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## Committee Documents

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# PLEASE NOTE THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION AT THE NEXT MEETING OF THE CAMDEN TOWN DMC, TO BE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 10 JUNE 2009.

## LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **CAMDEN TOWN DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE** held on **WEDNESDAY 4 MARCH 2008** at 7.00pm in the Conference Room, 2nd floor, Crowndale Centre, 218-220 Eversholt Street, London, NW1 1BD.

### MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor <a href="#">James King</a>	Executive Member, Community Safety and Housing Services
Councillor <a href="#">Chris Naylor</a>	Executive Member, Homes and Housing Strategy
Councillor <a href="#">Roger Robinson</a>	St. Pancras and Somers Town Ward

### REGISTERED DMC MEMBERS PRESENT

Fran Heron	Amphill Square TA (DMC Chair)
Paul Tomlinson	Amphill Square TA
Jackie Holloway	College Place TRA
Wendy Priolo	Coopers Lane TRA
Susan Gorrie	Curnock Street TRA
Lenny Rodgie	Delancey Studios TRA
Patrick Coss	Godwin and Crowndale TMC
June Gutzmore	Mayford TRA
Sherryl Murphy	Mayford TRA
Helia Evans	Ossulston TRA
Symphorosa Nwaneri	Ossulston TRA
Alan Lambert	Regent's Park TA

### ALSO PRESENT

Meric Apak	Camden Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations
Jessica Buck	Tenant
Alfie MacLeod	Tenant

### OFFICERS PRESENT

Lucy Gbadebo	Estate Services Manager, Camden Town, Housing and Adult Social Care
Sharon Joseph	Community Engagement Officer, Housing and Adult Social Care
Ryhs Makinson	Assistant Director, Finance, Housing and Adult Social Care
Kat Murphy	Programme Manager, Finance Directorate
Karen Orr	Tenant Participation Co-ordinator, Housing and Adult Social Care

Paul Shiel Estate Parking Control Manager, Housing and Adult Social Care  
 Chris Rouse Committee Officer, Organisation Development  
 Jackie Smyth Head of Housing Services (East), Housing and Adult Social Care

**The minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting.**

## 1. REGISTRATION OF TENANTS ASSOCIATIONS AND CO-OPTION OF TENANT REPRESENTATIVES

Consideration was given to an updated list of registered and unregistered Tenants Associations and co-option of Tenant Representatives at Appendices A and B respectively (dated 3 March 2009, tabled at the meeting and attached at **APPENDIX A** of the minutes).

It was noted that the Ampthill Square TA had not held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) as they had been waiting for the new Housing Management Structure to be implemented, so that new officers could be invited to attend.

The Chair asked how long the grace period was whereby TA/TRAs were given additional time to renew their registrations. Karen Orr (Tenant Participation Co-ordinator) responded that AGMs were required to be held, and renewals submitted between every 12-15 months.

It was noted that Robert McMahon's name should not have been listed on Appendix A as being the DMC Member for Coopers Lane, and that this was something which had been raised at the last meeting of the DMC, but had not been actioned.

### RESOLVED

THAT the lists of registered and unregistered Tenants Associations and co-option of Tenant Representatives be confirmed, subject to the above amendment.

## 2. APOLOGIES

Councillor Robinson (St. Pancras and Somers Town Ward) gave his apologies for needing to leave the meeting early, at 9.00pm.

**TO NOTE: All**

## 3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

### • Susan Warns, Curnock Street TRA

It was with great sadness that the DMC was informed that Susan Warns, Secretary to the Curnock Street TRA, had passed away. The DMC paid tribute to her by holding a minutes silence in her memory.

### • Balconies at Delancey Studios

Prior to the DMC, Lenny Rodgie (Delancey Studios TRA) circulated a document to Members raising concerns at the condition of residents balconies at Delancey Studios (attached at **APPENDIX B** of the minutes for reference).

**TO NOTE: All**

### • New Housing Management Structure

Lucy Gbadebo was introduced to the DMC as the new Estate Services Manager for Camden Town. It was noted that the new Housing Management Structure represented a significant change for Housing Services in Camden, and that the focus would be on providing support, and tackling issues such as past, staff under-performance and systems failures.

It was explained that Lucy's role encompassed overseeing the caretaking service for the whole Camden Town district.

It was also noted that Jackie Smyth would be taking up her new position as Head of Housing Services (East) on 9 March 2009.

The DMC was informed that letters would be sent to residents presently detailing the new Structure. The letters would contain new contact details for appropriate officers.

A chart detailing the new Structure (attached at **APPENDIX C** of the minutes) was circulated for reference. It was noted that Sharon Rodney and Vicky Morris, had been appointed as Ward Housing Managers in Regent's Park and St. Pancras and Somers Town Wards respectively. Lucy would be overseeing caretaking in Camden Town. It was noted that Sue Price would be Ward Housing Manager in the Gospel Oak Ward and Dermot Mullan would be the Ward Housing Manager for the Camden Town and Primrose Hill Ward.

It was also explained that the Estate Services Managers would have responsibility for sustainability issues including waste and recycling. Ward Managers would deal with issues such as resident liaison, working with (amongst others) Councillors, and the Safer Neighbourhoods Teams (SNTs).

