

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE	
Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living	
REPORT OF	
Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living	
FOR SUBMISSION TO	DATE
Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee	22 January 2024
SUMMARY OF REPORT	
The Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living provides the Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee with his annual report for discussion.	
Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information	
No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.	
Contact Officer:	
Hannah Bennai Cabinet Officer Corporate Services 5 Pancras Square London N1C 4AG Telephone: 020 7974 1750 Email: hannah.bennai@camden.gov.uk	
RECOMMENDATION	
The Committee is asked to note and comment on the contents of the report.	

Signed:



Councillor Richard Olszewski, Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living

Date: 11/01/2024

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Finance and Cost of Living portfolio oversees Camden Council's corporate resources, including our digital and data function, finance, human resources and organisational development, communications, participation and partnerships and our policy and design function. While maintaining oversight of these areas, this portfolio also heads the wider use of corporate resources such as legal, regulatory and democratic services.
- 1.2. A key element of this portfolio focuses on how our corporate resources are best used to support the missions, ambitions, and challenges within We Make Camden. This means that we aim to create the right organisational conditions and ensure our resources and capabilities are in the right place to support leaders and our workforce across our organisation, to deliver services and support change in the most effective way possible. Over the past few years, we have invested in design capacity and capability, which will support the organisation to take a much more relational and human-centred approach to both change and transformation, as well as operational service delivery.
- 1.3. Taking a missions-based approach throughout our work continues to be central to this portfolio. Our cost of living response and work across tackling poverty, assists the delivery of our estate mission as we engage with communities across the borough to support neighbourhoods to be sustainable and healthy. Our food mission is also a key priority as our tenant participation engagement programme and food partnerships support residents to eat nutritious, affordable and sustainable food.
- 1.4. While all of our We Make Camden ambitions relate to this portfolio in varied ways, our motivation to ensure Camden's local economy is "strong, sustainable, and inclusive" so that everyone can have a "secure livelihood to support them to live a prosperous life" are the ultimate drivers of much of our work. Similarly, our resident centred approach to service areas within the council reflect our long-term challenges to become a borough where everyone in Camden "can access and be part of a digital society" and "can get the support they need to avoid debt and be financially secure".
- 1.5. Our response to the cost-of-living crisis remains a central component of this portfolio and continues to frame our overall approach across the council. Lives of poverty and deprivation are realities many Camden residents face and the increased cost in food, shelter, heating and electricity have exacerbated these hardships, making it extremely difficult for many to get by. Although, the crisis came off the back of the government's handling of the Covid 19 pandemic, Brexit and the war in Ukraine, the economic impact of this struggle continues to entrench itself within society.
- 1.6. Cost of living was added to the finance portfolio in 2022, not only to recognise the severity of the crisis but also to highlight our ambition to develop a targeted operational response in Camden. This approach, that will see residents through the crisis, has continued across the current financial year. In March 2023, we announced our new council budget as cost of living budget. In aligning our

spending plans with our values and priorities, the budget was designed to give residents the maximum help we can offer to see them through this crisis, given the resources and powers at our disposal.

1.7. Making the best use of limited funds the council receives, the council has worked diligently to meet our objectives and respond to the needs of our residents and communities. This report reflects on the achievements of the Finance and Cost of Living portfolio from January to December 2023.

2. **Supporting people through the cost of living crisis**

2.1. Our cost of living budget was agreed in March 2023, and focused on addressing the tightest squeeze on living costs and living standards in a generation. Camden has always put tackling poverty and inequality at the heart of what we do, and in order to respond to the cost of living crisis we made a number of significant investments in services and support to address it:

- £2m to continue the cost of living crisis fund
- £1.3m for the Family Crisis Fund
- £1m towards the community impacts resilience fund to support the local voluntary and community sector through a period of increased pressure and need
- £300,000 to cost of living ward networks
- £150,000 in cost of living food response
- £200,000 in cost of living wraparound advice support
- £250,000 in resettlement grants
- £29m in Council Tax Support Scheme
- £50,000 to fund benefit take-up campaigns

2.2. These investments are both preventative and provide early intervention support. They provide crisis support, and help to ensure the resilience and stability of the voluntary and community sector. This sector provides much critical support to our communities and provides deeper outreach and engagement to our citizens and communities.

2.3. Our cost of living response has continued across the spring and summer period. We made tackling poverty, debt and financial insecurity the responsibility of all our services across the council. I took the lead chairing and organising cost of living response group sessions with cabinet members and the council's cost of living champion, Councillor Nasrine Djemai. Together, we worked to shape council services and focus resources that had the most impact on the harm caused by the crisis. This work was formally submitted as a report to Cabinet in July 2023. In the same month, the Family Crisis Fund was agreed to alleviate the impact of the incomes squeeze, particularly on families and young people not supported by our existing crisis interventions. The fund allocated resources to:

- work to support the increased uptake of eligibility and food for free school meals in secondary schools in Camden

- extending the holiday activity and food programme with the Young Camden Foundation to provide additional support for a large number of Camden young people over school holidays
- funding a school clothing grant to parents eligible for free school meals
- funding an additional staff member in our responsive retrofit programme to support families in need of additional heating and home insulation
- funding a number of community laundries on our estates to allow families access to low-cost washing facilities
- funding free Wi-Fi installation in family hostels in Camden.

2.4. Work is ongoing to implement these decisions and the Council will update on the use and impact of the funds as part of the 2024/25 budget process.

2.5. As we enter the second autumn/winter of the cost of living crisis, although energy costs have reduced slightly and inflation is falling, the cost of essentials – including food, clothing, housing and bills – remains very high.

2.6. We are setting up an increased winter crisis response, recognising the additional pressures that winter cold places on residents, families and services. Many people have been struggling to pay for essentials for at least the past year and may have got into debt and/or be relying on credit as a result. With less government support available compared to last year, this autumn and winter will remain challenging for many people.

Community Response

2.7. During the winter of 2022/23 Camden's Participation and Partnerships Team and Community Partnerships Team worked alongside ward councillors to convene a series of ward conversations. The local sessions brought together voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations, schools, faith organisations, tenants and residents associations, GPs, community activists and organisers. They focussed on developing a greater understanding of the local offers of support, using data and insight to identify gaps and funding grass roots local action to support residents over the colder months. The conversations were supported with £300k of top-sliced Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding. This funded a large number of organisations to deliver initiatives such as community meals, extended operating hours, warm welcome spaces, provision of hygiene products, and the provision of advice and information in community settings. This approach enabled new relationships and collaborations to be built and the Council continues to have strong links within these strengthened local networks. As part of this work, we increased the provision of debt, welfare benefit and debt advice in community settings, ensuring that residents accessing community projects such as food banks could get the advice they need.

2.8. The Participation and Partnerships Team and Community Partnerships are coordinating Camden's cost of living community response for winter 2023-24, with six community conversations across the borough. This response will include a £400k Winter 23-24 Cost of Living Community Response Fund. In line with last year's approach, this will fund organisations with between £5 – £10k to deliver

interventions that focus on responding to the immediate impacts of poverty and economic exclusion, but that also seek to create long-term preventative solutions.

- 2.9. This work will engage across community networks and support grassroots projects in response to data and insight-led community calls to action. For example, our tenant participation and engagement programme, alongside other insight, is identifying calls to action to set up community laundries, community kitchens and all year around warm spaces, where residents can socialise and join activities in their communities. This approach will also enable sustainable community action within the estates mission and the food mission. As part of this work, and our wider work on tackling food poverty, we will be ensuring that front line staff and volunteers have the skills, knowledge and information needed to help residents with money worries.
- 2.10. As evidenced last year, the cost of living crisis also led to an increase in resident action – with more people in the borough wanting to take action to support those living around them.
- 2.11. The council has committed to funding Camden Giving to run the We Make Camden Kit to support citizen action for a further two years. We have also further increased funding (an additional £85k) using unused CIL monies to support resident-led action.
- 2.12. At a borough level, the Community Partnership and Tackling Poverty teams are continuing to convene the Camden VCS Tackling Poverty Network. The network includes organisations in the Camden Advice Network, the Camden Food Partnership, Warm Welcome Hosts, social prescribers, and other Camden teams involved in the response to the cost of living crisis. This network seeks to ensure that voluntary organisations have information about the range of programmes and support provided by the council. It has also fostered collaboration and partnerships between organisations with a shared purpose of tackling poverty.
- 2.13. April 2023 marked the start of year four of our Camden Advice Network. Our insights gathered for years 1-3, showed a return on investment and the impact of our independent advice provision:
- £8.8 million was raised in unclaimed benefits, £900,000 of debt was written off and more than 3,000 residents were supported
 - more than 10,000 advice interventions around food access were made, which included 18,000 specialist legal advice interventions, 21,000 welfare benefits advice interventions and 12,000 housing support advice interventions
 - an additional investment of £200,000 for 12 months provision was agreed in January 2023 for increased outreach.
- 2.14. Currently there are 53 registered warm welcome spaces which have maintained and adapted their provision throughout spring/summer 2023. These spaces include council services and partner organisations that have committed

to providing warm, welcoming spaces for residents with information about the support that is available for residents impacted by the rising cost of living. Camden's warm welcome hosts including libraries, and children and family hubs, initially extended their opening hours in winter 22-23.

