

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **KENTISH TOWN DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY, 5TH MARCH, 2024** at 6.30 pm in the Kennistoun and Willingham TRA Hall, Willingham Terrace, Leighton Road, London NW5 2UY

REGISTERED DMC MEMBERS PRESENT

Derek Jarman (Chair)	Kennistoun & Willingham TRA
Jane McWilliams (Vice-Chair)	Brookfield Estate TRA
Momota Khatun (Vice-Chair)	St Pancras Way Estate TRA
Steve Barton	Holly Lodge Residents Association
Josh Cedar	Holly Lodge Residents Association
John Cowley	Camden Square TRA
Petra Dando	Camden Association of Street Properties
Barbara Daniel	Carol Close & Sanderson Close
Helen Duff	Ingestre Road Tenants Association
Greg Hattingh	Torriano Estate TRA
Deidre	Maiden Lane TRA
Helen Jack	Lissenden Gardens Tenants Association
Victoria Jago	Whittington Estate TRA
Tim Morgan	Torriano Estate TRA
Andrew Pierce	Camden Association of Street Properties
Sophie Roger	Carol Close & Sanderson Close
Agnieszka Slominska-Karachuk	Whittington Estate TRA
Pauline Stafford	Maiden Lane TRA
John Webb	Kennistoun & Willingham TRA

OTHER RESIDENTS PRESENT

Representative of Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum

COUNCILLOR OBSERVERS PRESENT

Councillors Meric Apak

COUNCILLOR OBSERVERS ABSENT

Councillors Camron Aref-Adib, Richard Cotton, Sylvia McNamara, Andrew Parkinson, James Slater and Anna Wright

OFFICERS PRESENT

Hugh Boatswain	Senior Tenant Participation Officer
Tara Cookson	Neighbourhood Manager
Natasha Constantinides	Consultation Officer
Scot Reid	Head of Property Customer Services and Engagement
Johaun Seesahai	Estate Management Service Manager

Jane Seaman
Maria Jacobs

Principal Caretaking Manager
Head of Neighbourhoods

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 'A' and 'B' lists were noted.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from John Loughran (Ingestre Road Tenants Association).

Abdilatif Shidane, Neighbourhood Manager, advised that he was unable to attend the meeting.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair announced the sad passing of Carol Delany. Carol was secretary of the Torriano Estate Tenants and Leaseholders' Association and had worked tirelessly for her estate and would be greatly missed. The DMC gave their condolences.

The Chair also announced that June Dodds, Peckwater Estate TRA, had stepped down from her role. June was thanked for her valuable contribution to Kentish Town DMC.

The Chair announced that Hugh Boatswain, Senior Tenant Participation Officer, was retiring. The DMC commended Hugh for all the work he had done for the Kentish Town DMC and the residents of Camden and thanked him for his service.

Hugh thanked the DMC for their kind words and introduced Natasha Constantinides, who would be Hugh's replacement.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS ON THIS AGENDA

There were no such declarations.

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

There were no notifications of urgent business.

6. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting of the last meeting.

It was noted that it had not been recorded that Momota Khatun (Vice-Chair), St Pancras Way Estate TRA, had sent apologies for the meeting that took place on 10 January 2024.

RESOLVED –

THAT the minutes of the meetings held on 28th November 2023 and 10th January 2024 be approved and signed as a correct record, subject to the amendment above.

Matters Arising

Heating Pool Charges

The heating pool charges had been discussed at the all DMC meeting that took place on 10 January 2024. Representatives from Maiden Lane sought further information on these charges and asked the following questions:

- 1) *“We would like to know how much we are paying for our heat network gas through the LASER purchasing system scheme per kWh, including any effect the EBRS/EBDS had had on the per kWh price.*
- 2) *We would like to know the meter readings from the boiler room for the last 12 month period so we can understand the kWh consumption for the whole estate.*
- 3) *We would like to see the calculation and apportioning of the monthly per kWh gas cost to 1, 2 and 3 bed units on the state. To be stated separately to understand how many kWh are being used relative to normal consumption levels. What are the current standing charges and what the approved process will be for the calculation of the standing charge for the new system?*
- 4) *If the Maiden Lane heating renewal project is significantly delayed again then we are calling for the installation of heat metering on the estate as a lowest common denominator option and want to know if this is happening; we believe residents have a right to be in control of there consumption and bills. Councillor Beales was open to this idea at last year’s AGM.*
- 5) *We would like to know the effect that previous metering installations have had on the consumption of gas on other estates with district heating systems for comparison.”*

DMC Representatives made the following comments in support of the questions:

- Residents were in distress as heating charges were increasing far too much.
- These increases on top of the other increases residents have faced have put residents under financial strain.
- Some estates had broken or out of date heating systems, so were paying for services they were not able to use.
- An impact assessment should be undertaken to determine the impact of the rent and service charge increases.
- Reporting processes should be clearer to residents, so they could access the help they needed.

