

Leader's Annual Report 2023/2023

I presented my last Leader's Annual Report in March 2023, setting out my continued commitment to tackling injustice and inequality, making Camden a fairer place, in which everyone has a voice. I am proud to present this report to the Joint Chairs of Scrutiny, setting out the ways in which the Council and our communities are working together to meet this vision for Camden, whilst tackling the new challenges we face. I am grateful for the work of Scrutiny Chairs and Committees in providing critical democratic oversight and challenge to the work of the Council and reflecting the priorities and concerns of our communities.

2023 was a special year for me personally, as I welcomed the birth of my son. I'm so grateful to Cllr Pat Callaghan for leading with her signature passion and commitment and Cllr Adam Harrison for his unwavering support as Deputy during my parental leave. Moreover, I am grateful for Cllr Sagal Abdi-Wali's leadership in her role providing additional support for projects such as Camden's Borough of Sanctuary, supporting refugees, our participation work and work relating to our missions and challenges. As a new parent I have gained a new perspective on the incredible family support and early years services that we provide in Camden. It is something that has always been close to my heart and seeing and experiencing the difference that these services make to people's lives first-hand has been wonderful and fills me with energy and ideas for the future.

First up is our work to deliver on our missions set out in We Make Camden. This is all about working in new and ambitious ways which help us to break down and tackle some of the big long-term challenges we're facing. Working in a 'missions oriented' way is about turning the big and lofty challenges we face into meaningful goals and action. It's about bringing people together in new ways, opening up new conversations, listening to ideas and trying new things. Councillors, Camden officers and partners all have a role to play in this – and are playing that role right now.

Housing has been a huge area of focus for Camden this year too. The system for funding social housing in the UK is broken and over the past few years, Government policy has reduced the resources we have to invest in repairing and maintaining our stock. Safety is our priority across our housing in Camden – and we have found the additional funds to ensure we are delivering crucial fire and building safety work across our estates and street properties. On top of this, the rising cost of building work and materials has meant that this, and other ongoing housing repairs and maintenance work, has cost significantly more than anticipated – and we have received no additional government funding to help with this. Finding new ways to respond to these challenges has been a priority right across the organisation, and you will know that one of the ways we've been doing this is through our ambitious tenant engagement programme – which

is opening up new conversations with local people about the places they live and their communities, giving us new opportunities to listen and as a result change the way we do things. I want to say a massive thank you to everyone who has been involved in this work so far.

You will all know the impact the relentless cost of living crisis is continuing to have on people. Every day I meet people who are being forced to make impossible choices, and I know that lots of you are struggling too. As I look ahead, my determination to do all we can to help local people during these difficult times remains at the forefront of my mind. We've done so much already, but there's so much more to do.

And finally, our work to support refugees in Camden will continue to be a focus for me. I'm so deeply proud of the way we have been able to support people when they are at their most desperate, providing them with safety, shelter and now homes and real opportunities to rebuild their lives and find happiness. Refugees who have settled in our borough have become such valued members of our community and are helping to make Camden the vibrant, creative, and diverse place that it is today. I know so many of you have played a role in this work, and I'm so looking forward to taking this even further.

Key Achievements

- We have maintained our Sure Start provision and invested in our schools and family support services. In 2023 97% of all Camden Schools and 100% of Camden Primary Schools have been graded Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.
- We created a one-off Cost of Living Family Crisis Fund. All primary and secondary schools were offered grant funding in 2023 to extend the reach of their existing breakfast offer, while more deprived schools eligible for the national Magic Breakfast scheme could sign up for free. This is in addition to Camden's commitment to extend permanently guarantee for every child in year groups 3,4,5 and 6 to have access to a hot meal at lunchtime.
- Since its adoption, 98% of all Climate Action Plan actions have either been completed or are in delivery. The third annual review measures progress against the 72 current actions in the Climate Action Plan using an indicator developed by the Climate Change Committee.
- Funding the re-purchase of Council homes for use as temporary accommodation – we've already purchased 132 homes through our Temporary Accommodation Purchase Programme (TAPP) and also refurbished to bring into use a further 26 homes for use as temporary accommodation.
- We've invested over £29m in the Council Tax Support scheme which remains one of the most generous Council Tax Support schemes in the country. It

ensures that in 2023 around 16,000 households (including pensioners) in Camden currently receive 100% support and do not pay any Council Tax.

- We updated our Housing Repairs Service enabling residents to contact our teams by the resident's online account, WhatsApp, SMS, Webchat, or telephone. The new WhatsApp option has very quickly become the dominant preferred method, helping many of our residents to report their repairs easily and swiftly.
- Damp and mold complaints have continued to fall throughout 2023 and we launched a Saturday Service for mold inspections and cleanings, which has proven so popular that it will now form part of our regular offer.
- Windrush 75 'The Homecoming': 22 June 2023 marked the 75th anniversary of the arrival of HMS Windrush in 1948. This significant milestone was a last chance to honour the living pioneers but to also open a wider public conversation about the past, present and future of the UK.
- In Camden we currently host 37,680 businesses, sustaining 368,000 jobs. As part of our plan to grow Camden's Inclusive Economy, we've developed a detailed strategy for the Knowledge Quarter, and strategies for both Evening and Night-Time and Affordable Workspaces.
- A Young People's Citizens' Assembly of more than 50 young women was held on the safety of young women and girls, led by our Youth Service colleagues, in partnership with Camden Safety Net, Strategy and Participation colleagues.
- Looking forward, the Council has an ambitious capital programme that is delivering new high-quality housing, including more social and genuinely affordable housing, improving the public realm and green spaces. In 2023, as part of our Community Investment Programme, we entered into contracts and commenced construction on 194 new genuinely affordable homes for Camden residents and 89 new affordable temporary homes for families in need.
- We announced a new £4m annual Voluntary Community Sector Investment Programme for 2024-31. So far, more than £2m per annum of awards have been made to 41 organisations for Community Partner Fund and the Infrastructure Fund.

We Make Camden – our work to bring citizens into decision making at every level

We have continued to develop our mission-oriented approach in local government as set out in We Make Camden. We are working on our missions, co-created with Camden's citizens and organisations as part of the Renewal Commission to tackle the big and urgent issues facing our communities – and ensure Camden remains fair, equal and a place where everyone can find opportunity and make a difference.

These missions retain their clear, ambitious targets for 2030 and beyond, and through our missions-approach we are galvanising cross-sectoral, bottom-up progress against some of Camden's most complex issues. At a time of limited resources for local government we are leveraging in new investment from outside the Council to deliver these ambitious missions. We are changing the way we work as an organisation to deliver our ambitious Missions – challenging our approach to power-sharing, partnership and investment for the long-term.

The key to our missions approach is collaborative policy making, where residents, professional leads, councillors and our partners all come together to work towards a shared vision. This has required officers and councillors alike to develop new capabilities, which has meant new cross-departmental collaboration within the council, realising new partnerships with the private, public, and voluntary sectors and inspired social action in communities.

I believe mission-oriented thinking and delivery is key to us working with the whole borough to tackle the most pressing issues our community continues to face, while we continue the work to ensure we are delivering excellent services for our citizens.

State of the Borough

We have published this year the second annual State of the Borough report— reflecting on work delivered to achieve the ambitions of We Make Camden and the missions and challenges – working with citizens and partners – and reflecting the measures and outcomes that we will use to understand how we are having an impact. This deliberately looks at outcomes in Camden, not just council performance so we can continue to convene and galvanise action far beyond the Council about what is happening in our communities. I would encourage partners, Councillors, community leaders and citizens to make use of this document as a reflection of where we are now as a Borough.

Youth Mission: By 2025, every young person has access to economic opportunity that enables them to be safe and secure. By 2025 we want to make sure all young people have access to the wealth of opportunities on offer in Camden to enable them to be safe and secure.

We want to make sure all young people have access to the wealth of opportunities on offer in Camden to enable them to be safe and secure. Our Youth Mission was introduced to address the specific impact of the pandemic on Camden's young people – to ensure that our youth services are providing all young people with opportunities to succeed, that we are attracting new partners and that we are building on our existing services to focus on where we can make the most impact for young people.

We reported in State of the Borough how, currently, almost 1 in 5 children in Camden live in poverty. We know that the number of children living in poverty has increased significantly since 2015. The cost-of-living crisis has exacerbated poverty levels and the proportion of children living in poverty varies dramatically between wards. We also report that youth unemployment remains higher than it was pre-pandemic. We have focused our resources on providing new opportunities for young people with the Council and working with our partners. We are focused on giving young people in Camden the best start and best opportunities to succeed— during 2023/24 we have delivered:

- 760 young people supported into an apprenticeship, training or a job
- 3717 young people involved in meaningful encounters with employers at school
- 350 WEX placements secured for July's STEAM work experience week; and approximately 520 students schools say want a place

We know we need a long-term focus to address the determinants of opportunity for young people, which cannot be achieved by the council alone, which is why we have over two years adopted the mission-oriented approach to further opportunity for Camden's young people and children. We have been working with employers across Camden to create opportunities for young people including apprenticeships, work experience, meaningful work encounters and jobs.

Good Work Camden is a well-developed universal, strengths-based, locally delivered approach, focusing on developing relationships with citizens and supporting them on their journey to good work, at their own pace. Our neighbourhood job hubs are strongly networked locally, with leads establishing relationships with trusted organisations and services, placing our advisors where people are. This is where our focus has been at the start of our Youth Mission work.

Camden Young Talent Guarantee was launched and is a programme that works to connect every 16 to 24-year-old in Camden to the support needed to access employment opportunities. 500 local young people a year will be supported into training, an apprenticeship or job while getting access to one-to-one, long term career support with a trusted advisor.