2.15. Led by Feast with Us, the Camden Food Partnership includes more than 50 voluntary and community sector partners, who collectively respond to the issue of food poverty, supporting approximately 5,000 residents suffering from food insecurity and food poverty. These organisations are central to our We Make Camden food mission of ensuring that by 2030, everyone eats well every day with nutritious, affordable, sustainable food. VCS partners from the Camden Food Partnership and Camden Advice Network are increasingly collaborating to support residents to access advice and support through community food projects.

2.16. In line with achieving our food mission, we are continuing to invest in our Camden Food Poverty Alliance as a network of community leaders and providers, working with them to highlight priority areas for action, unblock challenges, share resources and best practices and establish a shared set of principles for how we work with our communities around the issue of the cost of living and food poverty. The six principles that guide our action around food poverty are to:

- uphold a "money first" approach as far as practical
- ensure dignity, respect and choice
- be guided by resident voices and underpin action with strong communication
- use food as a social connector for good in order to access wider support
- prioritise quality food that is nutritious
- monitor data and measure impact.

Tackling Poverty

2.17. Our £2m cost of living crisis fund continues to support residents and families with essential everyday costs such as energy, food or rent. This year we have implemented a self-referral system, income maximisation advice and a tell us once approach for longer term, sustainable outcomes. Briefings are underway for all frontline workers to share information about support and how to access it.

2.18. In May 2023 our online self-referral form launched to increase accessibility and reduce pressure on the Camden Advice Network (CAN), freeing them up to deliver specialist advice. A core team of tackling poverty officers have been trained in income maximisation conversations and providing holistic support. They identify services and organisations who can provide help relevant to needs, without the resident having to use multiple points of contact. We have invested in the policy and practice better off calculator, which has resulted in multiple referrals to benefit advice to assist with applying for additional welfare support. Vulnerable residents are supported with targeted outreach work and face to face appointments daily.

2.19. We continue to strengthen relationships with services and organisations, working in partnership to increase uptake to specific benefits using data from our Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) dashboard. The LIFT dashboard has also been used to identify low income households who received cost of living payments from central government and to invite them to apply for a payment from the household support fund.

2.20. The Government has yet to confirm whether funding for the Household Support Fund (HSF) will continue in 2024/25. This has been a critical feature of our cost of living response and its potential loss threatens the support we can provide to some of the borough's poorest families. To date, we have been able to support c.16,500 children and more than 8,000 households. We've used our funding to provide supermarket vouchers during the school holidays. Additionally, it has funded the income maximisation advice team put in place to support people in extreme hardship with longer term, more sustainable solutions. It helps both residents in dire situations as well as catching people before they fall into extreme hardship, preventing them from accessing more costly services later down the line. The money has also allowed us to support citizens in severe hardship who were not eligible for national cost of living awards with both financial help and income maximisation advice.

2.21. The Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) was used fully by end of March 2023 and is on track to be spent entirely again by March 2024.

2.22. Discretionary financial support and advice has been well received by residents. Some of the highlights for 2023 are:

- receiving 8,533 referrals of which 84% have been approved, paying out £2.2m in direct awards
- since launch, 51% of applications have come via self-referrals
- 60% of referrals are from Black, Asian or other ethnic groups
- 36% are from families, 34% of referrals are households with a disabled person, 21% are couples and single people without children and 9% are from pensioners
- 83% of awards are for food and energy
- all wards are represented, the highest volume have consistently been from St Pancras and Somers Town, Kilburn, Haverstock, Regents Park and Gospel Oak.

Reduced welfare system

2.23. Debt, welfare and financial security is a key priority for Camden. We are developing a programme of work to deliver a clear and compelling vision of Camden's long-term ambition that sets out how we will work towards a more preventative agenda. We have started two aligned discrete projects. The first focuses on improving our advice and welfare support with early intervention. The second focuses on prevention of debt and financial hardship through advice, advocacy, income maximisation, based on improving collaboration between teams. By creating a coherent approach to debt collection across our teams, we prevent the debt of our resident's escalating. Together, both projects will deliver a more cohesive and preventative support offer.

2.24. To date we have conducted research with residents and staff to understand their experiences with debt and interactions with council. This includes research with recipients of the cost of living crisis fund to understand the impact of the discretionary award. We have drawn this work together to articulate Camden's ambition for financial resilience and move away from reactive support. The two projects above offer holistic financial support to people experiencing debt and moves them towards financial stability. Our single corporate debt strategy create a shared understanding across teams to ensure we can continue delivering on both projects throughout the next quarter.

Council Tax Support Scheme

2.25. We continue to invest around £29m in our Council Tax Support scheme, one of the most generous in the country. It takes 16,000 households out of paying Council Tax altogether and reduces the amount payable for another 6,300 households in the borough. The scheme minimises the tax burden on our most vulnerable residents, to allow them to use the money elsewhere at a time they need it most. Whilst a number of authorities have cut funding due to growing budget pressures, Camden still provides one of the most generous schemes in the country. We are maintaining funding for the 24/25 scheme. We continue to base our scheme on the London Living Wage rather than National Living Wage to ensure residents qualify for the maximum support possible. Our online referral platform Plinth has been developed to include several internal services, opening up an simple two-way referral pathway for our voluntary sector partners.

2.26. Our online self-referral form launched in May 2023 and has been successful, with 50% of referrals received via this route. We have purchased the Policy in Practice, Better Off Calculator and the team have been trained to deliver income maximisation advice. All referrals are assessed for multiple discretionary financial support offers and referred onto specialist support when needed using Plinth.

2.27. To ensure all our residents have access to support and advice, we have conducted outreach sessions with our advice network partners with a particular focus on our digitally excluded community. Sessions are joined up with family hubs, foodbanks, tenant participation events and the Greenwood Centre, to ensure we are able to reach as many people as we can who may not access the self-referral form. In addition to this, residents can book in-person appointments via our welfare support line (switchboard, option 9) for help with their self-referral applications.

2.28. Tackling poverty staff work in partnership with the voluntary community sector, schools, public health, food providers, Camden Advice Network (CAN), and many Camden services. A co-designed self-referral money advice form was released earlier this year which has been well used by residents.

3. Financial Resilience

3.1. The outlook for local government finance is undoubtedly challenging. In recent years, several local authorities have issued Section 114 (S114) notices (a legal measure a council must take when its unable to balance its annual budget). A

number of other local authorities have indicated they may be in a similar position in the coming months. Arguably, those who have issued S114 notices to date have experienced challenges in governance or taken on a disproportionate level of risk compared to their resourcing levels. However, we are now seeing an increasing number of councils at risk where they have not had those challenges – it is a worrying symptom of limited resources not being able to match the level of demand on services.

- 3.2. This is undoubtedly concerning for the sector and highlights the historic under funding and investment in local government, while its role has evolved and expanded over time. This situation has been exacerbated by the lack of progress in implementing the badly needed wider funding reforms, which has entrenched a funding system that is both out of date and lacks equity.
- 3.3. While Camden is not in the same extreme position as other councils, our challenge should not be underestimated, and we need to continue to build on our successful track record to date. We have demonstrated time and time again that we can both save money and deliver improved outcomes by planning over the long term, by investing and working with our communities and partners and by focusing on early intervention and prevention.
- 3.4. Importantly by taking that long term approach, we haven't had to rely on reserves to fill gaps in our budget – something others in local government have had to do. The use of reserves for day-to-day spending is not sustainable and risks undermining an organisation's financial health, limiting its ability to respond to unexpected events. This is something we have avoided doing. Reserves can only be spent once. Therefore, we will not be following government advice to spend them on day-to-day service expenditure that should be covered by an adequate and equitable local government funding settlement.
- 3.5. As part of our continuous learning, we review the lessons learnt from financial failures elsewhere in the sector and ensure that we build those learnings into our approach. We also make use of a number of tools to support our financial resilience and stability, including working within the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Financial Management Code (FM Code), as well as making use of a wide range of data and metrics to monitor and test our financial position and medium to longer term outlook.

The General Fund

- 3.6. As a result of prolonged inflationary pressures, high interest rates and significant service pressures supporting residents through the cost-of-living crisis, the Council is facing a period of increasing financial pressure and uncertainty. Current forecasts suggests that the Council will overspend the 2023/24 budget by £5.9m as at quarter 2. Further work and mitigation is underway to ensure that this overspend is reduced and there is a strong expectation that we will operate within the agreed budget at year-end. This is a vital part of our wider efforts to protect our financial health and resilience.
- 3.7. Looking ahead to next financial year, the local government finance settlement was announced in December 2023. Once again, the government has only

provided funding certainty for 2024/25 – the 6th year in a row in which local government has been provided with a one-year financial settlement. It was also disappointing to see that the finance settlement announcement again failed to provide enough funding to meet the significant cost and demand pressures that we, and all, councils are facing. Although the announcement set out an increase in Camden’s spending power of 6% (compared to 6.6% nationally and an average 6.4% across London), a large proportion of the increase for Camden (circa 40%) is based on the assumption that the council will increase their council tax by the maximum amount allowed next year. For Camden this is an increase of 4.99%. This is an incredibly difficult decision for a local authority to make at any time, but especially as the cost of living crisis continues to deepen.

