

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **KENTISH TOWN DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY, 8TH MARCH, 2022** at 6.30 pm in the

REGISTERED DMC MEMBERS PRESENT

Derek Jarman (Chair)	Kennistoun & Willingham TRA
Momota Khatun (Vice-Chair)	St Pancras Way Estate TRA
Sue Robertson (Vice-Chair)	Rochester Road TRA
Steve Barton (sub)	Holly Lodge TRA
Costa Costa	Brookfield Estate TRA
Josh Cedar	Holly Lodge TRA
Jane Hickson	Leighton Crescent TRA
Jane McWilliams (sub)	Brookfield Estate TRA
John Webb (sub)	Kennistoun & Willingham TRA

OTHER RESIDENTS PRESENT

Andrew Peirce (sub)	Camden Association of Street Properties
Pauline Stafford	Maiden Lane TRA

COUNCILLOR OBSERVERS PRESENT

Councillors Meric Apak and Ranjit Singh

OFFICERS PRESENT

Hugh Boatswain	Tenant Participation
Clair Bowman	Neighbourhood Housing Manager
Tara Cookson	Neighbourhood Manager
Graeme Dyson	Head of Security
Gavin Haynes	Director of Property Management
Michael Killeen	Head of Strategic Asset Management & Compliance
Stanton La Foucade	Tenant Participation
Peter Sebastian	Head of Finance (Supporting Communities)
Wayne Head	Principal Caretaking Manager
Angela Spooner	Head of Landlord Services
Danny Waite	Head of Repairs and Operations

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. REMOTE MEETINGS

RESOLVED

THAT the guidance on remote meetings be noted.

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

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

RESOLVED –

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

3. APOLOGIES

Laura Gillet, Voids Manager and Oliver Jones, Head of Green Spaces had advised that they were unable to attend the meeting.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair announced that Claire Beaumont, newly appointed Neighbourhood Manager, was in attendance and she was welcomed to her first meeting of the Kentish Town DMC.

The DMC reflected on the dire situation in Ukraine. Consideration was given to how this might affect the Council and residents, such as cost of living increases or gas supply. The Chair requested that Hugh Boatswain, Senior Tenant Participation Officer provide advice to DMC members on how they can donate to Ukrainian Aid efforts.

The Chair also announced that Mary McGowan, Director of Housing Management, was soon leaving the Council. She was thanked for her service and the DMC wished her well.

The Chair also thanked Councillor Meric Apak for his work with the DMCs as Cabinet Officer for Better Homes.

5. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

There were no declarations.

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

There was no urgent business.

7. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 30th November 2021 and the joint meeting on 12th January 2022.

Regarding the minutes for 12th January 2022, the Chair advised that that he had requested financial modelling to be provided regarding the rent increase and asked for an update to be given.

Responding to a question about further rent increase next year, the Cabinet Member for Better Homes advised that the Council was under huge pressure huge and would have to take informed view nearer the time.

Councillor Apak confirmed that a Letter has been drafted and it was currently awaiting to the signature of the Leader of the Council. Once the Leader had signed it would be shared with DMC Chairs and delivered to Number 10, Downing Street.

RESOLVED –

THAT the minutes be approved and signed as a correct record.

8. CONSOLIDATED ACTION POINTS LIST

Consideration was given to the Kentish Town actions points, on the consolidated action points list.

Angela Spooner, Head of Landlord Services, and Graeme Dyson, Head of Security, advised that the meeting would be updated on the action points during Agenda Item 11.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted.

9. HOUSING SERVICES CONSOLIDATED REPORT

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

Capital Works update

Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management, gave a brief update on the Capital Works programme.

In response to a question, Mr Haynes advised that the gas for the communal supply was purchased from LASER Energy, a public sector gas consortium. The Council had pre-purchased gas and had a supply up to October 2022. Responding to a follow up question Mr Haynes confirmed that there were no concerns that LASER would go bankrupt, however further information would be sought on the company's future viability.

DMC members expressed concern that there may be gas supply issues in the future as tensions rise in Russia and Ukraine.

Michael Killeen, Head of Strategic Asset Management & Compliance, explained that work had been undertaken, which had explored needs across the Council's housing stock and investments had been made in retrofitting programmes. Properties rated D or E for energy efficiency were priorities with a goal of raising their rating to C. Mr Killeen advised that boilers were being fitted and replaced in some properties.

Responding to a question about solar panels, Mr Killeen advised that the possibility of installing solar panels had been explored, however this was not currently a viable option as funding was not available. The Carbon Zero Improvement Forum had reported on solar panels, so the findings of the forum could be circulated to members.

