

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Camden's Estates Mission: Response to the Report of the Cabinet Adviser for the Estates Mission (CS/2023/07)	
REPORT OF Cabinet Member for Better Homes	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Cabinet	DATE 7 th June 2023
STRATEGIC CONTEXT We Make Camden is our joint vision for the borough, developed in partnership with our community. It sets out our 'Estates Mission' ambition that by 2030, Camden's estates and their neighbourhoods are healthy, sustainable and unlock creativity. In May 2022, the Leader appointed a Cabinet Adviser on the Estates Mission, to examine the work the Council is doing to further its goals—aiming to ensure our homes, neighbourhoods and estates enable us all to live happy, healthy, fulfilling and sustainable lives, no matter where we live in Camden—and to make a number of recommendations on how we can further this work to meet our We Make Camden Estates Mission ambition. This report examines the recommendations of the Cabinet Adviser, considering delivery implications and how the Council can take forward these recommendations as part of our commitment to our estates and building healthier, more sustainable and better-connected creative communities.	
SUMMARY OF REPORT The Leader and Cabinet of Camden Council have established Cabinet Adviser roles to provide evidence-based policy support and recommendations to the Council's Cabinet. Councillor Eddie Hanson was appointed Cabinet Adviser for the Estates Mission in the 2022/23 municipal year, and his work has focused particularly on how the Council's decision-making can be more inclusive of all our residents and communities, and how to support community-led activity more effectively. This report reviews the 10 recommendations made by the Cabinet Adviser for the Estates Mission, taking on board the comments of the Housing Scrutiny Committee, which considered the report at its meeting on 21 st February 2023. This report provides an initial response, and any relevant commentary on the priority and delivery of each, in turn, as well as the work already ongoing to support our estates as creative and healthy places to live in the borough.	
Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information	

No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to:

- Consider the recommendations made by the Cabinet Adviser for the Estates Mission.
- Consider the response of the Housing Scrutiny Committee.
- Note the response from the Cabinet Member for Better Homes to the recommendations made.
- Agree to endorse the recommendations at points 2.3 to 2.11.
- In relation to the recommendation at 2.2, note the response set out in that paragraph.

Signed:



Gillian Marston
Executive Director of Supporting Communities
Date: 25 May 2023

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. This municipal year, the Leader has appointed Cabinet Advisers to support the Cabinet through developing policy recommendations across a range of Council work and programmes aligned with We Make Camden. In Camden's spirit of challenge and collaboration, these Councillors have been invited to bring their wide experience as community leaders and policymakers to examine the work of the Council, to speak with community groups and those impacted by our services, and to draw together advice on how we can take our work forward.
- 1.2. The Cabinet Advisers have supported the Cabinet with in-depth research in some entrenched areas of Council policy and we are grateful for their expertise, providing fresh insight and perspective which will help us to fast-track progress in these areas. Camden values community and elected member leadership and the role that our Councillors play in engaging our citizens, our communities, and new partners. In providing independent research, engagement, and recommendations, the Cabinet Advisers provide an important channel for new ideas and connections to support the work of Cabinet Members and the Council.
- 1.3. Whilst this report provides an initial response to the recommendations of the Cabinet Adviser for the Estates Mission, the Cabinet Adviser and Cabinet Member will continue to work closely together to progress work across these recommendations in the coming year.
- 1.4. In May 2022, Councillor Eddie Hanson was appointed Cabinet Adviser on the Estates Mission, to explore how the Council can further the goals of linking the borough's cultural institutions to our council estates and providing opportunities for residents' creativity to flourish. His full report is contained in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 1.5. In his report, the Cabinet Adviser on the Estates Mission provides the results of his original research on estates from residents, businesses and cultural organisations across Camden and offers recommendations as to how the Council can further its Mission. The Cabinet Adviser's personal understanding and experience give him deep knowledge of the challenges and opportunities of those living in Camden's estates, which informs his recommendations.
- 1.6. Our Estates Mission began in 2021, with Camden's partners and communities working together to understand how we can ensure all of our homes, estates and neighbourhoods are healthy and sustainable. We started by imagining what our life would be like if the places where we live helped to achieve our potential rather than acted as a barrier.
- 1.7. We know that life can be different depending on where you live in Camden. This includes how our surroundings make us feel, our sense of connection to our neighbours and our local area, the services we access, how we travel around, our ability to meet others and the opportunities available to

us. This difference was highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic and raised the challenge: what would it look like if our homes, neighbourhoods and estates enabled us all to live happy, healthy, fulfilling and sustainable lives, no matter where we live in Camden.

- 1.8. The challenge for Camden is how we can build and develop healthier and sustainable communities that support everyone to achieve the best in life, without being held back. We want all our neighbourhoods to support everyone to be healthy, to achieve their well-being and self-fulfilment and collectively, to meet and exceed our climate action goals.
- 1.9. The Cabinet Adviser additionally recognises the impact that the cost-of-living crisis is having on our residents. Rising inflation and the resulting increasing cost of energy, childcare, travel and food are forcing residents to make real sacrifices to meet basic costs. Council officers and commissioned teams have seen the impact of the rising cost of living when engaging with and supporting our residents and improving our estates.
- 1.10. The Cabinet Adviser's report conveys Councillor Hanson's and the Council's shared commitment to bettering the health, sustainability and creative opportunities of our estates and those who live there.
- 1.11. The Cabinet Adviser presented his report to the Housing Scrutiny Committee on 21st February 2023. The Committee asked questions of Councillor Hanson, the Cabinet Adviser; of Ododo Dafe, Head of Innovation and Improvement; and of Marcus Shukla, Portfolio Lead. The Committee noted the report and resolved to endorse all of the Cabinet Adviser's recommendations.
- 1.12. This report provides an initial response from the Cabinet Member for Better Homes, taking into account the views of the Housing Scrutiny Committee and key responses given to the Committee on the ongoing work on the Estates Mission; discusses how the Council can deliver the recommendations; and details where work is already ongoing and in development to further the aims expressed by Councillor Hanson and endorsed by the Committee.

2. Consideration of Recommendations

- 2.1. The Cabinet Adviser's report (contained in Appendix 1) sets out 10 recommendations to the Council, which are quoted below and organised in the order set out in the Adviser's report. This section of the report considers an initial response to each.
- 2.2. **Recommendation 1:** *“Consider an audit on the garages and sheds we have on estates: some residents wait for a long time, but then report there are abandoned sheds they could be using on their estates. The Council*

can allocate them to be used and even start collecting rent for them”.