3.8. Against this backdrop of financial uncertainty, 2024/25 will represent year two of our three-year medium term financial strategy (MTFS), which was agreed by Cabinet in January 2023. The MTFS provides our financial framework for the three financial years to 2025/26 and sets out our intention to budget for near-term high-quality services and long-term transformational investment where we can make the greatest difference to our residents. In total, the MTFS includes a programme of budget savings totalling £27m to address the Council’s medium term budget gaps across the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account. The agreed programme of savings includes £6.8m to be delivered across the General Fund and HRA in 2024/25. Further work is being undertaken on the budget for next year, but current estimates suggests that the Council is well placed to balance its budget without further savings albeit this is subject to decisions around council tax.

3.9. Looking further ahead, we will need to continue to monitor our financial position and understand the impact of government policy, alongside the *increasing* need to support our residents and communities. Based on our current assessment, it is estimated that the council will need to identify a further £10-15m of savings for 2025/26 to manage its financial resilience over the medium term. Further assessments of our financial position will be presented to Cabinet in July and December.

Housing Revenue Account

3.10. The finances of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) have been under significant pressure for a number of years, largely due to a structural challenge in how social housing is funded nationally. The lack of a coherent central government strategy was exacerbated by its enforced rent reductions of 2016-2020. These forced rent cuts cost the Council £135m in lost rental income up to 2023/24 and our annual income is now £30m lower than it would have been had rental income been allowed to rise in line with inflation under the terms of the government’s move to self-financing. Combined with no direct government support for the impact of Covid on our housing finances, the financial challenge facing the HRA cannot be underestimated.

3.11. In January 2023, rents were increased by 7% for the 2023/24 financial year, the maximum possible under the rent cap imposed by the government. Even with the 7% increase, a funding gap over three years was identified at £8m, with the potential to rise to £14m. A savings programme of £7.5m was agreed to

close the gap with an acknowledgement that we would need to keep this position under review.

- 3.12. However, since January, the challenge has intensified. Rising inflation, spiralling interest rates and an increasing regulatory burden has only increased the financial pressure on us. At the same time, there has been no financial support from central government to support social landlords. Camden is not alone in this position and many large social landlords with large housing stocks and a commitment to build new homes, face similar challenges.
- 3.13. The long-term pressure on the HRA means that our financial resilience and sustainability have inevitably deteriorated, and our reserves are at low levels. Therefore, the council is taking action to reduce the current in-year forecast overspend (£4m) and to set the HRA's finances on a more sustainable path from 2024/25 onwards, and rebuild its reserves. Aligned with our wider approach to financial planning, we have sought to develop an approach that focuses on outcomes, and identifies opportunities for change and transformation that will improve delivery, and identify inefficiencies. We are continuing to think about how we can use our limited resources, aligned with We Make Camden and The Way We Work, as a stimulant to long term change in the direction we believe we need to move to deliver housing services in a complex and volatile environment, whilst maintaining our values and our ambitions.
- 3.14. Nevertheless, there remains a great deal of uncertainty around the HRA's finances, most notably around the government's future social rent policy. A more detailed assessment of the HRA's financial position will be presented to Cabinet in January as part of the budget and rent setting process for 2024/25.

Community Investment Programme

- 3.15. The Community Investment Programme (CIP) is a key pillar of the Council's capital programme. It has continued to develop and deliver a range of schemes throughout 2023. Work across CIP this year reflects the September 2022 cabinet decision to take a 'mixed economy' approach to programme delivery, supporting the council's regeneration ambitions whilst managing the risks facing the programme, including emerging financial challenges.
- 3.16. CIP's progress over the last year broadly reflects its new delivery strategy. In February, cabinet agreed the delivery strategy for the new homes for small sites scheme, which seeks to utilise up front disposals and Camden Living to deliver affordable homes whilst protecting HRA borrowing. During the year, procurement exercises have been launched for development partners at Bacton Phase 2 and Camley Street. A main works contract has been signed for the direct delivery of Agar Grove Phase 2a. The CIP has also progressed opportunities to use new funding streams to deliver on council objectives, including the decision to provide 36 units of refugee housing at the Highgate Newtown scheme, partly funded through Home Office and GLA grant.
- 3.17. Nonetheless, over the last 12 months the strength of the financial headwinds facing CIP has become increasingly apparent, especially within the HRA. High inflation on building costs and materials following Brexit, COVID and the war in

Ukraine has put pressure on tender prices, making delivering homes whilst protecting value for money, more challenging. Simultaneously, the rapid increase in interest rates to levels not seen since the 2008 financial crisis has contributed to real volatility in the private sales market and increases in the cost of the council borrowing utilised to front-fund schemes. The council will continue to manage financial risks through a comprehensive series of checks and balances, including sensitivity analysis when developing business cases, detailed monitoring of expenditure and receipts and regular reporting to cabinet.

Temporary Accommodation Update

3.18. Camden, along with local authorities throughout the country, is struggling to cope with increasing levels of homelessness with the cost of temporary accommodation having almost doubled in the past two years. One of the Council's main strategies to cope with this financial pressure is capital investment in buying back ex-Right to Buy properties through its Temporary Accommodation Purchase Programme (TAPP).

3.19. Between 2010 and 2021 Camden was one of very few London local authorities to reduce the number of households living in temporary accommodation, achieving a low total of 463 households up to August 2018. This was against the backdrop of welfare reform, austerity, and a changing private housing market. In September 2022, homeless households were at 544, an increase of 8% in 2 years. Homelessness numbers in December 2023 now stand at 703 placements per night a further increase in one year of 22%. From the 8th January 2024 714 households in temporary accommodation consist of 1630 estimated people.

3.20. The first two rounds of TAPP saw the Council purchase 133 properties for use as temporary accommodation, and the refurbishment/conversion of another 26 units, making a total of 159 units. TAPP properties are currently housing 143 homeless families consisting of 424 people. The table below shows the number of purchased properties by ward.

Ward	TAPP properties purchased
Belsize	7
Camden Square	1
Camden Town with Primrose Hill	3
Camden Town	5
Cantelowes	5
Fortune Green	2
Frognaal	1
Gospel Oak	15

Haverstock	14
Highgate	2
Holborn and St. Pancras	1
Kentish Town North	5
Kentish Town South	9
Kilburn	20
Kings Cross Ward	4
Primrose Hill	3
Regent's Park	11
St Pancras & Somers Town	7
South Hampstead	9
Swiss Cottage	5
Out of borough - Barnet	4
Total	133

Figure 1 TAPP property purchases by ward.

3.21. Without this vital supply of good quality temporary accommodation, the council would be facing even greater homelessness costs. The council has recently been awarded funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities for another round of TAPP to purchase 50 more properties.

Treasury Management Plan

3.22. The annual treasury management strategy, that was approved by the council on 27 February 2023 reaffirmed our investment priorities as being:

- **Security of capital** - to invest prudently having regard to the security of investments
- **Liquidity** - to maintain liquidity (accessibility) to meet the council's everyday spending commitments
- **Yield** – only once the above two priorities are satisfied, this aims to achieve the optimum return on investments commensurate with the proper levels of security and liquidity.

3.23. The past year has seen a significant increase in interest rates which has put pressure on the council's ability to borrow to fund capital investment.

3.24. This can especially impact on the overall viability and affordability of projects within the council's Community Investment Programme as well placing additional pressures on the essential long term capital works required on our housing stock.

Fair Funding Review

3.25. The 'Fair Funding' review was initiated by the government in 2016 with the aim of resetting how funding is allocated to individual local authorities through an updated assessment of relative needs and resources. Despite the review beginning in 2016 it is yet to be concluded and there is a growing lack certainty from government on the timing and impact of any eventual review of local authority funding.

4. North London Heat and Power Project

4.1. London Borough of Camden is a constituent member of the North London Waste Authority (NLWA). The NLWA area serves a population of more than two million people, with around 733,000 tonnes of waste collected in 2023/24 (forecast) and an expenditure budget of around £64m (2023/24), making it the second largest waste disposal authority in the country. The disposal of waste and management of recycling material is currently paid for through a levy apportioned across the seven constituent boroughs (Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Waltham Forest), some of which is based on actual tonnages and some which is split based on council tax. On an annual basis Camden creates around 89,000 tonnes of waste and recycling for management by NLWA at a cost of around £8.6m (2023/24 forecast).

4.2. Due to electricity sales from the wholly-owned NLWA energy from waste plant, borough costs were reduced this year due to a £10.2m windfall from high energy prices. As a result, Camden Council received a 'windfall dividend' of £475,000, which was used to alleviate pressure on residents affected most by the cost-of-living crisis; providing direct and timely financial support to those in need. This comprised funding for breakfast club provision across all Camden schools, with particular focus on 25 schools with the highest levels of deprivation. We also used it to fund home insulation, draught-proofing and secondary glazing to households in council properties; 25 households are currently involved in this specific programme.