A question was asked, whether Jackie Smyth would still be based at the Crowndale Centre. It was noted that she would be however, emphasis would now be on areas, rather than purely where officers were based.

**TO NOTE: All**

### • Letter from Councillor **Keith Moffitt** (Leader of Camden Council) and Councillor **Andrew Marshall** (Deputy Leader of Camden Council) to The Rt. Hon. **Margaret Beckett MP** (Minister for Housing and Planning)

Copies of a letter from the Leader and Deputy Leader of Camden Council, to the Rt. Hon. Margaret Beckett MP (Minister for Housing and Planning) were distributed for reference (attached at **APPENDIX D** of the minutes). The letter expressed concerns

regarding previous submissions and requests relating to the Council's opposition to rent increases imposed by central Government, being unanswered. The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council also requested a meeting with the Minister, to discuss their concerns further.

**TO NOTE: All**

- **Letter from Meric Apak, Chair, Camden Federation of TRAs, to the Camden New Journal, published 26 February 2009**

A copy of a letter published in the Camden New Journal (CNJ) on 26 February 2009, written by Meric Apak, Chair, Camden Federation of TRAs, was circulated (attached at **APPENDIX E** of the minutes).

The letter related to problems with Capital Works on estates, and asked for a report guaranteeing consultation through Tenants Associations and DMCs etc, for the March cycle of DMCs.

It was noted that the Chair (Amphill Square TA), Paul Tomlinson (Amphill Square TA), Susan Gorrie (Curnock Street TRA), and Helia Evans (Ossulston TRA) had attended the last meeting of the Camden Federation of TRAs and that concerns had been raised there, that the Federation was becoming sidelined by the Council. This was despite the fact that on its inception, it had been agreed that it would have a campaigning role.

Councillor Naylor (Executive Member, Homes and Housing Strategy) stated that he agreed that the Federation needed to have a campaigning role, and that he would look for a report to be produced for the next round of DMCs regarding consultation issues. It was noted that the report had not been produced for the March round of DMCs due to time constraints.

**ACTION BY: Councillor Chris Naylor (Executive Member, Homes and Housing Strategy)**

It was also noted that whilst there had been problems relating to Capital Works on estates, these had been under the old housing management system, and that the new Structure (detailed above), would seek to address them and prevent them occurring in future. Concerns were raised that the reorganisation of the Housing Management Structure had been used as an excuse in the past regarding delays etc. An example was given of numerous correspondence being sent to the Council seeking consultation, but these requests being met with no response.

Councillor Robinson (St. Pancras and Somers Town Ward), on the issue of delays and lack of consultation, stated that it had taken him approximately six months to secure a meeting regarding Capital Works at Phoenix Place. He also referred to problems at the Mayford Estate (which had been ongoing for in the region of 13 months) where he stated that the Council could face action at an Evaluation Tribunal. Councillor Robinson felt that there was a problem with communication between the Council and TA/TRAs and that staff did not receive adequate training on this, which needed addressing.

It was also reported that a letter had been sent to DMC Chairs from Philip Colligan (Deputy Director, Housing and Adult Social Care) apologising for TA/TRAs not being involved or consulted in the initial stages of the Decent Homes project.

Concerns were raised that the issue of lack of consultation had been raised at the Camden Federation of TRAs on numerous occasions. A particular example was cited whereby representatives of the Ossulston TRA had raised their own concerns on this matter.

Concerns were also raised that the letter to the CNJ failed to make any reference to the Ossulston TRAs concerns. In response, it was noted that the original letter had made reference to the Ossulston TRA, this however, had been edited out by the CNJ.

Councillor Naylor gave a clear commitment to involve TA/TRAs in future. The Chair stated that she was pleased to hear this.

The Chair proposed a vote on whether DMC Representatives agreed or disagreed with the sentiments contained in Meric Apak's letter.

The results were as follows:

Agree with the contents of Meric Apak's letter (as published in the CNJ): 7

Disagree with the contents of Meric Apak's letter (as published in the CNJ): 0

Abstentions: 1

It was therefore **CARRIED** that the DMC support Meric Apak's letter (as published in the CNJ).

**RESOLVED**

THAT the Camden Town DMC support the sentiments contained in the letter by Meric Apak, Chair, Camden Federation of TRAs, as published in the Camden New Journal, 26 February 2009.

- **Sharon Joseph (Community Engagement Officer)**

The Chair introduces Sharon Joseph to the DMC. Sharon explained that she was the new Community Engagement Officer, working in the Tenants Participation Section, and was there to help DMCs to put their views to the Council.

The Chair reported that she had had an initial meeting with Sharon, which had been extremely positive.

Sharon also noted that if she could not assist DMCs directly with issues, she would seek to put them in touch with the relevant officers and Sections.

Councillor King (Executive Member, Community Safety and Housing Services) stated that he was pleased with the changes which were taking place in the Tenants Participation Section, and that the need to improve discussions at DMCs was being taken forward. He noted that there was a real emphasis on improving processes.

**TO NOTE: All**

**4. DECLARATION BY MEMBERS OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL 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 were none.

**6. MINUTES**

**a) 3 December 2008**

**• Accuracy**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 3 December 2008.

The following amendments were noted:

**6a)/2 Registration of Tenants Associations and Co-option of Tenant Representatives**

It had been noted that the position of DMC Vice-Chair was now vacant. Clarification was sought as to whether another DMC Representative should take the Vice-Chair position, and whether the Coopers Lane TRA should elect a new Representative to take Robert McMahon's place.

