

## **THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

At a meeting of the **AUDIT AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** held on **THURSDAY, 27TH NOVEMBER, 2025** at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 2, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

### **MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT**

Councillors James Slater (Chair), Matt Cooper (Vice-Chair), Steve Adams, Richard Cotton, Janet Grauberg and Nanouche Umeadi; and Alan Layton (Independent Member)

### **MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT**

Councillors Nasim Ali, Samata Khatoon, Nazma Rahman and Lorna Jane Russell; and Fehintola Akinlose (Independent Member)

**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 Audit and Corporate Governance Committee and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.**

## **MINUTES**

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ali, Khatoon and Russell and from Fehintola Akinlose. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Cooper.

### **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 no declarations.

### **3. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY)**

#### **Webcasting**

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. Anyone addressing the meeting was deemed to be consenting to having their contributions recorded and broadcast.

**4. DEPUTATIONS (IF ANY)**

There were no deputations.

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

There was no notification.

**6. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2025 be approved and signed as a correct record.

**7. ANNUAL REWARD AND TERMS AND CONDITIONS UPDATE**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of People and Inclusion.

Members noted the intention to carry out a review of the number of politically restricted posts in the authority and asked for an update in due course.

**ACTION BY: Borough Solicitor**

In answer to a question on apprenticeships, the Director of People and Inclusion commented that a lot of focussed work had been undertaken on apprenticeships and care internships, and the number of existing staff who were undertaking apprenticeships had risen, with the Authority getting better at using the apprenticeship levy for skills development. The links between the HR team and the inclusive economy team had also been strengthened.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

**8. REVIEW OF CAMDEN PAY AND REWARD SCHEMES**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of People and Inclusion.

In response to questions, officers commented that the organisation had started to collect data on the number of staff who were care-experienced and would continue to improve data collection on this and be more care conscious. Work was also

underway to address the fact that women tended to be recognised more for smaller scale or team-based achievements. There were no plans at the present time to collect data on staff who were foster carers although support was already offered to such staff.

Members of the Committee welcomed the report and the approach to reward payments being proposed.

**RESOLVED –**

- (i) THAT the amendment to the My Reward Scheme to remove the 1% payment option, retaining a single 2% payment option, be approved;
- (ii) THAT the broader context of the Pay and Performance Review – Phase Two, including proposals to modernise pay, recognition, and performance frameworks, as referenced in paragraph 4.5 of the report, be noted; and
- (iii) THAT the commitment in paragraph 8.1 of the report to review the impact of the revised My Reward Scheme after six months of implementation be noted, and the completion of this review be delegated to the Director of People and Inclusion, noting that should the review result in further changes to the My Reward Scheme being proposed, these will be reported back to the Committee.

**9. INTERNAL AUDIT INTERIM REPORT 2025-26**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Finance.

In relation to the delay in the audit of the homelessness and temporary accommodation, officers remarked that this had been due to the need to respond flexibly to resource constraints on the auditee's side but a productive scoping meeting had taken place and the audit was expected to start in Quarter 4 of 2025/6 and report in Quarter 1 of 2026/7. With regard to schools establishment reviews, officers explained that the service aimed to do 7 of these a year and they were an audit of standard back office business functions, similar to a mini-company audit. In response to a question about the work undertaken by PriceWaterhouse Coopers, the Head of Internal Audit, Investigations and Risk Management emphasised the strengths of the co-sourced model which allowed to service to call on a small amount of external resource when needed.

The Chair requested that the committee be kept regularly updated on any delays in services undertaking follow up work so that it could take action if it considered there to be any cause for concern.

**ACTION BY:                      Head of Internal Audit, Investigations and Risk Management**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

**10. RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND FRAMEWORK**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Finance.

In response to a question regarding complex cross cutting cases, officers remarked that the framework did not talk to such specific scenarios, but it was expected in complex cases that the various service areas would come together to jointly manage the individual risks. In relation to opportunity risk, the service was starting conversations about the concept of risk not always being in relation to a negative but sometimes being something to be pursued in order to obtain a benefit. On the issue of risk management training for staff, figures were available on how many staff had completed the training and conversations were taking place about whether to make it mandatory.

The Committee indicated its support for the risk management training being mandatory for staff and asked for an update on this in due course.

**ACTION BY:           Head of Internal Audit, Investigations and Risk Management**

A Member queried the wording the Zurich's recommendation 4, which challenged Camden's zero tolerance approach on breach of legislation or harm. The Head of Internal Audit, Investigations and Risk Management commented that officers had pushed back on that and had come to the view that the existing wording accurately reflected the view of senior leadership, who were very clear on where the red lines were in relation to toleration of risk.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

**11. PRINCIPAL RISK REPORT 2025**

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Finance.

Members welcomed the inclusion of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Funding and Provision as a new principal risk. In response to a question about why the current score and the target score were the same, the Head of Internal Audit, Investigations and Risk Management remarked that it reflected the Directorate Management Team's assessment of the range of mitigations in place to manage this risk.

