

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **HAMPSTEAD DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** held on **THURSDAY, 8TH DECEMBER, 2022** at 6.30 pm in the Zoom meeting

REGISTERED DMC MEMBERS PRESENT

Toyin Majiyagbe (Chair)	Taplow TRA
Anne Ward (Vice-Chair)	5-7 Belsize Grove TRA
Ubah Egal (sub)	Alexandra & Ainsworth TRA
George Richardson	Arkwright Mansions TRA
Nigel Rumble	Bray TRA
Mary-Ann Gilroy (sub)	Dorney TRA
Andreas Yennadiou	Hillgrove Estate TRA
Janice Smart	Lymington Road TRA
Fatima Abubakur	Mortimer Crescent TRA
Caroline McHugh	Studholme Court TRA
Mary Ryan	Sydney Boyd Court TRA
Nevenka Martin	Taplow TRA
Giosina Scalzo	Templar House TRA
Lynda Stuart	Webheath TRA

OTHER RESIDENTS PRESENT

Nafisa Ali (sub)	5-7 Belsize Grove TRA
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COUNCILLOR OBSERVERS PRESENT

Councillors Nancy Jirira and Nanouche Umeadi

OTHER COUNCILLORS PRESENT

Councillor Meric Apak (Cabinet Member for Better Homes)
Councillor Tom Simon

OFFICERS PRESENT

Graeme Beedham	Head of TP and Sheltered Hsg
Celestine Fairhall	Neighbourhood Manager
Stanton La Foucade	Tenant Participation
Susan O'Hara	Caretaking Manager
Vinothan Sangarapillai	Committee Services
Glendine Shepherd	Director of Housing
Nilva Thompson	Neighbourhood Manager
Danny Waite	Head of Repairs and Operations
Michael Webb	Head of Finance (Supporting Communities)

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

MINUTES

1. REMOTE MEETING

RESOLVED –

THAT the Chair be authorised to hold the DMC meeting as a remote meeting.

2. REGISTRATION OF TENANTS ASSOCIATIONS AND CO-OPTION OF TENANT REPRESENTATIVES

The 'A' list was noted. There was no 'B' list.

3. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Jeremy Woolcock (50 Fitzjohns TRA), Hasan Shah (Burnham TRA), Jeremy Yankey (CASP), Jaman Hussain (Dorney TRA), Cara Paul (Studholme Court TRA), Ade Osinuga (Sydney Boyd TRA). Apologies were also received from Councillor Lorna Greenwood.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no notifications of any items of urgent business.

7. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd September 2022.

RESOLVED –

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd September 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

8. HAMPSTEAD DMC PROGRESS REPORT - ACTION POINTS UPDATE

The progress report was noted.

9. HOUSING SERVICES CONSOLIDATED REPORT

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

Michael Webb, the Head of Finance (Supporting Communities), introduced the finance section of the report. He said that the old rent-setting formula of CPI + 1% would have led to an increase of more than 11% this year. Instead, the government was capping rent increases at 7%.

Mr Webb said that inflationary pressures on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), such as increased costs for labour and for interest payments, would amount to £7.7m. A 7% increase was modelled as raising £8.5m for the HRA, which would cover this and allow for increased investment in priority areas such as building safety.

He explained the DWP would be increasing benefits and pensions by 10.1%, but he acknowledged that some residents would be facing significant cost-of-living pressures. The Council would be using some funds, such as the underspend that had been returned to Camden from the North London Waste Authority (NLWA), to subsidise measures that would help poorer residents such as school breakfast clubs.

It was noted that 70% of council tenants received full or partial housing benefit or Universal Credit. For residents in receipt of full Housing Benefit, the whole increase would be covered by this.

Mr Webb highlighted that service charges would be increasing for those households that received the relevant service. More information would be provided to the joint DMC meeting on 11th January 2023.

Attendees expressed concern that increased rents would lead to increased rent arrears. Officers said that they were doing their best to be supportive of tenants with rent arrears and arrange for payment plans for them to pay them off. The Council was also doing work to help people with income maximisation and ensuring that residents claimed all benefits and grants to which they were entitled.

