

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **CAMDEN TOWN DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** held on **WEDNESDAY, 12TH SEPTEMBER, 2018** at 6.30 pm in the Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Crowndale Centre, 218 - 220 Eversholt Street. London, NW1 1BD

REGISTERED DMC MEMBERS PRESENT

Fran Heron (Chair)	Amphill Square TRA	Pat McNicholas	Regent's Park TA
Jay Abdin	Bridgeway Street TRA	Sherryl Murphy	Mayford TRA
David Auger	Co-optee	Dimitrios Papageorgiou	Curnock Street TRA
Anne Byrne	Three Fields TRA	David Perris	CASP
Sylvie Chavrin	Churchway TRA	Wendy Priolo	Coopers Lane TRA
Steve Christofi	Regent's Park TA	Sonia Uddin	Camden Studios TRA
William France	Walker House TRA	Annamarie Vacchelli	Crofters Way TRA
Sheila James	Mayford TRA	Wolfram Westendorf	Godwin and Crowndale TMO
Stephen Kelly	Three Fields TRA		

OTHER RESIDENTS PRESENT

Edith Baker	Crofters Way TRA	Sandra Jija	Three Fields TRA
Jessica Buck	Tenant	Michael Royce	Walker House
Mark Hall	Chair, Gospel Oak DMC		

COUNCILLOR OBSERVERS PRESENT

Councillors Meric Apak (substitute), Samata Khatoon, Roger Robinson and Paul Tomlinson

COUNCILLOR OBSERVERS ABSENT

Councillors Nasim Ali, Heather Johnson and Andrew Parkinson

OFFICERS PRESENT

Jason Blackhurst	Team Leader, HRA and Capital Projects
Shaun Flook	Head of Housing Needs
Gavin Haynes	Director of Property Management
Antony Holmes	Ward Housing Manager
Andy Hardwick	Head of Repairs and Operations
Reda Khelladi	Tenant Participation Co-ordinator
Sarah Moore	Senior Tenant Participation Officer
Vicky Morris	Ward Housing Manager

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

MINUTES

1. REGISTRATION OF TENANT AND RESIDENT ASSOCIATIONS AND CO-OPTION OF 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.

It was noted in changes to the published A and B lists that the Camden Association of Street Properties had been re-registered on the A list and that Derrick Robinson had resigned as the DMC member for Curnock Street TRA.

RESOLVED –

THAT subject to the changes as set out above, the list of registered TRAs and their representatives as set out at Appendix A be noted.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Barbara Seckington, Eileen Kemp (both Agar Grove TMO), Eileen Ennis (Crofters Way TRA), Louise Fletcher, Marie O'Shea (both Amphill Square TRA), Richard Caylor (Bayham Place TRA), Ceri Thomas (Brook and Cranleigh TRA), John Wood (Walker House TRA) and Helia Evens (Ossulston TRA).

An apology for lateness was received from Councillor Samata Khatoon.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Community Clean-Up Events

The Chair noted that the Vice-Chair and representative for Walker House TRA had planned to make an announcement about forthcoming community clean-up events. As he was absent it was agreed that officers contact him and circulate the information via email.

ACTION BY: Vice-Chair (JW)

4. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

There were none.

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

There was no urgent business.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 4th July 2018 be approved and signed as a correct record.

7. CAMDEN TOWN DMC ACTION POINT UPDATE

Consideration was given to the action points arising from the previous meeting.

Council transport being hired by TRAs

It was noted the Vice-Chair and representative for Walker House had been in contact with Michael Lawrence, Transport Manager, to discuss TRAs being able to hire Council transport. This was an ongoing action and should be updated at the next meeting.

**ACTION BY: Vice-Chair (JW)
Michael Lawrence, Transport Manager**

Anti-Social Behaviour at Mayford

Representatives of Mayford TRA reported that while the number of patrols in and around Mayford had increased, this had not had any impact on the level of anti-social behaviour.

8. CONSTITUTION

RESOLVED –

THAT the changes to the Constitution be agreed.

9. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT: BUDGET AND RENT SETTING 2019/20

Consideration was given to the presentation of the Team Leader, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital Projects – Jason Blackhurst – who introduced the report.

The Chair set out that this item was being considered earlier than in previous years to give DMC members more opportunity to consult their TRAs and residents generally on rent setting and level of service charges.

