

## **THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

At a meeting of the **KENTISH TOWN DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY, 26TH NOVEMBER, 2024** at 6.30 pm in the Kennistoun and Willingham TRA Hall, Willingham Terrace, Leighton Road, London NW5 2UY

### **REGISTERED DMC MEMBERS PRESENT**

Jane McWilliams (Chair)	Brookfield Estate TRA
Derek Jarman (Vice-Chair)	Kennistoun & Willingham TRA
Ms. Momota Khatun (Vice-Chair)	St Pancras Way TRA
Valerie Amajoutt (Sub)	Maiden Lane TRA
Steve Barton	Holly Lodge Residents Association
John Cowley	Camden Square TRA
Shah Daber	Raglan Estate TRA
Deirdre McEvoy (Sub)	Maiden Lane TRA
Patrick Hagopian (Sub)	Whittington Estate TRA
Amyjo Lamb (Sub)	Brookfield Estate TRA
Kevin Lawer (Sub)	Ingestre Road Tenants Association
Tim Morgan	Torriano Estate TRA
Charlotte Pelzer (Sub)	Peckwater Estate TRA
Agnieszka Slominska-Karachuk	Whittington Estate TRA
Joe Thornton (Sub)	Spencer Rise & Churchill TRA
Sadiya Waasuge	Peckwater Estate TRA
John Webb (Sub)	Kennistoun & Willingham TRA

### **OTHER RESIDENTS PRESENT**

Terry Esnault	Local Resident
Paul Tomlinson	Amphill Square TRA (Camden Town DMC)

### **COUNCILLOR OBSERVERS PRESENT**

Councillors Meric Apak, Sylvia McNamara, James Slater and Sagal Abdi-Wali

### **COUNCILLOR OBSERVERS ABSENT**

Councillors Camron Aref-Adib, Richard Cotton, Andrew Parkinson and Anna Wright

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

Debora Byrne	Tenant Participation
Emma Cardoso	Strategic Finance Lead, Housing
Tara Cookson	Neighbourhood Manager
Katie Hawthorn	Housing Change and Transformation Manager
Simon Rathbone	Housing Policy and Change Lead
Stanton La Foucade	Tenant Participation Coordinator
Manjit Sokhi	Neighbourhood Manager
Russell Taylor	CCTV Control Room Operations 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**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Anna Wright, Josh Cedar (Holly Lodge Residents Association), Greg Hattingh (Sub, Torriano Estate TRA), Andrew Pierce (Sub, Camden Association of Street Properties), Sophie Rodger (Carrol & Sanderson Close TRA) and Andrew St. John (Raglan Estate TRA).

### **3. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

### **4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS ON THIS AGENDA**

There were no 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**

It was noted that Ms. Momota Khatun should be listed as Vice-Chair.

## **RESOLVED –**

THAT the minutes of the meetings held on 3 September 2024 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 meetings.

KT/0924/01 - To check on the progress of the letter sent to the Government by the Leader, regarding HS2 and Social Housing.

Officers confirmed that they had no new information on the matter and they would contact the Residents Office to report any updates on the progress made.

### **ACTION: Tenant Participation**

KT/0924/03 Provide an update on the matched funding for the Peckwater Estate MUGA project

Officers confirmed the funding was secured.

KT/0924/05 Information on how downsizing incentives were funded.

In response to residents, officers agreed to provide information outside of the meeting on the amount of budget allocated in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for downsizing and whether there was an allocation limit for each financial year.

### **ACTION: Tenant Participation**

Comments relating to other DMC actions – Emergency evacuation plans

In response to residents, officers confirmed the Council held an up-to-date register of vulnerable residents who would require assistance evacuating in an emergency incident. The Chair added that the Tenant Engagement Programme, where every tenant would be visited in the borough, would identify currently unknown vulnerable residents who should be added to the register.

## **8. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUDGET 2025/26**

Emma Cardoso (Strategic Finance Lead – Housing) introduced the report which updated residents on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 2025/26 budget setting progress which covered the following areas: 2024/25 budget pressures, rents, service charges, savings, heating pool, and the formal consultation in the Joint DMC meeting in January 2025.

The Chair thanked officer for the update and invited questions and comments from residents. The following was discussed:

- In response to residents, officers agreed to speak to the Director of Housing about whether it was possible to install sensory lighting units onto estates as a savings measure.