ACTION: Head of Strategic Asset Management & Compliance

Fire Safety

Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management, provided an update on the fire safety work that was due to be undertaken.

Responding to questions about fire doors Mr Haynes advised that information would be provided to the DMC on which doors were due to be replaced and that leaseholders did not pay for front doors as they formed part of an escape route and would therefore be 'gifted' replacement doors, however communal doors would be an apportioned cost.

ACTION: Director of Property Management

Voids improvement programme update

Laura Gillet, Voids Manager advised that she was unable to attend the meeting, so Angela Spooner, Head of Landlord Service provided an update on the voids improvement programme. It was reported that voids had been reduced by 17% and there had been an increase in void properties that had been let, therefore the service was on target to achieve a £1million saving.

Ms Spooner advised that HS2 would not be contributing to financial assistance on empty flats, but a further update would be sought and reported back to the DMC.

The meeting welcomed the good news on voids improvement programme.

Call handling and repairs

Danny Waite, Head of Repairs and Operations, provided an update and advised that there had been improvements within the services that had meant backlogs had started to be cleared and more resident were using the online services to raise repairs and talking to advisers using webchat. Mr Waite reported that during January 27% of all repairs had been reported through the online function, which had in turn reduced wait times for those contacting the service by phone.

Mr Waite provided the following responses to questions from DMC members:

- New systems could not be fully implemented overnight, therefore an online provision had been provided with the resources that were currently available, however continuous improvements would be made to the online service.
- The overriding message to residents was to use online channels if they were able to frees up space on phone for those who could not use the online provision.
- Work was being undertaken to provide statistics on which repair requests were the councils responsibility and those that were the tenants responsibility. There was generally a good understanding among resident but there was a small proportion of people who requested repairs for things that were their own responsibility.
- In future a photograph system would be implemented so a desktop analysis could be undertaken to determine the extent of repair work and whether it was the Council's responsibility before an operative was sent to the job. However, this was between six and nine months away from being ready.
- The service was keen for a phone application to be developed, with a 'track my repair' function, for resident to use. The Cabinet Member for Better Homes was supportive of this approach.
- It was not intended that jobs would be cut as a result of the increase in online services, as not all residents would be able to use the technology and it was preferred that emergency repairs were reported by phone, so Officers would still need to be available to answer phone calls.

Responding to a question about security lighting repairs, Michael Killeen, Head of Strategic Asset Management & Compliance, advised that OpenView were contracted to undertake this type of work, but had unfortunately been slow to carry out required work and there was a lead time of 10 days or more for materials. An update would be provided, and it would be ensured that necessary work was completed.

ACTION: Head of Strategic Asset Management & Compliance

Complaints & feedback

Regarding complaints and feedback, Angela Spooner, Head of Landlord Services advised that processes needed to be more coordinated across departments and a successful pilot which focused on a joined-up approach to complaints was carried out property services had been undertaken, which would be extended to landlord services.

The meeting was advised that changes would be made to the regulatory framework, which would mean that the Council will be required to report annually to the Regulator of Social Housing on performance and customer satisfaction.

Responding to a question Ms Spooner advised that from next year reports will need to be made to the Regulator of Social Housing, though no time scales had yet been made available, but it is expected that the information will be published next month.

Caretaking performance update

Angela Spooner, Head of Landlord Services reported that performance in the caretaking service had been good, and that estate walk abouts could be arranged by contacting the Principal Caretaking Manager, Wayne Head.

In response to a question about the recent recruitment activity in the caretaking service, Mr Head reported that agency staff could apply for permanent positions, so far 77 applications had been received, the vacancies were open until end of march, and that the roles had been advertised over several different platforms.

Responding to a follow up question, Mr Head confirmed that there were no plans to move staff to work in different locations at this time.

The DMC praised the work of the caretaking team and noted the standard of work had increased since Mr Head had been appointed to the role of Principal Caretaking Manager.

Estate parking – enforcement on estates

By way of an update, Angela Spooner, Head of Landlord Services explained that Traffic Management Orders had been implemented across the Borough, which would help to manage parking issues on estates. A trial Traffic Management Order

was introduced on Maiden Lane, which had been proven to be effective, therefore further traffic orders would be implemented in priority order and may potentially be in place by the end of the year.

Council tenant rents – February 2022

Angela Spooner, Head of Landlord Services reported that post-Christmas arrears had reduced. All neighbourhood housing managers had put together rent action plans and the team was exploring ways that residents could maximise their income and advice was on different grants and benefits.