- Through our Estates Mission, we have already committed to identifying the best use of different spaces on our estates, so we welcome wholeheartedly the objective of this recommendation. It is our view that the Council need not perform a new audit because recent information-gathering already performed has provided us with the tools we need whilst supporting the data for the Council’s asset register. This information-gathering included a small site asset review and physical audit in 2017 of all garages and sheds, which successfully led to these spaces being part of our stock condition survey that followed later that year. The stock condition survey is conducted every five years and has recently commenced for this cycle. This information we already have is informing our plans to accomplish the goals of this recommendation, which are detailed further in this section. We share Councillor Hanson’s passion to ensure our residents are able to make the most of all the Council’s available resources.
- Officers from Vacant Spaces, Estate Management and the Small Sites Teams are presently engaged in a programme of work to bring spaces back into use (such as creative businesses, start-ups, community uses) or, where it is felt more beneficial, use this land to build affordable new homes.
- We are continually carrying out stock condition surveys on these facilities as demand in a given area dictates and work alongside colleagues in the caretaking response team to carry out lock changes and ad hoc repairs in order to maximize available fit-to-let facilities and rent them out when required.
- There are sheds and garages on estates across the borough, which are located either inside a block or in the external grounds of an estate. There are varying levels of demand across the borough for sheds and garages based on residents’ specific preferences. For example: some estates have a waiting list for these facilities while others do not; some residents will only want a shed or garage where they live and are willing to wait until one becomes available rather than be allocated one on a nearby estate.
- In areas where higher demand exists, applicants are added to a waiting list until an asset becomes available in the selected area. This wait is highly variable depending on the type of asset and the demand in each area. There can therefore be mismatches between local capacity and local demand. The latest occupancy rates are shown here:

Asset type	Occupied
Garages	1563 (62%)
Sheds	3235 (38%)

- The current trend for larger vehicles can also restrict potential lettings, as the majority of our garages are built for smaller cars.
- Furthermore, we will be launching a participation and engagement initiative throughout our estates during the summer season, during which we will proactively seek feedback from residents regarding their living conditions. We understand that this is a pressing concern for many residents, and we are committed to identifying practical solutions tailored to the specific needs of each estate, particularly in relation to sheds and garages.

2.3. **Recommendation 2:** *“Engage with and listen to local businesses on the high street, not just the big businesses”.*

- We welcome this recommendation, and we are already looking at different ways to engage with a broader range of businesses in Camden so that they are able to contribute to the delivery of better outcomes within their neighbourhood. We applaud the Cabinet Adviser’s focus on this priority because we share the desire to include all parts of our economy, including local businesses.
- Camden has 5 Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) that represent businesses within their area, providing additional or improved services prioritised by businesses within that area. There is potential to work with BIDs, landowners and other business groups within the borough, such as Urban Partners, to explore ways in which businesses can contribute to achieving the vision that underpins the Estates Mission.
- Camden’s Inclusive Business Network could also be utilised to engage with employers as part of the Mission. The Network is comprised of a range of employers across the borough, who demonstrate the best employment practice and are seeking to encourage good work standards in their recruitment of local residents. Further to this, Camden are supporting public realm improvement projects focused on Drummond Street and Queen’s Crescent, which have required engagement with high-street and market-based businesses. As these projects develop this could enable further opportunities to engage with those businesses as part of the Estates Mission.
- In Kilburn, Camden and Brent Councils are piloting ‘One Kilburn’ and are trialling a new approach to convening local people, organisations, institutions and businesses around a shared ambition to improve Kilburn High Road and neighbouring spaces. Supported by Power to Change and the Greater London Authority, this has involved:
 - Funding, designing, and delivering a series of exciting, visual projects that present opportunities for local participation – including meanwhile use, art and sustainability projects

- Convening people through walkabouts, events and activities in Kilburn that are open to all
- Business engagement, initially led by Brent Council's Town Centre Manager and to be supported in the coming months by 'Community Activators' – local residents employed and supported to diversify the voices at the centre of conversation, including businesses
- Creating a 'Kilburn Working Group' for officers from services across the Council to provide a focus for coordination, collaboration, and peer support for Kilburn-focused projects, including those that impact and/or involve businesses
- Whilst work in progress, the example shows one approach to bringing together the people that can share lived experience, discuss challenges and work collaboratively on projects that respond to those challenges. As the Council is piloting Estate Action Plans in Kilburn, we will explore the opportunities to link this approach to business engagement with our estate-based improvements.

2.4. **Recommendation 3:** *“Be honest, fair and consistent with residents: The Council need not prejudge residents, so that residents will feel confident to have a trusted relationship with the Council. Enhanced staff training should be offered on respecting and treating residents on estates with dignity and not on a prejudicial basis. Officers should not use their powers to penalise residents who disagree with them by labelling the residents to other officers as, e.g., ‘ones to watch out for.’”*

- We accept this recommendation in its entirety and share its commitment to delivering services and responding to the needs of residents in an empathetic and relational way. Councillor Hanson's report contained a wealth of both personal experience and feedback from residents, in the form of interviews and case studies. Camden is committed to learning from our residents and working with them to improve communication and services, so we were very pleased that Councillor Hanson's report focused strongly on the sharing of power.
- We are committed to improving our services to make them more joined-up and connected, and to see residents holistically rather than only responding to the issue that involves individual services. We are working in our neighbourhoods to pilot a cross-cutting 'neighbourhood team' to try to join-up work at the Council so that residents are passed around less and receive a better experience with Council services.
- Frontline staff supporting the Neighbourhoods work will have the opportunity to learn about each other's services and share experiences, good practice and trial new approaches as part of a multidisciplinary team. This is an ongoing development, and we will continually review the impact that this approach is having in our communities.

- All Housing staff are expected to treat all residents in a respectful manner, and to show empathy, understanding and support for any issues they raise. Teams have ongoing learning and development within team meetings or through learning from issues as they occur, and there will also be formal training provided to re-set residents' expectations and the Council's expectations as we reshape and improve our services.
- In the same vein, the Council takes its safeguarding and other obligations to its staff and partners just as seriously, and protects itself and its officers, for example, with warning notices to protect against any violence or abuse by any member of the public in the course of the Council's work.
- The Estates Mission is supported by a working group containing a cross-section of different council services. The group meets on a regular basis and shares learning, including discussing best practice, with regards to resident engagement and participation. The way we engage with our communities is subject to perennial review and officers will continue to explore the best methods of engagement and participation to achieve different outcomes.

