

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **MONDAY, 11TH SEPTEMBER, 2023** at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT

Councillors Kemi Atolagbe (Chair), Sagal Abdi-Wali, Richard Cotton, Nasrine Djemai, Tommy Gale, Eddie Hanson, Nancy Jirira, Samata Khatoon and Bev Chambers (co-opted member)

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT

Ifrax Mahamoud and Andrea Radice (co-opted members)

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Georgia Gould, Leader of the Council, for item 7
Councillor Pat Callaghan, Deputy Leader of the Council, for item 7
Councillor Meric Apak, Cabinet Member Better Homes

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. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Andrea Radice and Ifrax Mahamoud (co-opted members) and Glendine Shepherd (Director of Housing).

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

There were none.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Broadcasting of the meeting.

The Chair advised the meeting that due to technical issues the meeting was not able to be broadcast.

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

There were none.

5. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 11th July 2023.

RESOLVED –

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 11th July 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

6. DEPUTATIONS

There were none.

7. BUILDING SAFETY ACT & REGULATORY STANDARDS

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

Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management, took the meeting through the report and he along with Councillor Georgia Gould, Leader of the Council, Gillian Marston, Executive Director Supporting Communities, Dominic Johnson, Head of Resident & Building Safety, and Ododo Dafe, Head of Innovation and Improvement, gave the following key responses to questions:

- The Council had obtained resources to pay for the Chalcots capital works and some other capital works carried out on the Cromer Estate (approximately £87.6M), and through the court settlement relating to the Chalcots. However, the ancillary costs regarding the evacuation, and the costs attached to the implementation of the Fire Safety and Building Safety Acts had mainly to be borne by the Council's own HRA, as additional Government resources had not been provided. This had meant that the Council has had to provide approximately £200M from its own resources to fund most of these requirements. The Council would continue to lobby the Government for local authorities to be given appropriate additional burden resources to fund these additional duties and responsibilities.

Housing Scrutiny Committee - Monday, 11th September, 2023

- The procurement of contractors to undertake works was a challenging process due to market volatility, so the Council was taking an agile approach when possible so the works could be undertaken, delivered and monitored effectively.
- Officers were working with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) regarding the way forward for the Council following the regulatory notice, and they would share the action plan arising from the regulatory notice once it had been signed off by the Regulator of Social Housing.

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management

- The Council was proactively getting on and delivering the works outlined in the regulatory notice and when the RSH returns in the autumn, it was expected that the authority would be able to provide evidence that it was on the right pathway for the delivery of the required works.
- The Council remained focussed on achieving the highest standards of resident safety and had been part of the Government's early adopter group; put in place and delivered fire risk assessments for its Council homes; and set up a Fire Safety & Compliance Advisory Panel (FS& CAP) to contribute to ongoing developments in fire safety and monitor the Council's delivery of its own fire safety works. Further thought was also being given regarding the membership of the FS&CAP so it could involve all the political groups on the Council, along with whether an independent co-chair should be brought in to work with the resident co-chair.
- The Council had a good record of informing its own residents regarding the duties and responsibilities arising from the new regulatory framework. The Council also had been working with other providers who would also be required to take on some of these responsibilities to ensure that they shared information with their own tenants. Officers would provide members with a copy of the briefing information being provided to private rented sector landlords.

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management

- The Council had put in place a plan to contact commercial property owners to ensure that they and those people who lived above such premises were also aware of the new fire safety regulatory responsibilities.
- The Council had not noticed an increase in fire safety issues being raised by the public following the issuing of the regulatory notice.
- The Council would be working with the LFB Borough Commander regarding the sharing of joint publicity regarding the dangers of E-Bikes batteries and how and where they should be stored safely.
- The Council now had 85 overdue high-risk actions that mainly related to door replacement works, and it was anticipated that the bulk of these works would be completed in the early autumn. Progress on these and the other

outstanding works was being considered by internal monitoring arrangements, as well as the FSCAP. The Council had also been working with specialist third party advisors to develop its approach to the implementation of the fire and building safety regulatory framework. This would lead to a third-party audit of the Council's processes so that it could meet British Standard 9997. The results of this undertaking would be shared with members when it was available.