In response to a question about monitoring arrears Ms Spooner advised that many residents pay their rent monthly in arrears, so usually monthly payers are would not be contacted until the system had alerted that a payment had not been received for six weeks. For those tenants who were weekly payers, arrears were noticed much sooner. Currently, options for technology improvements were being explored so that monitoring systems could pick up on issues sooner.

Tenant service charges

Angela Spooner, Head of Landlord Services provided the meeting with a brief update on tenant service charges.

CCTV & Responsive Security Patrol

Graeme Dyson, Head of Security provided key information in relation to the CCTV rollout as follows:

- The new equipment that had been installed was working well so far.
- Work has started on Regents Park Estate and the new cameras and transmitters had arrived.
- There was currently a shortage of computer chips so new equipment now had a much longer turnaround time, so equivalent alternatives were sought.
- More estates had progressed to the technical planning stage and other estates were in the process of being shortlisted for CCTV, such as Maiden Lane and Peckwater.
- Further transmitter sites were planned, which would extend the new network across the borough and enable further CCTV cameras to be installed, where required.
- The Service charge would not increase during the current financial year for most residents. It was expected increased service charge will be applied in 2023 when CCTV works were nearing completion.
- A new camera was being trialed that will enable residents to use the unit to speak to an operator. The order was due to be delivered end of month and Camden would be the first place in the country to use this type of equipment.

Responding to a question, Mr Dyson reported that the team were exploring options for Peckwater Estate and a walk about could be arranged, involving the TRA, to discuss needs and resource requirements.

In response to a follow up question, Mr Dyson advised that initially the areas of most concern will be prioritised for CCTV, however, estates will also need to in range of the transmitters. Mr Dyson confirmed that the project is long term and will be rolled out further as soon as possible.

Grounds maintenance & tree management

Angela Spooner, Head of Landlord Services provided a short update and advised that Oliver Jones, Head of Green Spaces was unable to attend the meeting, so questions from the DMC would be noted and a written response sought.

The following questions were noted:

- Kennistoun and Willingham Close had been waiting a while for the hedges on the estates to be cut back, the caretaker manager had liaised with the contractor over the work, could an update on progress be provided?
- Where trees on estates that were near to foundations of buildings causing problems to foundations and drainage issues, if so, what is being done to address this?

Following the meeting, the following responses were provided by Mr Jones:

- Grounds Maintenance works were completed on the 9th and 10th of March 2022. The algae clearance in the rear garden was also completed. The Grounds Maintenance Monitoring Officer was intending to meet with the Caretaker Manager and TRA for Kennistoun House to discuss area that the TRA maintains.
- The Council's Tree Policy sets out the response where tree related damage has been proven. There was an insurance agreed process to follow to prove any damage is related to tree roots which will be used to inform future maintenance or an engineering solution. If residents were concerned about damage to a Council owned property, they were asked to report it using the online form.¹ Information about tree works, including a map of managed trees, and the tree policy is available online.²

10. KENTISH TOWN DMC BUDGET

Consideration was given to a report of the Landlord Services Manager (South).

¹ www.camden.gov.uk/housing-repairs.

² www.camden.gov.uk/trees

Tara Cookson, Neighbourhood Manager, introduced the report and outlined the bids that had been received.

A DMC member requested that the remaining balance be allocated to a previous project that needed more funding. Ms Cookson advised that the DMC needed to have notification of bids and projects in advance of the meeting, and therefore this proposal could not be agreed.

RESOLVED –

THAT the following bids requests be approved:

TRA	BID REQUEST	AMOUNT
Brookfield TRA	Office equipment and furniture	£2,800.00
Ingestre TRA	Allotment revival, monthly meet and greet sessions and logo competition	£4809.71
Camden Square TRA (St Paul's & Agar)	Replant planters across estate frontage	£4975.00

11. KENTISH TOWN DMC INFORMATION REPORT

Consideration was given to a report of the Landlord Services Manager (South).

Tara Cookson, Neighbourhood Manager, reported that the Rochester Road gating was now completed. A DMC member passed on the gratitude of the residents of the block and reported that they were happy with the new gates.

The St Pancras Way Estate would use the DMC funding awarded at the previous meeting to fit lockable metal plates over the existing London Fire Brigade drop key access to communal doors across the estate, to prevent unauthorised access. Similar works had been a success on another estate. The work should be completed by the end of the financial year.

Claire Bowman, who had recently been appointed as Neighbourhood Housing Manager for the north area of Kentish Town, would be arranging meetings with the Leighton Crescent TRA and Caretaking Service to discuss the provision of adequate refuse storage facilities. Unfortunately, there had been a delay in this project due to planning permission possibly being required.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no other business.

The meeting ended at 8.47pm.

CHAIR

Contact Officer: Rebecca Taylor

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MINUTES END