

## **THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

At a meeting of the **KENTISH TOWN DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY, 29TH NOVEMBER, 2022** at 6.30 pm in the Whittington Estate TRA Hall, Retcar Place N19 5TR

### **REGISTERED DMC MEMBERS PRESENT**

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| Derek Jarman (Chair)         | Kennistoun, Willingham, Rosemary & Margaret TA |
| Momota Khatun (Vice-Chair)   | St Pancras Way Estate TRA                      |
| Jane McWilliams (Vice-Chair) | Brookfield Estate TRA                          |
| Steve Barton                 | Holly Lodge TRA                                |
| Runa Begum Miha              | Wittington TRA                                 |
| Costa Costa                  | Brookfield Estate TRA                          |
| John Cowley                  | Camden Square TRAs                             |
| Helen Duff                   | Ingestre Road Tenants Association              |
| Jane Hickson                 | Leighton Crescent TRA                          |
| Helen Jack                   | Lissenden Gardens Tenants Association          |
| Andrew Peirce (sub)          | Camden Association of Street Properties        |
| Rubi Rahman                  | St Pancras Way Estate TRA                      |
| John Webb                    | Kennistoun, Willingham, Rosemary & Margaret TA |

### **COUNCILLOR OBSERVERS PRESENT**

Councillors Meric Apak, Richard Cotton and Sylvia McNamara

### **COUNCILLOR OBSERVERS ABSENT**

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

### **OTHER COUNCILLORS PRESENT**

Councillors Meric Apak, Cabinet Member for Better Homes

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

|                    |                                |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Hugh Boatswain     | Tenant Participation           |
| Claire Bowman      | Neighbourhood Manager          |
| Bernard Charles    | Caretaking Manager             |
| Tara Cookson       | Neighbourhood Manager          |
| Ododo Dafe         | Head of Housing Transformation |
| Stanton La Foucade | Tenant Participation           |
| Glendine Shepard   | Director of Housing            |
| 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. 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.

### **2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Josh Cedar (Holly Lodge TRA), Petra Dando (Camden Association of Street Properties), and June (Dodds Peckwater Estate Tenants Association).

### **3. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were none.

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

There were none.

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

There were no items of urgent business.

### **6. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2022 be approved as a correct record.

**7. KENTISH TOWN PROGRESS REPORT - ACTION POINTS UPDATE**

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

Retrofitting of Street Properties

A DMC Member advised that the information on retrofitting of street properties be not yet been sent to the Camden Association of Street Properties and requested that it be sent as a matter of urgency.

**ACTION BY: Landlord Services**

In response to a question regarding the procurement process of the retrofitting project, officers advised that the process had two stages, during the first stage bids would be considered in terms of quality, secondly the cost would be considered. The bid that offered the highest quality for the lowest price would be successful.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the Action Point Update be noted.

**8. HOUSING SERVICES CONSOLIDATED REPORT**

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

HRA Budget 2023/2024

Emma Cardoso, Team Leader (HRA & Capital Projects), introduced the report.

The meeting was advised that since the report was published there had been several Government updates. As such, The Team Leader (HRA & Capital Projects) reported that it had been announced as part of the Autumn Statement on 17th November 2022 that the maximum rent increase was set at 7% for 2023/2024. Therefore, Officers would be recommending a 7% increase.

Danny Waite, Head of Repairs and Operations advised that a restructure of the Repairs Service was currently underway and provided an overview of the information provided in the report.

DMC Members requested that the for the February DMC should include an update on the progress of the Repairs Service transformation. The Head of Repairs and Operations advised that the transformation would take a phased approach to ensure a smooth transition over the busy winter months. Therefore, a short update could be provided at the February meeting and a full update could be scheduled for the summer.

**ACTION BY: Head of Repairs and Operations**

Responding to questions from DMC Members, officers provided the following information:

- 70% of tenants were in receipt of Housing Benefit and Universal Credit, 59% of these tenants were in receipt of partial Housing Benefit. Around 6000 tenants were in receipt of no benefits.
- The Council was seeking to ensure that it was able to maximise its resources from its commercial property portfolio through a reduction in voids for example, therefore an interim team had been put in place to address voids.
- Furthermore, the Council was also seeking to ensure that garage rents were more in line with the levels charged by other local authorities or similar garages nearby and the proposed approach would seek to maximise income from garage rents.
- In terms of rent arrears, a dedicated team had been set up to undertake work in this area. The Team had been in operation for two months and had found that whilst rent arrears had continued to increase, they had done so at a slower rate, and it was expected that rent arrears would continue to slow down.
- The Bad Debt Provision had been built up over time and money had been set aside against rent arrears, the provision was at about £12million.
- Whilst it was not clear if the rent increase from last year had had an impact on rent arrears and further analysis was needed to identify the increase in arrears, however it was believed that the cost-of-living crisis would have also contributed.
- If a tenant was downsizing as part of a mutual exchange they would qualify for downsizing incentives.
- A range of under occupancy work had taken place, focused mainly on residents over age 65 and incentives were offered for downsizing as well as help with things like moving and connection of utilities. There were around 50 underoccupancy moves per year and the aim was to try to increase this number and free up family friendly homes.
- There had been no changes to the communal gas supply rebate system for tenants that use less gas.

A DMC Member suggested that the Housing Service should work with the Tenants and Residents Associations, because they could provide valuable insights into local information that the service may not be aware of. The Head of Housing

Transformation welcomed residents' contributions and encouraged them to inform the service of relevant information.