Officers committed to providing a response to the questions raised by Maiden Lane.

ACTION: Director of Property Management

Officers also notified the meeting that there was a compensation system in place when heating systems broke and confirmed that residents could apply for compensation online or over the phone. Provided that the correct information was provided, and some checks were undertaken residents claims were usually processed in a week.

DMC Members noted that the compensation scheme did not cover partial loss of heating and had been refused in some cases when a valid repair number was not provided to residents, at no fault of their own.

DMC Members requested that further information advertising the compensation scheme be provided in Housing News

The meeting was informed that a heating issue on Holly Lodge Estate had been poorly managed and residents were not given sufficient information and TRA Representatives had to be a liaison point between residents and the repairs service. DMC Reps agreed that occasions such as these, there should be a clear emergency plan in place, including information how residents and TRAs will be communicated with.

ACTION: Head of Property Customer Services and Engagement

The Chair notified the meeting that tenants who wished to claim benefits towards heating costs were being refused because the Government does not have records of an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for their home. It was requested that this urgently be addressed.

ACTION: Director of Property Management/ Head of Property Customer Services and Engagement

7. KENTISH TOWN PROGRESS REPORT - ACTION POINTS UPDATE

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

Chair and Vice-Chair Training

The meeting was advised that training could be provided to Chairs and Vice-Chairs and were asked to contact Tenant Participation to arrange.

ASB

DMC Representatives requested a special deep dive meeting on this issue.

Damp and Mould

The DMC had previously requested information on the causes of damp and mould but had not yet received this.

Furthermore, DMC Representatives suggested that the issues with damp and mould had been made worse due to reactive repair works being undertaken, rather than proactive and preventive solutions and that the Council had only undertaken damp and mould work following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak in 2020.

The Head of Property Customer Services and Engagement advised that work was currently underway to analyse data on the underlying issues and causes of mould in properties with multiple visits. This information would also inform the forthcoming stock condition surveys.

A DMC Representative advised that during previous stock condition survey visits, access was not granted into some of the flats on their estate meaning that the results of the survey were only representative of roughly one third of properties, which was an inaccurate reflection of the estate as a whole.

The meeting were advised that stock conditions surveys would be discussed under Agenda Item 8(d).

Rent Setting

Representatives reiterated that quality information should be provided in reports, to allow informed decisions to be made.

The Action Point Update was noted.

8(a) HOUSING TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

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

The Director of Property Management provided an overview of the report.

Officers and the Cabinet Member for Better Homes provided the following information in response to questions from DMC Members:

- There was a need for more family homes to be built, however, it was also recognised that some residents were in need of smaller accommodation, therefore smaller properties, such as studios, would remain available.
 - Camden had a choice based letting policy and this process could mean it took up to 100 days to find a tenant for a vacant property. Efforts were being made to bring this down. The newly employed Head of Allocations and Lettings and Head of Repairs were considering ways to make processes for vacated properties more efficient, such as making improvements to end of tenancy processes.
 - DCM Representatives were invited to notify the Council about any empty properties they were aware of, as sometimes properties were abandoned without the Council's knowledge.
 - Sometimes properties stood vacant for a while due to delays in the courts dealing with possession cases. Empty properties were sometimes subject to legal processes and a backlog in the court system had caused delays, for example there was currently a long waiting list for court bailiffs to remove illegal tenants.
 - It was imperative that correct legal processes were followed, so that the Council was not vulnerable to legal proceedings.
 - A review of the allocation system was underway. Currently, the policy states that there was no limit to the number of properties a resident could bid on or refuse on property. The review aimed to assess whether refusals should be limited, for example each prospective tenant be limited to three refusals.
 - Viewings were offered on a points based system.
 - A report on the new proposals for the allocations process could be drafted for a future DMC meeting.
- ACTION: Head of Allocations, Lettings and Private Housing Services**
- WhatsApp had proven to be a successful method of communication with residents about repairs, and consideration was being given to how different systems could be used within the Housing Service to improve communications with residents.
 - This was expected to be a long project that would take roughly 12 to 18 months to complete.
 - Trying to case manage service enquiries via email and phone, through individual officers was often unmanageable, due to the large volume of enquiries received, therefore a front door solution was being explored.
 - Housing was one of the busiest services and 50% of enquiries took place via phone. Since the updates to the Repairs Service over 80% of repair enquiries were received via web-based methods.
 - This work was important as it would mean Neighbourhood Officers could have more time working with residents on estates, rather than at their desks responding to emails and enquiries.
 - In terms of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) the law required proportionate approach, and the Council could not simply evict those residents engaging in