Camden has launched the Euston Skills Centre. Working alongside the United Colleges Group it will deliver training, skills, qualifications and experience for local young people as well as support for the community to get into good work. The centre is a really practical space – with classrooms, CSCS test centre, a dedicated workshop space which includes specialist machinery rooms and an outside training area where students learn practical skills as part of their qualification. Euston Skills Centre will deliver over 150 construction apprenticeships each year.

A great example of partnership within the youth mission has been the collaboration between Google and Camden Steam in the development of the London AI (Artificial Intelligence) Campus. The Campus will sit in the heart of Camden and once fully operational will provide an opportunity to young people across the educational ladder to access skills and career opportunities within AI and broader STEAM based careers.

We are committed to supporting social action in this space, and the We Make Camden fund supports projects around the borough. Camden Youth Council launched grant funding for social action offering grants of up to £5,000 to fund projects that tackle issues most important to local young people. 43% of all Camden Kit grants are funding projects in our communities, led by community partners supporting young people.

Led by Cllr Sabrina Francis, the youth mission team have identified five priority cohorts who are at particular risk of missing economic opportunity, and we have some data on these cohorts from our State of the Borough report. We are focusing our proposed investments and interventions as a Youth Mission on these five cohorts initially – seeking to understand how we can build on our existing offer to reach out to those experiencing barriers to good work and opportunity. Our State of the Borough includes information about our priority cohorts including:

- We know 331 young people in Camden are care leavers which are a group that experiences increased barriers to employment;
- We know young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) have special education needs and there is a significant inequality in disability employment. There are approximately 1,500 young people with EHCP in Camden.
- We know that there are around 4,000 persistently absent school children in Camden, approximately 22% of primary and 26% secondary school children, and 57% of special school children. This cohort has doubled since the pandemic, in line with national trends – there is work ongoing as part of the wider Camden Learning and schools team regarding attendance – but the Youth Mission will engage with this as part of employment and careers planning;
- With regards to young people in the youth justice system, only 60% of young people ending an order were in education, training or employment.

Members have moved on to taking a deeper look at the challenges these cohorts face and what more we can do to support them, whilst also exploring the shared learning and the overlap between these cohorts. Full Council Debate in January 2024 saw a motion unanimously passed on making Care Experienced a Protected Characteristic, outlining our commitment to do more to support our care-experienced young people and this work will be carried forward through our Youth Mission work and a specific focus on

care experienced young people in Camden. The Council also announced that free Wi-Fi will be provided to all Camden care leavers up until the age of 25, whether they are in council housing, in private rented accommodation, or other accommodation, to further support those with care experiences access opportunities, services and employment.

Care-experienced young people can shape our services through the Young Inspectors Report. This set out the findings, key messages, and recommendations of the Young Inspectors inspection of children and families experience of social care meetings. The Young Inspectors were young people (17-24) who applied their own experience of Camden services in the design and conduct of the research, giving them valuable work experience.

We want young people to play an active role in shaping service design, delivery, and commissioning across Camden. Camden Special Educational Needs (SEN) in partnership with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS), and special educational needs charity KIDS held a co-production in February 2024 bringing together young people aged 13+ with EHCPs and ENG funding. The event featured employment pathway organisations, including Good Work Camden, supported Internships, and social Enterprises, enabling young people to learn more about the provisions available to them during and on completion of their education.

Six interns joined the Council in September 2023 as part of our commitment to supporting our care-experienced young people access employment and opportunity. The Drive Forward Foundation delivered preparatory training for intern managers as well as five employment-focused training sessions for interns. Interns receive on-going in-work support from Camden Apprenticeships and Drive Forward as well as access to a professional mentor from an external organisation to support with networking and sector awareness. We hope to now grow this pilot project to partners across Camden.

Food Mission: By 2030, everyone eats well every day with nutritious, affordable, sustainable food

We want Camden to be a place where residents are food secure, don't need to access crisis food provision and eat a healthy and balanced diet. Where food is a foundation of children's and young people's flourishing lives. We do that while making sure that Camden's food system contributes to tackling the climate crisis.

Camden's Food Mission is making significant strides towards achieving its ambitious goal. The food mission led by Councillor Anna Wright is creating a collaborative approach with partners for change, transforming the Borough, and reimagining Camden services.

The Camden Food Partnership, coordinated by Voluntary Community Sector organisation Feast with Us, currently includes around 40 community organisations and 20 social action initiatives. This in addition to about 12 Food Coop groups supported by Cooperation Town, amounting to a total of 72 Community Food offers in the borough. We have seen the food Coop provision grow, with 9 new coops opening in the last 18 months.

Our ambitious Food Mission programme will see investment in innovative food projects, community kitchens and cooperatives so that residents can access food with dignity and choice across the borough, seeking to build a sustainable long-term Camden Food Partnership involving businesses and the wider community.

We facilitated a successful VCS Food Partnership summit in February last year with over 40 partners. We know we need to grow this partnership further to match our Food Mission ambitions and support it to include big businesses, local business, Camden markets. Our ambition is to support a Camden Food partnership that can galvanise Camden energy to change the food system in the Borough.

This is why as part of the Budget this year, the Council invested £700k in additional funding to strengthen and widen the Camden Food Partnership and to enable the establishment of the infrastructure that will support initiatives such as collective buying among residents and organisations, supporting food sustainability, creating more access to food for residents in food poverty and supporting local efforts to reduce food waste, helping to push healthy and nutritious eating up the local agenda.

This funding will help to ensure that residents affected by poverty, debt and financial exclusion can access independent community-based advice services, providing residents with comprehensive casework support.

Within the Food Mission, the Health & Wellbeing Department are further progressing the whole school approach to food across Camden's Family of Schools and supporting Family Hubs and early years settings to further develop their approach to food. We are continuing to support all Camden's schools to become healthy schools (four out of five are in the scheme).

Camden has continued £300,000 of investment in our schools School Breakfast programme. Through a partnership with the charity provider, Magic Breakfast, we have made significant interventions in our schools with the highest levels of deprivation, Magic Breakfast primary schools are providing breakfast for 2,980 children (November 2023), up from 587 in 2022, with 575,000 breakfasts provided per year. We know that one in four primary school pupils in Camden benefit every day.

Additionally, we have supported all schools with their breakfast offer with an emphasis on ensuring free breakfast places for pupils on Free School Meals (FSM), this has

included supporting local arrangements and working with the National School Breakfast programme.

Since September 2023 all primary school children in Camden and across London have received free school meals. The value of this extension for Camden pupils is in excess of £1.5m, benefitting more than 3,000 pupils. This has led to a 27% increase in the number of school lunches eaten during the 2023 Autumn Term. Camden has committed to continuing this universal provision for Camden pupils from September 2024, at its own expense, if funding is not provided by the GLA (Greater London Authority) or another source.

To address hunger in secondary schools we have put £500,000 to undertaking an in-depth review, in conjunction with schools, into addressing secondary school hunger. This has looked at how to increase access to and awareness and uptake of FSM.

During the school holidays, programmes are delivered by 40 providers, across 54 venues, providing 58,000 meals, enrichment activities, physical activities nutritional education and signposting family support during school holidays.

With an additional £100k local funding, the council extended access during summer and winter 2023, and spring 2024. We are now sure there are enough spaces every day for 5–16 year olds in 54 venues across Camden – mostly in areas of higher deprivation. This includes 81 spaces every day for children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) who need 1:1 support or specialist places. SEND children who do not need 1:1 specialist provision can attend the vast majority of mainstream provision.

Additional action in early years settings includes the Little Steps to Healthy Lives whole setting approach to health improvement and healthy food, and popular ongoing healthy eating/cooking family programmes.

Our State of the Borough report touches on how, by continuing and redesigning our existing services and programs, we are adopting evidence-led and learning-based approaches to adapt them to emerging circumstances and our developing knowledge of the context the borough is operating in.

In Camden, we saw a 27% increase in the number of lunches eaten in schools Sep-Dec 2023 (9,000 additional meals per week). The emerging evidence, such as recent research funded by the Nuffield Foundation, has confirmed that universal free school meals in primary schools result in reduced childhood obesity and an improvement in reading scores.

Camden's Health & Wellbeing team have completed a needs assessment for older adults who would benefit from additional support around good nutrition. This

assessment will inform the development of targeted interventions to promote well-being, independent living, and access to key services as part of this mission's work.

We will be providing an additional £140k over two years of funding, a borough-wide food growing programme. With work that cuts across the Food and Estates missions, the program aims to establish a robust management model, develop diverse food growing models tailored to local needs, foster strategic partnerships, and integrate food growing into the council's long-term operations.

In further collaboration with the Estate Mission, Camden's Food Mission is identifying and preparing local spaces in estates to serve as hubs for connecting people through cooking, eating, and as creative spaces. These hubs will offer cooking classes, food safety training, and entrepreneurship support, empowering residents to make healthy food choices and develop cooking skills.

Very recently, we have been recognised with a Good Food Local-Leadership award. Camden is showing leadership on joined-up actions across London to tackling food insecurities and ensuring that everyone in London have access to healthy, nutritious diet and that our food systems are sustainable.

Community food provision is now easily accessible whether you are a resident visiting a warm welcome space or if you are searching online via Find Food Camden webpage.

Diversity Mission: By 2030, those holding positions of power in Camden are as diverse as our community – and the next generation is ready to follow.