Residents said that the Council needed to be more efficient in ensuring that communal lighting was only on when needed, as currently there were some examples of them wastefully remaining on at times when they were not required.

Concern was voiced about the slow pace of void turnarounds, which meant that the Council missed out on potential rents from properties that had not been let.

In order to encourage residents to be economical in their usage of energy in district heating systems, attendees said that they wished to see charges based on individual heat meters. The representative from Webheath said that meters had been installed in her block but that they were not connected.

Councillor Apak said that the Council would be installing individual heat meters where there were district heating systems, but that this would be a long-term process.

Danny Waite, Head of Repairs and Operations, spoke to his section of the report. He said that satisfaction with the repairs service, as measured by the resident satisfaction surveys, was 85%.

He said that 'channel shift' had meant that many residents were using the internet, webchat and SMS to contact the Council. This had meant that waiting times for phone calls had decreased.

Mr Waite said that the Council had difficulties in recruiting to some trades positions, and that they were also facing an increase in the cost of materials.

Residents asked for clarity about what was considered an emergency repair. Anne Ward, the Vice-Chair, highlighted cases where some elderly residents had faced a long wait to get hot water supply restored to their property.

Mr Waite said that the Council was reviewing what was classed as an emergency repair and what was classed as essential or non-essential.

Attendees also said that the Council needed to ensure a proper record was kept of vulnerable tenants who would need to be logged as requiring an enhanced service.

The new representative from Alexandra & Ainsworth TRA, Ubah Egal, said that the Council needed to monitor situations where there were repeated calls when the same problem recurred regularly, as it would indicate if there were deeper issues. She cited the communal heating system in her estate as an instance of this. She also said that there was an ant infestation and, rather than dealing with it flat-by-flat, a block-wide approach was needed.

ACTION: Pest Control

A query was raised as to why the Council did not deal with blocked sinks. Mr Waite said that this was a policy decision, and that the Council was responsible for pipes but residents were responsible for their own sinks. Blockages could often be resolved by using cheap household cleaning products, and repairs officers would be able to advise on this. He also urged residents not to flush wet wipes down toilets, as this was causing blockages and difficulties for the sewage system.

A resident raised concerns about a broken window taking a long time to repair. Mr Waite said that one of the trades that the Council had a difficulty in recruiting to was skilled glaziers.

Andreas Yennadiou, Hillgrove Estate TRA, highlighted an issue facing leaseholders when their property was affected by leaks which could be from a communal pipe. He said that he would prefer it if leaseholders could call on Camden's plumbing staff and be re-charged for it if need be, rather than having to engage an external plumber who might not have the knowledge or information to hand about the estate.

The representative from Lymington Road TRA raised a matter concerning a resident on her estate who had logged a leak affecting the ceiling of her property and had been told she would have to wait until next year for an appointment. The damage caused by the leak was getting worse and not attending to it promptly was likely to cause more expense for the Council in the long-run. Danny Waite asked for information about the case to be sent to him.

ACTION: Head of Repairs and Operations

Mr Waite added that he was working on creating a 'leak hub' which would help to deal more quickly with cases of leaks.

Mary Ryan raised a concern about the gates at Sydney Boyd Court being broken and not having been fixed for three weeks.

Attendees said that they had been disappointed with the quality of work that some contractors had done. Residents had to go back to the Council to report shoddy work and often this did not result in any further action.

Mr Waite noted the concerns residents had about poor workmanship by contractors, and said that he wanted to increase numbers of jobs that were inspected after completion.

Lynda Stuart from Webheath TRA highlighted lifts that went out of action frequently. She said there were some lifts that ought to be replaced, rather than having frequent short-term repairs.

Glendine Shepherd, the Director of Housing, introduced herself to the DMC and outlined the housing transformation programme. She said that the 8 service areas within Housing Management and Housing Support Services were being amalgamated into five.

This would mean that neighbourhoods and estate management would be brought together; and allocations, lettings and private sector housing would sit in one service area as well. The aim of this was to enable greater joint working and an improvement of services to residents.

Ms Shepherd noted that more than half of residents did not have contact with their housing officer. She aimed to increase the proportion of tenants who were able to see and contact their housing officer when necessary, and to have housing officers more visible and doing more tenancy visits.

