and processes regarding mutual exchange and downsizing, as well as clear information on the available cash and other incentives to be provided to residents.
- It would be useful to have a report to the next DMC on the information provided and the discussion that took place at special DMC meeting.

Officers provided the following information in response to questions:

- Essential repair work was always carried out prior to mutual exchange, as needed, however any works and repairs that residents were responsible for would not be fixed.
- Repairs and Better Homes works were undertaken based on the condition of a property, not age. Electrical tests and other safety checks would be carried out to check the condition of a property.
- Information about home swaps and downsizing and the tenants guide, which had recently been updated, were available online. A leaflet was also being

produced, which promoted mutual exchanges and downsizing and all the incentives and help available for these.

- It was understood that whilst cash-based incentives were appealing, sometimes more practical support would be preferred such as with moving, switching utilities, and decorating. As such, the Council had two officers who assisted residents with this and options for extending this support were being explored.
- The presentation that was shown at special DMC deep dive meeting would be shared for discussion at the next meeting of the DMC.

ACTION: Head of Innovation and Improvement

Repairs, CIP, and Better Homes Update

The meeting were informed that due to the reporting period on these areas, this work would be best placed to take place during the second quarter of 2024.

The Action Point Update was noted.

8. DISCUSSION ITEMS

8(a) HRA BUDGET MONITORING UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Team Leader (HRA & Capital Projects).

The Team Leader (HRA & Capital Projects) introduced the report and advised that the charges outlined in the report would be voted on at the all DMC rent setting meeting scheduled to take place in January 2024.

It was reported that the HRA reserve stood at £23 million. Furthermore, under the triple lock, pensions would go up by the 8.5% and benefits would go up by 6.7%, in line with the Consumer Prices Index.

DMC Members made the following comments:

- Rent payments go into the HRA, but there did not seem to be money available to fund important works, such as mould and damp repairs, and a large amount of money was being spent on internal borrowing.
- Essential or emergency maintenance work was not enough for some properties, as there were residents living in flats that were in disrepair and in desperate need of updates.
- Damp and mould was inevitable with the levels of overcrowding some residents experienced. It was appalling that government was not funding these essential repairs things, especially in the wake of Grenfell and child's death cause by damp and mould in Rochdale.
- 30% of council tenants did not receive any benefits and the proposed rent increases could have a huge impact on those residents. The increase would have to be paid for out of their own pocket and many residents who worked

would not receive an increase in their wages in line with inflation. A tapered system should be given consideration to lessen the burden on those residents.

- Those in receipt of a pension will also be worse off after the increases to rent and council tax.
- The impact of the Building Safety Act was expected to be far reaching and expensive. DMC Members would be interested to see how departments were adapting to these changes and residents should be informed on the Act and how it would impact service delivery and departments going forward. The proposed tenants conference could provide an opportunity to hear more about this.

ACTION: Head of Innovation and Improvement

Officers provided the following information in response to questions:

- Whilst gas prices had decreased, the supply had a large deficit as the reserve supply had previously been used to bring down costs to residents, therefore charges may not decrease so reserves could be replenished.
- The HRA borrowed both externally and internally.
- Some of the external debt included loans from the Public Works Loan Board, which would be paid back over 50 years. However, interest rates were increasing on all borrowing, including internal, which had resulted in increased costs.
- Camden's housing strategy placed importance on maintaining existing stock, through the Community Investment Programme (CIP) and the Better Homes programme, but it was also considered important to build new homes as well.
- The Better Homes programme included kitchen and bathroom refits but also works on roofs and windows.
- Maintaining properties was import and it was a huge responsibility to keep homes in good condition and problems with damp and mould should be urgently addressed to ensure that residents did not live in unsafe and unhealthy conditions.
- There was also a desperate need for more social housing, so there had to be a balance between maintaining existing stock and providing new homes.
- The Chalcots Estate evacuation had been costly and central government had assured the council that costs would be reimbursed, however this had not yet happened. Total costs, including replacement cladding and evacuation, had reached up to £130 million, and it was thought that only half these costs would be reimbursed. This had a huge impact on budgets.
- The Cabinet Member for Better Homes advised that borrowing through CIP and HRA was very complex, but it may be beneficial for DMC Members to be provided a breakdown of the borrowing and how this money was budgeted and spent.

