

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 16 JULY 2024 AT 6.30 PM
COMMITTEE ROOM 1, TOWN HALL, JUDD STREET, LONDON WC1H 9JE

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SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

Wards

6. DEPUTATIONS

To consider two deputations one from Jeremy and Joyce Yankey and the other from Jon Glackin – Street Kitchens (Pages 5 - 8)

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA ENDS

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1. Jeremy and Joyce Yankey

We would like to discuss three topics: the communication barrier between the council, residents, as well as fire safety issues and Anti-social behaviour.

Our presentation will be brief and should take less than five minutes

2. From Jon Glackin – Street Kitchen (linked to the Review of Rough Sleepers report on the agenda)

Thank you for considering our request for a deputation at the housing scrutiny committee meeting.

We feel it's very important to raise our concerns regarding the "rough sleeping" review that will be presented to you.

Streets Kitchen has operated in Camden for over 10 years: from morning outreaches where we regularly engage with over 120 people bedded down on the streets in only a small part of the borough, to evening outreaches where we serve almost 100 people regularly.

During the COVID pandemic, we fed those housed temporarily in the hotels while we were the only group out on the streets every day, encouraging people to come in while sharing essential supplies and companionship.

For the last four years, we have regularly met with commissioned outreach, commissioners and directors involved with rough sleeping services that were initially facilitated by Jon Kuhrt from Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in order to create a better working relationship which has had mixed results.

First and foremost the review was conducted internally whereas we continue to call for an independent review.

On November 16 we were assured that there would be an urgent investigation into the events on Huntley Street on November 10 as well as an urgent review into 'rough sleeping' services provided by LBC that would be independent.

<https://www.camdennewjournal.co.uk/article/tents-scandal-fallout-who-knew-what-and-when>

Not having an independent review can leave the council to accusations of lacking in impartiality, professionalism and indeed a lack of an ethical approach.

Other neighbouring boroughs such as Islington & Haringey have always brought in outside consultants which we would like to elaborate on at our deputation...

We also participated in the review and sadly cannot hear our voices within and we know so many organisations such as ourselves were excluded from participating which is quite strange... again on the evening we will elaborate on this

We would also like to know who the 15 participants consulted in the review were as we would hope there was a balanced consultation.. we feel there wasnt.

Just recently we at first hand saw the admitted breakdown of communication again with this incident outside Camden Offices:

<https://www.camdennewjournal.co.uk/article/hostile-environment-claim-as-council-moves-bike-racks-and-planters-into-space-used-by-rough-sleepers>

none of this has been actioned either:

<https://www.camdencitizen.co.uk/2023/02/14/councillor-volunteer-base-camden-homeless-people-housing-crisis/>

<https://fitzrovia.com/2023/02/17/camden-cabinet-adviser-makes-recommendations-to-support-street-homeless/>

We have worked closely with Liberty, who also supports our call for an independent inquiry:

Just some recent press coverage with Liberty:

<https://www.camdennewjournal.co.uk/article/tents-scandal-police-admit-they-acted-unlawfully-in-eviction>

<https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/issue/liberty-warns-tfl-over-threats-to-rough-sleepers/>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/rough-sleepers-evicted-tfl-camden-b1867882.html>

<https://www.camdennewjournal.co.uk/article/homeless-are-being-treated-as-criminals-lawyer-warns>

<https://www.camdennewjournal.co.uk/article/homeless-man-wins-appeal-against-ban-on-holding-cup>

In just a short period we already have many groups supporting our call for an independent review

for example, Amnesty has this to say:

"In 2022, Amnesty International contacted Camden Council about concerns over the rights violations of rough sleepers in the borough, calling for systemic action to address these issues.

We are alarmed to learn that the criminalization of rough sleeping in Camden continues. A recent high-profile case led to the Metropolitan Police apologizing and admitting that their officers acted illegally in November 2023 by removing the shelter and belongings of people who were homeless. This is an example of criminalization of rough sleepers in Camden, which cross cuts the councils obligations to provide homelessness assistance and policing.

The council's internal investigation report resulting from this particular instance, fails to address the cross-cutting causes of this kind of rights violation. Action to address this must be coordinated across local police, health, social care, and homelessness services to move away from punitive measures against people who are homeless, towards comprehensive coordinated support for people.

Instead of continuing down a path of siloed, internal investigation, the Local Authority should work with other local statutory sector partners to arrange an independent, cross-sector investigation into the causal factors that lead to criminalization of rough sleepers and its impact. Such an independent investigation would improve trust and should involve individuals with lived experience of homelessness to help develop a comprehensive plan for change which respects the dignity of rough sleepers in assuring they are able to have decent, safe homes, access to health services and an adequate standard of living”.

Jen Clark, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Lead, Amnesty International UK

c/f <https://www.camdennewjournal.co.uk/article/amnesty-tells-camden-council-its-treatment-of-rough-sleepers-breaches-human-rights>

These are just some of the many groups who are supportive of our call for an independent review:

Museum of Homelessness <https://museumofhomelessness.org/>

Outside Project <https://lgbtiqoutside.org/>

Simon

Community <https://cindex.camden.gov.uk/kb5/camden/cd/service.page?id=KpRQRlOmJ90>

Maverick Humanity

Liberty <https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/>

Amnesty <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/>

Public Interest Law Centre <https://www.pilc.org.uk/>

Camden Lib Dems cllrs.

Green Party cllrs.

Street Storage <https://www.streetstorage.org/>

Showerbox <https://showerbox.org/>

There are more and I will be bringing the full list on Tuesday....

I apologise for a lack of fluency in this request but I hope I have embodied most of what our deputation will consist of.

We are all volunteers with Streets Kitchen and we are reacting rapidly to ensure our submission will be accepted

Thank you for this and I look forward to presenting to you in a much more concise and fluent manner.

It's very important to us and the many guests we serve that Camden Council can operate a rough sleeping service that is a good and successful fit for those experiencing homelessness,

We stand ready to assist in any way we can.

Please contact me in the first instance if you require any more information.

When could we hope to get a response on whether we are successful in our application?

in solidarity,

Jon

ENDs