

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **JOINT CHAIRS OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **THURSDAY, 3RD MARCH, 2022** at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 1, Crowndale Centre, 218 Eversholt Street, London, NW1 1BD

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT

Councillors Douglas Beattie, Awale Olad and Lorraine Revah

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT

Councillors Maryam Eslamdoust and Andrew Parkinson

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Georgia Gould, Leader of Camden Council
Councillor Pat Callaghan, Deputy Leader of the Council,

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 Joint Chairs of Scrutiny Committee and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.

MINUTES

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED

THAT Councillor Douglas Beattie be appointed as Chair for this meeting only.

2. GUIDANCE ON HYBRID MEETINGS

RESOLVED

THAT the guidance on hybrid meetings be noted.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Eslamdoust and Councillor Parkinson.

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

No declarations were made.

5. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

6. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair announced

‘In addition to the rights by law that the public and press have to record this meeting, I would like to remind everyone that this meeting is being broadcast live by the Council to the Internet and can be viewed on our website for twelve months after the meeting. After that time, webcasts are archived and can be made available upon request.

If you have asked to address the meeting, you are deemed to be consenting to having your contributions recorded and broadcast, including video when switched on, and to the use of those sound recordings and images for webcasting and/or training purposes.’

7. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no urgent business.

8. TERMS OF REFERENCE

RESOLVED

THAT the following terms of reference be noted:

1. To consider the Leader’s Annual Statement and any other relevant cross-cutting business of the Cabinet, or business deemed relevant by the advice of the Chief Executive;
2. To consider, in particular, areas and a programme of joint working by the scrutiny committees (see Part 3 of the Constitution) with the power, for the purposes of individual projects, of agreeing to vary terms of reference between

the committees (subject always to statutory provisions) to facilitate joint and cross-cutting scrutiny working; and

3. To agree the allocation of scrutiny panels between scrutiny committees for the forthcoming year based on the Council's agreed priorities within existing resources.

To Note: All

9. MINUTES

RESOLVED

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 20th January 2020 be agreed as an accurate record.

10. THE LEADER'S ANNUAL STATEMENT

Consideration was given to the Leader of the Council's Annual Statement.

Councillor Georgia Gould, Leader of the Council presented her report that outlined her continued commitment to making Camden a fairer, more equal and just place in which everyone had a voice. The Leader's Annual Statement summarised the many ways in which the Council, working with its communities, had stayed true to that purpose in unprecedented circumstances; including paying tribute to the compassion and kindness that had been shared during the last two years of loss, grief and uncertainty.

Councillor Georgia Gould and Councillor Pat Callaghan, Deputy Leader of the Council, then gave the following responses to questions and points from the scrutiny committee chairs:

Covid Renewal, We Make Camden policy development and how do we measure progress and performance?

- There would be bold measurable time limited initiatives that would bring together the Council, partner organisations and the community. Building coalition's and working collectively towards shared objectives. The aims of the Council were measurable as well as aspirational
- There would be a focus on 2030 and the big systemic problems would be addressed in an annual statement about Camden, with large public meetings to scrutinise the Council.
- The Camden Climate Investment, that had recently been introduced, was a good example of funding the green future of the borough
- The idea for a State of the Borough Summit style event was based on work in Manchester that could be further developed in Camden

The cost of the We Make Camden events, were they value for money, can the costs of the events be provided?

- Eight boroughwide 'We Make Camden' events had taken place to date, and more were planned. There was a financial cost to organising these events but they had provided invaluable opportunities for community engagement and intergenerational work following a time of social isolation. There had been moments of interaction with starting points for further community networks and initiatives, that otherwise would not have taken place. The cost of the 'We Make Camden' events could be provided.

Looking at the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board – what difference would the new integrated partnership across five boroughs make to Camden?

- The Health and Wellbeing Board and all health partners were committed to addressing health inequalities and the social determinants of health that had been identified by Michael Marmot. The impact of employment on health outcomes had been addressed by the Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy and would continue to be a focus. There had been recent alarming statistics about the impact of unemployment and the importance of providing support into good employment opportunities. There was Health and Wellbeing accountability for the Strategy, with investment at a local level to make a real difference in the Camden community.
- The North Central London Integrated Partnership (comprising of the boroughs of Barnet, Camden Enfield, Haringey and Islington) would hopefully benefit Camden. The Local Care Partnership was working well, with the aim that services would be closer to communities. There were some challenges about political representation in the structure, with some tensions about democratic accountability.
- There continued to be concern about the lack of consultation about planned changes to services, particularly dentistry. There had been a very limited dental service during the pandemic and 60% of the dental service was currently operational. The NHS was under enormous financial pressure but there should be safeguards to ensure that essential services were provided and that there was accountability at a local level. Making cuts in preventative services provided the potential for more complex health issues and increased health costs later on.