**6a)/3 Local Development Framework**

References to Somers Town should read St. Pancras and Somers Town.

**6a)/3 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Helia Evans (Ossulston TRA) referred to a Green House conference she had attended and two projects related to this.

**• Matters Arising**

**6a)/2 Registration of Tenants Associations and Co-option of Tenant Representatives**

As noted under item 1, above, Robert McMahon was still listed as being the DMC Member for the Coopers Lane TRA. This was incorrect, and had been emphasised at the meeting on 3 December 2008.

**6a)/3 Local Development Framework**

Councillor Robinson (St. Pancras and Somers Town Ward) reported that he had met with some TRAs about the Framework and that the Council had now addressed the concerns he had raised regarding St. Pancras and Somers Town Ward, being left out of the Framework.

**6a)/3 Camden Town DMC Pantomime**

Councillor Robinson stated that he had attended the Camden Town DMC Pantomime, and reported that it had been brilliant.

**6a)/5 6/13, Monitoring of Key Performance Indicators**

A DMC Representative raised concerns that they had only recently received this information (with the agenda for the meeting of 4 March 2009).

**6a)/9 9. VERBAL UPDATE ON DMC CAPITAL AND REVENUE SCHEMES**

Clarification regarding Capital and Revenue schemes being described as up and running was sought.

**ACTION BY: Jackie Smyth (Head of Housing Services (East), Housing and Adult Social Care)**

**6a)/11 11. HOUSING MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT**

**PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT**

It was noted that Regent's Park, King's Cross and Somers Town should read, Regent's Park, King's Cross and St. Pancras and Somers Town.

**6a)/12 11. HOUSING MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT**

**PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT**

Clarification was sought as to who people referred to in reference to the consultation on the future of estate walkabouts.

**ACTION BY: Jackie Smyth (Head of Housing Services (East), Housing and Adult Social Care)**

**• Uploading Minutes to the Camden Website**

Concerns were raised about minutes being uploaded to the Camden website before they had been formally agreed by the DMC. This was something which was being addressed.

**ACTION BY: Chris Rouse (Committee Officer, Organisation Development)**

**RESOLVED** □

THAT subject to the above amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 3 December 2008, be agreed as an accurate record, and be signed once the necessary amendments had been incorporated.

**b) 8 January 2009 (Joint DMC)**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the Joint DMC meeting held on Thursday 8 January 2009.

• **Ossulston TRA**

It was noted that the minutes had failed to note that Ossulston TRA Representatives had been mandated not to vote on motions at the Joint DMC, which had been declared by an Ossulston TRA Representative at the meeting.

**6b)/5 Heating Charge Rises**

A DMC Representative noted that they had stated that the deal relating to heating charges, did not apply to everyone as it only related to those with communal heating systems.

**RESOLVED** □

THAT subject to the above amendments, the minutes of the Joint DMC held on Thursday 8 January 2009 be agreed as an accurate record, and be signed once the necessary amendments had been incorporated.

**7. UPDATE BY EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**

Consideration was given to the Executive Members DMC update (tabled at the meeting, and attached at **APPENDIX F** of the minutes).

The Chair raised concerns that tabling the Executive Update meant that DMC Members did not have sufficient time to scrutinise the report before it was discussed. This meant that in her view, Executive Members could not be fully held to account. Councillor Naylor (Executive Member, Homes and Housing Strategy) responded that the Update was generally tabled as it meant that it could be as up to date as possible.

• **Councillor James King (Executive Member, Community Safety and Housing Services)**

Councillor King (Executive Member, Community Safety and Housing Services) stated that many issues in the Executive Update were on the agenda for the DMC. He cited the new Housing Management Structure as one example, noting that he was pleased with the progress of the re-organisation. Councillor King reported that he had met with the new Housing Managers and believed that they were a strong team. He also emphasised the need for residents to □bear with□ staff over the coming weeks, as they would be □finding their feet□ in terms of getting to grips with their new responsibilities.

Councillor King also informed the DMC that funding had been secured for sustainability projects, such as □green gyms□, community orchards, food growing projects and other initiatives.

It was also noted that in terms of Tenant Participation, changes were being made. Reference was made to work that Dawn Aldred (Tenant Participation Manager, Housing and Adult Social Care) and Sharon Joseph (Community Engagement Officer, Housing and Adult Social Care) were doing at present.

Councillor King also reported that a report would be going to the Executive of Camden Council at the beginning of April 2009 relating to leaseholders and the current economic situation vis-à-vis reductions in interest rates.

The DMC were also informed that improvements were being made regarding case management of community safety issues. This was in response to there being a need for improvements on how District Housing Offices dealt with these issues in the past.

Councillor King concluded the presentation of his section of the Executive Update by stating that he was always personally happy to visit any estates in the borough if he was asked.

• **Councillor Chris Naylor (Executive Member, Homes and Housing Strategy)**

Councillor Naylor (Executive Member, Homes and Housing Strategy) stated that he would chase up the issuing of letters to residents detailing the levels of rent increases, following on from the Joint DMC on 8 January 2009.