2.5. Recommendation 4: *“Be seen to be completing tasks to its best and fullest capacity: The Council should reply to resident queries in a timely manner, communicate with residents more effectively, listen to residents. And Council officers should communicate more effectively with other Council officers, especially between departments.”*

- We enthusiastically accept this recommendation and are already taking it onboard. This important goal has already been identified by Councillor Meric Apak, Cabinet Member for Better Homes, as a key priority to focus on in the coming year, as reported in his annual report to the 21 February 2023 meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee and communicated to the District Management Committees (DMCs). We thus welcome the recommendation in full.
- Officers should make clear in all correspondence the timescales for when a resident can expect a response and what the service level agreement is. Written communication should be free of jargon, correspondence should outline the issues raised by the resident, clearly addressing issues in a non-defensive, solution focused way.
- As part of the Council's transformation of its Housing Services division, new heads of service working to the Director of Housing will work across their service areas in a joined-up way, sharing good practice, innovation and preventing silo-working and ensuring delivery of a person-focused service. We will invest in and undertake a programme of training for staff in resident-facing roles; addressing

behaviours and workplace culture is very much part of the overall mission of the housing transformation.

- As part of our resident participation and engagement efforts, we will be piloting new modes of communication and adopting a more transparent and open approach with residents, providing regular updates about our services and attentively listening to their experiences of living on our estates. Our housing officers and repairs teams will be working collaboratively on the estates to facilitate local problem-solving and address the issues that matter most to residents.

2.6. **Recommendation 5:** *“Do more to assist disabled residents and residents with special needs who may require special assistance. Only then will we allow them the ability to fully participate, which is their right.”*

- We share Councillor Hanson’s passion for this important goal, and we thoroughly accept this recommendation. Across the organisation, we recognise that our support must be accessible to all our residents, and we are working to better enable disabled or other vulnerable residents to engage with the Council. We will continue to explore the best models of practice and we accept this recommendation in full.
- All managers across Camden have received Disability Inclusion Awareness learning in the last year to ensure that managers understand the barriers to inclusion and the tools and support Camden has put in place to ensure residents are positively supported. One example of the way this is put into practice is Camden’s Disability Oversight Panel, providing disabled residents with a forum to discuss and influence issues that impact them. The Disability Oversight Panel has recently discussed in detail the cost-of-living crisis. Disabled residents are asked to advise the Council what support they need to attend panel sessions and this support is put in place. This includes British Sign Language interpreters, taxis, support for carers, large font documents and easy read.
- Staff in Estates Management have databases of vulnerable households and use these when preparing to undertake consultation and engagement with people living on estates. Age, disability or special needs are taken into consideration and colleagues from the Council will tailor a different approach in such circumstances.
- Equally, colleagues working on the Community Investment Programme run engagement events in accessible areas of estates. This is combined with door knocking at various times of day, and officers would complete a home visit to residents with mobility issues or learning difficulties (at their request) to explain schemes and proposals.

2.7. Recommendation 6: *“Consult with residents when Housing Officers visit them. Ask them how they want to improve their estates: this information needs to be gathered and investigated with the trends of responses, and then acted upon by the Council. Other Council staff from different departments should meet and get to know residents on estates.”*

- We accept this recommendation and continue to implement new ways to gather information from residents and use it to best effect across the organization.
- The Neighbourhood Housing Officers carry out home visits to residents and use this opportunity to discuss the views of residents about the service and where things could be improved or where they are satisfied with the services. Officers will take forward any issues that residents raise. The visits provide a valuable opportunity to identify any vulnerability issues or service requests, or where referrals to other departments are needed such as the repairs team, Adult Social Care or referrals to the Welfare Rights Team or Housing Benefit. They also identify any tenancy or estate management issues raised by the resident. We are completely committed to visiting every home through our tenancy visiting programme, so we can speak to residents and identify any issues or concerns. So far more than 1,000 visits have been carried out and the programme will continue until all tenants have been visited.
- In addition to getting feedback on an individual basis, the Housing Service gathers residents' views in other ways, for example by officers attending tenant and resident association meetings, from attending estate walkabouts, from trialling participatory budgeting in one area, and from listening to feedback at District Management Committees. We will be improving the way we communicate and engage with residents, and there will be opportunities through the neighbourhood working initiative to change the way we work together with residents to collaboratively improve our estates and services.
- In December 2022, the Council established a housing & property residents panel to “take an open and honest look at performance and policy across Camden's Housing Management and Property Management divisions”. To comprise the panel, we received more than 350 applications from residents keen to take part, one of the most popular uptake levels for a resident panel launched in Camden. A method of stratified random sampling ensured a fair balance of demographics and protected characteristics, in line with the borough's diversity commitments and supporting the council's aim of enfranchising traditionally underrepresented minorities. DMCs were also asked to send two representatives to sit on this Panel. Panel members discuss and review service and contractor performance, complaints, important projects, and borough-wide challenges. They also offer feedback and suggestions on how to improve services in a resident-led or resident-focused way.

- Additionally, as part of our Neighbourhoods Project, we are also trialling the implementation of pop-up enforcement hubs. These hubs will provide a visible, uniformed presence in local areas and give communities the opportunity to report and engage with enforcement officers in a localised setting. This work will also be linked to our programme of Community Safety and Housing walkabouts, which is being reviewed to ensure that all areas of the borough and key estates are visited at regular intervals.
- We are planning community-based activities across all estates and areas to engage with tenants and leaseholders on the issues we face in social housing and to involve residents in developing ideas and approaches in an inclusive way.

2.8. **Recommendation 7:** *“Educate residents about their influence to make change through working with the council and co-working relationships. This is especially important when bringing in new agencies to help their estates. It cannot be that estates residents are seen or believed only to be ‘on the receiving side of charity’ or that they ‘must accept or take whatever they are given.’”*

- The Administration’s Manifesto contains a commitment that all estates will have an estate improvement plan. We welcome Councillor Hanson’s focus on these issues and accept his recommendations. Work is about to begin on this commitment, and the Council will pilot an approach to developing plans in 2023-24 across six estates. Deeper resident engagement is one of the key determinants in the successful development of Estate Action Plans, and we welcome this recommendation.
- We will be taking a strength-based approach; recognising the skills and experience that residents have and involving them in improving their estates and delivering the Estate Mission. With Council staff and partnership organisations acting as facilitators, the collective views of residents will shape decisions relating to how we can make estates places that are (more) sustainable, healthy and creative.
- We are proposing to set up sharing spaces on estates (similar to the sharing space at Templar House), beginning with pilots on six estates, from May 2023. This will support residents to get to know each other better, share their skills and experiences and identify priorities for improvement. There will be extensive outreach before a sharing space takes place on an estate to ensure that the process is inclusive and that all residents are given the opportunity and information needed to participate. Council staff will be present at the Sharing Spaces throughout the week so that residents can discuss issues with them and be provided with information on how to influence change and deliver improvements.