ACTION: Team Leader (HRA & Capital Projects)

- The costs associated with the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023, were not yet clear but £195,000 had been budgeted for this.

- The HRA reserves had been depleted in recent years and it was critically important that it was replenished as quickly as possible to ensure financial stability. The reserves were currently at £23 million.
- It had been proposed that some savings could be made by increasing rent on garages, reviewing the leaseholder budget, improving collection of rent arrears, the housing service transformation programme, improving efficiency in repairs service, and refinancing debt.
- It was requested that more information on savings should be added to the report.

ACTION: Team Leader (HRA & Capital Projects)

- Opportunities and options were under consideration to increase the number of family homes available in the borough, and a strategic approach would be taken to make best use of current housing stock.
- A Zoom meeting had been scheduled on 14th December 2023 for residents to discuss the heating pool. The DMC asked for clarification at this meeting on how efficiency savings could be made on communal gas supplies as residents were faced with high charges and did not have the option of switching off to save money.

ACTION: Tennant Participation

A DMC Member made a proposal that the rent setting meeting, scheduled to take place on 10th January 2023 should be boycotted as the meeting was perceived by residents to be a box ticking exercise and served as a 'rubber stamp', as the Council would agree to the rent and service charge increases regardless of the views expressed by DMC Members and residents.

As such, DMC Members proposed and seconded that the rent setting meeting be boycotted, and on being put to the vote with seven in favour and one against, it was

RESOLVED –

THAT Kentish Town DMC boycott the rent setting meeting scheduled to take place on 10th January 2023.

The DMC then discussed ideas for a boycott and the following comments were made:

- A written motion should be brought to the rent setting meeting outlining the views of all residents and the reasons for a boycott.
- The motion could include case studies and real life examples of how the rent increase would impact residents, for example those struggling with low wages and fuel poverty.
- Some members felt morally obligated to boycott the meeting as they could not justify going to a meeting to discuss rent increases knowing how many residents were struggling with the cost of living.
- Other DMCs could be invited to sign the motion and then a walk out could be staged in protest of the rent increases.

- Some DMC Members felt it was important to attend the meeting to represent residents on their estates and give a collective view on the proposed increases.
- Some DMC Members thought that it might be more meaningful for residents to come to the meeting and express their concerns as a united group and refuse to vote on the increases.
- It was suggested that residents should be consulted on possible action before coming to a decision on the next steps and that a consensus should be formed before any action was taken.

It was suggested that DMC Member consider the points raised and discuss the next steps outside of the meeting.

8(b) COMMUNITY SAFETY AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Community Safety.

DMC Members raised the following concerns:

- Some DMC Members had experienced serious issues with crime and antisocial behaviour (ASB) on their estate and felt that these issues had not been suitably addressed.
- Some estates would have lower reports, despite crime and ASB being prevalent due to residents being reluctant to report due to not wanting to get involved or due to fear of consequences.
- Some residents had consistently reported issues but had become tired of continuously having to make reports and had found it incredibly draining, especially as they had not seen any of the issues resolved.
- Residents had experienced lots of issues such as theft, ASB, and drug use and had been put into situations where they were forced to take action due to concerns for their safety and lack of support from the authorities, which was unacceptable.
- Young people were being drawn into crime from young ages, as there were no more services available to them, such as youth clubs.
- It was noted that sometimes when police presence was increased on certain estates, the troublemakers would move on to a different area and bring issues to different estates.
- Sometimes patrols had been scheduled at times of the day when issues were not as apparent, so authorities did not have a full picture of some of the problems on the estates.
- It was imperative that there was cross authority working as some estates were pass throughs to get into Islington.
- DMC were concerned that the police were not sharing vital information about crime on estates with the Council, this needed to be addressed and improved.
- Anti-social behaviour was a problem for all residents, regardless of whether they were on an estate or in a street property. Some residents were living with serious issues but were too frightened to report them.