The Diversity Mission, led by Cllr Nadia Shah focuses on how we can affect:

- Access to leadership opportunities within our communities that the Council has direct control over– - school governors, tenant and resident representative group – **represented through our School Governors work;**
- Training and support for leadership roles for people stepping into these spaces for the first time– - and building capacity for future leadership – **represented through our Black on Board and Future Leaders programmes;**
- Influencing our partners and commissioned organisations to have the same values and priorities as us in diversifying their leadership and power structures – **represented through our Clearview Commission;**
- Challenging and campaigning for diversity and equity as a critical part of healthy, flourishing and innovative leadership – represented through the **work we are leading within our own organisation to address barriers to progression** and sharing and promoting our approach to diverse recruitment with organisations in the Borough and partners.

Our work on the Diversity mission has focused on opening opportunities and building capacity for future leadership in local communities, by offering training and support for people stepping into these roles for the first time.

The Diversity Mission includes a focus on addressing barriers to progression as part of diversifying Camden's leadership in the long term. Over the last year, the first cohort of 24 participants on the Black on Board programme graduated in December 2023. So far, 17% of participants have secured a board position; 21% are awaiting the outcome of board applications; and 13% have applied for job promotions.

We started this work with a focus on our own organizational diversity – understanding how our recruitment processes and approaches could be improved to provide opportunities and reduce barriers to progression for diverse leaders. In diversifying Council executive leadership, at present 39.1% of directors are from Black, Asian, and other ethnic backgrounds. Also, in 2023, Camden saw an increase in Black, Asian and other ethnic representation across salary levels 4 and 5. We have also launched a Reporting Discrimination Hub for staff to enable increased understanding and response to concerns of discrimination and prejudice.

Based on the premise that inequality serves not only to suppress opportunities for income and wealth generation but can also restrict potential to self-determine community priorities, the Mission seeks to deepen local participation in the decisions that affect their lives.

In doing so, we have selected key leadership positions that operate as everyday focal points within and across communities, working to identify the interventions required to make these positions more diverse, and consequently more effective and successful. We have particularly focused on school leadership recognizing the focus of the Mission on the next generation – and we have focused resources on looking at diversifying school Governor roles and encouraging residents from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds to consider and apply for roles as school Governors.

Over recent months we have been gathering publicly available data about large local anchor institutions and employers across public and private sectors to help understand the current landscape of diversity in leadership.

In October 2023, 100 young people, selected from 156 applicants, joined the Future Leaders programme. Delivered by Future Leaders UK and hosted by the Maria Fidelis secondary school, the young people are following a 24-week programme consisting of 10 in-person sessions, 10 virtual sessions and enrichment weeks during the October and February half terms.

During the summer term 2023, the third annual School Governor diversity monitoring survey was carried out. The return rate was approximately 46%. Data on governors in

Camden is increasingly robust, boosting performance reporting capabilities in this area so that we can understand more about how our school governor group is changing and what support the Council needs to offer.

In 2023 Camden commissioned Clearview Research to undertake qualitative research to understand the barriers to recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups to Boards and decision-making bodies in Camden. Over the last six months, Clearview have spoken with a number of people across business boards, partner organisations, community organisations who are currently or were trustees, board members and governors to understand their experience – and what interventions the Council could make to increase recruitment and retention and improve the experience for people from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups. This report will shape the next phase of work focusing on how we can increase diverse leadership across Camden organisations.

Estates Mission: By 2030, Camden’s estates and their neighbourhoods are healthy, sustainable and unlock creativity. We want Camden’s estates to be healthy, sustainable and unlock creativity.

We want to see our residents empowered and feel a sense of ownership over the places where they live. How our estates are shaped will create opportunities to support a sense of belonging and connection, promote wellbeing and self-fulfillment and deliver climate action goals. We have been conducting a number of pilots and experiments across our Estates to respond to what we have heard from residents about what they want to change in their communities – and contributing to what we know as a Mission about how we can intervene across all our estates.

In July 2023, we kicked off our intensive tenant participation and engagement programme – setting ourselves the ambition to knock on as many of our tenant’s doors as possible within a year and hold local estate action days on our estates. We spoke to people about what it’s like living in their home, to learn about what’s great about the neighbourhood they live in and importantly, to understand more about the challenges they are experiencing and what we need to do to improve our services. A whole Council approach has been mobilised and Council and VCS services have come together to provide a holistic approach to supporting people. The energy from our local communities has been phenomenal – from community kitchens being established in our TRA Halls to sharing spaces being established to help people to live more sustainable lives. Some of the key projects emerging from the intensive tenant engagement include:

- Community champions working with residents at Oseney crescent to create a TRA – and working with residents at Kenbrook to set up a homework club once their TRA is reopened;

- Working with the Food Mission to set up community kitchens in TRA hall– - Alexandra and Ainsworth and Bourne have already expressed an interest;
- Planning for new sharing spaces at Kentish Town Library and Clarence Way in addition to existing three estate based sharing space– - all coordinated by Think and Do; and
- At Ampthill– - we are working with UCL and Ampthill residents to open a community kitchen - project ideas are being developed which would enable local people to use and sell food via the kitchen in local markets.

The learnings from resident engagement will form the foundation for partnership working for the mission on estates, unlocking wider partnerships and fostering an environment that supports social action within our estates – we will be working on Estate Action Plans emerging from engagement with our communities that reflect their priorities. For each estate we'll be developing plans of action in partnership with people living on them. To date we have reached out to over 7,000 tenanted households, knocked on doors on over 5,000 homes, and held 28 estate action days on our biggest estates.

Participatory Budgeting is a method for involving citizens in making decisions on how money is spent. It gives residents the power to shape the area they call home through decision making on how public money is spent in and around their estates. Our first pilot on Hilgrove estate saw us partner with the Winch to enable residents to make decisions on the money spent on their estate. Winning proposals included new sensory play equipment for children with special educational needs and disabilities, hiring a new apprentice caretaker, and new bin and bike storage.

The project adopted guiding principles that are in keeping with WMC and the Renewal Commission's ethos:

- Residents and council officers meet each other as equals.
- Residents should shape the process
- Residents not involved in traditional forms of engagement should lead.

With the Winch and Public Works, our pilot vacant spaces project seeks to find uses with the local community for a multi-bay garage on the Hillgrove Estate. We will be agreeing lease terms, selecting an operator and procuring an architect before design, planning and refurbishment works. A further 10 potential sites on estates across the borough have also been identified along with council funding with community engagement likely to start over the summer.

Our Denyer House project was set up to work closely with residents to improve the physical environment and safety of the estate. The areas for improvement have been identified by residents and a contractor has been appointed and will start delivering the

co-designed improvements to the exterior of the estate with the aim of completing them by May.

With a focus on our estates and social housing, Camden has a number of retrofit programmes to improve the sustainability and comfort of Council homes in the Borough – this includes:

- 91 properties being taken to at least an energy performance rating of C including installation of new window glazing, new loft insulation, new ventilation, new doors
- At 5-7 Belsize Grove in a conservation area, we are adding new solar panels, storage heaters, loft and dormer insulation, heat recovery ventilation – this is a £3.2m investment
- We received £3,584,120 from the social housing decarbonisation fund wave 2 to complete retrofit to 283 properties focusing on housing blocks and the worst performing street properties for heat retention
- The Council allocated £175k from the NLWA windfall and £50k from the family crisis fund to support families living in fuel poverty with responsive retrofit
- As part of the GLA Future Neighbourhoods Programme we have received funding for internal wall insulation in Somers Town in 50 homes
- We are out to tender on the Henderson Court PV panels which will provide energy for heating and hot water to residents at Henderson Court
- New Home Energy Advice team has been established by the Council to invest in free energy advice for tenants and support includes liaising with energy suppliers, energy-saving measures, draught-proofing and low-energy bulbs – this team also works with the Capital Works Team to liaise with residents on installing more significant retrofit and source funding and grants for retrofit.

We Make Camden Challenges

When developing We Make Camden, we also wanted to acknowledge our commitment to addressing some major challenges that citizens in the Borough were facing beyond our four missions. The six challenges are representative of some of the most complex issues facing the country today, encompassing systemic inequality and injustice, the climate emergency, rapid technological advancements, ageing populations and violence against women and girls.

We know that these Camden faces these challenges directly, and that the mission-led thinking can help us approach them in a new way. However, we know we cannot solve these problems alone, and that national policies and global advancements play a prominent role. Despite this complexity, as part of We Make Camden we have started to

build consensus in the borough about the tangible actions we can take forward to begin to tackle these challenges.

Safety Challenge: Everyone is safe at home and safe in our communities

A primary focus for meeting the challenge of keeping our residents safe in the borough has been protecting our citizens against domestic violence. Domestic abuse is a high harm, high volume crime that remains largely hidden. It has a profoundly traumatic and disruptive impact on the lives of survivors, their families, and communities. Anyone can be affected by domestic abuse, regardless of age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief. However, national evidence shows that domestic abuse differentially and disproportionately impacts marginalised communities. Domestic abuse is a highly gendered crime, which disproportionately affects women and people with minoritised gender-identities.

In January 2023, Cabinet endorsed Camden's Theory of Change approach and the pillars underpinning our work and the Council's overall vision statement: "Camden is a place where Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is unacceptable and not tolerated. We want to reduce levels of VAWG in Camden, to broaden, enrich and increase the levels of support to survivors of VAWG and their families, and to deal with perpetrators".

We have continued to invest in a dedicated, in-house Independent Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocate service, Camden Safety Net (CSN) and invest an additional £400,000 every year to help prevent and tackle domestic abuse.

This year our Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) team has grown we launched a new Specialist Domestic Abuse Navigator service, an assertive outreach-based service for survivors experiencing multiple disadvantage and exclusion.