There had recently been a tragic preventable death of a cyclist in Holborn. Over the last 10 years Camden's roads had been transformed but what more could be done to resolve road planning issues in the borough that were within the remit of Transport for London? We should be more proactive in addressing the issues of road safety and making changes that would result in increased safety.

- Condolences to the bereaved families were expressed by the Councillors.
- There was a national lack of funding for roads and highways as well as a need for further investment in London. Camden was working with London

Councils to prioritise improvements to road safety, and this would include working with Transport for London.

What measures were in place to support refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine arriving in Camden?

- There had been a national failure of planning, resulting in the responsibility for refugees being left to local councils. In Camden there were staff specifically allocated to providing dedicated support to children and families with education, health, training, qualifications and support into employment.
- Councillor Gould expressed thanks to staff and community organisations for the incredible support they had shown in the welcome and guidance provided. However she voiced concerns about how unsuitable it was for families to have to live in hotels for extended periods of time and that government investment was required in order to secure housing in the private rented sector. The UK response had been deeply disappointing to the plight of refugees and lobbying would be taking place to ensure that resources and support were made available.

There had been recent national newspaper reporting about Russian Oligarch money in London and the impact on property prices affecting the private rented sector, what was Camden's approach?

There needed to be a wholesale change in the national approach, registering where money comes from and properties being used to store assets should be seized. Properties should not be used to artificially drive up rental prices and making them even more unaffordable. Camden as a local council does would support the changes recommend by the Mayor of London about a registry of London properties. When developing its own Council housing schemes, on its own land/property Camden had authority over the sales.

In response to questions about - housing ballots on the Wendling Estate; whether retrofitting the estate would have been a preferable option for local communities in West Kentish Town and what provision had been made for news homes for residents with disabilities or needing support - the Scrutiny Committee Chairs were provided with the following responses

- An 80% turn out of the people eligible to vote in the ballot, with 93% of the vote supporting the development, was an indication that people had understood what had been presented to them and were in favour of the proposals

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- The redevelopment of the West Kentish Town Estate had been the best options to address the massive issues of overcrowding and the quality of the housing stock on the estate
- Improvements to an estate should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, by listening to the views and needs of the people who live there and whether retrofitting was a better option
- Moving people elsewhere was disruptive. An important part of the ballot was that residents had been able to have confidence in the promises that had been made to them that it would be worthwhile for the improved, safe and good quality homes that they would have
- The ballot process had empowered residents, with the 93% vote support for the proposals showing the strength of feeling to build a better estate; doubling the bedroom space; children having their own bedrooms and life changing work that works best for residents
- The redevelopment was about better lives for families and children. In the absence of government support the proposals were delivering quality housing for families and had made a real difference to their lives. Good quality housing, with the addition of lifts, a community centre and there had not been any complaints from families
- The Tybalds Estate scheme had not moved as quickly during the pandemic but progress had been positive
- The new flats could be adapted to meet the needs of residents with disabilities. The Charlie Ratchford Centre was providing extra care facilities for older residents. The option for there to be quiet blocks for older residents on new developments could be part of the co-production discussions about housing and community in the borough

The following points were provided in response to questions about the role of scrutiny; more opposition Members chairing scrutiny committees and the number of Cabinet Members who were also members of the Planning Committee

- The role of scrutiny was to provide challenge to the decisions being made by the executive
- Members were able to put aside their Cabinet roles in dealing with quasi-judicial matters when sitting as members of the Planning Committee, Licensing Committee or Licensing Panels and back benchers should also be encouraged to sit on these committees,
- The appointment of opposition chairs of scrutiny committees had been generous in relation to proportionality. The Peer Review had asked for the role of scrutiny at Camden to be looked at and possible options would be considered after the Local Elections in May

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There were further questions to the Leader and Deputy Leader, from a Councillor for St Pancras and Somers Town ward, about what funding was available to retrofit Council housing in the ward. The following points were made in response:

- The London Council's agreement of £98bn to retrofit homes had been for the whole of London and not just council housing stock,
- Camden's focus would be on Council housing stock and retrofitting would differ on each estate because of the diverse housing stock in the borough,
- There would be some funding from Camden and opportunities for other investments such as the UK Cities Climate Investment Commission (UKCCIC) would be explored
- The sustainable energy pilot to reduce energy bills in the borough was part of bringing improvements to local communities. The Neighbourhood Strategy for Somers Town was another example of embedding the Green New Deal locally by collaborating with the local community, along with the support of external investments to realise future neighbourhoods vision for 2030.

Councillor Georgia Gould, Leader of the Council and Councillor Pat Callaghan, Deputy Leader of the Council were thanked for attending the meeting and the responses that they had provided.

RESOLVED

THAT the Leader of the Council's Annual Statement be noted.

To Note: All

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no such business.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm.

CHAIR

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MINUTES END