

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY, 11TH NOVEMBER, 2025** at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT

Councillors Kemi Atolagbe (Chair), Meric Apak, Joseph Ball, Richard Cotton, Tommy Gale, Nancy Jirira and Samata Khatoon and Charles Bertlin and Victor Seedman (Co-opted members)

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT

Councillor Eddie Hanson and Larissa Hope (Co-opted member)

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Adam Harrison, Cabinet Member for Planning and a Sustainable Camden (item 7)

Councillor Sagal Abdi-Wali, Cabinet Member for Better Homes

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 Housing Scrutiny Committee and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.

MINUTES

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Eddie Hanson and Larissa Hope, Co-opted Member.

2. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF STATUTORY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS, COMPULSORY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND VOLUNTARY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS IN MATTERS ON THIS AGENDA

There were none.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Broadcast of the meeting

The Chair announced that the meeting was being broadcast live by the Council to the Internet and could be viewed on the website for twelve months after the meeting. After that time, webcasts were archived and could be made available upon request. Those who had asked to address the meeting were deemed to be consenting to having their contributions recorded and broadcast and to the use of those sound recordings and images for webcasting and/or training purposes.

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

There were none.

5. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 2025.

RESOLVED –

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 15th September be approved and signed as a correct record.

6. DEPUTATIONS

There were none.

7. REDEVELOPMENT OF REGENTS PARK ESTATE NORTH: CARTMEL, CONISTON AND LANGDALE, HARRINGTON STREET, NW1 3SE; STANHOPE PARADE, NW1 3RD; AND REGENTS PARK CHILDREN'S CENTRE, AUGUSTUS STREET, NW1 3TJ

Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet Member for Planning and a Sustainable Camden

Sarah O'Neill, Community Investment Programme Team Leader, took the meeting through the report and she along with Councillor Adam Harrison, Cabinet Member for Planning and a Sustainable Camden, gave the following key responses to questions:

- Following a decision by Cabinet, the Council would procure a design team, develop an outline master plan, and along with the appointed architects, would undertake resident consultation. At this stage, residents had only been

consulted on whether they supported development in principle. Any future proposals forming part of a planning application would be subject to full consultation.

- It was the intention to secure master plan consent and progress towards delivery. It was acknowledged that estate redevelopment presented challenges; however, the Council had a head start as some blocks were in poor condition and had been decanted, so redevelopment could be progressed, subject to due diligence. This would include examining retrofit options and assessing whether any existing buildings could be reused. A further report would be submitted to the Cabinet and the scrutiny committee in due course regarding the progress regarding the next stages of the scheme.
- The Council's objective is to deliver homes at social rent, which are considered genuinely affordable. That "affordable" rent in Camden typically referred to genuinely affordable social rent or intermediate rent linked to earnings, not the 80% market rent model, which had little to no presence in the borough due to the planning policies adopted by the Council, that had prioritised social rent when referring to affordable housing. The aim was to seek to have 50% affordable housing as the overall target, the specific split between intermediate and social housing was yet to be determined.
- The work would be focused on identifying the first phase of the regeneration programme. The Council aimed to deliver the first phase of flats for residents to move into by December 2029. The master planners would be asked to determine the most appropriate first phase, taking account of ongoing work at Hampstead Road and that these considerations would form part of the regeneration strategy being developed over the next 12 months.
- A resident consultation group would be initiated as soon as the project progresses to the next stage.
- An arrangement had been made with Bow Arts to provide meanwhile use of the site for artist studios during the daytime, as the premises were not suitable for overnight accommodation due to noise and disruption from HS2 works. A dedicated team was working with the remaining residents to assist them in finding alternative properties.

The scrutiny committee welcomed the report, noting that currently there was support for the regeneration scheme proposals within the local community, also noting the linking of intermediate rents to earnings rather than market rents, and the aim of seeking an overall 50% affordable housing target for the scheme.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted

8. UPDATE ON IMPROVING HOUSING STANDARDS IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Housing

Darren Wilsher, Private Sector Housing Services Manager, took the meeting through the report and gave the following key responses to questions:

- The Government consultation on proposals for a Decent Homes Standard for the private rented sector had sought views on a commencement date of either 2035 or 2037; the Council responded that a proposed date of 2030 was a more reasonable timeframe to allow landlords to meet the required standards. Other measures, including Awaab's Law, property redress schemes and the Private Rented Sector (PRS) database, did not yet have confirmed implementation dates but were expected to be two to three years away, as they were dependent on secondary legislation.
- The Council continued to use a range of enforcement tools that were available, which included its general duty to inspect and respond to hazards. The abolition of Section 21 was expected in March–May next year as part of wider tenancy reform under the new Renters' Rights Act, including anti-discrimination measures, which the Government had prioritised. It was anticipated that additional tools would become available, although implementation dates were not confirmed. Existing powers under the Housing Act were being used to address hazards, alongside other legislation such as the Environmental Protection Act. The Council continues to operate HMO licensing schemes for these high-risk properties and is exploring the need for selective licensing generally, which could look at issues around poor property condition. Enforcement under selective licensing for poor property conditions still required the use of Part 1 powers under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), including serving notices on landlords.
- The Council did not operate a blanket compliance inspection approach for HMO licensing but instead undertook targeted compliance checks. It was reported that additional staff were being recruited to build capacity for this work, as effective monitoring was essential to ensure licensing schemes were functioning. Members were advised that priority was given to properties issued with one-year licences due to poor management or missing safety documentation, e.g. gas safety certificates. The Council also inspected known portfolio landlords where issues had arisen. It was explained that plans were in place to expand targeted compliance across the scheme and introduce risk rating at the initial inspection stage to categorise properties as high, medium or low risk.
- A recent tenant survey indicated that only 50% of tenants were aware that the local authority could assist with housing conditions in the private rented sector. It was reported that this issue had been discussed at a recent PRS Partnership meeting, which included representatives from Camden Federation of Private Tenants, University Accommodation and other stakeholders. Tenant engagement was considered critical for the implementation of the Renters' Rights Act, which would introduce new powers and protections for tenants. The Council had previously attempted engagement with private renters, including social media campaigns, leafleting thousands of households, hosting Zoom webinars, and writing to all licensed HMOs, but uptake remained very low. This

was a national issue, partly due to difficulties in identifying tenants. The forthcoming property database was expected to assist in proactive engagement moving forward, although its implementation under the Renters' Rights Act was likely to be two to three years away. The Council was also seeking to improve data capture during complaint handling, ensuring GDPR compliance when requesting contact details to enable proactive communications via newsletters, notification of renter forums.

- Estate agents were identified as a significant issue alongside landlords, and they were invited to attend the landlord forum, with the next session scheduled for December, where the Renters' Rights Act would be discussed. Estate agents required support similar to landlords, as many were unfamiliar with forthcoming legislative changes.
- The Council will receive new investigatory powers under the Renters' Rights Act which largely mirrored those already available to Trading Standards officers and were intended to support enforcement by enabling the Council to obtain information from landlords who were unwilling to provide it. These powers would allow officers to carry out inspections without the current requirement to give prior notice, reducing opportunities for landlords to pressure tenants or conceal issues. The powers would also enable officers to access landlords' offices and obtain financial records to confirm rent payments, which was critical for enforcement. These measures were aimed at landlords and agents rather than tenants.
- The Council aimed to ensure that Camden residents did not bear the cost of licensing schemes by operating on a full cost recovery basis. It was reported that fees were structured in two parts: Part One covering validation and licence issuance, and Part Two covering enforcement costs. The fee structure was not at full cost recovery in 2018. However, since then the fee has been increased to ensure that all costs are covered; it was important that ensured adequate funding was available for compliance and enforcement, including action against unlicensed HMOs. Additional funding has also been generated through recovered civil penalty notices fines, which was reinvested into additional housing enforcement resources.
- It was noted that any potential future selective licensing scheme would also operate on a full cost recovery basis, although it was generally desk-based and required significant resourcing for large schemes. Challenges included the need for adequate management information systems and sufficient staffing, with other authorities experiencing delays due to these issues.
- There was an ongoing national shortage of Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) and that Camden had invested in training seven new officers over the past three years through a 1-year diploma in Private Rented Sector Intervention, with four already within the service and the final three expected to join the service permanently shortly after successfully completing their studies. Additional capacity would be required to meet future demands arising from the Renters' Rights Act.
- All HMO Licensing applications continue to be inspected prior to issuing a licence. It was reported that this approach remained in place for most renewals. Under the new scheme due to start in December 2025, all new applications

would be inspected, while renewals might be subject to a desktop review depending on their risk rating. Interim compliance inspections would help identify any licence breaches.