2.9. **Recommendation 8:** *“Provide training for residents on how the Council works. [This should include] resident involvement on panels when recruiting new staff and having residents involved in decision-making that affects them and their estates.”*

- While the Council does not currently provide training to residents on how the organisation functions, we do acknowledge the great value of this, and we welcome the recommendation. The Council will take this on board and endeavour to explore more fully, taking into account Councillor Hanson’s report findings.
- Camden provides materials to all staff at corporate inductions that outline how the organisation works (decision making processes via members, scrutiny committees, statutory obligations), the structure of the organisation and its priorities, missions and challenges. We will look to tailor these specifically for residents’ groups.
- In addition to training, we are continually looking at ways to be a more transparent organisation – with residents better positioned to see how decisions are taken. It is only right that residents living in the borough know how we are delivering their services, the challenges we are facing and how we are addressing these.
- We will be developing a participation programme this year visiting every estate with the full range of council services to make them accessible and provide a coherent overview of the aims and in e.g., Housing, Property Services, Community Safety and Green Spaces. It would propose the development of a respectful culture across staff teams, involving residents in shaping their estates and working collaborative, with the Council and tenants valuing each other’s knowledge and lived experience. A project plan will be developed to include milestones, how residents will be engaged with and a process to measure the outcomes of resident engagement across Housing services.
- We recently successfully recruited co-opted members to the Housing Scrutiny Committee. These new members have brought the lived experience of tenants and leaseholders to those discussions and are making valuable contributions to discussions about Camden’s housing. We will continue to explore similar opportunities in the future.

2.10. **Recommendation 9:** *“Offer training to Chairs in Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs) and other community groups. Provide mentoring opportunities to help them flourish in their role and to be the best they can be in supporting their residents.”*

- The Council completely agrees on the importance of supporting resident engagement and welcomes this recommendation. We plan to develop training to give residents a broad insight into how housing service functions and support their participation. Topics might include:
 - housing law
 - housing finance
 - dealing with antisocial behaviour
 - lettings policy and practice
 - equalities and customer service
 - building and fire safety
- This will also include a training offer for TRA/DMC representatives which will include mentoring and one-to-one support for Chairs and key officers.
- Work to co-produce the Council's Tenant Participation Strategy will include discussions on the potential to develop a community skills exchange (or currency) where residents help each other using acquired expertise or qualifications. In so doing, social networks can build and help communities retain their wealth. This important mission, as identified by the Cabinet Adviser, is a key priority of the Council.

2.11. **Recommendation 10:** *“Promote awards for volunteers in Camden. This should be done even to the extent of e.g., Royal or National awards such nominating for the honours system (e.g., OBE, CBE), especially in recognition of important work done by TRAs/DMCs.”*

- We welcome this recommendation, and we will be providing a wider platform for tenant and leaseholder stories of success and ensuring that tenants and leaseholders have ways of sharing best practice and good news stories that encourage other tenant engagement, including tenant, leaseholder and estate awards.
- The Innovation & Improvement team will lead on this, organising a volunteer awards programme and capturing and promoting success stories and ‘*you said, we did*’ outcomes.

3. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

3.1. Recommendation 1 is very welcome. Any additional rental income from garages and sheds is much needed as the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is under considerable financial pressure at present largely due to past government decisions to reduce dwelling rents.

3.2. All other recommendations should not require additional resources to deliver and therefore should be met within existing Tenant Participation and

other budgets. The financial pressures on the HRA are such that there is very limited scope for increasing budgets.

4. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

4.1. The individual recommendations in this report will be taken forward by officers and individual decisions will take into account Equality Impact Assessments. We are, however, confident that the recommendations as a whole will have a positive impact on the goals of our Estates Mission.

5. Environmental Implications

5.1. This report should contain no significant adverse environmental implications for Camden. Additionally, the sustainability priority contained in the Estates Mission is an aspiration to ensure the work described in this report in future has a positive environmental impact.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1: Cabinet Advisor Report on Estates Mission, 21 February 2023

Appendix 1

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARD(S): ALL
REPORT TITLE: Cabinet Advisor Report on Estates Mission	
REPORT OF: Cabinet Advisor on Estates Mission – Councillor Eddie Hanson	
FOR SUBMISSION TO: Housing Scrutiny Committee	DATE: 21 February 2023
<p>SUMMARY OF REPORT: The Cabinet Advisor for Camden’s Estates Mission here provides the Committee with their report, including recommendations, for discussion.</p> <p>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to information: No documents that are required to be listed were used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Nathan Koskella Cabinet Officer The Cabinet Office Camden Council 5 Pancras Square London N1C 4AG Email: Nathan.Koskella@camden.gov.uk</p>	
<p>RECOMMENDATIONS: The Housing Scrutiny Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Note and comment on the report including recommendations. (ii) Note the proposal to bring an update on the work to deliver on the recommendations made by the Cabinet Advisor within the next year. 	
<p>Councillor Eddie Hanson</p> <p>Cabinet Advisor for Estates Mission</p> <p>9 February 2023</p>	

Section 1: Background

- 1.1. The Leader and Cabinet of Camden Council in 2022 appointed four additional Councillors as *Cabinet Advisors* to provide evidence-based recommendations and policy-making support to the Cabinet.
- 1.2. The Cabinet Advisors are appointed by the Leader, in conjunction with the wider Cabinet, to engage, research, and develop recommendations in a particular policy area, working with one or more Cabinet Members, other Councillors, groups across Camden and the wider community.

- 1.3. These posts are non-executive roles and do not sit as part of the Cabinet. While they do not have decision-making powers and are limited to collaboration and recommendations, the Leader and Cabinet have committed to thoughtful consideration of their findings and recommendations.
- 1.4. Cabinet Advisors present their findings in a report to Scrutiny in its policy and oversight function, to provide an opportunity for discussion of their findings. Following this, this report will go to Cabinet, alongside a report outlining the views of scrutiny and a response from the relevant Cabinet member. This will allow Cabinet to consider the report, the views of Scrutiny and the Cabinet member together and formally decide whether to accept the recommendations.
- 1.5. Cllr Eddie Hanson was appointed to the role on the topic of Camden's Estates Mission, the Council's drive to link the borough's cultural institutions to our council estates and to provide opportunities for residents' creativity to flourish.

