

## **THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

At a meeting of the **HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY, 15TH NOVEMBER, 2022** at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 1, Crowndale Centre, 218 Eversholt Street, London, NW1 1BD

### **MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT**

Councillors Samata Khatoon (Chair), Kemi Atolagbe, Richard Cotton, Eddie Hanson, Nancy Jirira and Nanouche Umeadi

### **MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT**

Councillors Sagal Abdi-Wali and Nasrine Djemai

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Councillor Meric Apak, Cabinet Member Better Homes  
Councillor Adam Harrison, for item 9 in his capacity as a member of Bloomsbury Ward

**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 Housing Scrutiny Committee and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.**

## **MINUTES**

### **1. GUIDANCE ON HYBRID MEETINGS**

#### **RESOLVED –**

THAT the hybrid meeting procedure set out in the agenda be agreed.

### **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sagal Abdi-Wali and Nasrine Djemai.

**3. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF STATUTORY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS, COMPULSORY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND VOLUNTARY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS IN MATTERS ON THIS AGENDA**

Councillor Nancy Jirira advised the meeting that for the sake of transparency she was a health visitor and item 10 mentions the service in a general capacity regarding its performance data.

**4. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Broadcast of the meeting**

The Chair announced that the meeting was being broadcast live by the Council to the Internet and could be viewed on the website for twelve months after the meeting. After that time, webcasts were archived and could be made available upon request. Those who had asked to address the meeting were deemed to be consenting to having their contributions recorded and broadcast and to the use of those sound recordings and images for webcasting and/or training purposes.

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

There were none.

**6. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

**7. DEPUTATIONS**

**Deputation request – Clarion Housing Association**

The Chair advised the meeting that she had accepted one deputation request from a tenant of Clarion Housing Association as set out in the supplementary agenda. They had though asked to remain anonymous so they would not be available to present the statement to the committee, so it would be up to members to consider the information, and think about any questions they may want to ask the representative

from Clarion when they came to the Housing Association Annual Performance report.

The Chair thanked the depute for submitting the deputation statement.

## **8. APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Property Management

The Chair advised the meeting that following a large number of applications that have been submitted, she had decided that the appointment process needed a little more time so that she would be able to interview a number of people who she had shortlisted for these roles. As a result of this the Chair proposed that the appointments be deferred to the December meeting so that this could be undertaken.

### **RESOLVED –**

THAT the appointment of co-opted members be deferred to the December meeting of the scrutiny committee.

## **9. HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

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

Councillor Adam Harrison was in attendance for this item.

Brian Matthews, Head of Housing Commissioning and Partnerships, took the meeting through the report and he along with Andrew Nowakowski, Head of Housing (Clarion), Sandra Fawcett, Director of Customer Operations (One Housing Group), Carol Carter, Chief Executive (Origin), and Richard Bellis, Regional Head North (Notting Hill Genesis), housing associations with homes in Camden, gave the following key responses to questions:

- The housing associations all had effective systems in place to deal with sharing information with residents regarding the progress on service issues (e.g. newsletters and all residents' emails) and repairs. Where this process had not worked, residents could complain (ultimately up to the Housing Ombudsman). They all had mechanisms in place for learning from the complaints that were coming through and where necessary had put teams in place to tackle issues of concern especially around repairs (e.g. anti-social behaviour, damp and mould teams, as well as resident liaison officers to work with the resident during the repair process). Having a focussed right-first-time approach helped in dealing with more minor repairs, though with more

complex issues this could sometimes be challenging especially for some of the older housing in the borough.

- Senior officers at the housing associations took a very active role in service planning and ensuring they were aware of the effectiveness of services. Overall, it was felt that customer satisfaction was improving, but they recognised that sometimes service provision did not meet the expected levels of performance. This could result in complaints not just from the resident but from local ward councillors and an MP, which could lead to an enforcement notice from the Private Sector Housing Team.
- Clarion Housing Association had been affected by a cyber-security issue which the whole service had to deal with. This had impacted on its ability to deliver some services as well as obtain data regarding service delivery and residents' issues. They were coming through this process and hoped the whole service would be back on track in the near future. They would also be undertaking a different approach to their repairs and maintenance service, with a new contractor over a 10 year period rather than the existing 3 year approach. This would help build a more consistent and consolidated approach to repairs service delivery and improvements.
- The housing association's residents were being sent reminders about appointments and asking for feedback regarding the work that was done. When the response identified an issue of concern, the resident would be contacted to find out the reason and appropriate action would then be undertaken.
- The housing associations had effective mechanisms for turning around void properties, with most now achieving an average turnaround of between 40 – 50 days. They were always though seeking to improve these figures as they were the best ways of being able to provide a resident with a new home.
- The housing associations recognised that providing new developments in a borough like Camden, where property prices meant that they could not compete with private developers for sites, was a big challenge. As a result, the Section 106 agreement plus 100% local authority nomination rights arrangement was the only way that people on the Council's Housing Register were able to access new build homes with the housing associations.
- The housing associations agreed to provide information to members regarding the support they are providing tenants in relation to assisting tenants with debt management in light of the cost of living crisis; the proposals for retrofitting their stock; investing in fire safety measures; addressing overcrowding; and planned investment in 2022/23 in their Camden housing stock. In addition, Clarion Housing Association agreed to provide specific information relating to the views expressed in the deputation statement and One Housing to respond to the query raised regarding proposed evictions at Arlington House by Councillor Richard Cotton. The responses would be co-ordinated by officers in the Council.