**ACTION BY: Councillor Chris Naylor (Executive Member, Homes and Housing Strategy)**

Councillor Naylor also informed the DMC that with Councillor King, he had looked at the 2.5% Service Charge increase proposed at the Joint DMC in January 2009, and had been seeking to minimise the increase as far as possible. It was noted that where possible, there would be no increase at all.

It was also noted that Councillor King had reviewed the Stock Condition Survey which had been carried out in 2007, and had identified another 8,500 properties to bring up to the □Decent Homes□ standard. This had been agreed at the Executive and the works would be carried out over the next two years. Councillor Naylor emphasised that this would bring real improvements to the lives of a considerable number of people. Further to this, it was noted that a newsletter had been sent out to tenants in those properties identified for the □Decent Homes□ improvements, informing them of the works.

Councillor Naylor also noted that housing repairs represented an extremely large volume service (approximately 100,000 repairs per year). Due to □Decent Homes□ work etc, Councillor Naylor hoped that this figure would decrease in coming years, as less repairs would potentially be needed.

It was also reported that a new tendering process was open for either new Contractors to bid, or for existing ones to reapply. This was in an attempt to improve the quality of repairs, and it was noted that in future Contractors contracts would include an element of performance related pay, whereby they would be paid more for good quality repairs, and less for ones that were inadequate. Linked with this, Councillor Naylor stated that there would be a □troubleshooting□ team created, to deal with long standing repair issues.

Councillor Robinson (St. Pancras and Somers Town Ward) referred to the report on □HRA Budget and Charges □ Context for 2008/09□ (presented to the Camden Town DMC on 3 December 2008), stating that he had not seen any improvement to the Housing Repairs service (he cited the example of longstanding repairs at the Mayford Estate, as a particular cause for concern).

Councillor Robinson noted that there were some outstanding repair issues which stretched back years, and that the Council needed to crack down on these problems once and for all.

A DMC Representative raised particular concerns regarding problems with lifts not working in Council blocks, and how this could impact on those with care needs. It was noted that there was a problem on the Rowley Way Estate relating to a broken lift for example. Councillor King responded that he was aware of the problems at Rowley Way, and would investigate what was happening there.

**ACTION BY: Councillor James King (Executive Member, Community Safety and Housing Services)**

Councillor Naylor responded that he was aware of problems at the Mayford□s Estate and that he would be happy to meet with Councillor Robinson to discuss any repairs issues he wished to raise. He also noted that a dedicated officer had been appointed with responsibility for outstanding repairs issues and, whilst he was sorry that this appointment was not necessarily bearing fruit at the moment, it was still very early days, and he was confident of future success in this area.

**TO NOTE: All**

The DMC adjourned for refreshments at 8.30pm, before reconvening at 8.45pm.

**8. INVESTING IN CAMDEN□S HOMES □ MARKET RENTALS**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Housing and Adult Social Care.

Rhys Makinson (Assistant Director, Finance) introduced Kat Murphy (Programme Manager, Finance Directorate) explaining that she would be the manager responsible for the Council□s proposed market rentals programme, if it was commissioned.

Rhys explained that the Council were looking at options for the future funding of housing in the borough, and noted that the □Decent Homes□ programme cost a significant amount of money. It was noted that various options had been looked at, including selling some properties, which the Council were unable to repair due to cost implications. However, due to the current recession, it was noted that selling properties was potentially extremely difficult, meaning that other options needed to be investigated. Rhys noted that renting the properties (of which 500 had been identified over the next five years as being empty too expensive to repair) on the open market could generate income for the Council, whilst also allowing them to retain ownership of the properties. Rhys did however emphasise that nothing had been decided formally as to which course of action the Council would take, and that any proposals would need to be agreed by the Council and its Executive.

Councillor Naylor (Executive Member, Homes and Housing Strategy) noted that the 500 properties which were being considered for market rental, were the same ones which had initially been considered to be sold, as they could not be used to house Council tenants.

A DMC Representative took issue with Councillor Naylor□s assertion that the 500 identified properties were unfit to be let to Council tenants, stating that the Council should never have allowed the properties to fall in to such a level of disrepair. Concerns were also raised that market rentals would mean that properties on estates would be rented out at different rentals (relating to disparities between market and Council rents). It was also suggested that the Council□s proposals were effectively introducing an Arms Length Management Operative (ALMO), by the □backdoor□. There was also an accusation that the Council□s proposal amounted to □rent laundering□ as they could potentially set up their own private company to process the properties and collect market rentals, which it was considered would be unethical.

A resident also raised concerns that despite the Council stating that they could not afford to make the 500 properties suitable for habitation, they could apparently find the money to prepare the properties for market rental. There were also worries that the report of the Director of Housing and Adult Social Care made no reference to tenancy conditions or tenure.

Reference was also made to 2.7 (page 8/4) of the report, relating to communal services. It was stated that this was confusing as the report failed to explain who would be responsible for the maintenance of the properties which were being privately rented.

Councillor Robinson (St. Pancras and Somers Town Ward) also agreed that the Council□s proposals amounted to an □ALMO by the backdoor□ and stated that in his view, the Council□s scheme represented increasing moves towards the privatisation of Council housing. He also asked what powers the Council would have regarding the behaviour of private tenants, citing examples of the Council having had difficulties dealing with anti-social behaviour from private tenants in the past. He also raised concerns that the Council were proposing that the properties should be rented privately for a period of 35 years, stating that this was a long time for the properties to be out of direct Council control.