4.3. The NLWA needs to ensure that the future waste management requirements of the sub-region are also met, replacing the existing 52-year-old energy from waste plant currently treating North London's waste. The North London Heat and Power Project (NLHPP) is North London Waste Authority's (NLWA) development of a new sustainable waste hub at Edmonton EcoPark that will replace the existing energy from waste plant and provide flagship recycling facilities for north London's residents. The NLWA is creating waste management facilities that will ensure waste collected by north London's seven boroughs can continue to be managed responsibly into the future. In the past year, significant progress has been made towards final commissioning of the Resource Recovery Facility (RRF) ahead of handover to LondonEnergy Ltd (LEL) to commence waste operations. Progress has also been made on building the new reuse and recycling centre and EcoPark House.

4.4. This year has also seen good progress in the Energy Recovery Facility project with effective contractor collaboration ensuring that the project remains on schedule for completion in 2027. Having committed more than 80% of the work contracts, the project remains on track to deliver within the original cost estimate at the 2019 price point and an outturn cost can be viewed with more certainty. Current spend to date stands at £620m.

5. **Regulatory Services and ENTE**

Licensing

5.1. We currently have 2,076 licensed premises within the borough across the different licensing regimes regulated by the licensing service. Earlier in the year the service was restructured to ensure service resilience and a more targeted service delivery for residents and licensed venues. The restructure enables the service to align more closely to the demands and the needs of licensed venues and Camden residents. The licensing service is now more responsive, agile and proactive in its approach.

5.2. We are in the process of reviewing our Statement of Licensing Policy in line with legislative requirements. The review brings into scope the assessment of the current two cumulative impact areas (Special Policy Areas) in Camden Town and Seven Dials, to ascertain whether there is sufficient evidence to retain, modify or remove them. The decision to make any change to the current policy position will be subject to a statutory public consultation. The revised statement of licensing policy, which is currently being developed in tandem with the Council's night time economy strategy, takes into account the changing licensing landscape, changes in customer behaviour, the wider impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on the hospitality sector, the needs of local communities, cost of living crisis and the council's ambitions.

5.3. We continue to process pavement licence applications in line with the temporary legislation (Business and Planning Act 2020) which was introduced at the peak of the pandemic to support businesses, capping the pavement licensing fees at £100. This scheme provided scope for businesses to thrive. The government is considering either to make the temporary legislation permanent or to introduce a new fee structure via the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. We will continue to deliver our duties and ensure ongoing compliance within the current or new legislative framework.

Trading Standards

5.4. The safety and wellbeing of Camden's youth is paramount to us. The increased use of vapes among young people has been one of the national challenges that the trading standards team is working on with relevant internal and external partners. Since September 2023, we have worked extensively to identify and map out the location of businesses selling vapes in the borough and their proximity to secondary schools, youth centres and school routes. We have carried out enforcement visits to 'test purchase' which has resulted in the seizing of illegal vapes. We will continue to engage with retailers and provide reassurance to our community. We have carried out a number of educational visits to schools to inform students about the dangers of vaping. We will continue

with this strategy, as this approach has been welcomed by the schools and students.

- 5.5. Camden Trading standards activity has also continued to focus on tackling the sale of counterfeit goods which can deceive consumers, are generally of poor quality and can be unsafe due to a lack of quality control. High profile enforcement operations have been delivered in partnership with the Metropolitan Police and significant volumes of counterfeit items have been seized as part of the targeted/intelligence led approach which seeks to protect consumers.
- 5.6. The trading standards team continues to work with internal and external partners to address fraud and scams targeted at Camden's vulnerable residents. Over the last year we have worked with external partners to deliver publicity workshops and educational campaigns to raise scam/fraud awareness among our elderly and vulnerable residents. Our early intervention and public engagement approach has prevented several scam/fraud activities including a case where a resident almost lost £10,000 to crypto currency fraud.

Health and Safety

- 5.7. In the past year, we have prioritised the core functions of investigating accidents reported under RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013), and investigated complaints related to health, safety and welfare at work. We have worked closely with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), and lead on many health-related case investigations, including the notification of legionella, lead poisoning and carbon monoxide poisoning cases. In addition, we have continued to work closely with the licensing team in carrying out inspections of premises offering special treatments which are considered high risk, such as tattooing, body piercing and laser hair removal. It is anticipated that work with UKHSA, Health and Safety Executive and other internal and external stakeholders will continue.

Food Safety

- 5.8. We have around 4,000 food businesses in Camden, with a high annual turnover of businesses opening and closing. Every year we see on average, 600 new openings.
- 5.9. In 2022-23, we carried out around 2,000 regulatory visits to food businesses to assess compliance with food safety standards, investigate complaints, and carry out sampling programmes to monitor the safety and standards of food products sold in Camden.
- 5.10. Food business compliance continues to improve year on year with more than 92% of the businesses assessed by officers being graded as broadly compliant with food hygiene requirements and achieving a food hygiene rating of 3 or higher. All ratings are published on the FSA website *Food Hygiene Rating Scheme | Food Standards Agency*.

Noise and Pollution

- 5.11. During the last year we responded to more than 6,680 noise and pollution complaints/service requests. More than 90% of calls to our noise response service were responded to within one hour. This effective response has enabled us to take robust and proportionate action to abate nuisances, including engagement with residents, issuing warnings and legal notices, and where necessary seizure of noise making equipment such as speakers and stereos. Earlier this year we were successful in the magistrates' court when defending an appeal against our notices to abate the noise from a restaurant extractor fan. The judge confirmed that our notices were warranted and awarded us £20,000 in costs.
- 5.12. We actively design out the impacts of noise and pollution where we can via the development control process and the premise licensing regimes. In the last year we have reviewed around 400 planning applications applying and discharging noise and pollution conditions. As a 'responsible authority' in relation to the licensing regime, we have considered around 245 premise licensing applications and 1,300 temporary event notices and made representation to apply pragmatic licensing conditions to balance the needs of all our citizens.

Pest Control

- 5.13. We seek to control and, where possible, eradicate, infestations of pests in all Camden tenanted properties. The service has carried out more than 6,000 pest control visits to carry out survey and treatment of pests, thereby protecting council and private residents from the harmful impacts of pest infestation. We have continued to see an increase in the number of pest reports received which is likely to be linked to several factors including population density, economic difficulties, climate change etc. Recently there has been a lot of media coverage relating to bedbugs; Camden has not seen a rise in numbers of confirmed bedbug cases. Bedbugs do nevertheless remain a common pest which is difficult to eradicate in households which do not follow the strict guidance in relation to its control.
- 5.14. In addition to the service delivered to Camden tenants as part of their tenancy, we also provide a commercial service which is available to all Camden homeowners and businesses. This provides residents with increased options when looking for reputable and trusted pest control suppliers; service users benefit from our expertise and in-depth knowledge of Camden's buildings and infrastructure.

6. Town Hall Refurbishment

- 6.1. The restoration and improvement of the much-loved Town Hall was completed on 14 April with the first full Council Meeting on 26 April 2023. Following the works, the building provides a modern standard space while also securing a 59% reduction in CO₂ emissions. Flood remedial works were completed on time, with the costs covered by insurance, and since then many events have been held successfully, from weddings to community meetings. Our Claudia Jones room officers a large community room on the ground floor for residents, voluntary and community groups to hire throughout the year.

- 6.2. Leases have been agreed and once finalised the rent will repay the entire cost of the refurbishment in approximately 20 years, 10 years sooner than originally reported to Cabinet. This means that there will be no additional costs to the Council Tax payer due to the refurbishment of the Town Hall. In addition to this, the running costs to the Council will be massively reduced, which brings further financial benefits.
- 6.3. Once open, the leased areas will support the development of the knowledge quarter and provide apprenticeships, local employment, and 100 free memberships of the facilities. The council has worked hard to market the space and negotiate with the tenants to ensure there will also be more in the way of community events and use than assumed in the 2019 Cabinet report.



Image 1 Town Hall Entry Way

7. Resident-centred working

Contact Camden

- 7.1. Contact Camden has seen real changes in the kind of issues being raised by residents. Calls for simple, transactional matters have reduced because of a successful programme of channel shift including the implementation of the parking management system (PPMS) and the 'Fix My Street' online reporting tool for highways matters. In contrast, calls for more complex, relational matters such as financial crisis has increased.
- 7.2. To address this, and as part of the development of 'The Way We Work', a project team has developed a prototype tool - the Citizen Experience Standard - to govern how we improve our citizen experience and inform our ways of working in the organisation. This includes considering collaboration between different teams

that create the infrastructure for the standard to be implemented by services (customer experience, technology, data sharing, digital delivery, ways of working in the front line).

- 7.3. This standard has been developed based on research with residents, and with services across the organisation. We are now engaging services to experiment with using the tool to drive improvements. For example, it is being used to structure a research and design project with leaseholders and staff in leaseholder services; to inform a review of the council's face-to-face customer services offer; and to guide work with human resources teams to improve the service they provide to colleagues. Early indications are positive, with a range of staff responding well to guided sessions using the standard to diagnose issues their service may face and reach alignment on priorities for improving the resident experience.
- 7.4. Contact Camden is currently consulting on a new target operating model which will improve the resident experience and better match resource to demand. This new model will see calls distributed by call type, rather than by service boundaries, meaning they are handled by larger and more flexible teams, skilled to deal with calls based on their nature. This, coupled with recent successful implementation of supporting technology such as the Knowledge Hub and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tools means that customer service officers are better able to meet presenting need holistically. This technology suite will be further enhanced in Q4 with the implementation of a new omni-channel contact platform, which will offer residents greater flexibility in contacting the council and give the service more efficient ways of dealing with the issues raised.
- 7.5. Since January 2023, Contact Camden has handled 647,026 contacts, made up of 499,791 calls and 147,235 emails. This represents a decrease of 4% against the previous year, when we received 700,226 contacts made up of 531,650 calls and 168,586 emails. This demonstrates some positive channel shift, with parking and business calls reducing by 31% as a result of the implementation of parking management system (PPMS) and Fix My Street. This is counterbalanced by increased demand in our more complex services, with an 11% increase in calls relating to housing and a 6% increase in calls for social care.