Members welcomed Glendine Shepherd to the role. They said that they sometimes found communication from the Council poor, and they often did not know who their housing officer was and when they changed. Some residents also said that there had been very variable performance from different housing officers.

Attendees said that they wanted residents to be more empowered, as currently they felt disempowered. Ms Shepherd said that she wanted to do this, and to improve relationships with TRAs.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report and the comments above be noted.

10. HAMPSTEAD DMC BUDGET REPORT

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Landlord Services.

It was noted that there were no new bids for consideration at this meeting.

The Chair raised concerns with regard to the delays in bids being processed by officers once they had been agreed in previous DMCs.

Sidney Boyd Court TRA had submitted a bid in January 2022 which had not been progressed for over 10 months, and a formal complaint had been raised by the DMC chair about this. The delay by the Council in sending payment to the contractor resulted in the original quote increasing and works being unable to begin until February 2023.

The Chair emphasised that such delay by the Council lacked consideration for the effort and all the work reps put in to submitting bids.

Glendine Shepherd said that the Council would attempt to rectify the way it handled bids and minimise delays in the process.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report and the comments above be noted.

11. DMC CHAIRS' PAPER - COMPLAINTS PANEL

The report was noted.

12. CABINET MEMBER FOR BETTER HOMES REPORT

Councillor Meric Apak gave a verbal report to the meeting. He spoke about the changes to the housing service that Ms Shepherd had mentioned in her report, and said he would be waiting to see how they bedded in and then asking DMCs to give their views on them.

He noted concerns that residents had about poor communication from the Council, and said he wanted to see this improved.

RESOLVED –

THAT Councillor Apak's presentation be noted.

13. LOCAL ISSUES

Anne Ward explained that her TRA (5 to 7 Belsize Grove) represented two old Edwardian houses which had been converted into numerous small flats. She said that they had poor energy efficiency and welcomed the Council's plan to install better insulation there.

Nigel Rumble commented that the show flat in Taplow did not seem to be ready. He said that there were problems with the central heating and that the highest it could go was 21 degrees Celsius and this took 3 hours.

Nilva Thompson said that the show flats seemed well-presented to her. She said that representatives who wanted to visit could arrange this via Astrid Kjellberg-Obst.

The Chair said she shared some of Mr Rumble's concerns and asked for information to come back to the DMC about the show flats.

ACTION: Project Director (Astrid Kjellberg-Obst)

Ubah Egal, from Alexandra & Ainsworth TRA, said that there needed to be CCTV installed on the "red brick" non-listed side of the estate. She highlighted that a young man had been murdered there in 2019 and this emphasised the need for proper CCTV in the area.

Councillor Apak said that a CCTV work programme was being put together and it would be sent to reps in the next few weeks.

ACTION: Head of Security (Graeme Dyson)

Lynda Stuart from Webheath asked when the CCTV installation work would be undertaken on her estate. Councillor Apak said it was planned for the end of 2023.

There was a discussion on the councillor-led walkabouts for Templar House and Hillgrove. The Chair said they had identified a number of repairs issues, including a

leaky TRA roof at Templar House. This still had not been repaired. Members said that it was important that progress from walkabouts be seen, as otherwise people's faith in the process and motivation to undertake them would be reduced.

ACTION: Head of Repairs and Operations

Given the autumn leaf fall, concerns were raised about guttering being blocked by leaves and the blocked gutters resulting in leaks. In some cases, this matter had been raised several years running. Mr Waite said this was a matter that a team in his section would be focusing on. Redfern House was highlighted as a block that particularly suffered from this.

The Chair announced that there would be a DMC Christmas Party on the afternoon of Sunday (11 December).

14. MINUTES FOR REFERENCE

The minutes were noted.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no other business the Chair considered urgent.

16. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Dates of future meetings:

- Wednesday, 11th January 2023 (Joint Meeting)
- Thursday, 9th March 2023

The meeting ended at 8.45pm.

CHAIR

Contact Officer: Vinothan Sangarapillai, Committee Services

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MINUTES END