

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **MONDAY, 15TH SEPTEMBER, 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 Sagal Abdi-Wali, Cabinet Member Better Homes
Councillor Lorna Greenwood, Cabinet Adviser for Leaseholders (item 7)

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 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

Councillor Meic Apak declared for the sake of transparency that he was a council tenant and Councillor Nancy Jirira declared for the sake of transparency that she was a leaseholder.

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 July 2025.

RESOLVED –

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 15th July 2025 be approved and signed as a correct record.

6. DEPUTATIONS

The Chair advised the meeting that the deputations from John Mason and Terry Esnault had been declined, and members of the scrutiny committee would be sent the details surrounding these decisions.

There were no deputations to consider.

7. LEASEHOLDER SERVICES & HOUSING INCOME UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Housing.

Glendine Shepherd, Director of Housing, took the meeting through the report and she along with Salim Khan, Home Ownership Manager, gave the following key responses to questions:

- The meeting was advised that the rent collection rate was currently running at over 100%, which was a significant improvement and had led to a reduction in rent arrears from £18 million to approximately just over £16 million. Also, the team were now working in a much more relational way to support Camden's

tenants to pay their rent. All of this was being achieved despite the continued rollout of Universal Credit, which posed a risk as moving over to Universal Credit meant tenants would be paid directly and not to the Council.

- Leaseholder Services were often contacted by leaseholders with questions about repairs, which had then to be referred directly to the Repairs Team. Officers were seeking ways to improve this process, through the creation of guidance materials as well as closer working together. As part of this process a joint meeting was being held in October where both teams would brainstorm ways to make things clearer and more efficient for leaseholders.
- Another issue that was often raised was what leaseholders were entitled to under their lease. This often caused delays, especially when there were grey areas or when staff weren't sure who to ask for clarification. The goal was to make these entitlements clearer for the Repairs Team and ensure they knew where to go for answers which would help to reduce holdups.
- Leaseholders were able to contact officers at any time if they wanted to explore enfranchisement or buying the freehold of their property. Officers would be producing information surrounding this issue as part of the invoices that were due to be sent out to leaseholders in the next few weeks. The Leaseholder Forum had helped officers shape this process.
- Officers had been working positively with the Leaseholder Forum and its sub-groups to address issues of concern.
- Following the Housing Transformation restructure approximately 80 new staff had joined the authority. These new members of staff, as well as existing members of staff, would be part of a housing induction programme that would make the service expectations clear, along with being provided with information regarding the work of the specific teams that formed part of the department. This would include ensuring that a consistent service (that would cover all forms of correspondence) was provided to tenants and residents across the board.
- Officers and senior representation from Leasehold Services sat on the Better Homes Board. At Board meetings information was provided regarding future capital works schemes so members were made aware of future works, and allowed for a discussion regarding disruption and possible costs of the works.
- Officers were in the process of developing a new approach to helping leaseholders when there were very large bills involved. This approach would see the payment returns process as being the most generous in any London borough.
- At the start of each financial year, the Council would send out an estimated bill to leaseholders based on previous years' data and expected spending. This was essentially a budget, as the Council did not yet know what repairs would be needed. In most cases, leaseholders would not then find out about completed repairs until up to 18 months later. For example, if a repair happened on 1st April, it wouldn't be reported until the end of the following September. To improve this, Camden had begun publishing all potentially rechargeable repairs on its online portal. Officers would also send this information directly to leaseholders who had signed up to receive updates. Every three months, any repairs carried out in the previous quarter were

added to the portal and shared with those leaseholders. This allowed leaseholders to review the repairs early and raise concerns—such as poor workmanship or repairs that hadn't been done—so officers could address issues within that three-month window. Officers would provide information on the number of leaseholders who had signed up to this scheme.