**ACTION BY: Strategic Finance Lead – Housing**

- A resident queried the £300,000 increase in the leaseholder income budget and requested clarification on what it was paying for, citing concerns about leaseholder dissatisfaction with current service delivery. The officer explained that the increase aimed to align budget estimates with actual costs, rightsizing the budget, correcting previous underestimations and this was part of an annual budgeting process and not about finding new costs. Divided across approximately 30,000 leaseholders, the increase equated to around £30 per leaseholder. Leaseholders were charged based on service costs, regardless of quality, and should contact the Leaseholder Team to address specific concerns about service delivery. Councillors raised that the Leaseholder Forum on 4 November 2024 was a good opportunity to discuss leaseholder concerns.
- A resident raised concerns about insufficient funding for basic maintenance, noting that only emergency fixes were being prioritised and other works were postponed. Residents attributed a recent fire on an estate to maintenance negligence.
- A resident asked about the discrepancy between projected and actual costs for the current year and whether this had been accounted for. The officer explained that the report highlighted key pressures, primarily related to repairs driven by high demand, disrepair claims, and inflation in repair costs for 2025/26. Ongoing pressures included rising insurance costs and borrowing expenses, with rates currently at 4.9% compared to under 1% in previous years. The officer said they hoped interest rates would reduce in the coming year to improve the financial position.
- A resident questioned the sufficiency of the reserve fund, expressing concerns about sustainability if budgets were not managed and the Council faced another major issue. The officer acknowledged the need to curtail spending by £3.5 million and explained that efforts had been made to build reserves to approximately £4 million annually. They reassured residents that overspending had been carefully offset to maintain reserve levels but noted that the current financial model was challenging. It was confirmed that repairs were the primary factor depleting finances.
- A resident raised concerns about the condition of Council-owned buildings and questioned whether funds were being allocated appropriately. In response, the Cabinet Resident explained that £1 billion would be needed to bring properties up to a good standard, noting the pressures on local authorities, the Decent Homes Standard, and investigations by regulators into Camden's performance. It was highlighted that Camden's income from rents totalled £300 million, leaving a £600

million shortfall. When broken down per unit, this equated to £30,000 per unit, whereas Camden only received £9,000 per home, reflecting a decade of underinvestment from the government. The resident said that the lack of funding and rising costs had been a long-standing issue, but responsibility for the situation lay with Camden, as some residents were having to carry out their own repairs. Officers said that discussions with other local authorities across London revealed that tenants and leaseholders were dissatisfied everywhere, not just in Camden. It was emphasised that building safety must remain a priority.

- A resident raised concerns about the Decent Homes Standard, highlighting that tenants on estates were expecting improvements, and questioned how the required standards could be met by 2025 if there was no funding available. The officer responded that retrofitting was factored into the budget and that the timeline for meeting the standards would need to be confirmed.
- Residents raised concerns about the low quality of repairs and the need for quality control. A resident suggested that the Council should implement a system where someone inspected the work before payment was made to contractors, which could potentially save money by preventing the need for rework and repeated payments for subpar repairs.
- Residents expressed concerns about the lack of communication to residents about repairs and stated that officers often failed to follow up with residents and emphasised the need for a tracking system to address this issue.
- A resident said that the heating contract was up for renewal and expressed concerns about one contractor notorious for not showing up and failing to provide adequate notice was bidding for the tender again. The resident, along with other leaseholders, advocated for the introduction of a penalty clause and compensation for residents who stayed home for appointments that are missed. They suggested that Camden's system of leaving a card when no one was at home should be applied to contractors as well. If Camden declined this proposal, the resident argued, compensation should be provided to residents, and costs should not be passed onto them.
- A resident said the same issues recurred each year and asked what it would take to introduce more radical recommendations and when these could be expected, suggesting options such as a one-off levy to improve stock or selling off money-losing properties. The Cabinet Member responded that radical changes were already in progress, including the Asset Management Strategy, with more details to be shared in the coming months, followed by the Housing Transformation Programme. Over the past two years, the previous Cabinet Member had worked to improve this situation, alongside Corporate Services, to better capture data and manage larger projects. The intention was to improve the model, though the issue was larger than the Council and involved lobbying the government. Progress on these initiatives had been shared with the DMC.
- A resident shared an example where they used WhatsApp to report a repair and an engineer arrived to service the boiler. However, the engineer stated that they had not received a photo, despite Camden having the photo on WhatsApp, which was not forwarded to the company. The resident acknowledged that while WhatsApp was a good idea, the system did not currently work effectively.

