

## **THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

At a meeting of the **HOUSING FIRE AND BUILDING SAFETY PANEL** held on **TUESDAY, 14TH APRIL, 2026** at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

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

Gulbahar Begum (Co-Chair, in the chair), Jason McIntyre (Co-Chair), Ceri Barraclough, David George, Brian Levey, Simon Murray, Gavin Haynes, Elizabeth Henderson-Sambell, Michal Jankowski, Maria Jacobs, David O'Keefe, Thomas Watkins, and Councillor Steve Adams, Councillor Kemi Atolagbe, Councillor Anna Burrage.

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

Catherine Crawford, Francis Dias, Gillian Farrugia, Ryan Heng, Tezar Miah, Jo Rose, Silvia Kirk, Councillor Sagal Abdi-Wali, Councillor Pat Callaghan, Lorna Jane Russell, and Councillor Tom Simon

**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 Fire and Building Safety Panel and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.**

## **MINUTES**

### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sagal Abdi-Wali, Councillor Pat Callaghan, Councillor Tom Simon, and Francis Dias.

### **2. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **Webcasting**

The Chair announced that the meeting was being broadcast live to the internet and would be capable of repeated viewing and copies of the recording could be made available to those that requested them. Those participating in the meeting were deemed to be consenting to being filmed.

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA**

There were none.

**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 28<sup>th</sup> January 2026.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2026 be approved as a correct record.

**6. LFB ANNUAL REPORT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Commander

David George, Borough Commander, took the meeting through the report and gave the following key responses to questions:

- There had been a significant decrease in fire casualties (a 66.7% year-on-year reduction), which maybe attributed in part to the joint work between the London Fire Brigade (LFB) and the London Borough of Camden, particularly with adult social care and housing services. Camden had moved from being the highest borough for fire casualties two years prior to a much-improved position.
- Care home fires remained a concern, with Camden ranking 7th out of 32 London boroughs. New initiatives with carers, including videos and communications, had been put in place to address this.
- Incidents of persons under trains had been high, but a new initiative with Network Rail at Euston aimed to reduce this figure. Carbon monoxide incidents had increased, which was attributed to a greater number of alarms and improved detection equipment carried by LFB crews. There were no incidents of people in water. The figure for 'locked in, locked out' incidents had risen, partly due to joint attendance with the London Ambulance Service (LAS) at incidents previously attended solely by LAS.
- Camden ranked 5th out of all London boroughs for the number of fire rescue incidents, which was considered appropriate given its density and business. Primary and secondary fire numbers were deemed good, ranking 18th and 21st respectively. There had been a slight rise in dwelling fires which was noted as a concern, and this would be addressed through work with the Council and community groups. Road vehicle fires had seen a 30% increase, mirroring a London-wide trend, with research ongoing into the types of vehicles involved. Primary fire injuries were very low, with no fire deaths

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reported in the last year. Attendance times for the first and second pumps routinely met London standards.

- There were some legacy performance measures (HFSVs, P1s, CFS) which were no longer used in the same way, with a focus now on triaging home fire safety visits to target high-risk, vulnerable individuals.
- In terms of protection operational crews conducted fire safety checks for local businesses, with most visits resulting in low-risk assessments. High and medium-risk findings were immediately referred to enforcement teams. For prevention, home fire safety visits were now prioritised using a triage tool based on risk factors, ensuring the most vulnerable residents receiving a quicker service (within four hours for highest risk, seven days for high risk). The target of 60% for these targeted visits was being met.
- Care homes were regulated by both the LFB and the Care Quality Commission (CQC). No specific problems had been identified in the care homes within the borough, but any Member could share any concerns with him, and he would forward them onto the enforcement team if necessary.

### **ACTION BY: All Panel Members**

- The 'locked in, locked out' terms referred to people calling the fire brigade because they lacked access to their premises, usually being locked out. LFB control would challenge these calls unless there was an emergency, such as a child or medicine left inside, or a cooker left on. The increase in these figures was partly due to joint attendance with the London Ambulance Service for 'collapse behind locked door' incidents. The 'locked in, locked out' figures did not include lifts, as lift incidents were recorded separately, and this data would be provided to the panel.