Councillor Robinson also asserted that in his view, the Council□s proposal could amount to □Rackmanism□ (charging extremely high rents for inferior properties, especially to those on the lowest incomes). He stated that whilst he hoped the Council did not do it, he would consider that letting the properties to a Housing Association, would be preferable to renting them privately. Councillor Robinson also expressed his concerns regarding the cost of private rents, asserting that ordinary people would be affected the most. He also stated that there was currently in the region of 16,000 people on the housing waiting list in Camden and that rather

than taking away potential homes, the Council needed to make them suitable for habitation by those in need. He also noted that the City of London had managed to do this, and therefore asked why Camden could not do the same.

Concerns were raised regarding proposed funding being raised from market rentals, with a DMC Representative asking if the Council had factored paying Corporation Tax into their proposals. Rhys stated that the Council had factored this in, and that the Council's calculations indicated that they would raise the required levels of funding over a 35 year market rental period.

The Chair stated that in her view it was better for those in urgent need of housing to have a "substantial" roof over their heads (even if it was in a property not necessarily considered by the Council as being fully up to adequate repair standard), than none at all.

A DMC Representative also stated that in their view it was difficult to consider the Council's proposal, as the report was lacking sufficient detail (such as a schedule, detailed costs and the cost of setting up any potentially company to let the properties). It was also emphasised that if properties could be rented to Council tenants, then they should be, anything else went against the ethos of Council housing. In response, Councillor Naylor conceded that the report to DMCs could have been set out more clearly.

The Chair stated that whilst she sympathised with the Council's plight regarding funding Council housing, it was suggested that in respect of the letter which the Leader and Deputy Leader of Camden Council had sent to the Rt. Hon. Margaret Beckett M.P (**APPENDIX D**) there should be a joint delegation to lobby Parliament. It was considered that the issue of funding for Council housing was something which needed pushing further, particularly in light of the concerns raised by the Leader and Deputy Leader, and that if they had these concerns, then it was suggested that Housing and Adult Social Care should be involved.

A DMC Representative stated that on the estate where they lived, fellow residents felt angry at the lack of housing stock available, citing examples of parents, whose sons and daughters were unable to get Council housing, and that what the Council was proposing would make things even worse.

Councillor Naylor stated that some important issues had been raised. He also sought to put the current situation in context by noting that there had been an lack of adequate investment in Camden's housing over a number of years, and that at present, there were between 50% and 60% of total housing stock below the "Decent Homes" standard. Councillor Naylor also noted that at present, approximately 1000 properties became empty each year. To make up the 500 for private market rental, approximately 100 would be taken out of "circulation" each year, over the next five years.

Councillor Naylor also emphasised that the Council was looking at market rental rather than selling off properties, so that they could retain ownership. He also noted that officers had raised concerns over whether selling off properties would really represent the best value for money for the Council, in the long term.

It was also stipulated that the Council would seek strict assurances and guarantees on issues such as anti-social behaviour etc. Councillor Naylor explained that short hold rentals (which was what the Council was proposing), gave the best controls over tenancy issues. However, he did acknowledge that this was a potentially problematic issue, and that there were no easy solutions.

It was also noted that before the Council could begin market renting any of its properties, they would need permission from the Government. Councillor Naylor did however state that the most important factor behind the Council's proposals was to find the best way of securing funding for the "Decent Homes" programme.

The Chair thanked Rhys for his presentation.

#### **TO NOTE: All**

### **9. CONSULTING ON A NEW APPROACH TO HOLDING DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ELECTIONS**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Housing and Adult Social Care.

Karen Orr (Tenant Participation Co-ordinator) explained that Tenant Participation was seeking to support DMCs with their elections, as a result of feedback they had received. It had been noted that many Representatives appeared to favour the introduction of secret, paper ballots, and that the options contained in the report had been drawn up by the Tenant Participation Team, resulting from the feedback from DMC Representatives.

Karen gave an overview of the three suggested options for holding DMC elections:

- **Option One:**

This did not involve any constitutional changes, and essentially involved publicity being sent to DMC Members advertising elections. Candidates would also need to be seconded, and would also need to produce election statements, which would be circulated to Members. Elections would then be held at the first DMC of the municipal year, with voting either being conducted via a show of hands, or a confidential ballot if more than one person was nominated.

- **Option Two:**

This involved some constitutional change, as it included postal ballots and the introduction of criteria for candidates. This would be in addition to the stages described in option one.

- **Option Three:**

This involved the most constitutional change. This was because, whilst adopting the steps detailed in the first two options, it also introduced "associate" membership. "Associate Members" would be residents who were not formal DMC Members, or who did not necessarily, regularly attend DMC meetings.

Concerns were raised over the idea of formally creating "associate" membership. It was suggested however, that this could prove a means of encouraging younger people, and those who did not usually attend DMC meetings, to get more involved. A Representative also suggested that criteria for associate membership needed to be developed at Tenant Participation level.

The Chair considered that the concept of associate members was potentially problematic, and was one which required a considerable amount of thought. She also stated that she did not believe that it was something which a decision should be taken on at the present meeting.