Website launch

- 7.6. During 2023, the digital products team has been working on a major overhaul of the 1,000+ pages on camden.gov.uk website (last redesigned in 2018). The goal is to make the content and user experience more accessible and readable. It will also aim to improve the process of how we design and build webpages and forms, as well as keep content updated and accurate.
- 7.7. The team has followed design best practices and analysed site statistics as well as gathered input and feedback from a diverse group of residents through surveys and interviews. Using this information and in line with modern development practice, the team has developed a design system that includes guidelines for design, code, and content. This system and documentation can be

used both within the organisation, and externally by other groups designing digital services for future websites and services.

7.8. The updated camden.gov.uk website is scheduled to go live later this year. To ensure ongoing improvement, new content governance processes have been set up. They are administered by a central content design team, with platforms and processes set up to ensure quality is maintained and extended to the whole of Camden's digital estate (sites and services outside of the core camden.gov.uk pages). The team will monitor and analyse usage regularly with the help of a dedicated web analyst as well as encourage direct feedback via the website. Alongside this, our teams will conduct further structured research with a focus on digitally excluded and marginalised communities, such as older and disabled residents. The goal is always to make the website and our services, more inclusive and easier for all to use.

Digital Inclusion

7.9. Our digital inclusion (DI) team continues to collaborate across the council to understand the needs of our community and to develop a holistic offer with targeted interventions that will help residents build digital skills and confidence. Furthermore, we're using the 'minimum digital living standards' research to develop a set of standards customised to the needs of our borough, providing a benchmark for inclusion success and a way to target our resources to ensure we are reaching those most excluded digitally.

7.10. The digital inclusion network seeks to coordinate the work across the council. Regular network meetings connect stakeholders, giving focus to priority topics and sharing best practices, with the next phase being to extend the network to other organisations working within the borough by working with 'Citizens Online'.

7.11. We're also developing a community digital champion network using an online platform, allowing us to recruit volunteers from the community. Volunteers will provide training sessions and one-to-one help directly to the community. We're working with UCL, Camden libraries and other internal partners to recruit our first wave of volunteers, and we hope to make better use of our libraries to deliver sessions.

7.12. Our partnership between digital and data service (DDS) and the library service allows us to focus on modernising the digital provision across the libraries, recognising that, increasingly, residents are visiting the library to access digital tools. Work is progressing to upgrade network capacity, responding to increased customer demand. We're also installing Wi-Fi hardware and other ICT infrastructure to deliver an enhanced experience.

7.13. Recognising the importance of Camden schools in our digital inclusion journey, DDS is working with Camden Learning to review the schools IT support service, intending to co-design a modern service model with headteachers. This will address the needs of school staff and students to improve the overall learning experience and build digital skills.

Cyber Security

- 7.14. The overall cyber threat landscape remains complex and ever-changing, with increasingly sophisticated tools and attack methods employed against organisations, recently focusing on the education sector.
- 7.15. Our dedicated information & cyber security team has continued to deliver critical work as part of the council's cyber security programme. This focuses on advanced security operations and security remediation with activity prioritised according to severity and risk. Engineers have continued addressing technical weaknesses in our legacy systems, leveraging the modern tooling available in the Camden environment and making incremental changes that improve our overall security posture.
- 7.16. New information governance (IG) oversight arrangements have been implemented by the Borough Solicitor, Chief Data Officer and Head of Technology, building on existing foundations to improve management focus on IG matters. Our new information security awareness product was deployed to all officers and members in August 2023 and we delivered our first cybersecurity awareness month engagement in October, delivering a range of engagement and training opportunities across the council.
- 7.17. The collaborative relationship with the audit and risk service has delivered targeted internal audits focusing on problem areas, with remediation tracking and reporting ensuring significant progress and reduced risk. Camden has been externally recertified as Public Service Network (PSN) compliant by the Cabinet Office standards and Payment Card Industry Security Standards Council PCI-DSS compliant by external audit.
- 7.18. A pilot of new in-line data loss prevention (DLP) rules with social care colleagues has significantly reduced data breaches, and we will begin deployment of DLP tools across the Council in the coming months, allowing us to improve compliance further and minimise risk.
- 7.19. DDS recognises the importance of business continuity planning, and our technical teams will continue to collaborate with the emergency planning service and other services across the council to build resilience. DDS staff have concluded a desktop exercise to test the council's approach to a range of service-impacting incidents and have begun testing the failover and recovery of all critical systems to our backup environment.

Data

- 7.20. Camden has started its journey on data maturity across our services. The data discovery project led to comprehensive understanding of Camden's data foundations and shaped Camden's new data strategy which underpins how the council uses data to drive better insights and delivery of services. The strategy aims to bring new data capabilities and improve data foundations as well as to invest in our current workforce. The implementation of the strategy has already commenced including alignment of our key data professions to the digital, data and technology (DDAT) framework, development of the data governance tool and establishment of the Data Governance Board.

- 7.21. A new geographical information system (GIS) data strategy has been developed to leverage a “place-based” approach to our services and underpinning systems. The implementation included increased GIS capability within key services, standardisation of tools, improvement and automation of pipelines as well as upskilling of GIS staff across the council. Our aspiration is to work with other London boroughs on setting interoperable and joined-up GIS capabilities.
- 7.22. The second Camden data charter resident panel took place in January 2023. The residents highlighted the need for greater engagement on data and as a result we have produced two simple animations explaining complex data processes (data linkage and sentiment analysis). We have also held the first forum for the residents, called Camden Talks Data, where we discussed with our residents how their data are used to improve Camden’s services.
- 7.23. The work has commenced to re-design Camden’s master data management framework to ensure that a concept of a person, address or business can be linkable and re-used across Camden’s systems leading to a more secure and efficient way of linking data securely for insight and analysis. The work commenced on the design of a Camden’s first data platform which will enable secure and safe data sharing between Camden and other external organisations as well as provide a safer way of exposing sensitive data for insight.
- 7.24. A new role has been created to jointly manage the public health intelligence function to facilitate better data sharing, linkage and common practices across the council relating to public health. Camden has also introduced a new data capability through data architecture which is critical to ensuring that data are understood, and that applications, systems and integrations are capable to adhere to core data principles and standards set through the data governance board.
- 7.25. Additionally, Camden has managed to move off a legacy system called Qlik View to Qlik Sense. This is part of a wider data reporting and analytics strategy. The strategy includes better engineering and re-use of data avoiding duplication and data quality issues.

8. Election preparations

- 8.1. Camden is preparing for two upcoming elections, the GLA / Mayoral election set for Thursday 2nd May 2024 and a general election, the date of which is to be confirmed. The delivery of lawful elections will be a key priority for the coming year and preparations have already begun with officers working at pace to develop workstream plans for all elements of the election, from staffing needs to security. Internal governance structures have been established to ensure all of these elements are signed off by the returning officer and other senior leaders are being updated at regular intervals. Each of the workstream plans takes into account varying timelines for the general election, ensuring Camden will be ready to go in any eventuality.

- 8.2. For the first time the council's main office, 5 Pancras Square, will be used as the count venue for the general election. This move will allow us to double the number of counters and give further use to what is a superb municipal asset.
- 8.3. We will begin a recruitment campaign in January to expand our staffing pool, with an increased focus on ensuring we have a diverse workforce who are representative of Camden's communities.
- 8.4. Camden's election team are liaising closely with their counterparts in Barnet to align plans for the GLA /Mayoral election on 2nd May. As Barnet have a larger population they lead on the GLA/Mayoral where we have a joint constituency. As has been the case in previous years the count for this election will take place at Alexandra Palace.
- 8.5. The council is particularly focussing on ensuring as wide a franchise as possible for the forthcoming elections and have developed a comprehensive communications approach to support this. Whilst sights are clearly set on the London mayoral election and the general election we also have long-term aims to ensure everyone in Camden is and remains aware of recent changes to voting, and is able to exercise their democratic voice. The council will use their channels and messaging to support and increase voter registration; to raise awareness and understanding of new voter ID requirements, and to support and increase applications for Voter Authority Certificates; to share information about postal and proxy votes; to publicise key dates and milestones and practical information about voting to residents; and to clearly signpost to election services, support and any relevant events.