Our vision at Camden is to deliver exemplary Housing and Repairs Services that are proactive, responsive, relational, and empathetic. We have signed up for Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation and created a dedicated post to take this work forward. DAHA accreditation is a best-practice approach, endorsed by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, for how local authorities can respond to domestic abuse.

We have also invested in a Perpetrator Lead role to develop our strategic and operational response to perpetrators of domestic abuse.

We have commissioned Camden Law Centre to provide free legal advice to domestic abuse survivors, and commissioned Hopscotch, a specialist service that supports Black

and Asian women to deliver a one-stop shop domestic abuse service. Hopscotch are also piloting positive masculinity workshops at Haverstock School.

We want women and girls to be safe when they go out in Camden, particularly during the evening and at night. As part of our work to improve safety, we have been encouraging businesses to sign up to the 'Ask for Angela' scheme which allows residents to get help if they find themselves in an unsafe situation while at a venue. We are working with the Safer Business Network to deliver training to all licensed venues and are also encouraging them to become part of the Safe Haven Scheme.

We also created the borough's first ever Camden Safety Hub that was launched in November 2022 which is proving successful. It assists people who find themselves in an unsafe situation, vulnerable state or needing some extra help or support during a night out. In December 2023 the Safety Hub Bus was also launched which is parked on Parkway in Camden Town and is open every Saturday evening.

We have been carrying out Women Safety walkabouts to identify areas where women don't feel safe and as a result have fitted more lighting and CCTV in these areas. We are working with local community groups and Camden Voices Against Abuse to shape future walkabouts and have an input into our wider council strategy against VAWG.

To support Police to tackle VAWG related crime, Camden Council have provided the Police with a Domestic Abuse Utility Vehicle. This has been funded through a portion of the Late-Night Levy. The Domestic Abuse Utility Vehicle allows the Police to gather evidence within a faster timeframe and supports the acceleration of urgent actions raised by Camden's Domestic Abuse MARAC.

Project Vigilant continues to proactively target perpetrators of violence against women and girls within evening and night-time economy venues using uniformed and non-uniformed Police Officers. The objectives include preventing violence against women and girls and enables predatory behaviour to be identified and challenged immediately. The operation has successfully engaged with perpetrators which has included arrests and arrests of those in breach of bail conditions, dispersals being issued and sharing intelligence to tackle offending behaviour.

Since the inception of the Domestic Abuse Utility Vehicle and Project Vigilant, we have seen a borough wide reduction in the number of VAWG related incidents reported to the Metropolitan Police. From when deployments began at the beginning of the financial year, Q3 shows us that there has been a 10% reduction. If reporting continues in this way Q4 is projected to show an 18% reduction since the first quarter.

We are working with the police to create opportunities for Camden residents and communities to co-design the development of a local policing plan to align with the = objectives in the New Met for London Strategy.

Keeping our young people safe remains a key priority for us as a Council, working in partnership with our local police and community. Our work to implement the recommendations of Camden's Youth Safety Taskforce continues and in the last year we have developed a three-year Youth Safety Outcomes Framework and Action Plan (2023). The new framework has been refreshed and aligned with the outcomes framework for 'Good Life Camden' and focuses on the key overarching outcomes of a reduction in violence involving Camden's young people, an increase in young people feeling safe in Camden and an increase in trust between young people and those in positions of authority.

Our Youth Safety Week in 2023 focused on 'Keeping Children and Young People in Camden Safe', aiming to raise awareness, encourage participation and signpost young people in need of support to the right places, with lots of activities, events, webinars and workshops run for young people, parents, professionals and partners across services. We held another very successful multimedia competition designed to encourage young people to get creative by producing a range of media and arts projects based on the theme 'keeping children and young people in Camden safe'. Young people involved in the project won money for their school or youth centre, as well as vouchers for themselves. Two of the runners-up and one of the winners also received funding to help produce their films as part of the Council-run competition.

Our work to keep Camden's children and young people safe, and the work of the Youth Mission to enhance access to economic opportunity for our young people are tightly linked. This is exemplified by the launch of 'Honest Grind Coffee', a radical new employee programme to help young people gain valuable work experience, who won the AYM (Association of Youth Justice Managers) (Association of Youth Justice Managers) John Hawkins award. Camden is the first London borough to receive the award, and the £500 prize will be used to pay the young people on the HGC wages in monetary value (usually they receive vouchers) and put towards marketing and promotion of coffee sales.

Finally, we launched our Anti-Social Behaviour Taskforce trail in November 2023 to develop an intelligence led approach towards reducing ASB activity in the Housing Estates more disproportionately impacted and will focus on the management of complex and challenging cases.

Debt Challenge: Everyone can get the support they need to avoid debt and be financially secure

Financial security remains a critical focus for the Council to support residents during the ongoing cost of living crisis.

We have pledged to work with all our residents, our voluntary sector, and across all our public services to ensure that no child, no resident, and no family in Camden go hungry or cold. Alongside this, we are seeking to put in place services and support to enable people to access the help they need to avoid debt and be financially secure in the long term.

The council has administered a range of programmes designed to provide support for those facing financial hardship in the borough including the Cost-of-Living Crisis Fund (CoLCF). The online self-referral for the fund launched in May 2023, allowing residents to independently access the fund without the support of trusted partners which has removed barriers to support considerably. This Autumn and Winter we received 3,381 referrals and have approved 92%. Over £1m has been given in awards over the last four months, demonstrating the continued need and the peak in demand over the Winter period.

The Tackling Poverty team work with Camden Federation of Private Tenants, the Camden Advice Network and other partners to increase awareness and referrals from the Private Rented Sector (PRS). The team work to ensure that provision is available in the community to support residents avoid evictions and access additional support.

Benefit uptake campaigns include the Pension Credit (PC) take up campaign, which (as of December 2023) generated £1,548,546 for 260 households, covering PC moving forward for the year, back-dated amounts and their entitlement to the 2023 Cost of Living payments. Looking at this over the likely lifetime of their claims, it represents over £17m of savings for residents.

As with the other missions and challenges, our challenges to address debt and financial hardship cannot be undertaken by the council alone. The Community Partnership and Tackling Poverty teams are continuing to convene the Camden Voluntary Community Sectors' (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 Cost-of-Living response.

By proactively co-convening key statutory and VCS services we collectively aim to:

- Improve consistency of awareness, signposting, and referrals across systems

- Improving equity, access and support for residents on low incomes - via targeted interventions/support – ‘wraparound support’
- Cascade/share training and best practice
- Develop a space for peer support
- Gathering data and case studies for campaigning – Tackling Poverty
- Collaboration and developing a shared and coherent view of information, advice, and support in Camden

As evidenced last year, the cost-of-Living crisis has led to an increase in citizen action – with more people in the borough mobilised to take action to support those living around them. To respond and capitalise on this momentum, the Council has committed to fund 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) via allocation of a Community Infrastructure Levy investment to support citizen-led action.

There are numerous examples of holistic provision within VCS Warm Welcome Hosts provision. These include:

- The London Irish Centre – Advice, pantry, social, community meals and debt support
- Castlehaven Community Association – Multi generational activities and support, social prescribing, community garden, food bank, and advice and debt support
- Gospel Oak Living Room – After school club, community laundry, food coop and healthy cooking activities
- Queens Crescent Community Association – Multi generational activities and support, advice, community meals, and emergency food provision

The Camden Advice Network (CAN) launched in April 2020. It is funded by £1million per year over 7 years, the network includes the following 13 community providers: Citizen Advice Camden, Age UK Camden, Camden Peoples First, Camden Community Law Centre, Mary Ward Legal, Camden Disability Action, Hopscotch, West Hampstead Women’s centre, London Irish Centre, Somers Town Community Association, Kosmos, Camden Somali Cultural Centre, and New Horizon Youth Project.

Since launching the network has collectively supported over 47,000 residents, raised over £9million in unclaimed benefits, and supported residents to have £1million in debt written off, across both priority and non-priority debt.

The Council recognises the need to allocate resources to think more strategically and in the long-term about how we might continue improving our approach to debt collection and to support those residents who are experiencing financial hardship. To this end, the

Strategy and Design team worked over the winter 2022-23 on the Debt & Financial Security Discovery: working with a core team of subject matter experts within the Council and consulting with residents, to build a deep understanding of the challenges faced by staff and residents around debt collection and support, and consider how the Council could better support people in debt.

Our vision is to create a compassionate and joined-up system for people in Camden who are experiencing escalating debt - enabling the Council to collect income from people who can afford to pay but doing this in an empathetic, supportive and sustainable way that protects people from

financial hardship. In response to the discovery findings the team will continue to develop the service propositions, staff skills and enabling systems for us to deliver on our ambitious vision, sharing learnings and updates from initial testing over the course of the next year.

I am grateful for Cllr Richard Olszewski for his leadership on addressing debt and the cost-of-living crisis in Camden.

Digital Inclusion Challenge: Everyone in Camden can access and be part of a digital society

Following comprehensive digital inclusion discovery research that concluded in early 2023, the newly established Digital Inclusion Team was formed within Digital and Data Services and embedded in the Technology Adoption Service.

Drawing on Camden's mission-based model, the team has used citizen-centered design principles and embraced innovation through test-and-learn models, drawing on established best practices from leaders in this area.

The team chose to focus on digital skills development as the primary barrier to address in year one, as the largest of barriers to digital inclusion from national research, it would provide the areas for the largest strides forward to be made. The team has focused on building capacity, working directly with citizens, establishing a champion network, developing a comprehensive borough-wide view of digital inclusion and providing targeted support and evaluation to the council's services.