Section 2: Introduction

- 2.1. I, Eddie Hanson, was elected as a councillor for Kilburn ward in May 2022.
- 2.2. I was appointed that month as the Cabinet Advisor for Estates Mission by the Leader of Camden Council, Councillor Georgia Gould. I held various voluntary roles in the community before becoming a councillor, including chair of a District Management Committee; chair of the board of trustees for a local Community Centre; a primary school governor; and I am the founder of an organisation that mentors young people into employment and seeks to give them a better start in life.
- 2.3. As someone who lives on an estate and previously grew up in an estate, both in Camden, over the years I have witnessed and experienced first-hand some of the challenges that some families and residents who live on estates may face.
- 2.4. Therefore, it is with great delight that I have been presented with this opportunity to try to advise and assist the Cabinet of Camden Council on the journey to making estates in Camden happier and healthier.
- 2.5. The leadership of the Council have set a goal that by 2030, **Camden's estates and their neighbours are healthy, sustainable and unlock creativity**. The recent coronavirus pandemic brought a lot of challenges; but equally it brought some opportunities to make things better for our residents. Since the start of 2021, Camden's partners and communities have been working together to understand how we can ensure all of Camden's homes, estates and neighbourhoods are healthy and sustainable.

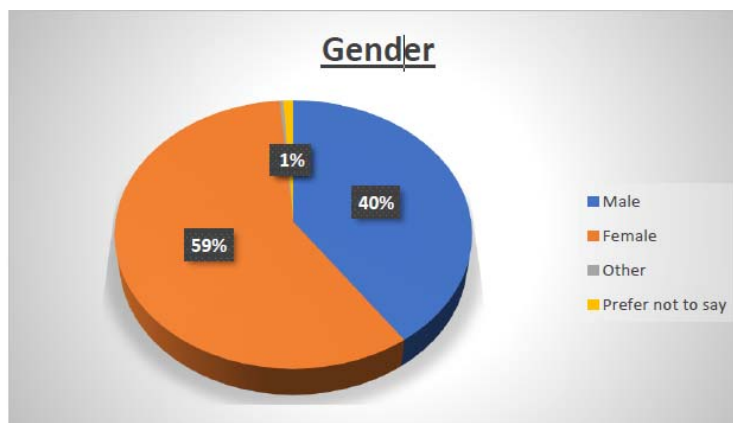
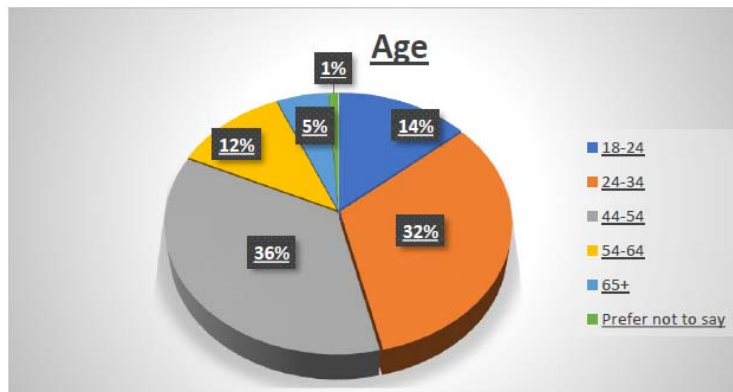
- 2.6. As it is not a secret that life can be very different depending on where someone lives in Camden, it is admirable that the Council's leadership has asked the important question of, "What would it look like if Council homes, neighbours and estates enabled everyone to live happy, healthy, fulfilling and sustainable lives, no matter where someone lives in Camden?"
- 2.7. The rich diversity of residents who live on our estates in Camden is a very important truth of our community, and it must be acknowledged and reflected in everything we do here. Truly seeing and understanding what and who our estates are made of is the best way to ensure that Council services are best delivering happy, healthy, fulfilling and sustainable lives for our residents.
- 2.8. Due to the diversity and mix of residents we have on our estates, the decision-making about them by the Council and partners, when it comes to improving the lives of residents who live there, to designing public spaces and shared spaces on estates, and especially when it comes to choices that would affect residents that have to live with these choices, it **is vital that a wider group of residents are reached and more voices heard**, not just the loudest voices.
- 2.9. For this piece of work, I will be focusing on how we can **share power** and support community-led activity more effectively. To inform my recommendations, I have engaged with various stakeholders including residents, businesses, Councillors, District Management Committee (DMC) chairs, schools, Council officers, Cabinet members, cultural and arts institutions and previous written work in this area.

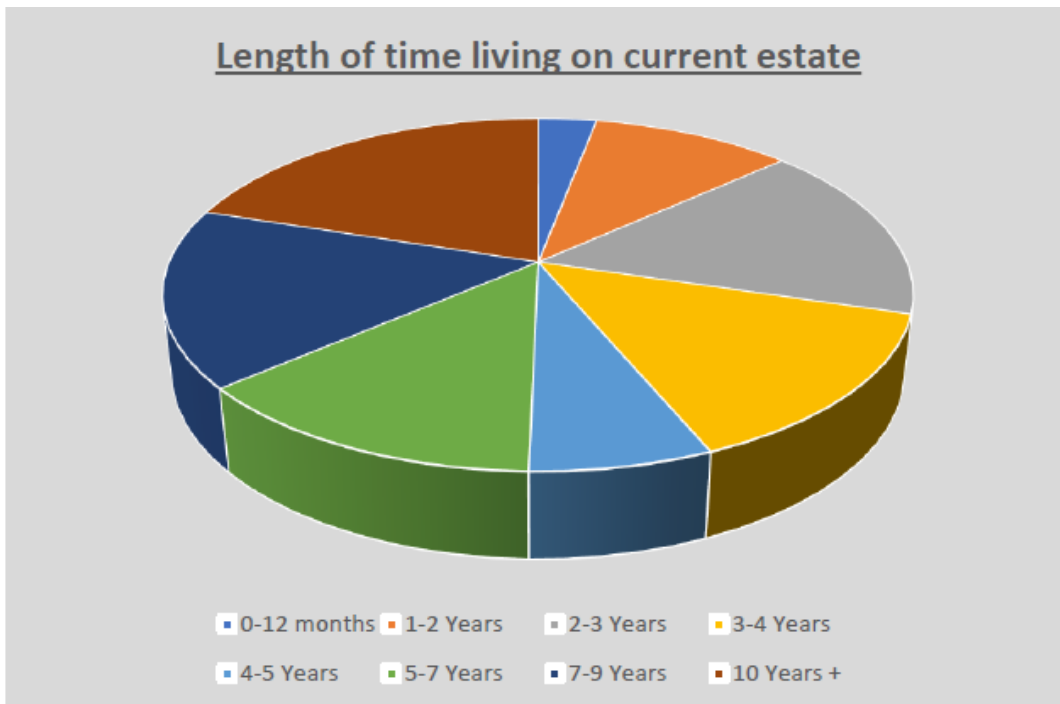
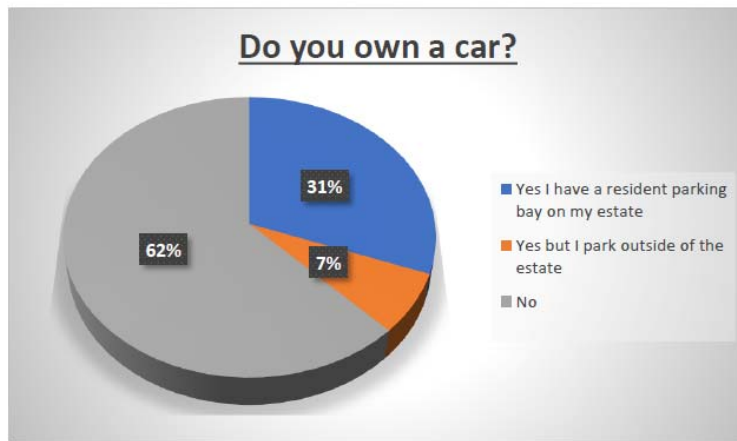
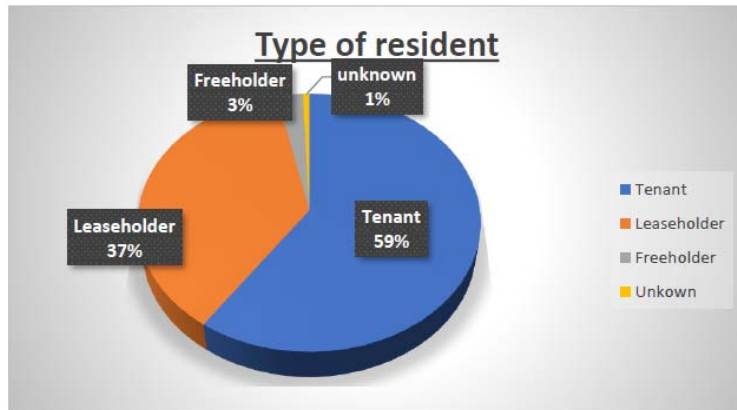
Section 3: Diversity and Why Our Estates Are Vitaly Important