9. Our approach to our workforce

- 9.1. We want everyone who works for Camden to be connected to the borough as a place and community. Our services shape the organisation, and by placing the community at its heart, we are able to serve effectively the residents of Camden. Throughout the pandemic the council's flexibility was essential to ensuring our vital services continued. As we've transitioned back to in-office working, hybrid models of work have been adopted by many of our services. In response to this, we have established our Future of Work Programme which encompasses three key focus areas:
- Advancing our People and Culture initiatives: The Council observed a gradual rise in the number of individuals using our facilities, with an average of 900 people at peak times in 5PS and this number is continuing to rise. While this figure is still notably lower than pre-pandemic levels, it's evident that hybrid work arrangements are becoming the new norm for the majority of staff. To ensure all colleagues remain connected to the borough, the council requests that all departments ensure that colleagues spend at least some time each week physically present in Camden and frontline workers are expected to be in Camden more often than not. As part of our dedication to flexibility, HR have been crafting a fresh flexible working commitment to supersede our current policy.

- Optimising our use of buildings: As a component of our Future of Work initiative, the council have undertaken pilot projects to implement several alterations to its facilities. This has encompassed installing private calling booths, establishing presentation areas and implementing writing walls in select areas.
- Ensuring we have the right technology to support the future of work: The Council has upgraded more than 500 monitors across 5PS and has upgraded 26 rooms across the organisation's estate, as well as our online booking system. The technology adoption team continues to work with staff to identify and enable tools and software that can support hybrid working across teams and departments.

Current work force

9.2. The council is dedicated to achieving a workforce that is as representative as its community at all levels. Camden employs a total of 4,356 staff with a full-time equivalent (FTE) of 3,987. The current headcount and FTE are 3.76% and 6.35% smaller than they were in 2012/13.

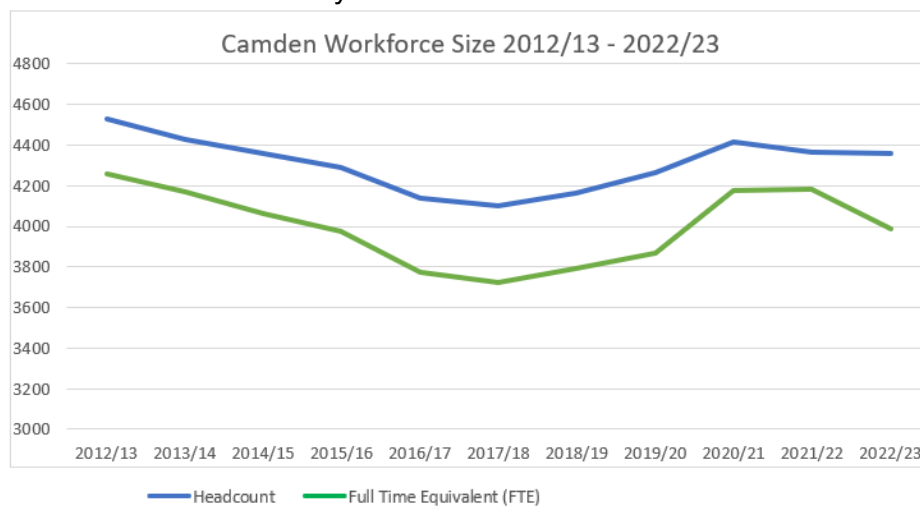


Figure 2 Camden workforce size 2012/13-2022/23

Ethnicity

9.3. Figure 3 below illustrates the representation of different ethnicities within our workforce in comparison to the working age populations of both Camden as a borough and London on a whole. While 46.2% of our staff come from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds in total, this representation is not uniform throughout our grade hierarchy. In particular, at higher grade levels, the proportion of Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic staff is 31.7%. This figure has, however, exhibited a consistent upward trend since 2012/13. This increase reflects the work we have done as an employer to ensure the organisation is as representative as the communities we serve. Progress has also been made at our most senior level where over 40% of our directors are from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds, bringing us in line with the community.

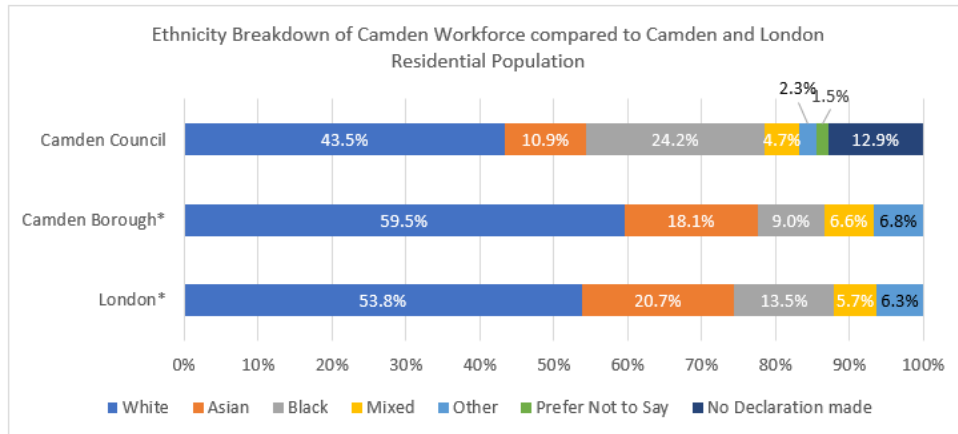


Figure 3 Ethnicity breakdown of Camden workforce compared to Camden and London Residential population

9.4. Between 2012 and 2020, the proportion of BAOE staff either stayed constant or experienced a 1% increase, resulting in a total cumulative increase of 3%. However, the period from 2020 to 2023, spanning just three years, has witnessed a growth of slightly more than 4%, demonstrating a substantial surge in the rate of increase.

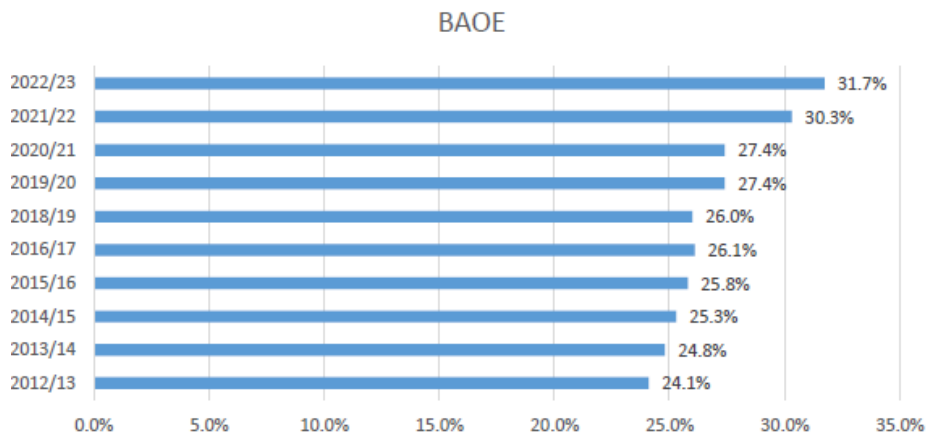


Figure 4 2012-2023 BAOE staff

Gender

9.5. Historically, employment numbers for women in local government tend to be higher than those for men, attributed to the flexible and part time opportunities in the public sector. While females make up 55.9% of Camden council's workforce, this ranks Camden as the eighth lowest among London boroughs, with the median figure for female representation being 59.8%. The gender ratio within the council has remained fairly consistent since 2015/16 to date, with the average percentage of female workers within the workforce during this period, being 50.1%. 49.8% of the highest 5% earners in the council's work force are women, demonstrating a slight decrease of 0.7% since 2017/18 when the figure was 50.5%.

Directorate	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Female	50.5%	50.0%	51.6%	46.5%	47.9%	49.8%
Male	49.5%	50.0%	48.4%	53.5%	52.1%	51.2%

Figure 5 Gender employee breakdown

Disability

9.6. At present, 7.3% of staff have formally shared their disability status with the council, while 13% of the respondents to our Wellbeing Pulse survey indicated having a physical, mental, or learning condition. We are actively involving our staff to enhance the sharing of this information and revising our diversity monitoring form. It's crucial that our staff feel confident embracing their disabilities with their employer, with the knowledge they will be supported with care so that they can bring their full selves to work while giving the organisation valuable insights as to how we can make Camden a more inclusive workplace.

Directorate	Disabled	Not Disabled	Prefer Not to Say	Unknown	Grand Total
Corporate Services	9.1%	62.2%	5.0%	23.7%	100.0%
Supporting Communities	6.0%	57.0%	1.3%	35.6%	100.0%
Supporting People	8.0%	59.1%	0.6%	32.3%	100.0%
Grand Total	7.3%	58.9%	2.0%	31.9%	100.0%

Figure 6 Employee's with disabilities

Age

9.7. Camden hosts the largest student population in London, owing to the presence of 11 higher education institutions within the borough. Many individuals within the 16-24 year age bracket are engaged in some form of education or training which is reflected in the organisations age group distribution as 2.9% of Camden council's employees fall within the ages of 16-24, in contrast to 15.9% of the working-age population in Camden.