Over the year, the team has started to build a cross borough network of services, organisations and community groups to address this together. This includes an internal Digital Inclusion Forum and building relationships with thirteen national organisations

including, The Good Things Foundation, Digital Unite, Accenture, HSBC, UCL and the Digital Poverty Alliance.

We have worked directly with fourteen Camden Community groups to understand the work they do or wish to do to support residents in getting online.

We have commissioned 'Citizens Online' to provide consultancy support on web pages and outreach work to improve understanding of digital inclusion provision across the borough.

In 2024, we will be bringing these groups together in a borough wide network to tackle the challenge together.

We have piloted direct community outreach activities in partnership with the Community Wellbeing Bus team spanning GPs, food banks, places of worship, community halls and local festivals to test the delivery of one-to-one informal support to those excluded. This work has been targeted into areas of the borough that data has shown to have the highest proportion of digital exclusion based.

Similarly to the test and learn approach adopted by the missions in Camden, this three-month pilot has gathered important learnings for what works, what can be improved and approaches that don't resonate across the borough. It has created a conversation directly with groups and residents to understand what support they need to tackle digital exclusion. These learnings guided the approach to a second three-month engagement during the spring.

The conversations have led to the development of a 'database of digital inclusion opportunities' for trainers or speakers to attend existing community activity to provide guidance and skills training directly to residents.

These opportunities can be matched to volunteer staff from across Digital and Data Services or other staff or citizen volunteers trained as 'Digital Inclusion Champions'.

The Digital Champions model is now well established as an effective means for improving digital skills amongst the community. It empowers individuals with digital skills to become local "Digital Champions," who provide support, guidance, and training to help others, be they friends and family or neighbours to navigate the digital work confidently. With support from your peers and existing support network it has proven to be one of the most effective means of providing support.

We have recruited and trained fifteen Digital Champions and started their placement in the community in February 2024. We have established a partnership with the UCL volunteering service to provide volunteers on a credit-earning basis and are working to target both frontline staff across Camden to upskill and community group members to join the programme as we look to rapidly scales up over 2024.

Agreeing the basis on which to judge digital exclusion versus inclusion sits at the heart of being able to track our progress towards a truly inclusive borough. The team has led conversations across the organisation in the hope of leading to a common set of indicators that can be used to track progress with the challenges.

We have been working internally to introduce the use of the 'Minimum Digital Living Standards' alongside the Camden Good Life Measures. We have adapted the standards to create targeted standards for known excluded groups across London such as those with disabilities, small business and the elderly. These standards can now be used across the organisation to inform surveying and data collection.

The team have met with the Digital Poverty Alliance and The Good things Foundation as the national leaders in this policy area, who we have been working with to champion the use of 'Minimum Digital Living Standards'. The team has also worked closely with several services to support the generation of new ideas and approaches or evaluate existing service approaches including Libraries, Adult and Community Learning, Schools and Camden Learning and Contact Camden.

Social Isolation Challenge: No one in Camden is socially isolated and without the means to connect to their community.

Camden recognises loneliness as a significant driver of poor health outcomes that needs a population approach and collective action to tackle.

To understand the local landscape around loneliness an in-depth health needs assessment was developed on social isolation, loneliness, and community connectedness. We found that in Camden, our residents are more likely to identify themselves as being lonely some of the time (33%), compared with London (21%) and England (20%), and that social isolation and loneliness spans the life course – although social isolation is highest among older people and increases with age, people aged 16-24 are the most likely to be lonely. The needs assessment also found that people from black, and other ethnic minority groups, as well as those on lower incomes, are more likely to experience loneliness and social isolation. The working group has met monthly over 2023 to prioritise recommendations from the health needs assessment.

As part of developing the health needs assessment key stakeholders were identified and participated in a multi-disciplinary workshop, where attendees identified potential gaps in local provision and opportunities for intervention and mobilisation. Following the workshop, the Community Connectedness and Friendships Working Group (CCFWG) was established. Recognising the key role of the voluntary and community sector in enabling residents to feel connected to communities, the working group is co-chaired by

the CEO of Voluntary Action Camden and an officer from Camden's Health and Wellbeing Department, which reflects the membership of the working group.

The Health Needs Assessment also shone a light on outstanding practice in Camden, demonstrating how we are already responding to the challenge. For example, the Community Champions is a pilot programme sponsored by the Health & Wellbeing Board and funded by Public Health. The programme pays for a single Champion Coordinator on three Camden estates, each hosted by a Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) organisation. The Coordinator's role is to help residents agree hyper-local priorities to improve health and wellbeing, and to recruit and train a volunteer network of Champions. The Community Champion volunteers deliver activities and initiatives to address local needs and act as a bridge to the wider offer of support.

At Regent's Park Estate 70 Champions have been recruited, engaging hundreds. This programme manages an inclusive and inter-generational network that simultaneously tackles loneliness and drives community-powered change on the estate.

There are various social prescribing schemes across Camden that connect people with activities, groups and services that improve health and wellbeing. Voluntary Action Camden's Care Navigation and Social Prescribing Service reported that up to 80% of referrals can include addressing loneliness or social isolation. They work closely with residents to support them through a journey from feeling lonely or disconnected towards feeling able to make friends and build a sustainable network.

The work on loneliness has been taken to various forums to share learning and gain input from as many people as possible. Workshops have been held for Councillors and for the community at the Disability Oversight Panel. Updates have been taken to the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee to gain feedback on the work so far and the plans for taking this work forward. 37 VCS organisations that have secured funding from the Community Partnership Fund are also collaborating around the social isolation challenge.

Plans are underway to develop an online seminar to raise awareness of the impact of loneliness and to upskill front line staff across the borough to identify people who are lonely and on how to have conversations about loneliness.

We're also at the planning stage for a communications campaign to tackle the stigma around loneliness. This will be a long-term, phased campaign, personalised to specific groups. The initial campaigns will be aimed at some of the groups most at risk of loneliness, specifically, young people aged 16-24, UK and international students, older men aged 65+, and adults with learning disabilities. Within these groups there will be a campaign focus on residents from Black, Asian and other ethnic minority

backgrounds. We will arrange focus groups with these groups to feed into the campaign.

Housing Challenge: Camden has enough decent, safe, warm, and family-friendly housing to support our communities

Ensuring Camden has enough decent, safe, warm and family-friendly housing is one of our biggest challenges. We are operating in an increasingly difficult national context with pressures on housing seen across the country and particularly in London. It means there are not enough truly affordable homes for everyone – to buy, to rent privately and for social rent – which means people are being forced to move out of Camden and many people who have grown up here cannot afford to raise their families in the borough. I want to thank Cllr Danny Beales for his unwavering leadership around the issue of affordable, accessible and high-quality housing – particularly social housing.

Since COVID, there has been a 41% reduction in private rental sector listings in London and there has been a 20% increase in the average London asking rent since the beginning of 2022. In 2023, median monthly rents in the private rented sector in Camden were £450 higher than the London median (£1,950 compared to £1,500). The increasingly narrow window of affordability has been exacerbated by an insufficient welfare system and the ongoing cost of living crisis. This has led to a 9% increase in the number of households on the Housing Register this year.

Camden's Community Investment Programme (CIP) is a key tool in realising the ambition that everyone in Camden should have a place they call home. The Council, through the CIP, is tackling the housing crisis by building bigger, better homes for families and communities, helping to relieve issues such as overcrowding and poor-quality housing. We remain fully committed to the ambitious target of delivering 4,850 new homes throughout the lifetime of the programme, with an estimated total investment of £2.3bn. We have now delivered over 1,500 homes, with another 495 homes currently under construction, and 1,014 within the approved pipeline. In the face of the many wider economic factors working against us, this year CIP has continued to progress schemes where many others have stalled. In 2023 we have completed 155 new homes at Maitland Park and Highgate Newtown, and we have started construction on 376 new homes, including 194 genuinely affordable homes and 89 new temporary homes.

We have also developed a strategy to tackle overcrowding through purchasing family-friendly homes. We recognise that the properties we do have available as social housing don't necessarily meet the needs of our families, with nearly 1 in 10 households overcrowded in Camden. As a result, we have developed a 5-year plan to purchase 280

family sized homes (homes with 2 or more bedrooms). Beyond the supply of housing, we also want to ensure that the homes we do have are safe, warm and dry. Since 2017 we have been developing and implementing our resident and fire and building safety programmes which has included an annual investment of £4.5m a year to implement the new fire and building safety regulations and allocating over £208m of our own resources since 2017 for fire safety works. We have also secured nearly £100m in grant funding towards the remediation of facades.

The Council is committed to the highest standards of resident safety and has carried out significant work to improve the safety of its homes. The Council approved its Fire and Building Safety Charter in July 2021 and is an early adopter in relation to regulatory change, playing an active role in Government working groups to develop the new regulations. In July 2023 we received a regulatory notice from the Regulator for Social Housing about the time taken to close actions raised within our Fire Risk Assessments. In response, we drew up an action plan and I am pleased to say that we have moved from 400 overdue high-risk actions in June 2023 to just 5 in April 2024. Across the last year we closed 10,500 FRA actions in total. All fire and risk management assessment actions are in progress under our work programme, with the Council focusing on the highest-risk and oldest actions first. We are installing carbon monoxide and hard-wired smoke detectors in Council homes, with the full installation of the programmes due to finish in the Spring of 2024. We are continuing our programme of Fire Risk Assessments in Camden, working with tenants, community groups and our Fire Safety Advisory Panel – currently 98% of Camden blocks have an up-to-date fire risk assessment where actions are being proactive addressed.