ACTION BY: Director of Housing (SS)

- The Council had rolled out tenancy audits and visits which would help the authority deal with issues like tenancy fraud. Officers would be helped tackle this issue by a new app that allowed them to upload information directly to the Council's system whilst on site. Also, lone worker devices had also been made available to staff that allowed officers to alert the Council immediately if anything happened whilst they were out. The tenancy audits were underway, and during visits, officers would check that the correct person was living in the property. If not, this was flagged. Housing Officers also worked closely with the Repairs Team to make sure every contact counted—for example, if someone wasn't home or there were issues accessing a property for gas checks, this was reported to the tenancy team. A prioritisation matrix was used to help manage visits across all 23,000 households. Factors such as not reporting a repair in the last five years, age, and vulnerability were used to decide which households to prioritise. Officers were taking a proactive approach, aiming to identify and address issues before they were reported.
- Between 50- 60 tenants were downsizing each year and this allowed these bigger homes to be allocated to those in need. The incentives that the Council offered to downsize were comparative products in terms of the incentive for giving up an additional bedroom. Also the authority was looking at its Allocations Policy to see how it could be used to improve the process to make it more attractive for tenants (e.g. going from a 4 bed home to a 2 instead of a 1 as that was what they wanted rather than needed).

The scrutiny committee welcomed the work being done to move Leaseholder Services provision forward.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted

8. HOUSING OMBUDSMAN'S REPORT AND ACTION PLAN

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

Scot Reid, Head of Housing and Property Engagement and Customer Services, took the meeting through the report and he along with Councillor Sagal Abdi-Wali, Cabinet Member Better Homes, and Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management, gave the following key responses to questions:

- Making it easier for tenants and residents to report repairs and keeping them informed about what would happen next was one of the key issues raised by the Housing Ombudsman. The Council had already recognised this and had been on a journey over the last 6 years to deliver on this commitment. The Council now had in place many ways tenants and residents could report repairs that included WhatsApp and SMS, and Madetech which saw nearly 20% of residents use this service last month. Overall, about 86% of repairs were now being raised using WhatsApp, SMS, Webchat or Madetech.
- Madetech Service allowed residents to report and track repairs easily. If the repair was handled by the Council's in-house team, residents could follow its progress online. The system avoided duplication, as information only needed to be entered once.
- Officers had worked closely with the Residents' Panel, who tested the Madetech system and gave feedback leading to further improvements. From next month, residents would be able to report heating and hot water emergencies during business hours without needing to call and wait in a queue. This service would also be used to keep tenants and residents informed about when contractors would be on site to undertake works in future.
- Officers worked with Neighbourhood Housing Officers to reach residents who hadn't been in touch for a while, through tenancy visits and door-knocking, to understand what might be going on in their homes.
- The Council now kept residents updated—for example, if a lift broke down, by sending out texts explaining what had happened, what was being done, and when it would be fixed. This kind of proactive communication was something both the Ombudsman and the Council's tenants and residents expected.
- The launch of a new repair system called ROCC in December 2024, streamlined the handling of repairs by integrating multiple functions, including repair management and appointment scheduling. A key feature of ROCC was its ability to support self-service options for residents. ROCC also allowed the Repairs Team to track appointments and manage work in real-time, ensuring that jobs were completed more efficiently and accurately, all of which would improve the service provided and avoid the need for repeated appointments.
- The Capital Works Team had sought to make improvements to its early engagement mechanisms and part of this was making sure each project had clerk of works. The Council also carried out independent surveys at the end of each scheme, and project managers worked together to identify common themes and lessons across different contracts.
- Tenant satisfaction data showed that generally tenants and residents were very satisfied with both the service and the repairs.
- The Council had completely changed the way it handled complaints. Previously, when a formal complaint was submitted through the central complaints team, it was passed to the relevant service, which would then acknowledge it within a set number of days. Now as soon as a complaint was allocated, someone from the team would call the resident straight away to confirm that it had been received, provide the reference number, and check if

anything had been missed. The officer handling the complaint would then follow up with another call to confirm the details and ask if there was anything else that could help with the investigation. The Council still aimed to send a full response within 10 working days. But it had now introduced a new step: if the complaint involved a follow-on repair, the new completion team made sure the job was booked in and kept the resident informed. Once the work was done, they would call again to confirm it had been completed and send a follow-up letter, significantly improving the engagement experience for the tenant or resident.