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management

- In preparing for the new consumer standards, the Council would be undertaking a survey of tenant's satisfaction that would start in September 23. The survey would contain the views of a random sample of tenants and provide valuable information on how they felt the Council was delivering its housing services.
- The Council's damp and mould initiative had brought to light over 6,000 cases after the initial campaign of which only 400 remained to be dealt with. Out of those 6,000 cases only 12 people needed to be decanted to enable damp and mould to be rectified in their homes. Going forward the Council now had valuable information regarding where such issues were, and would be contacting those tenants in the future to see if they still had these problems.
- The master key access programme for street properties only related to communal areas and not an individual's home.
- Officers would provide further information regarding the key issues arising from the estate action initiatives.

ACTION BY: Director of Housing

Following consideration of the report and responses the meeting,

RESOLVED -

- i) THAT the report be referred to full Council at its meeting 18 September 2023 for discussion and noting;
- ii) THAT it be recommended that the LFB Borough Commander and the current and/or past resident chair of the Fire Safety and Compliance Advisory Panel be invited to speak at Full Council at the meeting on 18th September 23 about their experience;
- iii) THAT the fire safety and regulatory standard be a standing item on the agenda for the scrutiny committee for the rest of the municipal year;
- iv) THAT members of the scrutiny committee receive a monthly update on performance of fire safety actions and any progress made and possible risk. This will also include updates on all areas of compliance (repairs/estate service/landlord service and capital works); the installation of hard wired smoke and carbon monoxide detectors; whether all buildings have had the FRAEW test; the BS9997 third party audit (evidence to be provided that this

has been undertaken (4.10)); the outstanding high risk actions; the Building Safety Case reports on the Council's high rise blocks; and on the clearing of combustible items with a focus on how the Council would support vulnerable residents to achieve this;

- v) THAT a report be submitted to the scrutiny committee on the tenant satisfaction regulatory survey when completed (2.16);
- vi) THAT officers provide updates to members of the scrutiny committee on the council's work to meet the new consumer standard (2.15); and with regards to self-assessment against the consumer standards, an update on the compliance against each of the standards and any action needed (2.16); and
- vii) THAT a report be submitted to the next meeting of the scrutiny committee regarding the Decent Homes Standard and an update on the 2023 stock conditions survey.

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management/Director of Housing

8. UPDATE ON COUNCIL'S STRATEGY TO TACKLE OVERCROWDING AND PURCHASE FAMILY FRIENDLY HOMES

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

Ododo Dafe, Head of Innovation and Improvement, took the meeting through the report and she gave the following key responses to questions:

- Officers would seek to ensure that the downsizing offer was widely known amongst tenants in the borough. The information would be more widely shared with other places within the borough that were well accessed by tenants (e.g., community centres, G.P surgeries, as well as family hubs).
- Housing officers worked with colleagues in adult social care and children's services to ensure that they were able to reach those tenants that needed assistance, because they were living in overcrowded homes or may wish to downsize.
- The Council worked alongside the tenant to understand their experiences and needs, this in-turn would help the development of a bespoke approach to their needs. The approach being followed had been shaped by the learning achieved from the visits to the 22 severely overcrowded families that was undertaken in January 2023, and the subsequent workshops with staff. Increases in the number of tenants seeking to downsize required a multifaceted approach that could not be solely achieved through the offer of increased financial incentives. When appropriate overcrowded households could be offered, a storage shed at no extra cost if that would help ease their situation. This offer could also be used to help in other circumstances.
- Officers were using the data from the choice based lettings system to see who was bidding for what types of properties, and through that checking which

overcrowded households weren't bidding to see if they could be encouraged to bid for homes in the scheme.

- The aim of the Family Friendly Housing Purchase Programme was to purchase family size former right to buy properties. This would be entirely funded by capital receipts from the sale of several categories of housing that were uneconomical or of low social value or both.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted.

9. COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER 4 END OF YEAR 22/23

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

Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management, took the meeting through the report and he along with Ododo Dafe, Head of Innovation and Improvement, gave the following key responses to questions:

- Officers agreed to provide further information regarding the 'Cost of Living' support being provided by the Camden Advice Network (e.g. where the support was based, types of concerns being presented, number on waiting lists to access advice and how long on average were they on a waiting list for, and what happens to those on agency waiting lists). Also, further information to be provided regarding accessing the temporary accommodation homes the council has, the support provided through that process, and storage available on estates.

ACTION BY: Head of Innovation and Improvement/Head of Neighbourhoods

- Officers would also provide further information regarding rough sleeper support provision (e.g. numbers contacted, where they were located, what support they were provided with, and repeat person contact)

ACTION BY: Director of Public Safety/Director of Housing

- Officers were working hard to speed up the gas certification process to ensure that the whole project was undertaken as quickly as possible.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted.