A DMC Member sought further information on the Leaseholder income maximisation project. The Team Leader (HRA & Capital Projects) advised that more information on this project could be provided in writing.

**ACTION BY: Team Leader (HRA & Capital Projects)**

A DMC Member queried if the void property list comparing different London Boroughs was still available. Officers advised that the list was previously published by the Greater London Authority, but it had not been made available for several years. However, officers would see if this information would become available again.

**ACTION: Housing Services**

Repairs

Danny Waite, Head of Repairs and Operations, gave the meeting an overview of the report.

The meeting was informed that work on the repairs reporting channel shift had continued and there had been a drop in call volumes from the same period last year. Webchat and SMS services had continued to be a popular option for residents and a WhatsApp service was due to be launched in the coming weeks.

Whilst residents were happy with the service provided there was some dissatisfaction around wait times. However, emergency and essential repairs needed to be prioritised, which meant that non-essential repairs had experienced longer wait times.

The Head of Repairs and Operations also reported that service was facing pressure from being understaffed and rising inflation.

Housing Transformation

Glendine Shepherd, Director of Housing, introduced the report, providing information on the service area review that was currently underway, the interim teams that had been set up and the upcoming tenancy visits.

Responding to questions from DMC Members, officers provided the following information:

- The tenancy visits would provide a useful opportunity to engage with residents and build relationships and well as identify and address issues such as disrepairs, hoarding, and overcrowding.

- Before visits were undertaken residents would be contacted by mail and random checks would not be carried out, this was due to concern that residents would be worried about bogus callers pretending to be council officers. Whilst this would mean that those illegally subletting would be alerted to the visits it was considered a better option overall for residents to be aware that the visits were taking place.
- If illegal subletting was identified enforcement action would be taken as necessary. Roughly 100 properties are recovered each year from illegal subletting and those who have been subletting, who are often unaware the arrangement is not legitimate, are offered support, as necessary.
- Depending on the outcome of the tenancy visits, work would be undertaken with colleagues in social care and the repairs service, as necessary. Residents experiencing more complex issues may also be referred to health services or third sector organisations, if required. Partners were aware that the tenancy visits were due to be undertaken.
- Details of the new areas and housing officers supporting those areas would be listed on the Council's website.

The meeting requested that an update be provided to a future meeting of the DMC reporting on the progress of the tenancy visits.

**ACTION: Housing Services**

An update was also sought on the Community Fibre project. The Senior Tenant Participation Officer advised that an update would be circulated.

**ACTION BY: Tenant Participation**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

**9. DMC CHAIRS PAPER - COMPLAINTS PANEL**

Due to time constraints this item was not considered.

**10. UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR BETTER HOMES**

The Cabinet Member for Better Homes provided the meeting with an update on his portfolio. He advised that the restructure of the Housing Service would provide an opportunity to do things differently and would establish a new way of working.

He also advised that a family had recently attended one of his ward surgeries and had informed him that they were a family of nine adults and eight children living in a

four-bedroom home. This was not an isolated case and around 150 households in the Borough were experiencing severe overcrowding.

Responding to a question about severe overcrowding, the Cabinet Member for Better Homes explained that a report was due to be heard at a meeting of Cabinet on 14 December 2022 that outlined plans to attempt to eliminate severe overcrowding within four years. The report was currently being finalised and would be made publicly available next week.

The meeting welcomed this report as a resident, who had been experiencing hardship from issues arising from overcrowding, had tragically lost her life to suicide on one of the estates in Kentish Town. Tara Cookson, Neighbourhood Manager, and her team was commended for working tirelessly to support residents during this difficult time.

The Cabinet Member for Better Homes reported that there had been a fire at Camelot House, and again commended the Neighbourhood Manager, and her team who had worked hard to support residents at this estate.

Responding to a question about CCTV, the Cabinet Member for Better Homes advised that the CCTV installation programme would be complete by the end of next year.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the update be noted.

**11. KENTISH TOWN DMC BUDGET**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Landlord Services.

The Chair took the meeting through the bids received.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the following bids requests be approved:

| <b>TRA</b>                  | <b>BID REQUEST</b>   | <b>AMOUNT</b> |
|-----------------------------|--|---------------|
| Willingham & Kennistoun TRA | Upgrade existing wall heaters in TRA hall  | £ 2,000.00    |
| Willingham & Kennistoun TRA | Gerda security panel for LFB drop key access for all 6 block entrances across estate | £ 5,223.00    |
| St Pancras Way TRA          | Women's group – 90 sessions  | £ 2,250.00    |

|                       |   |            |
|-----------------------|---|------------|
| St Pancras Way TRA    | Equipment for Sewing club   | £ 2,000.00 |
| Ingestre TRA          | Gerda security panel for LFB drop key access at Grangemill  | £ 870.50   |
| Abingdon Close estate | Secure bike hanger for the estate   | £ 3,500.00 |
| Lissenden Gardens TRA | Equipment for Christmas project in aid of charity   | £ 850.00   |
| Denyer House          | Complete refurbishment of an air raid shelter for relaunch of the TRA. Residents are currently without a meeting space. | £40,000.00 |
| Brookfield TRA        | Warm Hub project  | £4,900.00  |
| Brookfield TRA        | Equipment for TRA Hall (chairs and kitchen items)   | £1,334.00  |
| Brookfield TRA        | Film club project   | £ 500.00   |

**12. KENTISH TOWN INFORMATION REPORT**

Due to time constraints this item was not considered.

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

There was none.

The meeting ended at 9.02 pm.

**CHAIR**

**Contact Officer: Rebecca Taylor**

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**MINUTES END**