- Officers from the Council had set up a complaint's forum for London boroughs, and at one of the meetings, the Housing Ombudsman shared that a complaint was being logged with them every three minutes. August 2025 had seen the highest number of complaints they had ever recorded for that month, and they were working to clear a small backlog.
- The Council had identified three key areas where it still needed to improve: reducing wait times, keeping residents updated about what was happening next and clarifying tenant responsibilities—especially where certain repairs were the tenant's responsibility and could lead to areas of challenge.
- Regular updates were provided to councillors through monthly ward briefings. These included the number of complaints received, common themes, trends and customer satisfaction data, which showed that 85% of residents were satisfied with the service after a job was completed—highlighting that most complaints were not about the quality of the actual repairs.
- Officers advised that with Awaabs Law coming into effect from October 27th, the Council's whole approach to tackling damp and mould hazards would be changing. Officers would provide further information on this and how the Council would be ensuring emergencies were addressed swiftly and efficiently; where there were any checks and balances to ensure repairs were not lost; and was an analysis carried out as a matter of course of what the lesson's learned from repair's that did not go to plan.

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management

- Camden had a clear system for handling complaints and service requests. When a tenant or resident contacted the independent complaints team, they assessed whether it was a new repair request or a formal complaint. If it was a repair request, it would then be passed to the team to action that the same day. If the resident expressed dissatisfaction and there was a history behind the issue, it would usually be treated as a formal complaint, and a record was provided to the resident. Stage two complaints were reviewed independently, and the Council had a robust process for identifying dissatisfaction and complaints. The Housing Ombudsman had looked into this and hadn't raised any concerns.
- The Neighbourhood Action Days had been very well received with over 1,000 face-to-face conversations with tenants and residents taking place, many of which had expressed a preference for this type of interaction over a digital

based one. Based on this feedback, the service planned to run more events next year and over the winter, including sessions in libraries and other venues, to reach more people in person. Members of the committee were invited to indicate venues that could be used for these events.

ACTION BY: Members of the committee

- The Council's Vulnerable Residents Policy, which had been reviewed by the Disability Oversight Panel, had now been published. Over the next year, there would be a review of the Enhanced Repairs Policy, especially in light of Awaab's Law, which would come into effect from 27 October and required a new approach to tracking repairs.
- Officers regularly reviewed lessons learned from complaints and reported trends to the Board. Residents could give feedback through post-repair surveys and independent phone calls. Repairs managers were expected to inspect major works, and the authority collected over 1,000 pieces of customer satisfaction data each month. This made the service one of the most informed parts of the Council.
- Officers used this data to make improvements, and the lessons learned lead played a key role in driving changes. A new lessons learned officer was in place whose role it was to ensure service improvements were addressed when necessary. All of this was made transparent through the Council's website and resident microsite, where updates were shared with residents and members.

The scrutiny committee welcomed the work of the Council in addressing the recommendations arising from the Housing Ombudsman's report and the progress made leading to the investigation being closed. The scrutiny committee noted the proposed service improvements arising from this work that had been undertaken, and would be considering how it wished to monitor the progress in future as part of the discussion on the work programme item.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted

9. REPAIRS SERVICE PERFORMANCE, INCLUDING DAMP & MOULD

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 Sinéad Burke, Head of Property Asset Management, and Scot Reid, Head of Housing & Property Engagement and Customer Services, gave the following key responses to questions:

- The Council was aware of the impact that repeated call outs had on a tenant and resident, and changes were being made to service provision in relation to this issue that was being driven by new regulatory requirements, which meant the Council would have to shift resources to meet this obligation. In the past, when repair requests peaked, the authority would seek to quickly grow the team to handle the demand. But now, instead of expanding the team, the authority would seek to manage things by controlling diary appointments. This meant communication during that time was important—especially for communal repairs, where the operative did not visit the person who reported the issue. The new digital processes for engaging with tenants would help improve the communication flow between the Council and tenants and residents.
- As part of the Council's asset management and regulatory work, the authority had a programme to inspect 100% of its homes (currently it was inspecting approx. 100 – 200 homes a week). Of the 5,366 homes surveyed so far this year, 17 (0.3%) had a 'Category 1' hazard related to damp and mould and all had been referred to the damp and mould team to resolve. Awaab's Law required that Category 1 damp and mould hazards had to be investigated within 14 calendar days, with works starting in a further 7 calendar days and emergency repairs completed in 24 hours. The Council was already meeting these timescales.
- Around 100 staff had already received specialist training, with further sessions scheduled for all Neighbourhood Housing Officers and frontline staff in Neighbourhood and Estate Services. Building safeguarding training was also being rolled out so that staff could quickly identify and report defects while on site, supporting earlier intervention and stronger compliance.
- In addition, under the damp and mould work, the Council had proactively reached out to NHS staff—including doctors—and asked them to let the Council know if they came across any cases of damp and mould that had been reported.
- Officers would be working with colleagues in Public Health and Children Services regarding communications to the public when the new requirements become operational.
- Officers would contact tenants and residents whose journey using Madetech had not been completed, this would be done via the persons email address. Assistance was also available to users via the live chat function on the Council's website.
- It was an aim to try and educate tenants and residents about the costs of a missed appointment, not only as a cost to the Council, but it could mean that another tenant or resident was missing out. Officers would be working with the Residents Oversight Panel to have a discussion on how this information could be passed on to tenants and residents and members of the scrutiny committee would be provided with an update on this when it was available.

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management (SR)

The scrutiny committee welcomed the report.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted

10. VOID PROPERTY PERFORMANCE

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 Glendine Shepherd, Director of Housing, gave the following key responses to questions:

- Officers in the Neighbourhoods Teams were working closely with colleagues in the Voids Teams to deal with voids in a particular area.
- There had always been a challenge in the mutual exchange process as the tenants were exchanging their homes they were, regardless of whether the home had any issues related to its condition. Officers would look at where improvements could be made in the mutual exchange process to help tenants move homes through this route, and make sure repairs that were the landlord's responsibility were addressed in line with policy.

ACTION BY: Director of Housing

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted

11. WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

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

The scrutiny committee added the following changes to the work programme, along with the further information required regarding items:

- Housing Associations Annual Performance Report to be moved to the December 2025 meeting
- Private Rental Sector Service update to November meeting
- Cabinet Adviser report on Tenant Engagement in Private Rented Sector Housing to the 24th February 2026 meeting
- Housing Ombudsman recommendations update report to the February 2026 meeting to include lessons learned; engagement and communication (including proactive work); link with repairs, major works and preventative

Housing Scrutiny Committee - Monday, 15th September, 2025

maintenance services; and progress and performance of ROCC (Repairs handling system) and MadeTech (On-line repairs portal)

The meeting asked that the Cabinet Adviser on Tenant Engagement in Private Sector Housing be invited to the meeting on 11th November when the officer report on Private Rental Sector Housing was to be discussed.

ACTION BY: Committee Clerk

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

11th November

- Housing & Repairs Transformation Programme (to include use of AI in Housing, update on policies e.g. Vulnerability, Domestic Abuse and Allocations)
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy update (to include homeless scrutiny panel recommendations)
- **Update on Private Rental Sector service (to include borough-wide HMO licensing scheme and no-fault evictions)**
- Work Programme

9th December

- Cabinet Member Better Homes Update
- HRA Budgeting Report
- Insight, Learning and Impact Report (Quarter 2 2025/26)
- **Housing Associations Annual Performance Report**
- 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
- 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 Ombudsman recommendations update to include lessons learned; engagement and communication (including proactive work); link with repairs, major works and preventative maintenance services;**

and progress and performance of ROCC (Repairs handling system) and MadeTech (On-line repairs portal)

- Work Programme

Yet to be programmed

None Identified

RESOLVED –

THAT the report work programme be revised as outlined above.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There were none.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm.

CHAIR

Contact Officer: Gianni Franchi

Telephone No: 020 7974 1914

E-Mail: gianni.franchi@camden.gov.uk

MINUTES END