10. HOMELESSNESS SCRUTINY PANEL

Consideration was given to the report of the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

The scrutiny committee agreed to the establishment of a scrutiny panel to look at homelessness with the terms of reference as set out in the paper, with Councillor Richard Cotton as the panel chair, along with Councillors Kemi Atolagbe, Tommy Gale and Nancy Jirira as the other members. The panel would submit its final panel report to the scrutiny committee at its February meeting at the latest.

RESOLVED –

That the Homelessness Scrutiny Panel be established as identified above.

**ACTION BY: Director of Housing
(JH)/Director of Corporate
Strategy and Policy Design (IDLC)**

11. WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

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

The meeting was advised that the work programme should be revised to add for the November meeting the Cabinet report on the Resident Safety Programme – Implementation of the Fire and Building Safety Acts (Cabinet Report) and the Decent Homes Standard and an update on the 2023 stock condition survey. Also, to revise the January meeting with the report of the Cabinet Adviser: Leaseholder Billing and Service Charges to be moved to the February meeting. The final report of the Homelessness Scrutiny Panel was to be considered at the February meeting at the latest, though it could come to an earlier meeting if the work was completed sooner. All remaining meetings for the municipal year would have an update on fire safety and regulatory standard.

The scrutiny committee also wished to see added to the programme reports on the Tenants Satisfaction Regulatory Survey, when it was available. Also, update reports should be provided regarding the Cabinet Adviser reports on Supporting Rough Sleepers, Estates Mission and Tenants Participation.

The scrutiny committee asked the Cabinet Member for Better Homes if his next report to the meeting could include information regarding rent arrears, repairs (including lifts and what the issues were along with proposals for improvement), and voids.

**ACTION BY: Cabinet Member Better
Homes**

Housing Scrutiny Committee - Monday, 11th September, 2023

Members asked that officers ensure that they provide responses to actions in good time rather than waiting for the next meeting of the scrutiny committee to provide the update.

Officers agreed to set up visits to the Council's temporary accommodation sites for members of the scrutiny committee to attend.

ACTION BY: Director of Housing

Programme of meetings (new items in bold)

Meeting date: Tuesday 14th November

Items:

- Repairs and improvement
(This report to include information on planned maintenance and the retrofit programme; roll-out of CCTV across the borough, damp and mould)
- Housing Association update report
(A report on the activity from Housing Associations in the borough – including the build of new homes; how they are tackling key issues such as damp and mould).
- Housing Services Performance Update
- **Resident Safety Programme – Implementation of the Fire and Building Safety Acts (Cabinet Report)**
- **Update on fire safety and regulatory standard.**
- **Decent Homes Standard and an update on the 2023 stock condition survey**
- Cabinet Member better Homes – Update
- Work programme

Meeting date: Monday 18th December

- Housing needs and allocations
- Housing Supply:
 - *CIP delivery including small sites (Cabinet report)*
 - *Temporary Accommodation Purchasing Programme*
 - *Private rented sector*
- HRA Budget Update
- **Update on fire safety and regulatory standard.**
- Cabinet Member better Homes – Update
- Work programme

JANUARY 2024

- HRA rent setting (Cabinet report)
- Tenancy arrears
- Cost of Living issues
- **Update on fire safety and regulatory standard.**

Housing Scrutiny Committee - Monday, 11th September, 2023

- Cabinet Member Better Homes – Update
- Work programme

FEBRUARY 2024

- CIP annual report
- Cabinet Member Better Homes annual report
- **Update on fire safety and regulatory standard.**
- **Report of Cabinet Adviser: Leaseholder billing and service charges**
- **Homelessness Scrutiny Panel – Provisional date**
- Work programme

Yet to be programmed

- **Tenants Satisfaction Regulatory Survey, when it was available.**
- **Update reports regarding the Cabinet Adviser reports on Supporting Rough Sleepers, Estates Mission and Tenants Participation.**

RESOLVED –

THAT the report work programme be revised as outlined above.

**ACTION BY: Director of Housing/Director
of Property Management**

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There were none.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm.

CHAIR

Contact Officer: Gianni Franchi

Telephone No: 020 7974 1914

E-Mail: gianni.franchi@camden.gov.uk

MINUTES END