### **ACTION BY: Borough Commander**

- The LFB did not routinely differentiate between social and private housing for these incidents (locked in, locked out). If a property was not securable, a boarding-up company would be called. Safeguarding protocols were in place for vulnerable individuals, and any concerns would be passed on.
- Data regarding e-bike or e-scooter battery fires was not currently available but would be included in future reports, as it was acknowledged as being an issue of concern.

### **ACTION BY: Borough Commander**

- E-bike fires were currently categorised under road vehicle fires as the current recording system made it difficult to capture precise data until updates were made.
- Battery storage was a focus of concern and work on the nighttime economy would likely include shops selling vapes and battery storage. The current data would be reviewed to see if specific evidence supported increased focus on vape shops within the borough.

**ACTION BY: Borough Commander**

- Care homes were responsible for assessing their own risks and developing suitable evacuation or stay-put strategies. LFB enforcement officers assessed the suitability of these plans during visits. Failures in these plans observed by fire crews or others should be reported to LFB enforcement teams. The LFB did assess these plans, as did the CQC.
- The term 'accidental dwelling fires' meant fires in houses or flats, as opposed to commercial premises. Regular meetings with the LFB and the Council's fire safety team discussed incidents in council properties, with these premises often being identified by the Council.
- False alarms constituted the bulk of calls for fire stations. The automatic fire alarm (AFAs) reduction policy had been introduced, meaning LFB no longer attended some commercial AFAs during working hours, expecting building occupants to call if there was a real fire. Out-of-hours calls, residential properties, churches, and hospitals were still attended. Previous research had indicated a very small percentage of AFAs were actual fires.
- Officers agreed to investigate the feasibility of incorporating one-hour fire standard storage cupboards with heat detectors and sockets in new council properties for e-bike and e-scooter charging.

**ACTION BY: Director of Property Management**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted

**7. UPDATE ON PROPOSED NEW DECENT HOMES STANDARD**

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

Sinéad Burke, Chief Asset Management Officer, took the meeting through the report and she along with Gavin Haynes, and Michal Jankowski, gave the following key responses to questions:

- The Decent Homes Standard had been in place for 20 years and primarily focused on houses, but lacked provisions for communal areas, balconies, and lifts. A Government consultation had taken place regarding developing a new Decent Homes Standard, and a policy statement was issued in January 2026, though detailed guidance was still awaited. The new standard was proposed to be effective from 2035, allowing social housing providers time for necessary investments. The standard would also apply to private rented homes, potentially leading to leaseholders requesting block-level works from the Council.

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- The proposed changes applied across the four existing sections and created a new fifth section:
  - **Section A (Housing Health and Safety Rating System):** No change, serious hazards would still result in failure.
  - **Section B (Reasonable State of Repair):** More communal elements would be added, kitchens and bathrooms would become key elements (meaning their poor condition would cause failure), and the threshold for failure would be lower, requiring a better state of repair. Age criteria for components would be removed.
  - **Section C (Reasonably Modern Facilities and Services):** Age criteria for kitchens and bathrooms would be removed, focusing solely on condition. Window restrictors would become an essential requirement.
  - **Section D (Thermal Comfort):** This section would see the biggest change, moving from a low SAP rating of 35 to a proposed minimum Energy Efficiency Standard of C. A separate consultation was ongoing for this, and homes would need to meet both fabric and heating efficiency standards, not just a combined energy rating.
  - **New Section (Damp and Mould):** A fifth section would be introduced specifically for damp and mould, with even minor occurrences potentially leading to failure, and would be assessed against a lower threshold of seriousness than in Section A.
- The full impact was difficult to assess without complete details, significant financial implications were expected, which were not currently accounted for in the asset strategy.
- Meeting the Decent Homes Standards was now integrated into the Regulator of Social Housing's inspection regime, where low decency figures would affect grading and lead to regulatory measures, rather than fines.
- The 'adequate insulation against external noise' in Section C did not include noise from neighbouring properties as it primarily referred to outside noise (streets, trains) but officers would double-check the detailed standard.