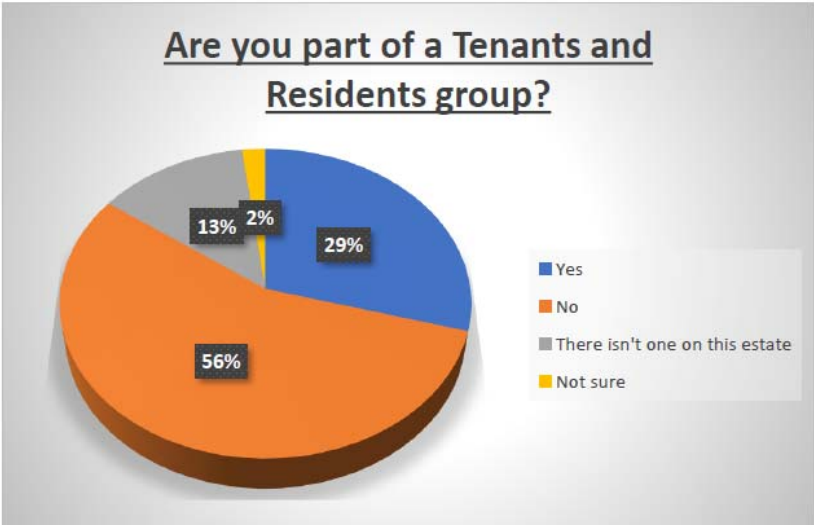
- 3.1. Our estates provide homes for people and should be safe places for residents to be. Our estates are very different to other houses, and in fact estates can actually offer more opportunities for a closer-knit community. An estate's halls are where residents can put on events and community gatherings. The halls can act as a hub where residents can go to find community, support each other, and share skills and ideas with one another. Estates with these halls can also earn revenue from the hall's usage to inject back into their community.
- 3.2. Some estates have play areas and multi-use games areas (MUGAs) that allow children who live there to be able to go outside and play and have a place where they can get exercise and meet other children. Some families have reported that since living on estates, their children have made more friends and they feel happier letting their children go out and play around the

estate.

- 3.3. There are however still families on some estates who would not feel that their children would be safe going out to play on their estate. This is due to various reasons, including cars and traffic driving dangerously around the estate; anti-social behaviour taking place; or even simply because these families do not know who is around, given that people come from outside into the estates who do not live there (e.g. if strangers walk their dogs on the green spaces or park their vehicles on their estate and leave).
- 3.4. For this piece of work, **I carried out a survey of 300 Camden residents to give me their views** on why Estates are vital and important. As the below images show, the residents are a mixed group across demographics.







Section 4: Feedback Findings

4.1. Here I include in visual form some results of my study:

Positive feedback:

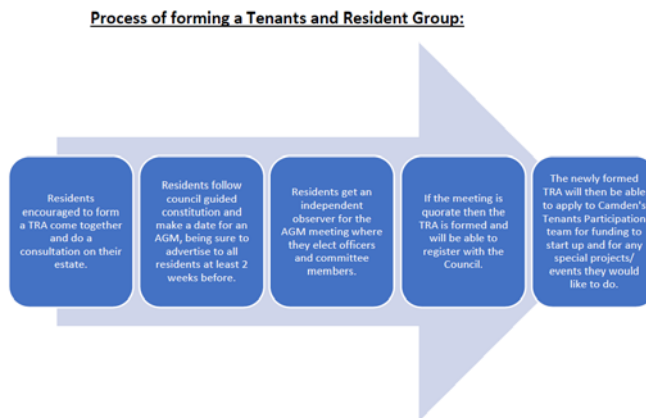


Feedback to be worked on:



- 4.2. Something that stood out for me was when residents told me that they felt a stronger sense of community, and as though they are taken more seriously and are listened to more by the Council, when they had a Tenants and Residents Group (TRA).
- 4.3. Issues with works that residents wanted to see carried out, either to improve individual homes or communal areas within an estate, **seemed to be resolved more effectively and efficiently once those estates had resident group in place**. Some also mentioned the influence of the DMCs in help getting things done.
- 4.4. Some of those interviewed felt as though their resident groups could involve private renters—such as students, for example—who could **bring a different perspective** to the group.
- 4.5. Residents feel they should be more involved in recruitment of Council staff and Council decision-making. They should be trained by the Council to feel better equipped to get involved in decision-making: some residents feel as though the Council presently 'do tick box exercises' for decision making and that their voices are not heard for vital decision-making on their estates.
- 4.6. Some also feel that their views are not respected and are taken for granted due to mistrust with the Council, so they don't feel confident working with the Council any longer.
- 4.7. Some residents in TRAs who have been successful in their roles have benefited from mentorship to grow in their roles and become more confident in dealing with challenges and affairs that come with those roles.