- DMC Members agreed that a special meeting on Crime and ASB would be beneficial for residents and requested that TRA Chairs be provided with further information.

ACTION: Community Safety/ Tenant Participation

The Community Presence Team Leader introduced the report and provided the following information in response to questions:

- Leaflets and door knocks had taken place on some estates to inform residents when estate action days were taking place, however action days had not yet been arranged for some estates but information on upcoming action days would follow in due course.
- So far action days had taken place in Kentish Town on the Torriano, Rostock and Peckwater Estates.
- The action days had been well received so far, and residents had the opportunity to talk to officers from different services and some issues were able to be resolved on the day, for example some repairs had been undertaken on the spot, or they had been inspected and further work arranged for a later date.
- The Ingester Road Estate Action Day was scheduled to take place in January.
- Officers went with police on patrols of estates. In the south of the borough for example, hotspot patrols were undertaken and areas with high levels of ASB and drug activity were inspected to identify issues and potential perpetrators and enforcement proceedings were initiated, as necessary.
- Low levels of reporting on estates was a major problem as deployment of resources was data lead and based on reports, so it was important that detailed reports were made when residents witnessed crime and ASB.
- If consistent reports were received about issues on certain estates or in certain areas resources would be directed to address this.
- if there was a particular address of concern, resources and specific support would also be directed there.
- Officers were undertaking design out crime work and were exploring new ways to work more closely with partners.

8(c) HOUSING PERFORMANCE

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Housing.

The Head of Innovation and Improvement reported that the tenancy visiting programme had been halted as it was a very resource intensive, efforts had been focused instead on the estate visit programme.

8(d) RENT ARREARS

Consideration was given to the report of Head of Leaseholder Services & Housing Income.

DMC Members noted that the report briefly explained some of the issues that were causing tenants to struggle to pay rent but would have found it beneficial to have more information about this. It was requested that further detail on this be provided in future reports so that DMC Members could identify some of the biggest challenges residents were facing and discuss options for support.

ACTION: Head of Leaseholder Services & Housing Income

Various issues relating to rent accounts were raised and DMC Members were reminded to contact rent team directly to discuss individual queries and problems.

The Head of Innovation and Improvement advised that there was usually more focus on those accounts that had higher arrears, but it was acknowledged that those who had accounts with smaller debts should be contacted quickly as it was important to provide advice and support to tenants who were at risk of falling further into debt. It was confirmed that benefits and welfare advice was provided to residents who fell into arrears.

8(e) NEIGHBOURHOOD OFFICERS ROLE AND FUNCTION

The information provided in the agenda was noted.

8(f) DAMP AND MOULD PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Property Services.

Responding to a point of clarification on the definition of a high risk or vulnerable resident, the Head of Innovation and Improvement advised the central government definition included children under the age of five, asthmatics, and people over the age of 85. The Head of Innovation and Improvement would confirm this definition and inform the DMC.

ACTION: Head of Innovation and Improvement

The meeting requested a breakdown of the causes of damp and mould, such as overcrowding, lifestyle, and ventilation issues, be provided within the next report as it was important to consider the causes of damp and mould so that services could identify issues and help prevent them in future.

ACTION: Director of Property Services

8(g) HEAT METERING PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Capital Works.

The meeting was advised that the Head of Capital Works was unable to attend the meeting, so if DMC Members had questions that could not be answered in the meeting, they would be noted and a written response provided.

The following points were noted:

- A progress update was sought on the review of street properties.
- It was reported that there had been ongoing issue with the heating system on Whittington Estate and that individual heat metres had not yet been connected, despite a commitment to do so and residents were frustrated that they were paying for a heating system that did not work. An update was sought.
- The communal heating system at Holly Lodge had broken, leaving some residents without heat. The process to get the system repaired was unclear and conflicting information had been given to residents, which had meant that some residents had to act as intermediaries to coordinate the repair work.
- Information was sought on whether consideration had been given to assessing and improving energy efficiency in properties.