**ACTION BY: Director of Property Management (SB)**

- It was recognised that neighbour noise could be a significant factor in quality of life, but sound insulation between existing properties could be difficult to alter, and the standard aimed for achievable requirements.
- The Council would need to review its housing stock against the new standard once the full standard was published, as some older homes might face challenges.
- All new build properties would already meet the new standards.
- The Council had a written protocol for window restrictors, including accessibility of release options and advisories to tenants.
- That this standard could serve as another tool for the private sector housing team to improve conditions in privately rented homes. Camden needed to be

clearer about its responsibilities and liabilities, as it could not be expected to be a testing or responsible body for properties beyond its purview.

- Officers to investigate whether there would be the inclusion of security measures, including communal security and door entry systems, within the new Decent Homes Standard.

**ACTION BY: Director of Property Management (SB)**

- The condition of dwelling entrances doors was a key component, but the standard aimed not to overlap with fire risk assessment legislation. The fire risk assessment (FRAs) regime determined the need for fire doors, and if the FRA was up-to-date and the door was in good condition, the requirements would be satisfied. There was a rolling programme for replacing fire doors across the borough, currently at the Council's cost.
- Council checks regarding compliance were ongoing in relation to using private rented properties to place tenants, particularly for temporary accommodation. In relation to discharging duty placements, further checks would be needed, but the new legislation would act as a 'catch-all' to raise standards in the private sector.
- The decency figures were reported annually to both the Government (as part of a larger statistical return) and the Regulator of Social Housing (as one of 22 tenant satisfaction measures).
- The Council would need the full, detailed published standard to begin work reviewing its homes against the new standards, as the implications depended on precise wording, such as changes to condition thresholds for components.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted

**8. PERFORMANCE ON COMPLIANCE Q3 2025/26**

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

Michal Jankowski, Head of Resident & Building Safety, took the meeting through the report and he along with Gavin Haynes, and Sinéad Burke, gave the following key responses to questions:

- The report presented performance broken down into statutory checks, remedial works, and servicing for Q3 2024-2025. Performance had increased in the last quarter, with most compliance areas near 100%, except for lifts and electrical checks.
- For lifts, the main issue was access for six-monthly insurance inspections, though lift servicing was at 100%. A backup contractor had been brought in to improve inspection performance. For electrical checks in dwellings, access

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was also a challenge, with the Council working with contractors and using enforcement measures as a last resort. Water hygiene inspections were near 100%, but access to individual street properties for checks was still a barrier. Future plans included procuring new contractors and insourcing gas services for better control. Fire safety, particularly fire risk assessments (FRAs), had achieved nearly 100% completion this financial year.

- Regarding voluntary undertakings, there was a steady decrease in overdue outstanding fire actions, with approximately 1,800 complex actions remaining, this was mostly with the capital delivery team and was often impacted by gateway requirements. An increase in pending actions was noted due to a significantly higher number of FRAs required this financial year. Plans were in place to smooth the FRA programme and implement a new IT system ('True Compliance') which had been successfully trialled. This system allowed real-time management of actions, automatic allocation to teams, required evidence for closure, and provided full transparency to the fire safety advisory team.
- In building safety, Camden had achieved 11 out of 12 building assessment certificates submitted to the Building Safety Regulator (BSR), a success rate of almost 100%, compared to a national failure rate of 75%. This was attributed to understanding BSR criteria, providing sufficient evidence, and partnering with a consultancy experienced in safety case management from the nuclear and aviation industries. There were 170 further assessments required for high-rise buildings, but the BSR had not yet called in any buildings for assessment.
- Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) would require assessment of approximately 6,500 households in high-rise buildings to identify residents needing assistance during evacuation. Initial letter campaigns had low response rates, but a telephone service started in December had reached 1,200 residents, with 300 highlighting needs. This service would continue, supported by government funding.
- Under Awaab's Law, the team had achieved 100% performance on all four key performance indicators for damp and mould hazards, including acknowledging, triaging, investigating, and dealing with reports within 10 working days. Stock condition surveys were at 65% by Q3, with access being the main issue. Multi-visits were being used to improve access and identified non-decency levels were low. The KPIs related to procedural points of early response, such as mitigating or removing immediate risk (e.g., mould washes). It did not cover wider, long-term work to prevent recurrence, which varied greatly and was harder to KPI. Data from internal stock condition surveys and Awaab's Law reports were being combined to track recurring issues. Regarding auditing, that work was evidenced with photographs.
- In relation to block-level issues regarding leaseholder responsibility, if the issue was a Council responsibility (e.g. roof and windows) then the Council would be liable for disrepair claims from leaseholders.
- The True Compliance IT system used widgets to show actions due within 90, 60, and 30 days to prevent them becoming overdue. For overdue actions, a separate widget existed. While individual email notifications for every overdue action were not practical (given 1,800 actions), weekly reports to managers