Responding to questions, the Team Leader, HRA and Capital Projects advised:

- The HRA received around £128million of rental income annually currently and £60-70million of fees and charges. These were not fixed as, for example, if there were savings in the heating pool then heating charges could go down;
- Of the £128million of rental income, about £60million was fixed for interest payments and contributions to the housing capital programme, which was a statutory requirement. The rest went to repairs and housing management and this was more flexible;
- Council Tax had increased in the previous year, but the HRA was ringfenced away from Council Tax income;
- The Responsive Security Patrol was partly-funded through an additional service charge, which had been increased by 3% for the current financial year. That increase had raised an extra £30,000-£40,000 for the service. The extra vehicle had been funded from an additional £140,000 put into the service from the HRA; and
- The heating pool was a single pool but the level of charge could vary. Investments in heating improvements would be allocated through a rolling programme of works.

Regarding the move to bring cleaning of external areas on estates back from Veolia to caretakers, the Cabinet Member for Better Homes advised that the change should not affect the level of service charge as the same work was being funded.

DMC members queried the differentials in rent levels between the smallest and largest properties in Camden's stock and suggested these were not proportionate and a more equitable division was desirable. The Team Leader, HRA and Capital Projects, advised that there was limited power to do this because of Government policies on target and average rents. DMC members remarked on how Government policy on housing rents revolved around keeping the level of Housing Benefit low.

The DMC was also advised that the Council's housing stock was weighted heavily to smaller properties so not much income would be raised from substantially increasing the rent levels of the few very large properties in the Council's portfolio. DMC members commented that amending the differentials between bands was more about fairness rather than changing the spread of income derived from each band. It would also encourage people not to over-occupy larger homes. While circumstances varied, there could be four working adults resident in a large Council home and therefore paying not much more than for a smaller property seemed unreasonable. The Team Leader, HRA and Capital Projects, commented that that had been the basis of the Government's aborted Pay to Stay policy.

DMC members suggested that it would be worth setting out in future reports what the legislative position on increasing rents after 2020 was. This would give Camden time to assess and lobby the Government if it considered appropriate. The Team Leader,

HRA and Capital Projects, advised that while the Treasury wanted rents to go down, other parts of the Government wanted to build more social housing, which could in part be funded by increasing rents. The Government had said it was not planning any legislation to reduce rents again in the next 5 years.

Following further questions, the DMC was informed that the £17.9million figure was the budget savings required between 2015/16 and 2018/19; the budget difference from the current year to next year was about £6.5million-£7million. The Team Leader, HRA and Capital Projects, explained that had rents continued to increase in line with the previous formula rather than being reduced by 1% since 2015/16, then income in rents to the HRA would be around £65million more for 2018/19; much of this would have gone into the capital programme. DMC members commented on the cost impacts due to inflation of waiting longer to undertake capital works.

The Team Leader, HRA and Capital Projects, advised that costings for the Better Homes programme could be incorporated into future reports on the HRA budget and rent-setting, albeit Better Homes was a multi-year programme and had to be considered as such.

DMC members noted that consideration had to be given to the non-financial impacts of rent and service charges and how changes might impact on tenants' wellbeing.

10. CHANGES TO COLLECTIONS OF WATER CHARGES

The Chair outlined that previously there had been queries over whether Camden had overcharged tenants for water in the same way Southwark Council had been found to have. However, Thames Water had been now written to advise all London councils they would be collecting water charges directly in the future. She cited a copy of a letter from Thames Water to the Council, commenting that it seemed apparent that Thames Water believed it would be cheaper for them to collect directly due to advances in digital payments. There were queries about water metering. DMC members commented that paying water charges alongside their rent worked well. Concern was expressed with regard to provision of vital water services and in the circumstances it was important that residents, and especially vulnerable people, were given assistance and advice.

Antony Holmes, Ward Housing Manager, reiterated that Southwark Council had been deemed to be reselling water, whereas Camden was in a different position, acting as a collector of water charges and taking legal action for non-payment as necessary; for this it received an administration fee of around £1m. In terms of Thames Water collecting water charges directly, senior officers had met with them to discuss this and Thames Water were steadfast in their decision; Camden had no legal powers to challenge this. Thames Water's decision was relatively recent and there were still a lot of details to be provided. Officers were concerned about the impact on vulnerable persons in particular and were speaking to the welfare rights team to discuss advice and assistance. More communications would go out to tenants in due course

DMC members noted potential savings from installation of water meters, but that the elderly and vulnerable may feel unduly pressured if Thames Water pushed to have them installed. Officers advised that there was no indication from Thames Water of a programme to rollout use of water meters.

It was noted there was no scope to change water suppliers, which gave Thames Water a great deal of power. Past incidents where Thames Water had acted aggressively towards residents were noted, including threatening to turn off water, which was unlawful. Their administration was regarded as poor, which did not bode well for them taking over directly collecting the charges. Conversely there were cases where Thames Water had agreed to reduce rates based on water usage where there were single-occupants for example.