- 4.8. My research reinforces the conviction that the TRA is one of the main vehicles used to empower residents in Camden on estates, and they carry weight. They are supported by a designated team in the Council, the Tenant Participation Team, and for the Committee I provide a reminder below the steps to form a TRA:



- 4.9. The DMCs also play a significant role in Camden in empowering residents. The DMCs are really influential: the Cabinet Member in charge of housing attends every DMC meeting, and every DMC has got a budget of around £140,000 to spend on their members, their TRAs and other resident groups.
- 4.10. The DMCs also can request reports from various departments of the Council, such as key performance indicators and demonstrations by the Council on how their services are benefiting residents.
- 4.11. I feel the Council is trying to open up ways to be answerable to residents and bring them on their journey; **but some residents feel there is more to be done**. The Council has acknowledged that they want to do more to support and engage with residents, and this is indeed why I have been commissioned to do this report.
- 4.12. Residents I spoke with generally feel confidence in the leadership of Camden to continuously be trying to improve things for them, especially at a time when the supply of resources keeps getting less and less from local Government.

Section 5: The Sharing of Power and the Power of Co-working

- 5.1. Based on the interviews I have conducted and the lived experience I have, I do not believe we can have estates where residents are happier, healthier, feeling fulfilled and living sustainable lives without **looking at how we share power and support community led activity that will serve everyone**.

- 5.2. I agree with this statement in the Camden Renewal Commission report: **“What if we lived in a borough where our leaders were representative of Camden’s many diverse communities, and where young people from underrepresented communities were better supported on their leadership journeys?”** I cannot stress enough the importance of supporting young people from underrepresented communities into leadership because the majority feel the system in place does not serve them or work for them.
- 5.3. I think what needs to be done is **the people and organisations who are making decisions on behalf of people who live on estates should reflect those communities in diversity and lived experiences.**
- 5.4. From my research, some residents are giving up on having a real voice on what happens on their estates, even when they get involved in decision-making platforms such as on boards, groups, committees. Unfortunately, they do not feel the support to grow or feel at liberty to genuinely contribute their own lived or professional experience.
- 5.5. I think because of the various challenges of our time—climate change, COVID-19, the murder of George Floyd—a lot of emphasis has been placed on inclusivity, equality and diversity in the workplace, committees, boards and other voluntary groups. This new or shift in the way of working, of “not business as usual” has put some leaders in uncomfortable positions, namely those who did not have diversity and inclusivity at the top of their leadership agenda before these challenges.
- 5.6. The popularity of social media now means that good work is celebrated and not buried underneath the carpet; however, some **residents expressed they are not getting acknowledged or celebrated because they may not be part of the social circle** of the ruling groups. Rewards may not be given to those who deserve them but instead to those with the loudest voice. In certain circles and on some estates, some residents had concerns that for those making decisions on their behalf, the majority of the time have got their mind made up already. Or, that decision-makers have placed residents in those positions who some suspect are to some extent being manipulated by others in authority when they are meant to be neutral or independent.
- 5.7. These suspicions and feelings really put off and deter those who would not normally put themselves forward for these leadership roles in their communities. To put oneself forward, one must often be resilient, diplomatic, strong, hopeful, confident, bold and, in some instances, even “a maverick” to survive in some of these roles. This would make it hard for anyone not already inclined to this style to thrive, especially when they will be made to feel that they do not belong there or that their input does not matter. This is especially

the case in areas or groups that that may have lots of experienced people already: in some cases, some residents are even outright told their views do not matter.

- 5.8. I also experienced some residents who want their voices heard, but they do not show commitment to get involved. But they still want to see the change they envisage to happen and come to reality, even if they rely on others to deliver the change for them, or even if others may use unpleasant or inappropriate means and or do not always follow the rules of how best to affect change.
- 5.9. I disagree with this: I believe that even when you disagree with someone or a group, you must respect them and try to see things through their eyes. This is how I have helped deliver some ground-breaking changes. It is not done by just blaming or criticising others, which is too easy. **Being a committed volunteer takes its toll on some people**, so when bringing change to them we must respect their years of service and commitment in their communities. We do this by working with them to bring about positive change, not forcefully and not undermining them, which in some cases causes only more resentment and resistance to change.
- 5.10. I know Camden's leadership is driving inclusivity and diversity on our estates. I believe that how I came to be a politician today myself in Camden is directly because of the Tenant's Voice platforms the Council have put in place. I believe this even though I also feel that if you have not got the grit, toughness, determination and allies, you often still will not survive as there are **so many obstacles** for you not to succeed.
- 5.11. I know because of my personal journey; I feel well equipped to support others in bringing not only the loudest voice or most familiar voice, but more importantly the voices the Council may not normally hear. This is ultimately the way to foster inclusivity and diversity in local leadership.
- 5.12. I am focusing here on how to get the minority voices we would not normally get to our decision tables. As this has been a huge challenge for a very long-time, if I can do it, then I believe my story can inspire others to achieve this, without the rules being bent against them along the way.
- 5.13. Anyone should be able to make it to the top table and be respected equally by those they may come across along the way. What I feel needs to be done I have thus recommended in this report.

Section 6: Methodology Based on Cross-Community Stakeholders

- 6.1. What has informed my views for this piece of work is my lived experience supplemented by interviews I have conducted with various key stakeholders in the community.
- 6.2. As well as residents, various organisations and groups that I spoke to for this piece of work, I also included local businesses and arts and cultural centres. Some **residents feel it is important to bring culture and arts into estates** to reflect diversity, bring out a different demographic of residents to participate in activities and to look at a more collaborative way of working with arts and cultural centres.
- 6.3. Some of the **local businesses would like to engage more on a social basis with the Council, instead of doing just financial transactions with them**. They do appreciate the value of estates in their neighbourhoods, and therefore some of the local high street businesses work with estates to provide support when estates are holding their community events, including: giving vouchers, providing food, goods and services, offering estates gardening tools and equipment and offering their presence in the community.
- 6.4. I agree that businesses, arts and cultural institutions should be “creating community and entrepreneurial opportunity on estates; being good neighbours to the estates and communities they are based within and helping to deliver on the mission objectives.
- 6.5. I am grateful to have spoken with various arts and cultural organisations who are doing fantastic work in their communities, which was evident. However, they struggle with financing.
- 6.6. Depending on capacity, it would be helpful for the Council to have a co-working relationship with some of these organisations and local estates. Before I get into my principal recommendations, I wanted to highlight as a positive example something that the Council seem to have done well with. **This has been the Council’s work with local artists and residents on estates to implement street art** on walls and shed doors, which appear to have a positive effect in reducing anti-social behaviour.
- 6.7. This has helped to create pleasing environments on estates that reflect creativity, and they are a talking point for residents to engage with one another, therefore boosting community cohesion. Examples of these in Camden are on Tybald Estate in Holborn; Ferdinand Estate in Camden Town; and Webheath Estate in Kilburn, the latter two of which are shown here:

Ferdinand Estate, Camden Town



Webheath Estate, Kilburn



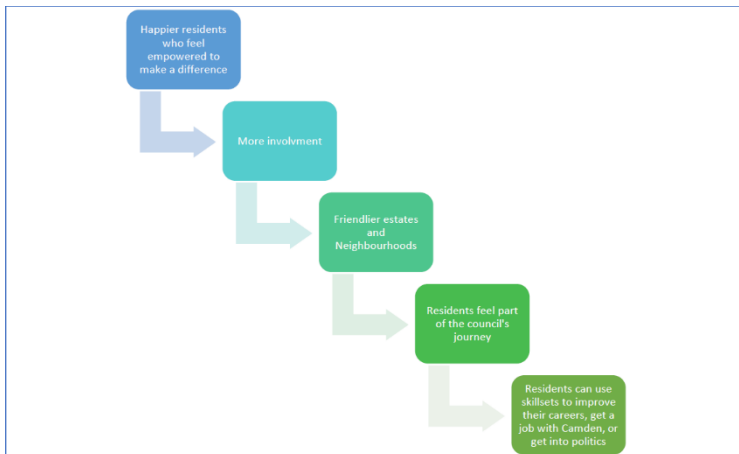
Section 7: Principal Recommendations

7.1. The Council, in light of my narrative and findings above, should:

- **Consider an audit on the garages and sheds we have on estates.** Some residents wait for a long time, but then report there are abandoned sheds they could be using on their estates. The Council can allocate them to be used and even start collecting rent for them.
- **Engage with and listen to local businesses on the high street, not just the big businesses.** This was what I heard from the majority of the businesses I spoke with.

- **Be honest, fair and consistent with residents.** The Council need not prejudge residents, so that residents will feel confident to have a trusted relationship with the Council. Enhanced staff training should be offered on respecting and treating residents on estates with dignity and not on a prejudicial basis. Officers should not use their powers to penalise residents who disagree with them by labelling the residents to other officers as, e.g., “ones to watch out for.”
- **Be seen to be completing tasks to its best and fullest capacity.** The Council should reply to resident queries in a timely manner, communicate with residents more effectively, listen to residents. And Council officers should communicate more effectively with other Council officers, especially between departments.
- **Do more to assist disabled residents and residents with special needs who may require special assistance.** Only then will we allow them the ability to fully participate, which is their right.
- **Consult with residents when housing officers visit them.** Ask them how they want to improve their estates: this information needs to be gathered and investigated with the trends of responses, and then acted upon by the Council. Other Council staff from different departments should meet and get to know residents on estates.
- **Educate residents about their influence to make change through working with the council and co-working relationships.** This is especially important when bringing in new agencies to help their estates. It cannot be that estates residents are seen or believed only to be “on the receiving side of charity” or that they “must accept or take whatever they are given.”
- **Provide training for residents on estates on how the council works,** including resident involvement on panels when recruiting new staff and having residents involved in decision-making that affects them and their estates.
- **Offer training to Chairs in TRAs and other community groups;** provide mentoring opportunities to help them flourish in their role and to be the best they can be in supporting their residents.
- **Promote awards for volunteers in Camden.** This should be done even to the extent of e.g., Royal or National awards such nominating for the honours system (e.g., OBE, CBE), especially in recognition of important work done by TRAs/DMCs.

- 7.2. With the council empowering its residents in the above ways, it will be giving our resident more of a voice. By offering an academy of training on estates, those in positions of power and giving effect to residents' voices will be able to do so fairly and effectively. By providing mentoring and more opportunities for those who are less represented and heard, the Council will promote more diversity and create a true reflection of our wonderful Camden communities.



Section 8: Summary and Concluding Remarks

- 8.1. Based on all the data I have collected, the goal of this paper is communication, listening and, to some extent, **a culture change** for the Council to be able to support residents on estates. The positive fact going forward is the leadership of the Council genuinely believes in the importance of delivering a healthy, sustainable and happier community.
- 8.2. Some of the residents I spoke to acknowledge that Camden Council cares, perhaps especially in comparison to other boroughs they may have lived in before or where some of their relatives reside. However, they also feel that the Council can improve on how it engages and empowers its residents, in pursuit of a better co-working relationship, versus a relationship where the Council is directing design top-down.
- 8.3. Some residents said they would appreciate wider involvement from residents on the estates, and they also feel that the Council should put aside more **resources to train residents**. In this way, they would be better able to support the Council in their work on their estates.
- 8.4. While some were concerned that “too many cooks would spoil the broth,” equally some thought that because of the lack of resources of some residents to afford personal development for themselves, these trainings I propose would help, and that is why I have recommended them above. These trainings would not only help the residents to be better supportive volunteers but may

also help them in their professional development. If they were able to, for example, get a new job or better job, the whole community would be so much better off. Unemployment, it is well known, brings a lot of unhappiness amongst residents and some households on some estates, especially now during this cost-of-living crisis.

- 8.5. It was clear that some of the residents who were in resident groups focused on communal issues on their estates, while the residents who were not part of any group would tend to talk about their personal concerns and communal issues.
- 8.6. I agree with Sir Michael Marmot that “the extension of people participation in their communities and the added control over their lives that brings, has the potential to contribute to their psychological well-being and, as a result, to other health outcome”. This point reinforces the importance of resident involvement in all processes that may affect their surroundings.
- 8.7. Thus, the Council can improve things greatly by providing residents with sufficient training to facilitate residents working appropriately with the Council.
- 8.8. Some residents spoke about the challenges the cost-of-living crisis has brought, as they need to work extra hours to pay their bills. And so, they believe that reasonable rewards should be given when you are volunteer with the Council, which would cover basic costs and expenses acquired when carrying out their voluntary role.
- 8.9. Overall, with the various findings in this report and implementing the recommendations given, especially on the sharing of power and more collaborative teamwork, Camden’s goal to ensure our estates and their neighbours are healthy, sustainable, and unlocking creativity by 2030 is achievable—and will change the lives of Camden residents for the better.

Section 9: Required Notations

9.1. Finance Comments

The Director of Finance has been consulted on the content of this report and has no comment to make at this time.

9.2. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

The Borough Solicitor has been consulted on the content of this report and has no comments to add.

9.3. Environmental Implications

This report to the Committee should contain no additional environmental implications for Camden. Our policies and strategies which animate the work

described in this report are always mindful of aligning with the Camden Climate Action Plan, Biodiversity Action Plan and Clean Air Action Plan.