ASB. Evidence was required before action was taken and residents were encouraged to report any issues to build up a case.

- As part of the Pilot Neighbourhoods Team running in Kentish Town, weekly meetings had taken place to discuss different areas of concern or specific cases. These meetings were attended by representative of the police, Adult Social Care, Housing, the Repairs Service, and Community Safety, who came together to gather and discuss evidence and work on progressing cases.
- As a result of this work, funding had been secured to install ring doorbells on homes that have experienced issues or had reported problem neighbours.
- At the last two meetings, specialist teams on gangs were in attendance, which had been valuable and productive.
- Residents were encouraged to make reports on ASB or other concerns to build up profile of issues in the local area.
- When reports are received, they are discussed at the weekly meeting, and options and possible solutions resolution were offered to residents.

DMC Representatives commented that work sounded like positive steps were being taken to address ASB and other issues in the community and were pleased with the progress of the Pilot Neighbourhoods Team and requested that an update report be provided to a future meeting of the DMC.

ACTION: Director of Housing

The report was noted.

8(b) CCTV AND RESPONSIVE SECURITY PATROL UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Security.

Officers provided the following information in response to questions from DMC Members:

- A follow up could be provided once all the surveys had been completed.
- The new cameras that had been installed were working well.
- However, this had led to an increase in criminal damage targeting the new cameras and infrastructure in an effort to prevent them from working.
- Feasibility of CCTV coverage for streets with street properties could be explored, but there could be privacy and other implications that arose from this.
- The programme had been targeted towards estates where CCTV was currently in place. As the costs were covered by service charges, consultation with residents would be required and costs would need to be estimated before installation was considered.
- In addition to CCTV, other prevention methods were important, such as reporting.

- If a resident did not want to report something, someone was able to do it on their behalf or they could be encouraged to report anonymously, as it was important that as much evidence as possible was available.

The report was noted.

8(c) COST OF CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Finance (Supporting Communities).

The Chair noted that it was Labour Party policy to encourage pension funds to invest in housing schemes, such as affordable housing or capital schemes, to diversify their portfolios. However, it was noted that Camden Councils Local Government Pension Fund did not invest in housing scheme.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Better Homes advised that he could not comment on the Pension Fund as this was not something he was involved in but agreed to make enquiries and provide further information.

Assurance was sought that the Camden Living scheme was financially viable and secure, following reports of similar schemes at other authorities going bankrupt. The Cabinet Member for Better Homes confirmed that Camden Living was financially secure.

The report was noted.

8(d) HOUSING WORKS PLANNING

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

DMC Representatives made the following comments:

- Holly Lodge TRA had undertaken a survey of residents to seek their views in advance of the stock condition surveys.
- A briefing note on the HS2 Land at Euston was requested, to include how this would impact social housing, information on the work had already been undertaken, details on the meetings that have taken place in relation to this (to include attendance lists), and what work was planned for the future.
ACTION: Head of HS2 Programme Delivery
- It was also requested that the future of HS2 Land and social housing was on the agenda at the forthcoming Resident Conference and it should be ensured that this was a resident led conversation, rather than a presentation from HS2.
ACTION: Strategic Lead

- An update on the retrofit programme for street properties was also requested.
ACTION: Director of Property Management

Responding to questions about Tenancy Visits, Officers advised that so far a series of estate action days had been organised and door knocks had been carried out and tenancy visits would be undertaken in the future and data about the residents who did not frequently engage with the Council would inform this programme of visits. An update would on this programme would be provided to DMC Reps.