The Head of Property Asset Management provided the following information in response to questions:

- In terms of repairs to the heating system at Holly Lodge, it was clarified that contractors should undertake repairs on the spot when possible and provide a timeline for any additional works or repairs that will be required. Residents should have been provided with an alternative heat source.
- Further detail on this shall be provided so residents have a clear outline of the repairs process.

ACTION: Head of Property Asset Management

- Periodical checks were undertaken on heating systems to ensure that they worked correctly and were safe to use.
- Occasionally, repair work to heating systems was more complex due to different systems across different estates and sometimes a specialist was required to carry out the work.

8(h) STOCK CONDITION SURVEYS/CAPITAL PROGRAMME

This item was deferred to a future meeting so that the outcomes and results of the stock condition surveys could be included.

8(i) PROPOSAL FOR A TENANT CONFERENCE - SPRING 2024

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Innovation and Improvement.

Ododo Daff, Head of Innovation and Improvement and Lydia Roberts, Strategic Lead presented the report and explained that Lydia would be leading on upcoming work on tenant engagement.

The following comments were made:

- The proposal was welcome as the last tenant conference had taken place nine years ago.
- The conference would be good opportunity to hear from residents and discuss the issues important to them.
- It would be useful to see positive examples of where residents have been engaged with and listened to.
- The conference would provide an opportunity to showcase the work that TRAs had done and a chance to hear positive news from residents and celebrate local projects and the time and effort put in by TRAs residents.
- It would be important to measure both successes and failures.
- It would be useful to look into things that haven't gone too well and use these examples as learning opportunities to drive future improvement.

Petra Dando (CASP), Steve Barton (Holly Lodge Residents Association) and Jane McWilliams (Brookfield TRA) volunteered to be part of a working group to assist with the organisation of the conference. John Cowley (Camden Square TRA) was nominated to contribute due to his campaign work on Council Housing.

The Head of Innovation and Improvement advised that a working group would be set up and it would be beneficial to also hear from residents who were not formally involved in TRAs, DMCs or other resident processes.

9. KENTISH TOWN DMC BUDGET

Consideration was given to the report of the Neighbourhood Manager.

Tara Cookson, Neighbourhood Manager, introduced the report and outlined the bids received. The Neighbourhood Manager advised the meeting that £55,545.05 of the £151,650 budget had been allocated so far, so there were sufficient funds available for all the received bids.

RESOLVED –

THAT the following requests be approved:

TRA	BID REQUEST	AMOUNT
Peckwater & Wolsey House	2 x LFB drop key gerda security panels to main entrance doors	£ 1,750.00
St Pancras Way TRA	Youth activities	£ 500.00
St Pancras Way TRA	Christmas community event	£ 1,000.00
St Pancras Way TRA	Mental health and online	£ 500.00

	consumer awareness workshops	
Lissenden Gardens TRA	Room hire costs	£ 300.00
Ingestre TRA	Signage, bench, new timber to secure handrails and wildflower planting for the woodland	£ 4,953.00
Ingestre TRA	New lining and plants and safety mesh for the woodland pond. Brickwork and new bird nesting boxes	£ 4,977.00
Ingestre TRA	Repair and replace a section of fencing to secure woodland	£ 4,990.00
Brookfield TRA	Christmas Bonanza weekend event	£ 4,950.00
Brookfield TRA	Christmas hampers	£ 1,750.00
Whittington TRA	Landscape improvement project	£ 4,000.00

10. INFORMATION REPORT

Due to time constraints, this report was not considered.

11. CABINET MEMBER FOR BETTER HOMES UPDATE

Due to time constraints, this report was taken as read.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There was none.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm.

CHAIR

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MINUTES END