

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **HAMPSTEAD DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** held on **WEDNESDAY, 11TH JANUARY, 2023** at 6.30 pm in the The Council Chamber, Crowndale Centre, 218 Eversholt Street, London, NW1 1BD

REGISTERED DMC MEMBERS PRESENT

Toyin Majiyagbe (Chair)
Janis Smart
Fiona Cubbins
Ubah Egal
Andreas Yennadiou
Mary Ryan
Tina Daniel
Cara Paul
Malcolm Bush
Habibur Rahman
Nevenka Martin

Taplow TRA
Lymington Road TRA
Alexandra & Ainsworth TRA
Alexandra & Ainsworth TRA
Hillgrove Estate TRA
Sydney Boyd Court TRA
Mortimer Crescent TRA
Studholme Court TRA
Abbey Road Housing Co-Op
Westcroft Close TRA
Taplow TRA

OTHER RESIDENTS PRESENT

Fatima Abubakar (sub)

Mortimer Crescent TRA

COUNCILLOR OBSERVERS PRESENT

Councillors Nanouche Umeadi

OTHER COUNCILLORS PRESENT

Councillor Matthew Kirk
Councillor Eddie Hanson

OFFICERS PRESENT

Cait MacDermott
Ododo Dafé
Graeme Beedham
Vinothan Sangarapillai

Camden Finance
Camden Housing
Tenant Participation
Committee Services

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 Hampstead District Management Committee and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.

MINUTES

1. REGISTRATION OF TENANTS ASSOCIATIONS AND CO-OPTION OF TENANT REPRESENTATIVES

RESOLVED –

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

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Jeremy Woolcock (50 Fitzjohn's TRA), Annie Ward (5-7 Belsize Grove), Nafisa Ali (5-7 Belsize Grove), Brian Richardson (Arkwright Mansons), Casey Okezie (Blashford TRA), Nigel Rumble (Bray TRA), Deborah Killingback (Spedan Close TRA), Lynda Stuart (Webheath TRA).

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FOR ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no notification of urgent business.

6. JANUARY DMC HRA BUDGET 2023/24 AND RENT SETTING REPORT

Passing of Lidia Venegas

The meeting held a minute's silence for Lidia Venegas, a homeless person who had sadly died in Kentish Town.

Joint session

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Finance.

Emma Cardoso, Team Leader (HRA and Capital Projects) took the meeting through the report and supplementary information as part of a briefing for all DMC representatives.

The DMCs then met separately to consider the recommendations in the report.

Hampstead DMC session

Members discussed the proposals in the report and noted that the inflation rate (as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI)) was 11%. The Government had

capped rent rises at 7%, and the Council was proposing that rents increase by this amount.

Some members welcomed the fact the proposed rent rise would be less than inflation, as the old rent-setting formula would have led to an increase that was greater than the CPI.

However, members noted that many people – particularly those in low-paid jobs – would not be getting pay increases of 7%, and that other costs were increasing sharply. There was concern that rent, service charge and heating pool increases would put residents who were “just about managing” into more difficult situations.

The Chair noted the statistics from the report which said 70% of council tenants received full or partial housing benefit. However, she emphasised that the Council should have regard to the 30% of tenants who did not and so would have to meet their whole rent out of what were often quite modest incomes. It was also noted that there was already a situation where there were significant rent arrears across the borough as a whole.

A representative from Alexandra & Ainsworth pointed out that housing benefit would not cover prior rent arrears, and so residents would find it difficult to pay those down. Additionally, some residents were on zero-hours contracts or had variable incomes in other ways. They often fell into the 11% of people who received partial housing benefit and, in those cases, their housing benefit might be overpaid or underpaid initially, while the DWP was processing data on changes in their earned income, and this could cause debts and arrears to develop.

There was a discussion about the service charges, and some members were reluctant to see them increase when there were concerns about the quality of the service. Others said that they did not want to see the service deteriorate, and so would be willing to see service charges increase if this was necessary to safeguard the service.

Members highlighted cases where they thought there was waste that the Council could tackle to reduce costs. An example given was where there were repeated visits from contractors who did not have the expertise or equipment to fix a repairs issue; and the representative from Hillgrove said that repairs costs could be reduced with a more comprehensive in-house repairs service and less reliance on contractors. Others referred to communal lights which were left on even during daylight hours.

The representative from Sydney Boyd Court said she had been involved in a housing association which had a 21-day turnaround for voids. She said she felt Camden was too slow at filling void properties and so losing out on potential rent from them.

Concerns were raised about “efficiency savings” mentioned in the report. The Chair highlighted that many residents would not want to see cuts in staffing or other cut backs which would lead to services deteriorating.

Concern was also raised about reference in the report to “maximising income from leaseholders”, as it was felt this could impact severely on the finances of leaseholders.

In discussion on the heating pool, it was noted that officers said that Options 2 and 3 would not be applicable to leaseholders or those with individual heat metering. It was noted that those with heat metering did have the ability to control their own usage, but some leaseholders did not have individual controls as those had not been introduced for their estates. They asked the Council to look into whether leaseholders could also benefit from these options if they lived in properties without individual controls. The Chair emphasised concerns about the rises being very high and said that she wanted an option that would benefit as many residents as possible.

It was commented that members were choosing between undesirable options, but that the financial impact on residents would be less from Option 3. It was added that there was also a chance that the energy market might settle down and that future increases beyond the net 125% in Option 3 would not be necessary.

Members then voted on the proposals in Appendix D of the report. Following the votes, it was

RESOLVED –

- i. THAT the recommendation for a 7% rent rise be rejected;
- ii. THAT the recommendation for a caretaking service charge increase of 54p per week be agreed;
- iii. THAT the recommendation for a CCTV service charge increase of 5p per week be agreed;
- iv. THAT no recommendation be made on the £1.64 per week communal lighting service charge increase as the vote was tied;
- v. THAT the recommendation for a mechanical and electrical maintenance service charge increase of 13p per week be agreed;
- vi. THAT the recommendation for a grounds maintenance service charge increase of 15p per week be agreed;
- vii. THAT the recommendation for a Responsive Housing Patrol service charge increase of 3p per week be agreed;
- viii. THAT the recommendation to increase garage rents by £2 per week be agreed;

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- ix. THAT the DMC recommend Option 3 for the heating pool, which would result in a 125% increase once one-off credits were applied to reduce it to this level.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no other business.

The meeting of Hampstead DMC held separately ended at 8pm.

CHAIR

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MINUTES END