- in response to a resident asking if Camden's pension fund could be moved into the HRA reserve fund, a councillor stated that pension funds needed to be invested to guarantee a percentage increase in the medium/long-term, but the volatility of markets made this uncertain. Therefore, funds were directed into large companies and investments and a considerable amount of work had been done to assess the ethical soundness of these investments. The councillor added that a London conglomerate of pension funds was investing in social housing, with a certain amount of money already allocated for this purpose. However, it was considered that better investment opportunities might exist outside of London. They also mentioned that Chancellor of the Exchequer was proposing that local authorities no longer control their own pensions, suggesting that larger conglomerates could manage them for more lucrative returns.
- A resident asked if interest was being paid on the reserves. Officers confirmed that interest was paid both on the reserves and on borrowing, with borrowing exceeding the savings. They emphasised the importance of maintaining a reserve for emergencies, such as events like the Chalcots Estate emergency. The officer also noted that the Section 151 officer required sufficient reserves for both emergency situations and future planning.

## **9. HOUSING TRANSFORMATION**

Katie Hawthorn (Housing Change and Transformation Manager) and Simon Rathbone (Housing Policy and Change Lead) introduced and summarised the report which updated residents on the Housing Transformation programme and covered the following areas: context of the programme, recent achievements, workstreams and upcoming priorities, and the restructure of Housing Services.

The Chair thanked officers for the update and invited questions and comments from residents. The following was discussed:

- A resident asked how residents could interact with the Housing Transformation Team. The Chair said there were already various groups and panels for resident engagement and stated that residents' suggestions were often not followed through in current routes, leading to a loss of faith in meaningful engagement. Officers explained they were working on a participation model to involve DMC representatives and create more opportunities for resident engagement and they planned to recruit a group of residents to work on topics on subject-specific initiatives of their choosing over the course of a year. They noted that while engagement would be with a smaller group, new Tenant Participation Services would also offer broader opportunities for involvement beyond the DMCs.
- A resident asked how the newly established Housing Policy, Performance and Assurance service would be funded. Officers explained that the justification for the team was an 'invest to save' approach. The transformation programme was focused on ensuring value for money. They noted that the team was small, consisting of five people, and would be closely examining how to make services more efficient, with robust business cases behind all initiatives.

- In relation to the Asset Management Strategy, a resident asked how quality control, pressures, and how to balance multiple goals could all be addressed under the strategy. The resident expressed concerns about the rushed presentation of the Strategy and the lack of time for proper discussion at the previous joint DMC meeting. Given Cabinet's timing to agree the Strategy, there had been insufficient opportunity for deliberation and meaningful input from residents. The resident also pointed out that the Asset Management Strategy was not on the regular DMC agenda, which they felt showed a lack of respect for residents' involvement in the process. Officers clarified that the asset management strategy would now be presented to Cabinet in January 2025, alongside the rent setting. They added that it had already been discussed at the Joint DMC, the Housing Residents Panel on 14 November 2024, and would also be addressed at the Leaseholders Forum on 4 December 2024.
- The Chair agreed on the need for more pre-meeting discussions between chairs to set the DMC agenda. They planned to send an email to all representatives to gather input on what topics should be discussed at the next DMC meeting in March 2025.
- A resident expressed frustration with ongoing issues, noting that despite changes such as a new Head of Repairs and a new system a few years ago, the same problems persisted. They added that tenants were reluctant to attend meetings, believing nothing would change.
- The Chair expressed a desire for the restructure to involve fewer managers and fewer management levels, advocating for more frontline staff with higher salaries. Officers responded that they were working to make the structure as efficient as possible, including identifying areas to reduce management levels.
- A resident raised concerns about poor communication between Camden and residents, particularly noting that officers were not responding to emails and residents were not being treated seriously. They also highlighted a recent fire that left residents badly affected, with minimal communication from housing officers, asking if this could be considered part of the transformation process. Officers acknowledged the issue, explaining that work was underway to improve how officers engage with residents. This included implementing a proper triaging model for processing queries within an appropriate timeframe, as outlined in the Housing Front Door report. They recognised the current system was not working and efforts were being made to address it.
- The Chair expressed concerns about communication with housing officers, noting that there had been issues with staff availability and a lack of updates when officers were absent. The Chair emphasised the importance of clear communication, requesting that residents be informed when an officer is unavailable for an extended period, with an alternative contact provided in such cases, as the current system lacked automatic email updates which was frustrating.
- A resident stated that the report lacked a focus on outcomes or success measures. They pointed out that while the strategy and policy were discussed, there was no clear indication of progress or improvement. Officers acknowledged the point, agreeing that future reports would focus on outcomes and factual information. The resident also noted the lack of details on the outcomes of the

resident action day. In response, the Chair mentioned that feedback from that event had been positive and updates had been shared in previous meetings and information was available on the microsite and in a video.