We have also taken the necessary steps to ensure we will be compliant with the new regulatory requirements of the Building Safety Act, which has included recruiting a robust Building Safety team and providing key evacuation and firefighting information to the emergency services. The resident-led Housing Regulatory and Fire Safety Compliance panel continues to hold us to account, and we have recently appointed an independent expert as co-chair to improve independence and accountability. We shared an annual report with residents of all Council homes on the five Fire & Building Safety Charter commitments setting out how we are performing against key safety standards and identifying areas to improve.

More broadly our next steps will include an increased focus on gaining access for works for all statutory fire and building safety checks; coordinating actions across teams so we can consistently secure access across gas safety, fire safety, electrical testing and water hygiene programmes; and finding solutions with residents for the long-term removal of front door safety grilles. We are also setting up a dedicated fire and building safety micro-site for residents of Council homes so that they can find information, advice and support in one place and are developing apps and systems which will help

residents who have sensory disabilities or who first language is not English to access fire and building safety information about their homes and support from our fire and building safety teams.

Tackling damp and mould also remains a priority for the Council. By the end of last year, over 5,000 properties had a mould inspection, and over 2,000 had a mould wash carried out. We do still have a number of active cases due to the age and condition of the properties we manage, but we have a dedicated team of 12 full-time Mould Marshalls working with tenants who report this problem. To support our residents better, we have introduced Saturday appointments, which have been very successful, and we offer many ways for residents to report this to us, including WhatsApp, SMS, Livechat, video calling as well as telephone.

In line with our ambition to be guided by our residents in all areas, our Housing & Property Residents Panel has been running since 2022. The 27 residents and 2 DMC reps on the panel use their lived experiences to look at our housing performance, help develop new policies, and shape how our services should be more focused around residents, and not just operational needs. For example, the panel has helped us improve our fire safety work in Camden's communities and come up with the idea for our very popular home repair videos on YouTube.

We have also launched a Housing Customer Experience Oversight Panel, and they had their first panel session on 7 February 2024. The panel currently has 5 members who will offer feedback and suggestions on how to improve services in a genuinely resident-led way. The new panel will meet 6 times per year to review complaints that come into Camden's Housing and Repairs services. The panel will be able to invite senior managers from Camden teams and major contractors along to panel meetings to explain what they're doing to prevent recurring complaints in their areas. It will also discuss the reasons behind complaints and offer advice to managers about the kinds of complaints that are coming up, as well as make suggestions about how to improve things so that residents don't need to complain in the future.

I would like to thank Councillor Meric Apak for his leadership in this portfolio and his unwavering commitment to delivering for tenants in the midst of difficult national circumstances.

Climate Challenge: Camden's local economy tackles the climate emergency

In 2019 Camden declared a climate and ecological emergency and committed to do everything we can to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Camden to 'net-zero' by 2030.

The Camden Climate Action Plan, adopted in 2020, sought to strike a balance between the need to act quickly to reduce carbon emissions in Camden, while ensuring that the transition to a low carbon Camden does not have adverse social and economic impacts on residents given that the cost of a zero carbon Camden exceeds £10 billion.

The key measure of progress against the Climate Action Plan is the level of borough wide greenhouse gas emissions (CO2 emissions). The Council's CO2 emissions across our own corporate buildings and operations are also measured to determine organisational progress. Using data from the latest reporting year, we have been successful in lowering CO2 emissions from our own estate and operations, excluding Council housing, by 63% compared to the 2010/11 baseline financial year. Emissions of our own estate and operations are calculated using energy use data from the Council's corporate buildings, schools and fleet.

Camden's Climate Plan recognises that almost two thirds of borough wide CO2 emissions are generated by the commercial and industrial sectors in Camden and therefore includes a number of actions to support this sector to reduce its carbon emissions. The Camden Climate Alliance business network is the key engagement and support offer for the sector and all-time membership now stands at 428, with organisations reporting an average annual carbon reduction of 22%.

In 2022/23, Camden expanded its support offering for businesses through securing £640,789 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The Fund is supporting 125 businesses in Camden and Brent to develop plans to decarbonise and achieve net-zero. The CCA also works to link local businesses with community-led climate projects through the Climate Connectors programme, which has been renewed for 2023/24. In 2022/23, more than £27,000 in funding from businesses, £5,000 in corporate volunteering time and 239 hours were volunteered to support climate projects among schools and community groups.

The Climate Action Plan continues to be supported by Camden's Climate Citizen Panel. The panel of residents meet quarterly to help shape the development of projects within the Climate Action Plan.

Since its adoption, 98% of all Climate Action Plan actions have either been completed or are in delivery. The third annual review measures progress against the 72 current actions in the Climate Action Plan using an indicator developed by the Climate Change Committee. The third annual review shows that ten actions have been achieved, two have been partly achieved, with 60 actions in delivery. Some highlights include:

- Camden and the Somers Town community won £3M from the GLA's Future Neighbourhoods 2030 programme, with over £3M of additional funding secured from local partners to deliver a sustainable neighbourhood in the area. Launched

in March 2022, the programme has already created 15 temporary green jobs, facilitated the retrofit of 30 homes to improve their energy efficiency and supported the development of over 200m² of green spaces across estates. A new online engagement platform has also been created to share progress and celebrate achievements.

- Over 2,290 borrowings have now taken place from **Kilburn and Kentish Town's Libraries of Things** reporting 27.6 tonnes of CO₂ saved and 13.9 tonnes of waste prevented. The Fixing Factory electrical repair shop, which opened in October 2022 on Queen's Crescent, has now supported over 400 residents to repair electrical items with over 200 items now back in use.
- We now have 560 **electric vehicle charging points** in Camden, an increase of 70% in a year. In addition, 300 cycle hangars in Camden and over 29km of protected cycle routes had also been installed by the time of the 3rd Annual Review.
- Camden completed a comprehensive **£3.7M energy efficiency retrofit of Swiss Cottage Library** in 2023. The project includes the installation of improved glazing, insulation, lighting, low carbon heating upgrades and will save an estimated 138 tonnes of CO₂ a year. Energy efficiency projects at both Acland Burgley and Eleanor Palmer Schools were also completed, reducing emissions from both buildings by 45 tonnes CO₂ annually.
- With support from the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, Camden commenced **two major retrofit projects at 5-7 Belsize Grove and Brookes Court** in 2023. Works include the installation of improved window glazing, insulation, and Solar PV, with additional retrofit works planned for a further 27 street properties in 2023-24. A further £3.1M was secured from the Government's Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund in March 2023 to retrofit approximately 280 of our least energy efficient homes.
- In November 2023, Camden published its first two-year Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan which has been produced to improve our understanding of climate hazards while devising a set of activities to improve the borough's resilience to them. The plan was informed by a public consultation on climate readiness along with outputs from a Climate Risk and Vulnerability Data review conducted by Arup in 2023. The Climate Citizen Panel also supported the design and communications approach for the plan at their meeting in July 2023.

The Camden Climate Investment

- Secure consent for a solar energy installation on Council buildings: A solar installation, to maximise the amount of renewable energy that can be produced from the available space on the roof of the building, at Henderson Court is being considered by the planning department.

- Fully electric vehicles to replace Camden's fleet of diesel and petrol vehicles with greener alternatives. We've bought six fully electric low emission vehicles to enhance the operations of our Estate Services, Post and Fleet Services teams.
- Six new Healthy School Streets have been delivered since June 2023 as part of Phase 5 of the programme: four in the Somers Town area of Camden at Maria Fidelis School, Regent High School, Edith Neville and Blossom House Schools, and two in West Hampstead at West Hampstead Primary and Kingsgate Primary Schools

The Council has collaborated with Thames Water, the National Flood Forum, and the South Hampstead Flood Action Group to enhance community resilience against flooding in South Hampstead. This area has been notably affected by flooding during the three significant flooding events documented in Camden in 1975, 2002, and 2021. The community flood plan has led to the formulation of measures such as community leaf litter clearance and surveys of basement properties with elevated flood risk exposure.

In my role as Chair of London Councils, I've promoted investment in the climate programme. Overall, London boroughs have agreed to invest £2 million in the next phase of London Councils' Climate Programme, with the rollout of pan-London projects, research and data to support boroughs' individual and collective climate action. The priorities identified for the next two years focus on pan-London projects that:

- Help boroughs make faster progress on climate action through developing shared solutions that can be adopted and implemented in multiple boroughs
- Address skills, capacity and coordination gaps that can help London to deliver at scale
- Strengthen London's research, data and intelligence to enable more strategic action on climate and enable us to track progress
- Develop new delivery models and partnerships that can attract investment and bring additional capacity, expertise and innovative solutions to London's climate challenges

Also, in my role as Chair of London Councils I've encouraged the work of 3Ci across London and in Camden in particular. 3Ci have continued to develop their innovative approach to driving private investment into local net zero action, through the development of the Net Zero Neighbourhoods model, the national Net Zero Projects Pipeline and work on a technical assistance facility. Key highlights include:

- Delivery of the Net Zero Investment Task Force and report, led by Catherine McGuinness, which identified strong investor support for Net Zero

Neighbourhoods, together with key challenges that 3Ci will now work to resolve with investment and other experts

- Strong engagement with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and Shadow frontbench, with ongoing work to identify how the 3Ci model can deliver on government and opposition priorities
- Publication at COP28 of the Net Zero Neighbourhoods (NZN) pitchbook, profiling 15 borough NZNs - including Some–s Town in Camden - amongst a national suite of 40 proposals that demonstrates local leadership and investment in integrated NZ approaches
- Launch of the London NZN cohort, bringing together 12 boroughs, including Camden, who are working together at pace to share learning and develop full NZN business cases
- Advanced discussions with the Greater London Authority around funding to update the London Net Zero Projects Pipeline, and deliver options for a fully dynamic, live London pipeline
- A number of regional investor events across the UK, bringing together local places and leaders with investors to discuss emerging investable propositions
- 3Ci partnership in the government's Net Zero Accelerator, which is working to accelerate replication of models like the Bristol LEAP in Greater Manchester, West Midlands and Yorkshire.