- That an officer working group had been established to review the 149 clauses of the Renters' Rights Act and assess their implications. Meetings had already taken place with Legal and Communications teams to plan for future requirements resulting from the Act. Members were advised that, although detailed guidance and a timetable from Government were still awaited, the Council was confident its preparations were progressing well compared to other authorities. The Council intended to prioritise early communications to raise awareness among landlords, agents and renters about forthcoming changes. Consideration of resourcing requirements was already underway.
- Under the Duty to Report in the Renters' Rights Act, local authorities were required to report on private rented sector enforcement activity. It was reported that the Council carried out monthly checks on the GLA rogue landlord database to monitor civil penalty notices and enforcement actions recorded on the public tier. Members were advised that the Council's figures fluctuated and that approximately 20 cases were due to be added. It was further noted that around half of London boroughs had recorded no enforcement action at all on the database.
- Although Section 21's evictions were being abolished, there remained 33 legal grounds on which a landlord could seek possession, including for a family member to move in. It was reported that controls existed around these grounds, but the Council anticipated challenges in relation to homelessness. Landlords might seek to evict tenants before the reforms took effect in March–April of the following year, due to the move to periodic tenancies. The Council's Tenancy Relations Officer continued to work with Safer Renting to support tenants facing illegal eviction or harassment.
- The Council operated a voluntary landlord accreditation scheme, introduced 20 years ago to promote professional standards. Accredited landlords received a full day of training on their responsibilities, with updated content now being developed to reflect the Renters' Rights Act. Accredited landlords were required to undertake regular Continuing Professional Development and comply with a code of conduct. Accreditation also provided a discount on licensing fees, as the scheme aimed at improving property management standards and reducing the need for enforcement.
- The Council maintained regular communication with landlords through its accreditation scheme and associated channels. It was reported that approximately 6,000 contacts were held, including 2,500 Camden landlords registered on the Landlord Accreditation Scheme (LASS), most of whom operated HMO properties. The Council used LLAS to distribute updates and guidance to accredited landlords on a frequent basis.
- Improvement notices could be issued for a range of hazards. Officers agreed to include an expanded version of Table 5 to specify Category 1 hazards and disrepair issues, clearer information on the level of action taken alongside details of enforcement activity in future versions of the report.

ACTION BY: Director of Housing (DW)

- Officers often experienced difficulties maintaining contact with some private rented sector tenant complainants despite repeated attempts by phone, email and visits. This was possibly that, in some cases, individuals might have moved on, been illegally evicted, or accepted informal settlements. Also, some tenants may have withdrawn due to concerns about being evicted, although officers emphasised that complaints were treated anonymously.
- Complaints often ceased after initial visits or enforcement action, despite officers continuing efforts to follow up. It was reported that inspections could still be carried out, but the volume of new complaints required prioritisation of cases with ongoing engagement. It was recognised that the need to address properties that remained in poor condition even when complainants had stopped responding would still need to be dealt with.
- Prior to commencement of the new legislation, the Council's role was limited to advising tenants served with a Section 21 notice, as such notices remained lawful provided, they were correctly issued. Landlords would be out of time if notices were not served before the legislation took effect. Officer training was being prioritised to ensure readiness for the transition from Section 21 to Section 8, with legal knowledge forming a key part of the programme. This work was being coordinated through the established working groups.
- The Council was reviewing its online content to ensure updates were made in line with the Renters' Rights Act. It was reported that Camden Private Renters website received approximately 300 visits per month and was referenced in all outgoing communications.
- The service worked closely with the Homelessness Initiatives Team and had expanded significantly since 2018, growing from 40 to 60 members of staff. It was reported that this growth had been supported by reinvestment of income from civil penalty notices. Members were advised that the forthcoming Renters' Rights Act presented further opportunities to reinvest and expand resources to meet legislative requirements.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted

9. HOUSING TRANSFORMATION UPDATE

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

Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management, took the meeting through the report and he along with Elly Shepherd, Head of Housing Policy, Performance and Assurance, gave the following key responses to questions:

- Performance on anti-social behaviour (ASB) had improved, with the service moving from the lower quartile when compared with similar landlords under

the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). While this represented progress, ASB remained a significant and priority issue.

- The Council had taken a cautious approach to the use of artificial intelligence (AI). Initial applications had been internal, such as comparing contractual documents but would be moving towards converting surveyor notes into short memos for residents. Whilst these uses had demonstrated efficiency and time savings, external deployment would be approached on a case-by-case basis. The Council continued to test and evaluate potential areas for application, including complaints handling, to ensure compliance and accuracy. A Council-wide pilot of Microsoft Copilot was underway, alongside some AI use within compliance systems to read and summarise documents. The Council maintained strict governance over AI use, including IT controls and mandatory assessments, to ensure responsible implementation and human oversight.
- Staff retention remained strong overall following the restructuring of services as part of the transformation programme. Although the employment market had been highly competitive, Camden largely continued to retain staff effectively. It was reported that new employees generally remained with the Council, due to its proactive approach and adaptability through this programme and other initiatives. Recent work included staff conferences aimed at improving engagement, sharing updates on ongoing projects, and providing opportunities for staff feedback.
- Housing Officers were facing significant pressures, particularly in the homelessness service where desired outcomes could not always be achieved. These significant pressures had created challenging working conditions and contributed to increased levels of verbal abuse towards staff, including racialised abuse. The Council was undertaking work to protect staff and provide appropriate support, recognising the marked rise in such incidents. It was further noted that these pressures reinforced the importance of engagement initiatives, the relational practice model, and leadership development to support frontline staff. Feedback from recent staff conferences indicated that many experienced housing professionals considered current conditions to be the most difficult in recent years.
- Officers had mechanisms in place that ensured that appropriate monitoring was in place to assess whether current initiatives were delivering the intended outcomes. Officers agreed that future reports would include data on staff leave rates, recruitment gains, sickness absence to assess impact, information on the effectiveness of relational practice work, indicators beyond tenant satisfaction, and identifying metrics that demonstrate whether investment in these programmes were achieving results. Also information regarding how the service was supporting tenants in street properties in relation to ASB, the allocation review, an appendix of policies and standards for easier reference, clarification on the funded tenant network (aimed at reaching harder-to-reach tenants) and the enhanced repair offer review (moving towards more flexible criteria) would all be included in the next report to the scrutiny committee in approximately 12 months-time.