**ACTION BY: Director of Housing (BM)**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted

**10. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 1 2022-23**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Directors of Supporting People, Supporting Communities and Corporate Services.

Gillian Marston, Executive Director Supporting Communities, took the meeting through the report and she along with Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management, gave the following key responses to questions:

- Officers believed that there has been a significant undercount of the Camden resident population and occupied dwellings. This was based on the inconsistency between the census data and a range of other population estimates and data sources pointing towards increased population and increased numbers of dwellings. This was most likely due to the impact of Covid-19 and the challenge in counting Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in Camden. A reduction in population could have significant impacts on Council funding. The current distribution of funding for local government was notionally based on the principle of relative need and proportionate shares. Any reduction in population size in Camden relative to other local authorities – i.e. if Camden's population reduced while they grew in other areas, which was what was seen in the initial census results – would see Camden lose out significantly in future funding arrangements. Officers would be undertaking further engagement with the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and work with other local authorities to develop lobbying plans, and further work to understand potential financial impacts. The key aim of the work going forward was to ensure that subsequent ONS population estimates based on the census appropriately captured resident population that officers believed was missing when the census took place. Several meetings with ONS had now taken place and officers were developing a better understanding of how future population estimates could be influenced, and have continued to build the evidence base to support this. Conversations had been held with Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea Councils, London Councils, and others regarding joint work and lobbying.
- The Census was a Government run undertaking and they determined the type of data required so they would have comparative information. The Council, undertook a similar approach to other local authorities in the way it sought the data which included door-knocking at premises when the residents had not responded.
- Support for Afghan refugees came directly via granting funding from the Government and whilst two bridging hotels in the borough were currently housing a large number of the refugees in Camden, the Council was working with government departments about options for housing the refugees in

affordable good quality homes. The Council had developed a 'Pledge' for accommodation offers within the borough, which would include 20 properties for different household sizes and across different forms of tenure for families from these bridging hotels.

- Support for Ukrainian refugees was being given direct to the individuals from the Government who were offering them places in their homes. The Council had asked more people to come forward to offer accommodation for these refugees and would now be offering people a £200 supplement across the winter months, which was beyond the Government payment for undertaking this.
- Information relating to the numbers of both Afghan and Ukrainian refugees being placed in Camden was available, however information regarding the number of refugees from other countries and asylum seekers was not. Also the Council was able to access homes for Afghan refugees using the private rented sector, temporary accommodation and housing associations, however this was not available for Ukrainian refugees who were being housed in people's own homes.
- The Council had already put in place a Temporary Accommodation Purchase Programme which sought to use Right-to-Buy receipts to fund the purchase of homes to be used as temporary accommodation. Further work was being done to expand this initiative.
- The Council wanted to make the processing of reporting issues to it as easy as possible, and many more tenants and residents were using on-line mechanisms for doing so. There were though tenants and residents who still wished to speak to an operative and the Council had put in place a call-back process where an officer would call the person back after they had contacted the Council. Officers would provide data to members regarding the call-back and text messaging schemes.

**ACTION BY: Director of Property Management (DW)**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted

**11. WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN**

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

The Chair advised the meeting that the following items should be added to the agendas for the following meetings:

**December 22**

- Appointment of Co-opted Members

## *Housing Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday, 15th November, 2022*

- Cost of Living Report going to Council and RCP Scrutiny Committee on November 22
- Housing Management Services including the performance framework

### **January 23**

- Improving the safety of estates (assess crime and ASB data, progress on CCTV installation across the borough)
- Community Investment Programme annual report

### **Programme of meetings (new items in bold)**

#### **12<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2022**

##### Draft agenda

- Cabinet Member Better Homes (update report)
- Family Friendly Housing (Cabinet report)
- **Appointment of Co-opted Members**
- **Cost of Living Report going to Council and RCP Scrutiny Committee in November 22**
- **Housing Management Services including the performance framework**
- Work programme

#### **17<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2023**

##### Draft agenda

- Medium Term Financial Strategy (Cabinet report)
- Cabinet report – HRA budget setting (Cabinet report)
- Corporate Performance report (Q2)
- Cabinet Member Better Homes (update report)
- **Improving the safety of estates (assess crime and ASB data, progress on CCTV Installation across the borough)**
- **Community Investment Programme Annual report**
- Work programme

#### **21<sup>ST</sup> FEBRUARY 2023**

##### Draft agenda

- Annual portfolio report: Better Homes
- Report of the Cabinet Adviser (Rough sleeping: homelessness prevention, temporary accommodation, and the review with public health of homelessness provision)
- Report of the Cabinet Adviser (Estates Mission)

*Housing Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday, 15th November, 2022*

- State of the Borough report
- Work programme

**Yet to be programmed**

- Allocations Policy (Policy review and service redesign)
- Leaseholder services
- Landlord Licensing Scheme update
- Camden Housing Strategy

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report work programme be revised as outlined above.

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

There were none.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm.

**CHAIR**

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**MINUTES END**