I would like to thank Cllr Adam Harrison and officers for their continued commitment and leadership here.

Key areas of Focus

Partnerships and Participation

We Make Camden is a vision developed in partnership with our citizens and we want to continue to support the great ideas that residents have for their communities.

We Make Camden Kit

We're now in the third year of our We Make Camden Kit partnership with Camden Giving, which provides money and support to residents and community groups with ideas for their communities that support any of the four We Make Camden missions.

The WMC Kit is a great example of how we are sharing power with citizens, Our We Make Camden citizen panel meets every other week to decide on which projects are funded. The participatory grantmaking process is run by Camden Giving with funding and resource support from the Council as well as partners who have provided over £300,00 of grant money to the project.

Since the Kit was set up in July 2021 it has funded 313 different community-led projects, 198 of which have come from individual ideas mobilising around the missions. The Kit is funding a range of projects led by Camden's diverse citizens that would struggle to access funding otherwise and are becoming long-term sustainable community activities.

There are some remarkable examples of what unleashing community power through the We Make Camden Kit has achieved:

- Friday Night Supper Club was set up by Alison and a group of friends to provide a fun, social space for children with special educational needs. The club has provided an opportunity for children and parents alike to socialise and make new connections, with a number of the parents going on to form a food cooperative together.
- Khady's Dream was developed by Kevin who wanted to use his life experience to support young people at risk of offending to understand the realities and consequences of being involved in crime. The team now provide workshops across London in schools, council and community settings.
- The Curious Club was created by Chris to bring together people that identify as LGBTQ+ and allies to stay curious! They run regular trips, workshops and cultural events getting to know new people and to maintain the mantra of lifelong learning. Chris says 'The world is full of people with incredible ideas and usually they just need a nudge to get going. And the We Make Camden Kit does that.'

One Kilburn

One Kilburn has become established as 'an alliance of local people, organisations, and businesses, working together to improve the quality of life of everyone in Kilburn'.

Camden Council had £10,000 to spend on the project and One Kilburn members designed a participatory funding process which concluded at the end of February 2023. 1,000 people participated in the decision making. The process has helped increase membership and develop local leadership as well as increase social action.

Space to meet is a major consideration for One Kilburn members and they have occupied the Play Hut in Kilburn Grange Park, using that as a meeting place and activating the park with a variety of new activities.

Major council schemes such as transport, library and arts programmes and family hubs are receiving a lot of support from residents through One Kilburn as there is a shared understanding of issues and opportunities. Future opportunities for coproduction include air quality, policing and addressing health inequalities.

This approach in Kilburn has enabled us to:

- Establish an open, well connected, community–governed network - with members positively sharing the benefits it's brought.
- Bring in additional external resource to the area (Kiln Theatre led a 250k national lottery bid via their One Kilburn role)
- Provide a platform for Council services (i.e. arts, libraries & transport) to collaborate and have 'one conversation' with Kilburn and to work with citizens who don't usually come forward.
- Support One Kilburn to open the Kilburn Play Hut as a meanwhile space, after being closed for many years.

Bringing citizens close to decision-making

The case for democratic renewal is overwhelming. We know we can only restore trust and build the networks and relationships needed to tackle complex issues by putting our communities, our citizens and our partners at the heart of our thinking about our future. When people and communities are given more power and agency, when our planning for the future is rooted in the imagination of our citizens and communities, we all benefit. This is why a participative approach must sit at the core of our society and how public services are delivered.

We're getting on with a radical shift in power that is seeing democratic renewal led from the bottom up. We continue to experiment with and deliver deliberative approaches, providing renewed mandates for shared action and change.

In March 2023, we concluded an extensive period of engagement with key stakeholders by hosting our first Evening and Night-Time Citizens' Assembly. The assembly had 47 members and they agreed on eight themes containing supporting principles and calls to action. We know we need to balance the needs of residents, visitors, and businesses who appreciate and enjoy these activities, with those who may be negatively impacted.

In housing, we've developed our Housing & Property Residents Panel. Residents on the panel use their lived experiences to look at our housing performance, help develop new policies, and suggest improvements to the way we deliver existing services. For example, the panel has helped shape how the enhanced repairs service works and improving fire safety and helping people feel safer in the community.

Our resident-led Data Charter, co-created with Camden citizens, guides how we collect, process and share data ethically. We want to be even more open and transparent. We are engaging with our residents through a series of Camden Talks Data events to explain and involve residents in how we use a wide range of data to improve and develop services and policy.

Last June, we held our first Youth Assembly focused on safety of young women and girls. 50 young women and girls attended and shared their experiences of sexism, misogyny and violence against women and girls. They generated an incredible amount of insight and ideas on how to balance some complex challenges facing young women in Camden. We are committed to ensuring Camden is a safe place for all its citizens.

We are continuing to work on the development of the Camden Community Wealth, a missions based, community led fund to invest in people, businesses and organisations within Camden. It will also be pioneering a new community-driven model of participatory investment, handing power back to citizens to help make decisions about how and what we invest in. Citizen scientists are leading participation to shape the fund this year.

WMC Summit

In March 2023, we held our second annual We Make Camden Summit at the Wellcome Collection, to reflect on our progress over the past year in working towards our We Make Camden ambitions. The Summit brought together a movement of 150 citizens and representatives from a diverse range of Camden organisations, to celebrate work already taking place and convene around further action needed to tackle the biggest issues facing the borough.

The event launched our State of the Borough report and the Good Life–Camden framework - a wellbeing measurement framework was co-created with residents and staff that shows what it means to live a good life in Camden. We heard from a range of citizens and partners from across voluntary, health, education, housing and businesses about their work to help achieve our Missions. The breakouts and panel discussions were filled with an amazing creative energy and sense of possibility, with many new connections made and ideas sparked.

This years' Summit – to be held in April 2024 - will be an opportunity to welcome an even bigger group of citizens and other Camden representatives, who will be sharing their experiences of working to progress towards the missions over the last year. We'll be using this annual event to come together to reflect on the latest data and evidence in the Council's State of the Borough report and hear of how the Good Life Camden Framework has progressed and is now being used by partners to assess the difference that their services or programmes are making by focusing on the measures that matter most to the people of Camden.

Cost of Living

Camden Council has made tackling inequality a core part of our priorities and commitments – it is central to our purpose outlined in We Make Camden. There has been a persistent and increasing wealth and income inequality gap in the Borough –

one that we have sought to tackle through our housing, employment, education, health, and other services.

This cost-of-living crisis is and will continue causing long-term harm requiring both an urgent response and the design of our services to respond to poverty and inequality in our communities for the foreseeable future. We have pledged to work with all our residents, our voluntary sector, and across all our public services to ensure that no child, no resident, and no family in Camden go hungry or cold. Alongside this, we have sought to put in place services and support to enable people to access the help they need to avoid debt and be financially secure in the long term.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living at the Budget setting Full Council in February 2023 announced a "Cost of Living" budget allocation and a number of investments to support ongoing work to tackle the cost-of-living crisis.

Cost of Living Crisis Fund (CoLCF) is a £2.25m fund to support residents in severe hardship with the essentials needed to live. Within this there are also Resettlement Grants, one off awards of up to £1000. We have also been administering government funds: the £4m Household Support Fund and £622k Discretionary Housing Payments.

In February 2023, we announced the creation of a one-off Cost of Living Family Crisis Fund. We committed that universal primary school free school meals would continue beyond the academic year 2023/24 and beyond and ensure it would be a permanent offer for Camden primary school children.

We also announced that the time-limited Family Crisis Fund would focus its support on supporting children and young people in secondary school entitled to free school meals or otherwise experiencing hunger and food poverty and helping with school clothing. The fund supported 16,500 in 9000 households to avoid school holiday hunger. We also provided £100 in cash to parents/carers of children who moved into year 7 in September 2023 to help with the cost of school uniforms and school clothing.

In 2023, we launched a Money Advice Service to provide residents with tailored help and support with money and debt, and to help ensure residents are accessing all the benefits and help with money they're entitled to – including our Cost-of-Living Crisis Fund. We also launched our Better Off Calculator, which helps residents check they're receiving all the benefits they're entitled to. Both those services helped nearly 5,900 residents access support last year.

In November 2023 the council established a Cost-of-Living Community Response Fund 2023/24. This fund, comprising £450,000 from CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy), the Family Crisis Fund and other Council budgets was established to provide grants to VCS organisations to support residents and communities, who are most impacted by the rising cost of living. The grants awarded through this programme will be restricted to the

provision of additional services and activities that respond directly to the impact that the rising cost of living is having on residents.

In December 2023 the council coordinated eight VCS Cost of Living Community Response Meetings across the borough. A total of 145 organisations registered and/or attended a session - 13 partners representing the wards in the North Neighbourhood, 36 in the East, 54 in Central, 15 in the South and 27 in the West - reflecting and representing multiple stakeholders including VCS organisations, schools, faith organisations, TRAs, GPs, community activists and organisers. These meetings were established to promote collaboration and partnership between VCS organisations.

A second additional investment of £60K was awarded to 12 community organisations in Summer 2023 as part of a Cost-of-Living Equity Fund. The fund was specifically aimed to support residents disproportionately impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.