outlining overdue actions were being considered. The system offered full transparency, allowing anyone to see action status dynamically. A governance model with regular strategic and operational meetings was in place to discuss overdue actions and barriers to closure.

- The outstanding actions graph showed pending and overdue actions, and the increase was due to a higher volume of FRAs completed at the end of the previous year. Plans were in place to smooth the FRA programme and FRAs covered intake cupboards. FRA actions for combustible items in communal areas were allocated to neighbourhood teams for removal, and the new 'True Compliance' system would require photographic evidence of completion.
- Officers agreed to provide a year-on-year graph showing the downward trajectory of outstanding fire actions for clarity in future reports.

**ACTION BY: Director of Property Management (SB)**

- Damp and mould issues were more prevalent in older, properties, and much lower in newer stock. Recent revisions to Part F (ventilation) of building regulations, highlighted challenges in legislating for ventilation and air tightness in new builds, which could lead to overheating. That some periods of building regulations might have inadvertently created environments conducive to mould, but Camden had not seen the same widespread issues as elsewhere with cavity wall insulation.
- The assessment plans for Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans were based on person-centred fire risk assessment principles, starting with a simple survey, followed by in-depth on-site assessments by the Fire Safety Team. These assessments considered physical disabilities, comprehension of emergencies, household environment (e.g., candles, electric blankets, smoking), and other vulnerabilities to determine risk levels. In high-risk cases, localised sprinkler systems had been recommended. Letters had been sent to all residents, and if residents from TMO-managed blocks responded, the process would be undertaken. The actual evacuation assistance was provided by the LFB, not TMOs or the Council. The PEEP information was stored in a secure information box (red box) outside the building for LFB colleagues. The legal requirement was to update it annually. The Council was also working with the tenancy team to gather information when new tenants moved in or during tenancy holder undertakings. Discussions were ongoing with LFB on the best way to present this information in the box, aiming to anonymise personal details as much as possible (e.g., using a 'high risk' label on a flat to indicate specific LFB response requirements).

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted

## **9. FORWARD PLAN**

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

The panel noted that the June agenda was very comprehensive and that they would consider the issues that could be looked at in the October meeting, at the June meeting.

### **New items in bold and dates of meetings**

#### **22<sup>nd</sup> June 2026**

- Compliance performance report (Standing item)
- Commercial Properties Compartmentation Programme Update
- Grenfell phase 2 inquiry recommendations (Subject to publication of Government programme)
- Review of the Panel Terms of reference
- Internal Stock Condition Surveys
- Fire safety training for residents - update

#### **20<sup>th</sup> October 2026**

- Compliance performance report (Standing item)
- Chalcots Stage 2 Independent Review report

### **To be Programmed**

- New Decent Homes Standards Update
- Serious case incident review reports

### **RESOLVED –**

THAT the report and action tracker updates be noted.

## **10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

There were none.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm.

## **CHAIR**

**Contact Officer: Gianni Franchi**

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**MINUTES END**