Members discussed areas for a risk deep dive later in the year, with SEND, school sufficiency and viability, cyber and data security and financial resilience all being suggested. On financial resilience, it was felt that a deep dive might be better timed for later in 2026 when the funding picture was clearer, and therefore it was proposed to focus on SEND and school sufficiency, as well as cyber and data security. Members requested some briefing beforehand on the terms being used in relation to cyber and data security in order to better understand the risk deep dive report.

**ACTION BY: Chief Information and Experience Officer**

**RESOLVED –**

- (i) THAT the Council's principal risks and actions being taken to mitigate risks be noted; and
- (ii) THAT risk deep dives be undertaken in 2026 on: Special Educational Needs and Disability Funding and Provision and School Sufficiency and Financial Viability; and Cyber and Data Security.

**ACTION BY: Chief Information and Experience Officer & Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion**

**12. RISK DEEP DIVE - COMPLAINTS IN PROPERTY MANAGEMENT**

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

Members thanked officers for the work that had taken place to address the increasing number of complaints about property management and asked a series of questions, to which the Head of Housing Property Engagement and Customer Services gave the following responses:-

- The building blocks were now in place to ensure continued improvement and there was increased transparency about how services were performing. Whilst there might not be a decrease in the number of complaints, it was hoped that there would be a decrease in the number of disrepair claims.
- There was a lot of resident engagement taking place and considerable investment going into addressing issues with communal heating systems.
- The majority of complaints related to communications, rather than the work being carried out by council operatives, and investment in new systems was now making communication between the Council and residents more effective.
- The authority was also getting better at identifying and addressing themes or trends.
- In addition, where new contracts were being procured, it was clear from the outset that customer satisfaction feedback would need to be regularly reported and would need to be acted on within a specified time frame.

- A detailed monthly report was submitted to the Housing Safety Regulatory Board, identifying trends and how they were being addressed.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

**13. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Solicitor.

A Member commented that on page 202 of the agenda, the reference to ‘the landlord’ in the 1<sup>st</sup> bullet point under ‘When we receive a complaint under stage 1 or 2, we will:’ was too specific as the complaint might not be about the Council as landlord. The last bullet point was worded oddly in that it didn’t follow on from the ‘we will:’ that preceded it.

In response to a question about what action could be taken in relation to complaints received about Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs), the Borough Solicitor remarked that the Council had management agreements with TMOs under which it was able to take action when warranted.

In response to a comment from a Member who felt that the remedies set out in Appendix C were too prescriptive, the Chair remarked that the remedies policy had been agreed by the Committee at its previous meeting and was included here only for information.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the revised policies and procedures attached at Appendix A and Appendix B of the report be approved subject to amendments to the first and last bullet points under ‘When we receive a complaint under stage 1 or 2, we will:’ on page 202 of the agenda to address the points recorded above.

**ACTION BY: Borough Solicitor**

**14. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REPORT 2025-26**

Consideration was given to a report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

**15. 2024/25 AUDITOR'S ANNUAL REPORT AND PENSION FUND AUDIT COMPLETION REPORT**

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Director Corporate Services.

Suresh Patel of Forvis Mazars, the Council's external auditors, updated the Committee on the position with regard to rebuilding assurance in future years, remarking that the guidance received from the National Audit Office had been more onerous than expected and therefore the process of rebuilding assurance was going to take longer than initially anticipated. The 2024/25 accounts would, therefore, be disclaimed, although the auditors would be able to provide assurance about whether the closing balances were materially correct. In response to questions, Mr Patel commented that if he had unlimited resource the picture would of course be different, but this was not the environment that auditors were working in and there was already a considerable amount of resource being invested by both the Council and the auditors.

In relation to the objection received from an elector referred to in the Auditor's Annual Report, this was currently being considered and a provisional view would be provided to the elector in the next few weeks.

With regard to the outstanding matter within the Pension fund audit in relation to the related parties testing, the Chief Accountant commented that this was a new audit test this year which had required officers to contact all councillors and they were currently working through that process. Mr Patel added that there were alternative procedures that the auditors could implement if necessary, but the Council ought be getting assurance on this.

Mr Patel remarked that Camden was highly unusual in not currently having any weaknesses around financial sustainability. Although there were of course financial pressures, Forvis Mazars was satisfied with the arrangements in place with regards to financial sustainability.

**RESOLVED –**

- (i) THAT the 2024/25 Auditor's Annual Report presented at Appendix A of the report be noted; and
- (ii) THAT the Audit Completion Report for the Pension Fund at Appendix B of the report be noted.

**16. WORK AND TRAINING PLAN AND ACTION TRACKER**

Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Solicitor.

**RESOLVED –**

- (i) THAT the work plan for the remainder of 2025/26 as set out at Appendix A be noted;
- (ii) THAT the training programme set out at paragraph 3.4 of the report be noted; and
- (iii) THAT the action tracker for actions arising from previous meetings in 2025/6, as per Appendix C, be noted.

**17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 8.18pm.

**CHAIR**

**Contact Officer: Vicky Wemyss-Cooke**

**Telephone No: 020 7974 5726**

**E-Mail: vicky.wemyss-cooke@camden.gov.uk**

**MINUTES END**