ACTION BY: Director of Housing/Director of Property Management

- Anti-social behaviour (ASB) remained a significant priority for the Council and measures had been introduced to simplify reporting processes, including an online ASB reporting tool covering issues such as drug-related activity. It was confirmed that ASB formed part of the wider transformation programme, although it was not limited to that work. The Housing Regulator had made clear the expected compliance requirements regarding how ASB was managed on estates, and the Council was mindful of these obligations.
- The Council recognised the importance of ensuring engagement with all tenants, beyond existing structures such as District Management Committees and the Resident Panels. The Housing Regulator expected that landlords identify and reach those who were not currently engaged, including hard-to-reach groups. It was reported that the proposed tenant network would be designed to represent the diversity of voices within the housing community and provide opportunities for all residents to influence future housing and property management.
- Future tenant engagement would extend beyond the existing Resident Panels, which had a defined membership and focus. This would allow for broader co-design opportunities, particularly in relation to major service improvements such as the enhanced repairs offer and process redesign.
- The proposed enhanced repairs offer was at the early stages of its development and needed to change as currently it was based on too rigid criteria, such as age and the presence of a care package. Work was underway to review the vulnerability policy to ensure that residents requiring support were identified appropriately. Once agreed, the flexible criteria would enable more discretion to allow a focus towards determining how additional support could be provided within budget constraints.

The scrutiny committee welcomed the report and the way that the transformation of housing services was seeking to be strategically ambitious, with a focus on high performance, being proactive, tenant and resident focused, changing the working culture, embracing digital change, and seeking to achieve this under difficult financial conditions. The committee also welcomed the work being done in identifying domestic abuse cases and the way they were being supported, along with the improvements in the TSM regarding the way the Council was dealing with anti-social behaviour, but noted that this still remained an issue of concern to tenants and residents and the Council needed to continue making clear progress in this area.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted

10. WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

Housing Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday, 11th November, 2025

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

The scrutiny committee noted that they would receive update reports regarding the Redevelopment of the Regents Park Estate North, Stanhope Parade; and Regents Park Children's Centre, and the Housing and Repairs Transformation Programme in approximately 12 months' time.

Also, Members of the scrutiny committee were asked to submit specific questions in advance (through the Chair) for the January meeting, to ensure that the housing associations in attendance came prepared to respond to the issues that they wished to see raised.

ACTION BY: All Members of the Scrutiny Committee

Officers agreed to provide an update on the progress on taking forward the recommendation arising from the Cabinet Adviser report of Leaseholder Services separately to members. Also progress on the update would be included in the annual report of the Cabinet Member for Better Homes, that would be submitted to the committee at its February meeting.

ACTION BY: Cabinet Member for Better Homes/Director of Housing (SS)

Programme of meetings 2025/26 (new items and information requests in bold)

9th December

- HRA Budgeting Report
- Housing Improvement Report (Complaints)
- Insight, Learning and Impact Report (Quarter 2 2025/26)
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025 – 2030 – Cabinet Report
- Work Programme

12th January 2026

- HRA Budget & Rent Review 25/26
- Anti-Social Behaviour and Community Safety
- Housing Associations Annual Performance Report
- Work Programme

24th February

- Cabinet Member Better Homes Annual Report
- Community Investment Programme Annual report
- Cabinet Adviser report on Tenant Engagement in Private Rented Sector Housing

Housing Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday, 11th November, 2025

- Housing Ombudsman report recommendations and repairs update
- Work Programme

Yet to be programmed

- **Redevelopment of the Regents Park Estate North, Stanhope Parade; and Regents Park Children's Centre**
- **Housing and Repairs Transformation Programme**

RESOLVED –

THAT the report work programme be revised as outlined above.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There were none.

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm.

CHAIR

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MINUTES END