Another Representative stated that they believed that the process worked reasonably well at present, although there was widespread support for the introduction of secret, paper ballots. There was some opposition to the idea of postal votes as set out in option two however. One Representative noted that those who did not regularly attend DMCs should not receive any extra help in taking part in the operation of the DMCs, and that people needed to be willing and interested in attending.

A DMC Representative considered that advertising elections was a positive step as it could help to encourage those who did not usually stand, to consider becoming candidates. There were however, also concerns regarding the language used to advertise the elections, with the suggestion that if it was too formal, newer, younger Representatives could be put off standing. It was also considered potentially problematic, with candidates being required to produce election statements. A DMC Representative felt for example that this could effectively sound too professional, discourage inexperienced Representatives, and ultimately lead to community activist figures being the only ones interested in standing. Another Representative considered however, that election statements and addresses could be a good thing.

A Representative also noted that traditionally, not many people tended to stand for DMC elections, so it was considered that the proposals set out in the report were unnecessary.

Another Representative expressed their wish for there to be moderate, minimal change and advocated a mix and match approach.

The Chair stated that she agreed with the introduction of secret, paper ballots, as relying on a show of hands could make Representatives feel uncomfortable, and could lead to factions developing within DMCs as Representatives knew which way each other had voted. The Chair also noted that she would personally favour a hybrid option combining elements of options one and two.

The Chair also asked about what options other DMCs had favoured. Karen responded that so far, only the Kentish Town DMC had discussed the report, and that they had favoured holding elections at the first meeting of the municipal year (in June), but that they had favoured voting by a show of hands. Kentish Town DMC had also expressed interest in establishing a working group, and Karen asked if Camden Town DMC would consider being a part of this.

Concerns were raised that potentially the five DMCs could decide on different options for holding their elections. Karen noted that once all the DMCs had discussed the options, feedback would be passed to DMC Chairs for final consideration.

Councillor King (Executive Member, Community Safety and Housing Services) stated that the DMC might wish to think about how to manage a way through this process. He suggested that they might wish to set up a working group to look at the proposed options. The Chair however raised concerns at the creation of what she termed, yet another working group and suggested that consideration of the proposals could potentially be done via telephone.

The Chair proposed a vote on whether future DMC elections should have a secret, paper ballot or not. The results were as follows:

Agree that there should be a secret, paper ballot: 8

Disagree that there should be a secret, paper ballot: 1

Abstentions: 0

The vote was therefore **CARRIED**.

#### **RESOLVED**

THAT the Camden Town DMC formally endorse secret, paper ballots for DMC elections.

### **10. GREENING OUR ESTATES A DISCUSSION PAPER**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Housing and Adult Social Care, presented by Jackie Smyth (Head of Housing Services, East).

Jackie preceded her presentation by informing the DMC that low energy light bulbs and other energy saving devices (which switched off televisions and computers left on standby after a period of time), were available free of charge to anyone who wanted them. It was noted that the Council was making these available to all Council tenants in the borough. Jackie stated that if there were not enough light bulbs and energy efficiency devices for tenants present, then anyone who had not had opportunity to collect them could leave their names and contact details and she would arrange for them to be supplied with them.

#### **ACTION BY: Jackie Smyth (Head of Housing Services (East), Housing and Adult Social Care)**

It was noted that sustainability was a major priority of the current Partnership Administration. Various initiatives were noted, which the Council was implementing in order to support its aims. These included addressing energy efficiency in buildings, through adding cavity wall insulation, installing showers, (aiming to reduce volume of water used by residents), and installing low flushing toilets in properties.

Reference was also made to projects such as the pilot food collection service in parts of Gospel Oak, Frognal and Fitzjohns Wards (page 10/3, 3.4) and a pilot Rocket compost scheme on the Maiden Lane Estate in the Canteloves Ward (page 10/3, 3.5). Jackie noted that if recycling schemes such as these proved successful, and could be rolled out throughout the borough, then savings could be made in terms of waste collection on estates (through potential reductions in volume of refuse), which would also help towards the Council's commitment to sustainability.



Concerns were raised however, in relation to the pilot schemes. Some DMC Representatives were worried that schemes involving waste being stored on estates, could encourage rats. In response, Jackie stated that the waste would be stored securely in containers, and that currently having waste left in refuse sacks on estates, was potentially more of a risk for encouraging rats. It was noted however, that concerns such as these would be looked at, which was why the food recycling schemes were being piloted at the moment, and had not immediately been introduced borough wide.

Jackie also acknowledged that there could be problems around recycling bins on estates, where rubbish was sometimes dumped, making the area look unsightly. It was considered that this could counteract the good which was being done by having the recycling bins in position.

It was also reported that the Council was working with the contractors Veola regarding green, open spaces on estates. Initiatives such as green gyms were being introduced for example, providing residents with opportunities to grow things, thereby helping the environment, and their own health. Jackie noted that schemes such as this had other benefits, as they encouraged social cohesion, and could help residents gain skills. It was noted for example, that a gardening college was helping residents on estates in the Regents Park Ward, through providing training.

A resident raised reservations with regard to these schemes, stating that children should be encouraged to use green spaces on estates, to play, and that there was a danger that play areas could be lost to green gyms. It was considered that a balance needed to be struck in this area.

The Chair also suggested that the Council could consider looking at bringing areas on estates which were perhaps not suitable to be used for green gyms into use for any identified schemes etc.

