

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **RESOURCES AND CORPORATE PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY, 12TH SEPTEMBER, 2023** at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 2, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT

Councillors Chung (Chair), Rebecca Filer, Edmund Frondigoun, Liam Martin-Lane, Jonathan Simpson and James Slater

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT

Councillors Jenny Mulholland and Andrew Parkinson

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Richard Olszewski

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 Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.

MINUTES

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jenny Mulholland and for lateness from Councillor Edmund Frondigoun.

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

No declarations were made.

3. 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.

Running order of the meeting

The Chair announced that there would be a change in the running order of items on the agenda, this was to allow attendance from officers. The running order would be taken in the following order:

8. An update on the council's channel strategy (communications) - connecting with Camden's communities
9. Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-assessment - London Borough of Camden 2022-2023 update
7. Review of the Council's Income.
- 4. DEPUTATIONS (IF ANY)**

There were no deputations.

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

There was no such business.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

THAT the minutes of the meetings held on 10 July 2023 be agreed.

7. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S INCOME

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Finance. The report was introduced by the Head of Finance, Corporate Services.

In their discussion of the report, the Committee made the following comments: Members were interested in social value being gained from assets. They asked whether Camden had a policy of using unfilled assets to generate social value. The Head of Finance agreed to take this away to the Property Team for a response.

Action by: The Head of Finance.

In response to a question about the debt servicing cost of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the Head of Finance agreed to come back with the confirmed figure.

Action by: The Head of Finance.

The Committee asked about affordable housing funding from the Greater London Authority (GLA) and what impact a decrease of funding would have. The Head of Finance said that decreased funding would impact Camden's ability to build more rather than impact existing sites. Schemes were not agreed until there was a clear business case and funding guarantees.

Responding to a question from the Committee about business rates, the Head of Finance explained that Camden only retained a percentage of the business rates raised. Camden could retain some of the revenue from tax base growth but would also need to absorb any losses to the tax base.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted.

**8. AN UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S CHANNEL STRATEGY
(COMMUNICATIONS) - CONNECTING WITH CAMDEN'S COMMUNITIES**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Participation, Partnerships and Communications. After an introduction from the Director, the Head of Strategic Communications and Head of Media and External Relations, the Committee discussed the report.

Members commented that they were pleased that Camden could demonstrate using a wide variety of forms of communication. They asked whether an assessment of efficacy had been carried out with Camden's digital advertising on social media.

The Director of Participation, Partnerships and Communications, responded that the Camden website was undergoing significant change. The website was being improved and the space and role for communications was being developed.

Officers spoke about the use of targeted adverts on social media, that they were effective and had a low cost. This allowed for a targeted approach to communications.

In response to a member question about why Love Camden was not mentioned in the report and how it could be integrated into communications more, the Director said that it not being included in the report was an oversight and that the Communications team worked closely with Love Camden. She further commented that Love Camden worked well as a standalone channel but that it added a lot of value when used in right way.

The Committee discussed the Camden Magazine and how it was a good way to reach communities. The Director said that the magazine, that was published three times per year, was used as a vehicle to disseminate essential information. Focus groups were held to understand the quality and effectiveness of the magazine for engaging residents. From these groups, residents said that they enjoyed reading the magazine and using it as a reference point.

Officers said that Housing was the largest portfolio area for the Communications team and that they constantly reviewed the range of communications that were sent to residents. In response to a member question the Director said that writing the content was done in collaboration with Housing colleagues and was signed off by senior offices in the Housing team. She acknowledged that Camden sometimes got

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the communications right and sometimes it did not. The Communications team had close working relationships with all officers and were always willing to provide support and advice for effective communications.

The Committee discussed the importance of the resident journey on the new website and reducing the number of pages needed visit before accessing the desired information.

Members asked officers about working with the Word on the Kerb podcast. The Director said that through Camden's work with Word on the Kerb they were able to reach communities that they would not have been able to engage. Due to the success of this work, Camden were teaming up with Word on the Kerb to create communications around the cost of living crisis.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living extended an invitation to the Committee to view the updated Council Tax pages, via the beta site, before they went live. A link to this was agreed to be circulated to the Committee.

Action by: the Policy Designer

Members asked how councillors could help with communications. The Director said that there was a fortnightly member update that highlighted areas that Camden would like councillors to share more widely. Networks into communities and speaking community languages would also be valued as part of making communications accessible to all communities.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted.

9. HOUSING OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINT HANDLING CODE SELF-ASSESSMENT - LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN 2022-2023 UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Solicitor. The report was introduced by the Service Manager, Business Support and the Head of Property Customer Services and Engagement.

Members commented that there had been an improvement since the Committee last took an item on complaints and that residents felt more communicated with. In response to a question about the increase in Stage 2 complaints, the Head of Business Support said that further detail would be provided in the Annual Complaints Report. To provide some context to the figures, the Head of Property Customer Services and Engagement said that Camden had carried out 35% more repairs than in the previous year.

Members asked about the forms that complaints could take and whether there was a uniformity of approach. The Service Manager said that complaints were put into the case management system, this allowed more effective management of complaints, with an audit trail and less risk of duplication.

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The Committee asked about Housing Associations and whether Camden had powers to help them improve their own complaints processes. Officers said that Housing Associations had the same level of service to meet from the ombudsman's advice. The Head of Property Customer Services and Engagement commented that if Members were aware of issues, they make the Private Section Housing Service aware so it could be followed up.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted.

10. WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 AND ACTION TRACKER

RESOLVED –

THAT the work programme be noted.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no such business.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm.

CHAIR

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MINUTES END