- In response to residents, officers agreed to provide an update on the Tenant Engagement Programme of Housing/Council officers visiting every tenant household in the borough.

**ACTION: Tenant Participation**

**10. CCTV PROGRAMME**

Russell Taylor (CCTV Control Room Operations Manager) introduced and summarised the report which updated residents on the renewal of the CCTV network on estates.

The Chair thanked the officer for the update and invited questions and comments from residents. The following was discussed:

- The Chair asked if there was a list of estates due to receive CCTV, expressing concern that many requests had been made but not prioritised. Officers confirmed that there were lists, but several factors must be considered before proceeding with installation, including the justification for CCTV, whether it was proportionate to the issue, available power sources, and whether it addressed issues like antisocial behaviour and crime. Officers emphasised that CCTV was not the only solution, and alternative, less intrusive methods were also considered. If DMCs wanted more involvement, local officers were able to engage earlier in the process.
- The Chair inquired about the process for estates that currently did not have CCTV, and highlighted that Camden security patrols did not occur frequently enough. They asked how security was managed for estates without CCTV. Officers responded that patrols and incidents were recorded and analysed through an intelligence hub, using data from police reports and public calls to inform decisions on patrols. They noted in their role they were not able to personally address why patrols might not be as frequent as required.
- The Chair expressed frustration regarding ongoing issues of drug problems, violent incidents, and residents not feeling safe, particularly in areas that had seen serious crimes. They raised concerns about the lack of CCTV, despite the presence of ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) cameras which they felt were prioritised over local safety needs. Officers acknowledged these concerns and suggested working with Community Safety Officers to develop a proposal for increased CCTV coverage. The officer clarified that decisions on CCTV installations involved more than just responsive teams and were also informed by police reports and crime intelligence.
- In response to residents, officers agreed to provide information of which estates are on the CCTV installations waiting list, to include information on how those



estates can develop their case to the Council for installations if there are any obstacles to their application.

**ACTION BY: CCTV Control Room Operations Manager**

- A resident asked how long it typically took to process a request for CCTV installation. In response, officers explained that the timeline depended on whether it was for an individual camera or for a whole estate. For individual cameras, the process would be quicker, but there were challenges with power sources and where cameras could be mounted. For a full estate system, more contractors would be involved, and the process would take longer. It was estimated that the whole process could take around two months, depending on the evidence and information supplied.
- A resident raised concerns about antisocial behaviour and the lack of communication between departments. They asked whether the number of antisocial incidents that had been escalated into formal complaints or perceived non-action had been tracked. The officer responded that while specific numbers were not available, cases were handled through normal complaints channels and were processed accordingly.
- A resident asked where the CCTV operations would be based once the Holmes Road site was sold to developers. Officers responded that discussions had started regarding the location of the new CCTV suite but a new location had not yet been confirmed.
- In response to residents, officers confirmed that residents personal cameras could face outward to the street as long as they did not infringe on other residents property and privacy.
- The Chair asked about the cost of the CCTV programme. Officers responded that they were unsure of the exact cost but noted that the ongoing costs were part of the residents' fees and the charges would not begin until one year after the cameras were active. The Chair pointed out that some cameras were not working or active.

**11. KENTISH TOWN DMC BUDGET**

Deborah Byrne (Tenant Participation) introduced the report. Residents agreed the officer bid for Peckwater Estate TRA and an additionally proposed bid for TRA hall repairs from Kennistoun, Willingham, Rosemary & Margaret TRA - in principle - which would be made using the express bid process.