Reference was also made to energy efficiency drives on estates. Examples were given of energy efficient light bulbs being used, and of the Council looking to tackle issues of lights being left on, on estates when not needed. This would involve moving from a light timer system, to a sensor based one. A DMC Representative stated that this was an extremely important issue, noting that where they lived, lights were often left on during the day, but were off at night.

In terms of funding sustainable initiatives, the DMC was asked to give consideration to sustainability criteria for bids in the next financial year. It was noted that budgets were not finalised at the moment, however, this was something which there would be a need to begin looking at for the next DMC cycle.

**ACTION BY: Jackie Smyth (Head of Housing Services (East), Housing and Adult Social Care)**

In response to looking at bids containing sustainability initiatives, a DMC Representative stated that whilst the intentions were laudable, TA/TRAs had needed to bid for funding for work which the Council had not been able to afford to carry out, potentially making it difficult for other considerations (such as environmental factors) to be taken in to account.

Councillor King (Executive Member, Community Safety and Housing Services) stated that he expected to see issues on sustainability appearing regularly at DMCs, and emphasised the importance of this. He also suggested that these issues could have a positive impact on DMCs by perhaps encouraging residents who did not usually attend DMCs, to become involved.

Concerns were raised by a DMC Representative who noted that on their estate, residents were discouraged from hanging washing outside to dry, and yet this was a good way of encouraging sustainability in their view, through not needing to use energy for clothes dryers etc. In response, it was suggested that where these problems were encountered, it could be worth contacting local TA/TRAs for their views etc. Jackie stated however, that not all identified solutions relating to sustainability issues were necessarily appropriate across the board. The wishes of local people, and whether schemes were fit for purpose needed to be taken in to account. Jackie did however offer a commitment to help facilitate what people wanted in their local areas where practicable.

**ACTION BY: Jackie Smyth (Head of Housing Services (East), Housing and Adult Social Care)**

Concerns were also raised that the Council had stated its commitment to saving costs, and yet residents who had communal heating, were not being given the opportunity to control their heating supplies through individual metering. In response, Councillor King stated that a clear steer was required from residents on this issue, for the Council to look into the possibility of individual metering.

In conclusion, Jackie stated that sustainability issues could not simply be tackled overnight however, it was important to begin taking small steps. Further to this, she emphasised that DMCs should seek Council commitment to sustainable projects, then issues of securing funding for projects could be addressed.

The Chair thanked Jackie for her presentation.

**TO NOTE: All**

**11. ESTATE PARKING  EMISSIONS BASED CHARGING**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Housing and Adult Social Care.

Paul Shiel (Estate Parking Control Manager) introduced the report, explaining that Camden was looking to make a change to the way in which residents were charged for estate parking, based on vehicle emissions. This would mean that vehicles with engines producing higher emissions of Carbon Dioxide (CO2) would potentially pay more for parking, than those which produced lower emissions.

This policy was being considered because of the Councils commitment to decreasing CO2 levels in the Borough. It was also because Camden had been identified as having a higher than national average level of CO2 emissions. The Chair however, questioned this, stating that emissions might be higher, due to motorists travelling *through* the borough, and that residents should not be penalised for this.

Paul noted that data had been collected on vehicles in Camden, from which bands based on CO2 emissions had been devised (see page 11/3 of the report). Paul stated that whilst some vehicle owners could face increases in estate parking charges, others would see decreases.

It was noted that it was anticipated that following the introduction of an Emissions Based Charging policy, between 60% - 70% of vehicle owners in Camden could see a reduction in their parking charges, whilst between 30% - 40% could see an increase. Paul also noted that the Council's scheme would be "revenue neutral", meaning that it would not lead to any increases or losses in revenue for the Council. Paul also noted that at present road tax banding was already environmentally based.

A DMC Representative raised objections stating that estate parking charges were for renting a space for a vehicle to be parked, providing a vehicle fitted in to that allocated space, then issues such as engine size and CO2 emissions, were irrelevant.

Paul responded that the policy was geared towards encouraging behaviour changes, and that in Islington, where it had already been implemented, it appeared to be proving successful. Paul also noted that there was not always a correlation between vehicle size and volume of CO2 emissions.

A Representative noted that people on lower incomes perhaps tended to have older cars which could be less "environmentally friendly". This meant that "green taxes" such as the one being advocated regarding estate parking, affected those on lowest incomes the most.

Paul agreed with this assertion, but noted that to help mitigate financial pressures, schemes such as Car Clubs had been established. An example was given of a car club scheme which what included a reduced introductory, membership offer for Camden residents. A Representative stated that car clubs proved prohibitively expensive, whilst another asked if this introductory offer was still available. Paul endeavoured to find out.

**ACTION BY: Paul Shiel (Estate Parking Control Manager, Housing and Adult Social Care)**

Councillor King (Executive Member, Community Safety and Housing Services) stated that the Culture and Environment Department had produced a press release regarding the car club. He agreed to ensure that more information be supplied to DMCs about the scheme.

**ACTION BY: Councillor James King (Executive Member, Community safety and Housing Services)**

Paul also noted that whilst Islington had introduced an emissions based charging policy for parking, this was based upon there were differences with the one proposed by Camden, as VED bands A and B (but not C) were in the lowest tariff, which offered a bigger reduction in current parking charges.