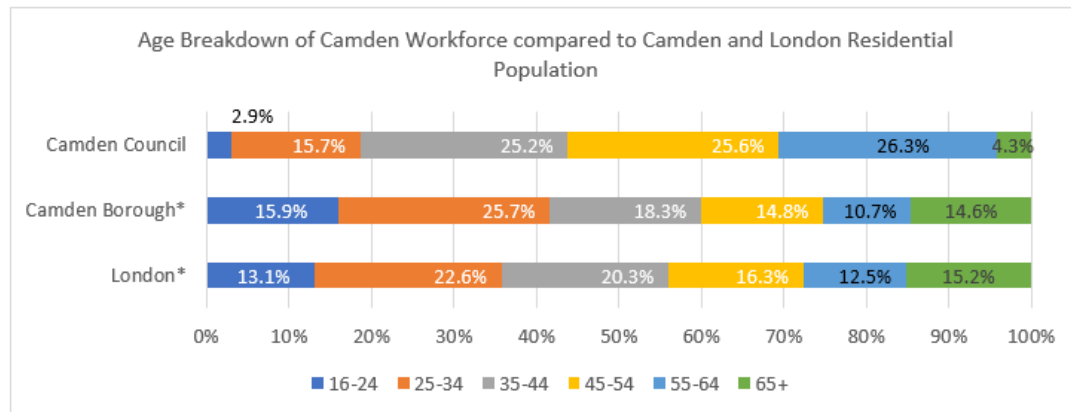


Figure 7 Age breakdown of Camden workforce compared to Camden and London residential population

Camden resident staff

9.8. A key priority outlined in We Make Camden is to enhance employment opportunities for local residents. To ensure we achieve this objective, we have taken the initiative to monitor the percentage of our workforce living in Camden. As of 31 March 2023, 14.6% of our staff (637 individuals) were also residents of Camden, representing a decrease from the previous year when the council employed 746 individuals (17.09%).

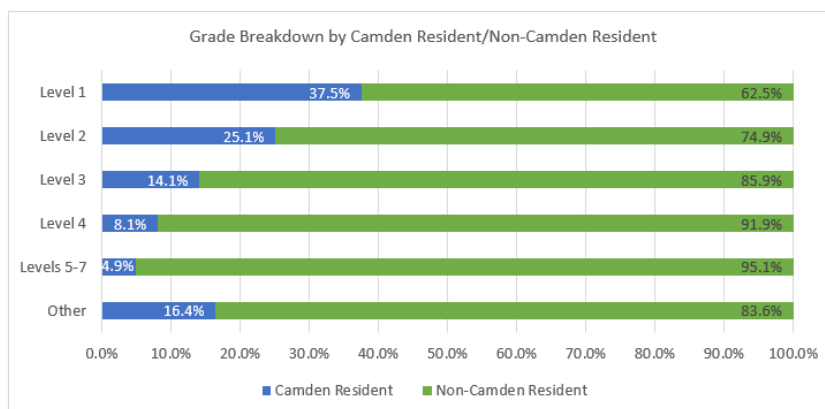


Figure 8 Grade breakdown by Camden resident/non Camden resident

Workforce inclusion

Pulse survey

9.9. Each year Camden runs an inclusion-focused pulse survey to ensure our inclusion work reaches our employees and can adapt to become more inclusive. 81% of employees indicated a strong sense of belonging to the organisation, marking a noteworthy 26% surge from the prior year. Additionally, 93% expressed confidence in their ability to recognise prejudice and discrimination, reflecting a notable 19% increase from the previous year. Moreover, 70% of the staff believed that career progression in Camden was fair, while 86% felt that the leaders at Camden were genuinely dedicated to fostering an inclusive workplace environment. This was our third year of running the survey and the overall feedback shows significant improvements compared to last year.

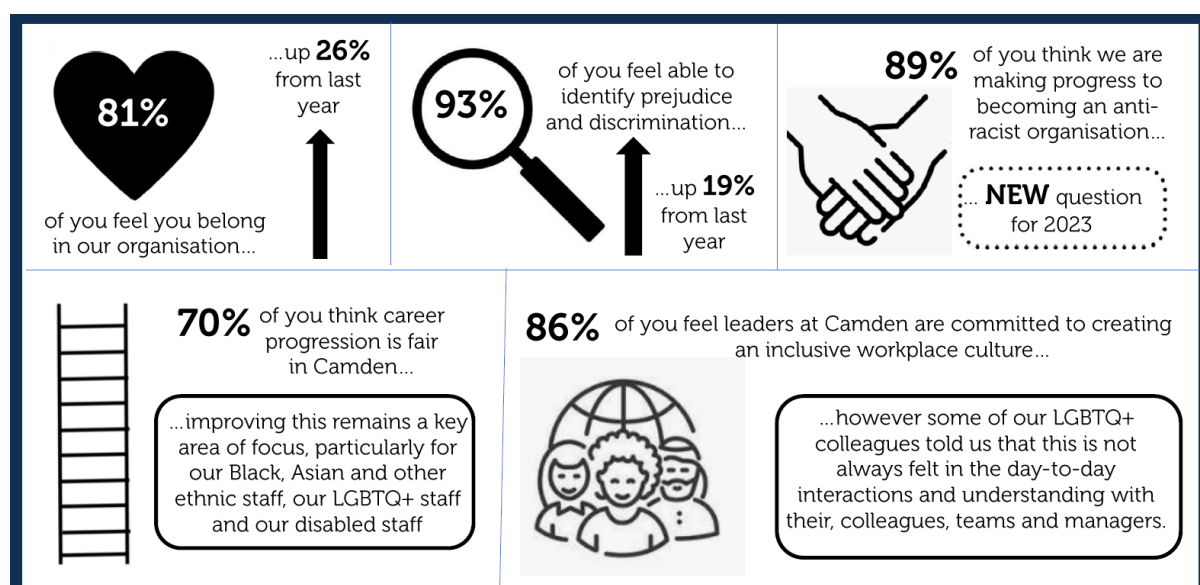


Figure 9 pulse survey data breakdown

Anti-racism

9.10. Becoming a truly inclusive and anti-racist organisation is one of our biggest priorities. We understand the importance of creating a healthy and inclusive workplace as it translates to the service, we are able to deliver to the community.

9.11. Our anti-racism learning program is pivotal to achieving the aims of our race equality action plan, as it equips employees with the knowledge and resources to actively recognise and confront racism, while empowering managers to apply anti-racist leadership practices. This was broken down into three phases:

- phase 1 (May – September 2021) - virtual education, reflection and managers sessions for staff with digital access
- phase 2 (October 2021 – May 2022) –sessions for front-line workers, those lacking digital access, and sessions for new employees as part of their induction process. To date, the educational sessions have reached a total of 95% of staff members
- phase 3 (May 2022 – onwards) –integrated the learning into the organisation to make the adoption of anti-racist behaviours a standard practice. This encompassed:
 - anti-racism e-learning module –integrated into Camden’s mandatory learning offer, guaranteeing that all staff members undergo this training at least once every two years
 - managers session - managers are mandated to participate in a two-hour virtual anti-racism session tailored specifically for managerial roles, accompanied by preparatory and follow-up exercises that must be completed
 - learning resources - accessible through Camden’s learning and development hub covering a range of topics related to anti-racism, including subjects like micro-aggressions
 - shared learning and experiences - an event for local businesses and various local authorities across London to disseminate our anti-racism progress, with a particular emphasis on the learning resources we offer.

9.12. It became apparent that emotions linked to trauma such as grief, loss and burnout have been exacerbated by the heightened attention on the injustices. Consequently, we have introduced a new well-being initiative specifically tailored to support colleagues affected by trauma in all its manifestations. The program complements our existing employee assistance programme (EAP) and features trauma-informed coaching, as well as access to qualified counsellors who specialise in trauma-related matters. As of now, 160 individuals have sought out and utilised this support.

9.13. We also felt it important that employees feel confident to report incidents of discrimination and we have developed a restorative approach to reporting discrimination that will be launched by December 2023 with two integral components to this approach:

1) *Reporting*: HR wants to create a safe, accessible way for staff to report incidents of discrimination that they trust, which also enables us to collect data so that we can understand the overall picture of these incidents within the organisation.

2) *Restoration*: The approach HR are working towards is one that focuses on healing. HR’s aim is to create a working environment that is safe, supportive and enables staff to thrive. To do this, we need to create an approach that recognises the hurt that has been caused and looks for ways to restore the relationship through creating a learning environment. This is not about reaching a judgment but about healing a relationship.

Palestine/Israel corporate management team-listening sessions

9.14. Having reflected on our on-going work to ensure employees are able to bring their full selves to work, we recognise the impact the conflict in Israel and Palestine has on not just our communities but our workforce. It is crucial in times like this that we come together and support one another and have pulled together a range of support for our staff, this has included:

- CMT face to face listening sessions
- people managers sessions focusing on the support in place
- online reflection sessions both internally and externally facilitated
- dedicated web support pages
- regular weekly emails
- additional capacity provided in trauma support, above our employee assistance programme package
- created an advisory group of Muslim staff to advise on communications.

Menopause and period awareness

9.15. We have reviewed, updated and relaunched our menopause commitment, to acknowledge how everyone experiences perimenopause or menopause differently with the objective of being able to accommodate to individual circumstances wherever possible. In line with this commitment, we have:

- introduced portable USB fans that can be connected to staff members' laptops or computers
- ensured the availability of complimentary menstrual products in all our primary buildings
- encouraged staff to seek out quiet spaces for short breaks to manage symptoms or take medication
- initiated a series of workshops for managers aimed at destigmatising menopause and understanding its impact on women's lives
- conducted eight workshops within our organisation to break down stigma, normalise conversations about periods and menopause, and cultivate a working environment that is truly inclusive for everyone.