The following was discussed:

- Officers stated that any new bids could not be submitted until 1st April, when the new budget would become available.
- The Neighbourhood Manager reported that the St Pancras Way Estate TRA historically submitted a bid to develop a community hub on the estate. However, the project could no longer be delivered with the available funding of £100,000

from the DMC and £40,000 from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), as the total cost of the project now exceeded £400,000. The TRA had explored all options but now suggested building a smaller hub initially and would seek additional funding over time to expand it. Officers said that residents had proposed alternative uses for the funds, such as installing an outdoor gym in the area. Residents said that the estate attracted antisocial behaviour, as the site was already a hotspot for drug use and other issues. Residents also highlighted the need for safety measures, such as a barrier gate and bollards, to deter joyriding and prevent cars from entering open areas near the children's playground, which posed a danger to children. In response, Tenant Participation explained that a significant amount of funding initially allocated for a specific purpose could not be redirected without approval from the Director of Finance. They noted that a new bid from St Pancras Way Estate could be submitted in March.

- A resident highlighted the availability of a £150 million government fund, the Community Ownership Fund, which provided grants of up to £250,000 for community upgrades. They expressed interest in applying but noted the need for assistance from Camden, as tenants did not own the spaces and did not know the exact amount of funding to apply for since the application would need to be costed. It was noted that housing officers could provide initial assistance, with finance staff available for complex applications.
- In response to residents, officers agreed to provide information outside of the meeting on whether there was any scope to develop the two undercroft areas into two disabled flats units on St Pancras Way estate.

**ACTION BY: Director of Property Management**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the following bid requests be approved:

<b>TRA</b>	<b>Bid Request</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Peckwater Estate TRA	TRA hall refurbishment.	£12,000
Kennistoun, Willingham, Rosemary & Margaret TRA	This is approved by members in principle, the TRA will pursue the express bid process. The bid is for TRA hall repairs.	£5,000

**12. CABINET RESIDENT FOR BETTER HOMES UPDATE**

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

Councillor Sagal Abdi-Wali, Cabinet Member for Better Homes, provided an update on several areas across their portfolio.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for the update and invited questions and comments from residents. The following was discussed:

- A resident emphasised the need to address the void property situation, expressing concerns about the impact of vacant properties on the community, including damage and squatting. The Cabinet Member explained that processes related to voids had been streamlined under the Housing Transformation Programme, with teams working more cohesively. While acknowledging improvements, they noted that communication about the reasons for long-term voids, such as high repair costs, needed strengthening.
- A resident suggested introducing consequences for tenants who returned properties in poor condition and recommended clear contracts outlining upkeep responsibilities.
- The Neighbourhood Manager clarified that voids and lettings were managed by the Moving Homes Team rather than Housing Officers and confirmed that early visits were being conducted as part of the process.

### **13. VOIDS PERFORMANCE**

The information report was noted.

### **14. KPI DASHBOARD**

The information report was noted.

### **15. HOLMES ROAD**

Consideration was given to the information report which provided a summary update on the re-provision of the Holmes Road Depot as part of the Regeneration Strategy for Regis Road.

The following was discussed:

- The Cabinet Member explained that the regeneration of the Holmes Road Depot was driven by the need to create both employment opportunities and homes, with 50% of the development being affordable housing. The in-house labour force was guaranteed jobs through contracts, ensuring that the re-provision of the depot met both current and future service requirements. The regeneration team had engaged with services to understand their needs and ensure that these were incorporated into the plans.
- In relation to section 4.3, a resident asked for more information about the inefficiency issues with the current layout of Holmes Road. The Cabinet Member explained that services working at the site were providing feedback, and future plans aimed to meet retrofit and net-zero standards. They suggested planning a

DMC visit to discuss potential improvements. The Cabinet Member, who had worked at Holmes Road for a decade, acknowledged both the effective and inefficient parts of the site, emphasising that the best insights came from the services themselves. The Chair inquired about the plans for a public meeting, and the Cabinet Member confirmed that public consultations had been ongoing for six weeks and would conclude at the end of November 2024. The Chair also asked about the scope of the consultation. In response to residents, officers agree to provide information on the current resident consultation of the future of Holmes Road Depot, to include information on when a public meeting that residents can participate in will take place.

**ACTION BY: Area regeneration Manager**

The information report was noted.

**16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no other urgent business.

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm.

**CHAIR**

**Contact Officer: Anoushka Clayton-Walshe**

**Telephone No: 020 7974 8543**

**E-Mail: [anoushka.clayton-walshe@camden.gov.uk](mailto:anoushka.clayton-walshe@camden.gov.uk)**

**MINUTES END**