DMC members suggested that a dedicated Council phone line be established that tenants could call if they wanted advice and assistance. This could be advertised through the planned communications.

11. CAMDEN'S DRAFT HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Housing Support Services.

Answering questions, Shaun Flook, Head of Housing Needs, informed the DMC:

- 85% of homeless persons in Camden were originally from outside the borough because Camden's location in central London, with three transport hubs, meant that many people came to the borough seeking services;
- Less than 5% of homeless persons eligible to be housed had been homed outside of London. Welfare changes, especially noting the impending rollout of Universal Credit in the borough, and lack of available housing meant there was a risk more homeless people would have to be housed outside London;
- Camden had received a grant from the Government's Rough Sleepers Initiative. This recognised that Camden was doing good work in terms of homeless;
- The majority of people in hostels were there for 6 – 18 months. The Hostel Pathway was a multi-stage process to address individuals' complex issues and support them to a position where they could sustain living in their own accommodation; and
- Camden worked with a number of housing associations to address homelessness.

Regarding the former Parker Street hostel, DMC members suggested that it was in a much better state than officers portrayed it as being in. The Head of Housing Needs reiterated that the hostel was not considered fit for use and the residents of Parker Street had been moved to other hostels or been supported into housing. The sale would fund capital programme works to improve other hostels; the Holmes Road hostel was currently being refurbished.

DMC members commented that it was clear that a generational change in terms of access to social housing was taking place. The level of homelessness was unacceptable considering the wealth of the country.

Regarding hostels, it was noted that some were historically clustered together and there was sadly some anti-social behaviour associated with them. Management of hostels needed to include protections of local residents in the vicinity. Views were expressed on how sensible it was mixing those recovering from substance abuse in the same hostels with new persons who were still drug or alcohol dependent. It was also noted that more work was needed on removing stigmas associated with homeless persons. If they were resident in hostels for 6 – 18 months on average they could quite easily become members of the local community. A better overview of the relationship between hostels and the communities in which they were located was needed.

The Head of Housing Needs advised that some effort was made to keep those in hostels with substance misuse issues away from others who were in recovery, and people could be moved between hostels as they advanced through the hostel pathway, but this was not always possible. He added that the Council would afford people multiple chances at hostels even if they did relapse.

12. INCREASING DOWNSIZING MOVES BY MUTUAL EXCHANGE THROUGH A NEW BEDROOM STANDARD AND INCREASING DOWNSIZING MOVES THROUGH A NEW TENANTS OPTIONS FUND

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Housing Needs, Shaun Flook, who in response to question advised:

- The Tenants Option Fund had been in place for a number of years but a new scheme was being piloted;
- Help with moving as part of a mutual exchange could be arranged. The costs would be deducted from the Tenants Option Fund payment;
- If a tenant was in arrears when mutually exchanging, there would be a deduction from their Tenants Option Fund payment;
- When downsizing through a mutual exchange, residents would be eligible for both a Tenants Option Fund payment and an additional £500 for doing so through mutual exchange. Not having to go through the bidding process empowered residents and saved the Council resources; and
- The policy would not be applied retrospectively.

13. IMPROVING HOUSING SERVICES

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

The Chair noted the importance of feedback leading to improvements in services, but crucially that consultation fed into the policies before they were introduced.

Currently consultation was driven entirely by costs, efficiencies and savings and had lost focus on residents' priorities.

Regarding the landlord review and the ongoing pilot in Kentish Town, Antony Holmes, Ward Housing Manager, advised that the idea underpinning the pilot was that the team provided a holistic service solving as many problems as possible at the first point of contact rather than referring them to other teams. Feedback had generally been good from those in the pilot area and a wider consultation would begin later in the autumn. As requested by the DMC, more detailed feedback from residents in the pilot area should be provided.

ACTION BY: Angela Spooner, Head of Tenancy Services

Reda Khelladi, Tenant Participation Co-ordinator, gave an overview of the Responsive Security Patrol (RSP) contract monitoring group and how the appointment process would work. The aim was to have the Panel established by November/December 2018 able to start reviewing all satisfaction data and making recommendations as needed. The Chair suggested that this be picked up at a proposed special meeting and expressions of interest be sought from all DMC members in the interim.

ACTION BY: Reda Khelladi, Tenant Participation Co-coordinator

DMC members suggested that the proposed monitoring group needed to meet more than twice-yearly to be able to react more quickly to issues with the service; quarterly as a minimum would be considered standard. The Tenant Participation Co-ordinator suggested this was feasible.