'Bloody Good Employer'

9.16. The council firmly believes that nobody should face any form of disadvantage due to menstruation, which is why Camden officially joined 'Bloody Good Employers' in September 2022. This has empowered the organisation to engage actively in conversations surrounding menstruation and cultivate a more inclusive workplace. Since joining, the council has:

- conducted a staff survey to gain deeper insights into the perspectives and encounters related to menstruation within the organisation
- undertaken a self-assessment of HR and Camden leadership to gauge the existing support framework and evaluate how effectively we cater to the needs of individuals who menstruate in the workplace
- hosted a series of workshops with a focus on (with 54 participants):

- continued to challenge norms, dispelling myths, and eradicating stigma surrounding menstruation
- enhanced awareness of issues arising from menstruation, appreciating cultural variations in menstruation practices, and fostering greater comprehension.

9.17. As a direct outcome of this initiative, HR has implemented the provision of free period products in all restrooms within the council's primary facilities. Additionally, HR is currently in the process of formulating an organisational action plan to further solidify our commitment.

LGBTQ+

9.18. As Stonewall Diversity champions, the council remains dedicated and committed to promoting LGBTQ+ equality. The council's senior leadership consistently conveys a resolute message regarding LGBTQ+ inclusion, actively confronting inequality, and motivating their teams to do the same. There have been a number of actions taken over the last year to ensure we continue to uphold this standard of equality:

- in November 2022, we revised our pledge to trans equality to address the needs of non-binary staff more effectively
- in December 2022, we introduced new material in our mandatory Conscious Inclusion e-learning module, which features expanded and improved information regarding LGBTQ+ identities
- in June 2023 during our atrium briefing our senior LGBTQ+ Sponsor, emphasised the significance of Pride month, the ongoing battle for genuine LGBTQ+ equality, and the vital role of robust and outspoken allyship
- in July 2023, a group of 50 Camden staff, councillors, along with their families and friends, united to participate in the 2023 Pride in London parade
- we have also collaborated with Gendered Intelligence, a local company based in Camden, to conduct a range of trans awareness workshops on what it means to be transgender and how to be a supportive trans ally. To date, we have organised a total of 11 workshops.

Wellbeing

9.19. As an employer we want to ensure our workforce wellbeing reflects our ambition for the borough. Our We Make Camden ambitions strive to "support good health, wellbeing and connection" across Camden, including our workforce. Our wellbeing offer has been available to employees since 2020 and has expanded beyond our initial Covid 19 pandemic response. Over the past three years we have developed our wellbeing offer to recognise the various areas that impact people's lives and support them through any challenges. By offering effective long-term support to our employees, we not only help them feel happy and connected to Camden as a work place, but also reduce potential long-term absences.

Microsite

9.20. In acknowledgement of the effectiveness and expansion of our wellbeing programs in spring 2023, we consolidated the diverse offerings and introduced a dedicated wellbeing microsite. The microsite undergoes regular updates to align with national wellbeing events, while also addressing specific aspects relevant to Camden, like connecting our physical wellbeing with the borough's green spaces, outdoor fitness areas, and complimentary fitness events.

9.21. The microsite offers a range of wellbeing support, conveniently organised under the following categories:

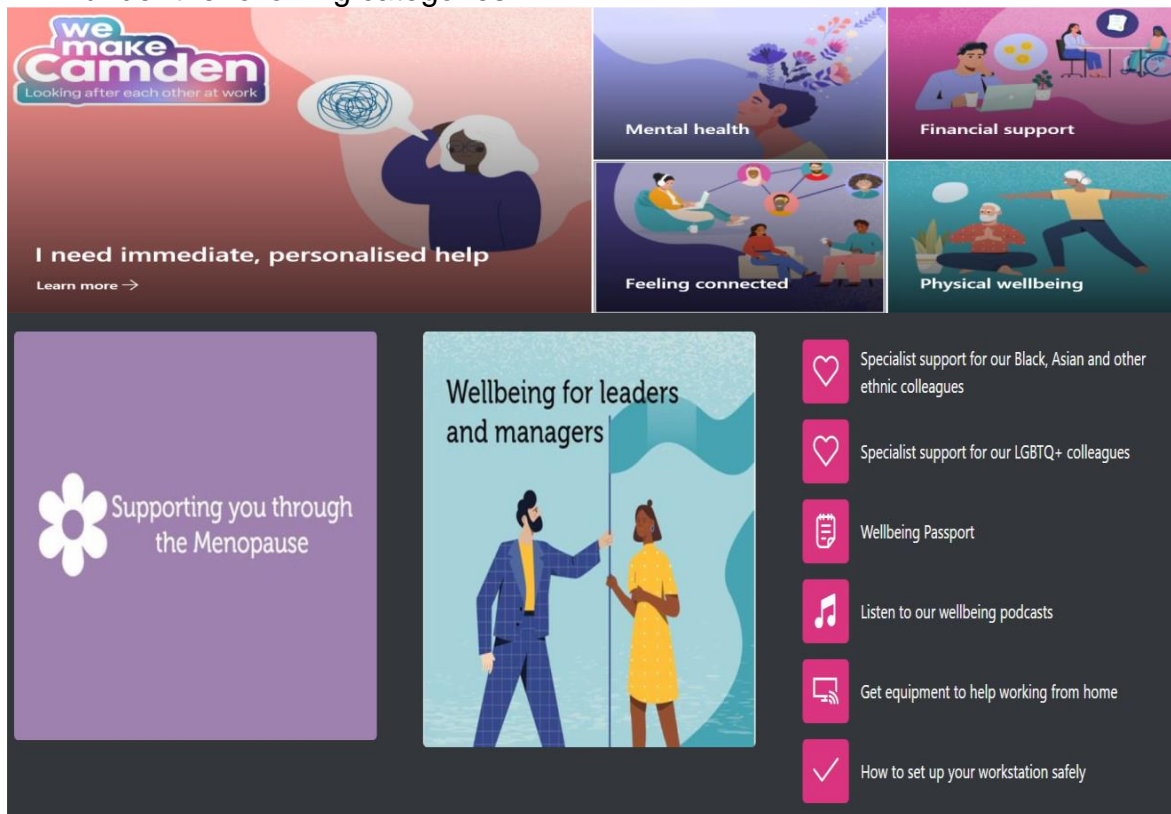


Image 2 Camden micro-site pages

Employee assistance programme (EAP)

9.22. The council's employee assistance programme (EAP) offers staff and their family members access to confidential emotional support from qualified counsellors, free of charge. This service is accessible around the clock, every day of the year. Our data show that 248 employees used the EAP over the last 12 months which is a decrease of 26 from the previous year.

Bereavement leave

9.23. Coping with the loss of a loved one can be one of the most painful times in life. We want to support colleagues through these hard times, and so we've compiled a suite of resources – including links to helplines, articles, advice networks and more – for colleagues to use when they need it. This is in addition to paid time off.

In-house podcast

9.24. Camden HR have also created an in-house podcast series dedicated to various aspects of wellbeing. These podcasts aim to showcase staff

experiences and narratives, illustrating how they've managed difficult situations. Over the past year, we've produced and recorded seven podcast episodes, exceeding 750 plays (averaging more than 100 plays per episode).

Supporting staff through the cost-of-living crisis

9.25. In response to the increased cost of living and financial challenges this brings, Camden has been actively promoting the support the council has in place for staff, while also signposting individuals towards specialist sources of advice.

9.26. There has been an array of initiatives put in place over the last year to ensure employees are aware of options available to them which have included:

- November 2023 marketplace event for staff to engage with our benefit providers, learn about the support options and receive guidance on debt management
- during Mental Health Week in May, we launched our podcast
- we wrote to all frontline staff in May, to highlight the available support and provide directions to additional resources and assistance
- reintroduced of our routine schedule of financial education seminars
- partnered with HSBC, to initiate an ongoing series of practical financial wellbeing webinars for our staff
- in anticipation of the 2023 winter period, HR initiated a review of our internal communication and engagement strategy in response to the cost-of-living crisis, to ensure that all staff members are informed about the available support, understand how to utilise it, and are equipped to guide colleagues and residents towards assistance when necessary. This includes a further letter to the front line in November.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. The Borough Solicitor has reviewed this report, and his comments have been incorporated.

11. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

11.1. The Director of Finance has reviewed the report, and his comments have been incorporated.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

12.1. The cost of living crisis is strongly linked to the wider climate emergency, with strong drivers for increasing energy costs rooted in our continuing reliance on carbon-based fuels for our gas and electricity supply. The report outlines how we are seeking, as part of emergency response, to make homes more sustainable this winter by providing support for responsive insulation and support. Reducing heat loss and improving the thermal efficiency of homes both benefit households by keeping them warm and well and saving them money, and contributes to a reduction of CO2 emissions associated with heating. Alongside this and as part of our commitment to climate mitigation and a just transition to a net zero economy, we are working longer-term to improve the thermal efficiency and

sustainability of our housing stock, our commercial property and our Council buildings.