ACTION: Director of Housing

The report was noted.

10(a) SMOKE DETECTOR INSTALLATION WORKS

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Capital Works.

Responding to a question officers explained that hardwiring into a properties lighting circuit was the preferred option when installing smoke detectors as this was a safer option as would ensure that the detectors remained connected to a power source.

Battery powered detectors were provided as interim measures when properties did not have wired in detectors or in instances where access was refused, however most residents were understanding and accommodating as the smoke detectors were essential for safety.

The information report was noted.

10(b) KENTISH TOWN PARKING SUSPENSIONS

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Parking Operations.

Responding to a question officers explained that Council Estates are considered private land, so legislation makes it difficult to enforce parking charge notices. Therefore, the Council proposed to implement Traffic Management Orders which will allow the Council to issue penalty charge notices to those parked in contravention. Responding to a follow up question it was clarified that this measure would not give public rights of access and people will require permits to park on estates.

A DMC Representative advised that there were a number of parking issues on Torriano Estate. Officers advised that they would provide further information to the TRA and further explore measures.

The information report was noted.

10(c) DMC ELECTION NOMINATION FORMS

The information report was noted.

10. RESIDENTS CONFERENCE BRIEFING REPORT

Consideration was given to the report of the Strategic Lead (Supporting Communities), which had been circulated as a supplementary agenda.

Representatives from the Resident Conference working group updated the meeting on some of the discussions that had taken place and made the following comments:

- It was imperative that the conference was resident friendly and welcoming for everyone.
- There would be information stalls on different topics, such as the Cost-of-Living Crisis.
- It would provide an opportunity for residents to come together and discuss different ideas and officers could help residents with practical issues.
- The DMC will take ownership of the conference by providing the funding.

The Chair thanked the working group for all their efforts so far and advised the meeting that the report requested that District Management Committees sponsor the event using funds from the DMC budget for the next financial year, equating to £4,000 per DMC.

It was clarified that the DMC could authorise funding to be allocated from the 2024/2025 budget and that the funds would be released on 1 April 2024.

Therefore, it was

RESOLVED –

THAT a £4,000 contribution towards the funding of the Residents Conference be allocated from the 2024/2025 budget.

ACTION: Neighbourhood Manager

9. KENTISH TOWN DMC BUDGET

Consideration was given to the report of the Neighbourhood Manager.

Tara Cookson, Neighbourhood Manager, introduced the report and outlined the bids received. The Neighbourhood Manager advised the meeting that £85,215.05 of the £151,650 budget had been committed so far, so there were sufficient funds available for all the received bids.

RESOLVED –

THAT the following requests be approved:

TRA	BID REQUEST	AMOUNT
Whittington TRA	Landscape improvements - phase 2	£4900.00
Lissenden TRA	Tennis coaching and tournament 2024	£1740.00
Lissenden TRA	Setting up of a community website	£1500.00

11(a) KENTISH TOWN LOCAL INFORMATION REPORT

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Neighbourhoods.

Tara Cookson (Neighbourhood Manager) provided an overview of the report.

Officers responded to a question about rent arrears and universal credit by advising that universal credit was usually paid directly to claimants, and they would be responsible for paying their rent. A breakdown of information on rent arrears in the Kentish Town North and Kentish Town South wards could be provided to DMC representatives.

DMC Representatives were invited to contribute to the report by providing any news and updates from their estates to the Neighbourhood Manager for inclusion.

The information report was noted.

11(b) KENTISH TOWN NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

The Chair advised that the Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum had invited the DMC to nominate a representative to the Forum Committee and requested nominations.

A representative of the forum provided an overview of the Forum and the work it did. The Chair added that the Forum was especially important as there were big issues facing Kentish Town, such as the regeneration of the Regis Road area.

The Torriano Estate TRA Representative volunteered to attend a meeting of the Forum, as an observer, and would report back before a decision was made on a DMC representative.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

The Chair noted that Councillors Representatives were frequently absent from DMC meetings, so he agreed to write Councillors to encourage them to attend or to send apologies if they were unable to attend.

ACTION: Chair

The meeting ended at 9.27 pm.

CHAIR

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MINUTES END