The Chair stated her support for such a scheme, and suggested that Camden should follow a similar model to Islington.

Paul noted that Camden wished to align on street and estate parking costs. The Chair however, noted that it was vital that issues of affordability be stressed.

The Chair thanked Paul for his report.

**RESOLVED** □

THAT the comments of the Camden Town DMC regarding the introduction of estate parking based on emissions based charging, be noted.

**12. ESTATE WALKABOUTS**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Housing and Adult Social Care.

The contents of the report were noted.

**RESOLVED** □

THAT the report of the Director of Housing and Adult Social Care on Estate Walkabouts be noted.

**13. A NEW SYSTEM FOR TENANT MONITORING OF HOUSING SERVICES**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Housing and Adult Social Care.

The Chair raised concerns that the proposed new approach to tenant monitoring of housing and housing related services, placed too much emphasis on one person (as detailed at 13/7, 4.0 "Local Monitoring Proposals") and that it was unrealistic to expect one person to take on this role, as it encompassed a huge amount of responsibilities. The Chair asserted that there needed to be a lot of thought on the practicalities of the proposals.

Concerns were raised that the preamble to the report (page 13/1) stated that the, "Tenant Participation Strategy, (was) agreed in May 2008". It was noted that the Camden Town DMC had rejected the proposed Strategy, and that no DMC Representatives wished to be on the Monitoring Board.

It was suggested that due to time constraints, it might be more appropriate for this item to be deferred to the next DMC. Alternatively, it was suggested that DMC Representatives could possibly meet outside of an ordinary DMC meeting to specifically discuss this item, and monitoring in general.

**RESOLVED** □

THAT the report of the Director of Housing and Adult Social Care on a new system for tenant monitoring of Housing Services be noted, but that the DMC defer discussion of the item until a time to be agreed.

**14. PROPOSED DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE DATES FOR 2009/2010**

Consideration was given to proposed dates for District Management Committees (DMCs) for the municipal year 2009/10.

The Chair noted that a meeting date had been set for Wednesday 26 August 2009, which could be problematic, as DMC members may be on holiday etc, at this time.

**TO NOTE: All**

**15. DMC BUDGET ALLOCATION  CAMDEN TOWN DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

This report was not presented. Jackie Smyth (Head of Housing Services, East) noted that budgets had not been allocated at present.

**TO NOTE: All**

**16. DMC CAPITAL BUDGET ALLOCATION  CAMDEN TOWN DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

This report was not presented. Jackie Smyth (Head of Housing Services, East) noted that the Capital budget had not been allocated at present.

**TO NOTE: All**

**17. REPORT OF DMC REPRESENTATIVES**

- **October 2008  February 2009 Camden HSF Report**

Noted.

**INFORMATION ITEMS****18. GRANTS**

Noted.

**19. CHANGES TO DMC BOUNDARIES**

This report was not ready in time for the DMC. A structure chart of officers in the new Housing Management structure was circulated however (attached at **APPENDIX C**, as discussed at item 3).

**TO NOTE: All**

**20. TENANCY CONDITIONS FOR LEASEHOLDERS AND TENANTS**

The Chair stated that she had reservations regarding the Council's review of tenant and leaseholder tenancy conditions in relation to whether security of tenure was potentially at risk. She also asked where the decision to produce a report had originated. Councillor King (Executive Member, Community Safety and Housing Services) responded that it had been produced following a request from the Housing and Adult Social Care (HASC) Scrutiny Committee.

The report was noted. Due to time constraints however, The Chair requested that the report be discussed formally at the next meeting of the DMC.

**RESOLVED** 

THAT the report of the Director of Housing and Adult Social Care on tenancy conditions for leaseholders and tenants be noted, but that it be formally discussed at the next meeting of the Camden Town District Management Committee (DMC).

**21. RECESSION: CAMDEN'S RESPONSE**

Noted.

**22. CAMDEN LEASEHOLDERS FORUM**

- a) **14 January 2009, and**
- b) **18 February 2009.**

Noted.

**23. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

A question was asked whether DMC Members who were Council tenants had received annual rent statements including charges for the new digital television, IRS system. Members reported that they had.

**TO NOTE: All**

**24. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**



















Wednesday 10 June 2009 (proposed date, subject to confirmation).

**TO NOTE: All**

The meeting ended at 10.00pm.

**CHAIR****Contact Officer:** Chris Rouse**Telephone No:** 020 7974 6884**Email:** christopher.rouse@camden.gov.uk**MINUTES END**

## Reports

-  Agenda
-  Item 01 - Registration of TRAs
-  Item 06A - 03Dec08 Minutes
-  Item 06B - JointDMC8Jan09
-  Item 08 - Investing in Camdens Homes
-  Item 09 - DMC Elections
-  Item 10 - Greening Our Estates
-  Item 11 - Emission Based Charging
-  Item 12 - Estate Walkabouts
-  Item 13 - Tenant Monitoring of Housing Services
-  Item 14 - Proposed DMC Dates
-  Item 17 - Report of DMC Representatives
-  Item 18 - Grants
-  Item 20 - Tenancy and leaseholders Conditions
-  Item 20A - ASB ladder - nuisance neighbour
-  Item 20B - Lease and Tenancy Conditions
-  Item 21 - Recession Camdens Response
-  Item 22 - Camden Leaseholders Forum

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