The Chair noted there were concerns about a perceived recent deterioration in the RSP's service response. She presented the motion that had been tabled with regard to the provision of future RSP services and asked the DMC to agree it. The DMC unanimously supported the motion. Non-voting residents present also noted their agreement with the content of the motion as well

DMC members noted that it would be difficult for a small group of residents to understand how the RSP was working in all areas, especially as hotspots changed. Therefore, a mechanism was needed for TRAs to feed in their views to the group. Data needed to be logged correctly. Appropriate links between the group and Safer Neighbourhood Panels (SNPs) should be established to minimise duplication and overlap. Residents with some expertise were already sitting on SNPs, so it would be sensible to seek expressions of interest for the group through SNPs.

The Tenant Participation Co-ordinator confirmed that the roles of the SNPs and group were different. Establishment of the group had been promised as part of the contract tendering. The RSP monitoring panel intended to support the Council's contract monitoring rather than change the burden of responsibility from officers to residents.

Returning to the report, in relation to major works DMC members noted the need to establish better links between contractors and residents, whilst retaining the involvement of officers. This was especially important to have in place before works started. Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management, noted a lot of TRAs worked closely with contractors and officers already, and there were lots of ways to ensure resident liaison took place. For example, some TRAs nominated a lead resident to engage with contractors. DMC members commented that this was an additional burden on residents.

In discussion, DMC member stated:

- CCTV was in urgent need of review. Functional CCTV would help deter crime and support prosecutions;
- Caretakers were reporting faults multiple times using their apps without effective action being taken subsequently. Staff generally found reporting repairs as difficult and time-consuming as the general public. Consideration should be given to providing a priority line for staff to call;
- A Freephone number for repairs had been previously suggested. Councillor Meric Apak, Cabinet Member for Better Homes, advised that this remained under consideration;
- Contractors appeared to be 'writing their own job descriptions'. There were frequent cases of duplication of work with contractors with residents therefore paying twice as a result. This could be eliminated by better record keeping. The Director of Property Management advised there was a central record and certification process. Sometimes it may appear that works were being duplicated, but for example, asbestos surveys may be conducted in parts; and
- Surveys were being done so badly that new surveys had to be commissioned. Residents should not have to pay twice for this. When undertaking surveys, contractors should set out in letters when the last survey was undertaken and set out the reasoning for having repeat work.

RESOLVED –

THAT Camden Town DMC approved the following motion:

“Due to rumour and counter rumour, this DMC moves this emergency motion with regard to the Responsive Security Patrol Unit.

Background

For a variety of reasons, prior to the inception and development of the RSP, arrangements to tackle a range of serious ongoing crime and criminal activities including inter-gang territorial disputes often related to significant drug markets, increasing violence with multiple stabbing and tragic loss of lives over the past several years, were considered unfit for purpose. Calls to overworked police were ignored, neighbourhoods were terrorised and fear for one's safety and the safety of one's family were among the top priorities of people across Camden. Local people felt helpless in the face of escalating crime and ASB. In hot spots such as Somers Town and Gospel Oak areas this was especially true.

Following protracted battles to improve the accountability and performance of the now defunct mobile security service within Camden, the constant lobbying and pressure by local people across the borough finally paid off leading to the welcome introduction of a new service management and oversight being placed firmly within the Housing Department and within the remit of the Cabinet Member for Better Homes

We make the following points:

1. The development and implementation of the RSP service has had a very significant positive impact in reducing crime and fear of crime in our neighbourhoods
2. The dedication of the team and 'Can Do' attitude have been of particular note
3. Statistical evidence demonstrates that the visible presence of uniformed security patrols and clearly marked RSP vehicles has had a noticeable positive impact in reducing and disrupting serious crime.
4. A culture of identifying problems and intervening as early as possible to prevent potential escalation and disruptive patterns of behaviour is now in place
5. The public are expressing trust in the service hitherto absent
6. The Acting Head of Property Services has been inspirational in driving the project forward and has spared no effort in responding to concerns at grass roots level
7. We support his plans to introduce regular Community Safety Surgeries on our estates and elsewhere
8. The introduction of much needed powers of arrest for suitably trained personnel will enhance the service enormously and relieve under-resources neighbourhood and emergency police capacity
9. Some of us have been in early discussion about the contents of a planned 7-year business plan which we fully endorse
10. We would strenuously oppose any plan we consider would reduce the effectiveness and integrity of the RSP service
11. The model now developed for the RSP team under its inspiring leadership is a flagship service working with and for the people who fund it providing positive impacts rippling out across the whole borough. Any dilution of effectiveness, lines of responsibility and accountability without full community consultation and approval will be resisted by all and every means possible
12. Any move to alter the responsibility for this dedicated housing service funded by and provided for those living in council-owned homes from the remit of the Cabinet Member for Better Homes will be very strenuously resisted."

14. UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR BETTER HOMES

Councillor Meric Apak, the Cabinet Member for Better Homes, introduced his report and outlined some of the key issues raised during earlier items, which he would take forward.

The Chair suggested and it was agreed that a special DMC meeting be arranged to discuss the Housing green paper.

ACTION BY: Sarah Moore, Senior Tenant Participation Officer

The issue of voids was raised and a report for the next meeting was requested covering the numbers of voids, average turnaround times, the improvements and issues in the processes, and any other relevant details. Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management, advised there were currently around 300 voids, with another 300 held for regeneration reasons. The Cabinet Member noted that the number of voids had crept up for various reasons, such as being held back for Chalcots residents, but this was a temporary blip. A report could be provided.

ACTION BY: Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management

15. HIGH SPEED 2 (HS2)

The DMC was given a brief update on HS2 with it noted:

- The lorry routes application was due to go to Camden's Planning Committee on Thursday 20th September;
- There was a proposal for a taxi rank running up Eversholt Street from Euston up to Barnby Street;
- Demolition on the Regent's Park estate and Granby Terrace would start within weeks; and
- Some works had been brought forward from primary to preliminary works including the extension of Granby Terrace Bridge.

It was noted roughly 1300 homes were due to get noise insulation ahead of works starting. To date only around 50 homes had had this work done, and of the rest many Council tenants or leaseholders were affected, so the Council as landlord had a duty to assist them. Neither was the monitoring in place to measure noise impacts from the works, nor had the ventilation been sorted out for a number of affected blocks. It was felt that the Council had raised insufficient objections to this situation. As a result some residents would be looking to escalate the issue to the Construction Complaints Commissioner. The DMC agreed that councillors needed to challenge officers on how Camden had complied with these wholly unacceptable circumstances. The Cabinet Member for Better Homes agreed a response was needed for residents, but that he would also seek a briefing for councillors so they could update their constituents as needed.

ACTION BY: Katy Mann, HS2 Programme Lead

16. CAMDEN TOWN DMC BUDGET

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

The representative of Curnock Street TRA introduced their bid for new gating and fencing to block some entrances to the estate. There was a problem with anti-social behaviour (ASB) on the estate and CCTV had not proven effective. Catching perpetrators was very difficult because of number of ways on to the estate. By blocking some entrances, people would be deterred from coming on to the estate and the Police would find it easier to catch anyone causing ASB. The Police and Fire Brigade had been consulted as part of a widespread consultation. Officers and ward councillors expressed their support for the bid, noting the proposals had been in development for a number of months.

In discussion, DMC members commented:

- Other TRAs had not been allowed to put forward bids for gating or fencing, and consistency in approach was needed. Antony Holmes, Ward Housing Manager, commented that this case was different as the proposals would not enclose the entire estate and therefore would maintain the public access;
- Curnock Street TRA had already had a major bid approved this year. Some thought had to be given to fairness of allocating funding;
- Enclosure, even if only in part, may lead to ASB moving to other estates. An independent view from a security specialist would be welcome;
- There ought to be other sources of funding for issues of this nature;
- Only one quote had been submitted. While from a Council contractor, more quotes would be helpful in assessing value-for-money; and
- There were no plans provided. It had been agreed at the special DMC meeting in July 2018, plans should be provided in support of large bids of this type.

The Chair proposed and it was agreed that the bid be deferred to the next meeting in light of some of the queries raised. For the next meeting, the DMC should be provided with:

- Information on why this bid was supported by officers unlike previous bids by TRAs for gating and fencing;
- Supporting information on how the bid would lead to ASB being reduced and not simply diverted elsewhere;
- Copies of relevant plans;
- More information on the quote received and why others quotes had not been sourced; and
- Reasons why the DMC budget was the correct source of funding for the bid and why other sources of funding were not available.

Due to lack of time, the revised budget template was not discussed and it was agreed this would be picked up at the previously agreed special meeting.

ACTION BY: Sarah Moore, Senior Tenant Participation Officer

RESOLVED –

THAT the Curnock Street TRA bid for gating and fencing be deferred to the next normal DMC meeting.

17. CAMDEN SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD BOARD (CSNB)

The report was noted.

18. ENGAGEMENT REPORT

The report was noted.

19. SERVICES UPDATE REPORT

The report was noted.

20. MINUTES FOR REFERENCE

The minutes for reference were noted.

21. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DMC MEETINGS

The topics for future DMC meetings were noted.

22. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There was none.

The meeting ended at 21:56.

CHAIR

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MINUTES END