We've continued to provide funding to local partners to provide Warm Welcome Spaces across Camden where residents can go to stay warm, get involved in free events and activities and get advice with the cost-of-living crisis. These spaces include council services and partner organisations that have committed to providing warm, welcoming spaces for residents all year round with information about the support that is available for residents impacted by the rising cost of living.

Last year we launched our Home Energy Advice Team who provide amazing 'warm and well' home visits to tenants to give in-person or over the phone advice on energy bills, energy debt, energy usage and keeping your home warm.

Our Good Work Camden service continued supporting residents during the cost-of-living crisis to find a new or better paid job, and training opportunities as well. Last year, we also launched a Good Work Camden job hub specifically for disabled people. In 2023, Good Work Camden helped over 700 people into work or training.

We invested £29 million into our Council Tax Support Scheme, which reduces the amount of council tax people who have a low income have to pay. Camden's scheme is one of the most generous council tax schemes in London and in 2023, it provided 16,000 of our poorest residents with funding to pay for their entire council tax bill.

Supporting Refugees and the Borough of sanctuary

Camden is currently host to nearly 1000 refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants currently living or transient in the borough. Refugee communities are subject to different rights and status, depending on the terms or circumstances of their entry into the UK. They are also subject to different levels of Government support, and public funding and

some refugee communities are more disconnected from Council and community support networks than others.

As a borough of sanctuary Camden is committed to helping all refugees living in the borough or transient in the borough to access the support they need to rebuild their lives. To achieve this Camden is sustaining and building refugee facing services and working with a range of strategic and local partners to deliver places of sanctuary, welcome, dignity and inclusion for refugee communities.

In March 2024, the Council held a “waves of migration” event, which brought together our refugee community leaders, members and partner agencies. The event anticipated our full accreditation as a borough of sanctuary and will be a chance to celebrate the different communities which have found sanctuary in Camden over many decades.

Camden has a strong track record of welcoming refugees, made possible by the reach of our services and the strength of our communities. Our thriving Ukrainian community, for example, have been able to begin rebuilding their lives, thanks to the successful Home For Ukraine scheme.

In my role as Chair of London Councils, I have lobbied nationally to ensure councils have the resources to provide the support refugees coming to our boroughs need. Policy wins have included the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities’ decision to extend ‘Thank you’ payments for the third year of Homes for Ukraine Visas and to top up the Homelessness Prevention Grant for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 years, recognising homelessness pressures arising from the Ukraine schemes. We have also successfully lobbied for national Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) funding schemes allowing councils to purchase homes for Afghan refugees, Ukrainian refugees and residents facing homelessness in our boroughs,

We are now building on these foundations to create longer term refugee service priorities, ensuring we have refugee facing services which are more future proofed and able to make a contribution in the years ahead, at a time of global instability.

Camden Refugee Service Priority objectives:

- To be a borough of sanctuary for refugees arriving or living in Camden; working with our communities to develop offers which are culturally tailored to meet the diverse needs of refugees and asylum seekers in the borough.
- Providing long term support and welcome for refugees making their home in Camden and taking their journey from refugee to resident, as part of a citizenship pathway.
- Enabling transient refugees arriving in the borough via the St Pancras International port of entry to reach their next settled base in Camden or in the UK safely, while preventing incidents of homelessness.

- Working with the Home Office to ensure asylum seekers living in short stay housing are safeguarded from harm and access the service options they need.
- Ensuring all refugees and asylum seekers in Camden can access a viable move on option within Camden or the UK, which meets their households needs.
- Work with London Councils, the GLA and the London Strategic Migration Partnership to develop a “fair shares” approach to dispersed accommodation, which recognises local housing pressure and ensure that temporary homes for asylum seekers and refugees are of a decent standard.
- To influence the direction of national policy regarding refugees, asylum seekers and migrants so that there are safe routes of entry, additional housing capacity, work opportunity and a culture of compassion and welcome for all.

The Camden Pledge and LAHF refugee housing development

In March 2023, Camden delivered on the original Camden Pledge to resettle 20 Afghan families from Camden bridging hotels into long term homes in the borough. In total, 99 Afghan refugees, made up of 36 adults and 63 children, were housed in homes in Camden.

All families have an allocated a support worker from Camden Council’s floating support team and are accessing the following support options:

- Tenancy Sustainment
- Welfare benefits advice
- Employment training and education support
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) support
- GP registration
- School places

We are now well advanced in delivering an expanded pledge offer for up to 200 refugees made up of 42 families who remained in the bridging hotel programme in Camden during 2023, most of whom wish to make their long-term home in the borough. These are people who were left in hotels in Camden for three years who put down roots, finding work and children thriving at schools and colleges.

The council has managed to secure national funding earmarked for Afghan families to buy homes that would have been sold on the open market to provide housing without creating pressure elsewhere in our housing system. Properties intended for sale on the open market have been taken back into the Council’s housing stock, by means of a public subsidy made available under the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF). These homes will now be part of our council stock available for future generations. This sits

alongside grants the council have won to buy homes lost to right to buy to house homeless families.

To date, 36 households, comprised of 132 people, have now been resettled in the new safe haven housing.

Overall, 221 Afghan refugees have been housed in 57 properties under the Camden Pledge 1 and 2. These families are now integrating further within their neighbourhoods, accessing local schools, learning English, gaining employment, and becoming part of our Camden story.

Over 800 Ukrainians fleeing war and persecution have found homes in Camden under the Homes For Ukraine scheme. This is one of the largest schemes in London and is administered by the refugee programme office. This has happened because of the generosity of Camden residents opening their homes and is a demonstration of the strong civic spirit in our borough. There has been a huge amount of support to ensure these new members of our community are supported, including with access to employment.

The Council has developed refugee-facing approaches able to intervene early to prevent homelessness, with enhanced access to private sector options, for example. This approach has been effective with Ukrainian households, and we are improving the reach of our offers available to asylum seekers living in hotels in the borough, who require help with their move on options.

109 former Syrian refugees, now living in Camden were supported to apply for full UK citizenship. This was commissioned via a specialist VCS agency as part of our developing citizenship pathway.

Over 500 asylum seekers have been placed in low standard contingency hotel accommodation in the borough, provided by the Home Office. Many individuals have suffered trauma and other privations and lack many opportunities we take for granted. The Council have stepped up safeguarding, employment and homelessness prevention offers, which have improved the situation to a degree. The Council have also initiated proportionate enforcement measures to address the poor standard of accommodation.

Over the last year the number of contingency hotels being used in Camden has fallen from 5 to 3. There has been a shift from the use of contingency hotels towards units of dispersed accommodation. The Council will be working closely with the GLA, London Councils and the strategic migration partnership to deliver a London Regional Asylum Plan which offers decent accommodation, apportioned fairly across Local Authority areas and which acknowledges local housing pressure, especially in inner London.

What are we asking of central government?

Camden is proud of the part it has played in lobbying government on behalf of refugees, but it is important that we continue to be bold in our asks of the Government including:

- Enhance the employment prospects for working age refugees by ensuring that ESOL is available to all and that professional qualifications granted in countries outside the UK are accorded an appropriate status within the UK.
- Provide sustainable funding so that Local Authorities can continue to deliver the Homes for Ukraine (HFU) scheme and ensures that hosting and rehosting are suitably recompensed, given the cost-of-living crisis.
- Provide greater parity for the different cohorts of refugees arriving in the UK under different Visa arrangements, entry status and humanitarian schemes, while aligning with the principles of the UNHCR.
- Actively consider extending the leave to remain entitlement for the HFU visa beyond the current 3 years.
- Address the affordable housing shortage in London so that refugee families living in temporary situations in Camden (and across London) can find long-term housing.
- Build appropriate safeguards into legislation governing the arrival of asylum seekers into the UK, ensuring protected and vulnerable groups, including Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) receive a compassionate and meaningful response and that additional safe routes are opened up for those fleeing persecution, war and human rights abuse.
- Allow Asylum seekers waiting more than 6 months for a decision on their asylum claim to work in the UK generating economic benefit within our communities and giving asylum seekers more dignity and independence.
- Improve the national transfer scheme so that support for unaccompanied asylum seeking is shared fairly across Local Authorities in the UK, while increasing the funding available to Local Authorities which are corporate parents to UASC.
- Ensure that asylum seekers granted leave to remain in the UK receive the holistic support they need to take their next steps before they are asked to leave their Home Office funded accommodation.

Rough Sleepers Charter and Homelessness Dashboard

Homelessness is still an issue in London, and we have seen an increasing number of individuals presenting themselves as homeless in the borough. There are multiple different reasons for this, including the huge increases in rent in the private sector, the lack of available affordable housing as well as the increasing speed of asylum decisions by the Home Office at the end of last year in an attempt to clear the backlog.

This has resulted in an increase across London in the number of households in B&B accommodation by 132%, with the number of families living in B&B accommodation for longer than 6 weeks up 272% (1,329 families, data from 31 councils). Although Camden has also seen significant increases, we have reduced the number of families in B&B accommodation for longer than 6 weeks by 50%. To further reduce this number the Council has also successfully applied for and secured £20m grant funding from central government. This funding will enable the Council to deliver Round 3 of the Temporary Accommodation Property Procurement (TAPP3) scheme. The TAPP3 scheme will support us to purchase an additional 57 family size properties in 2024. We have already completed on 8 properties with 37 in the procurement pipeline.

Rough sleeping is also increasing across the whole of London and we have observed this on the streets of Camden. Between October, November and December in 2023 (Q3) 330 individuals were seen rough sleeping in Camden. This is a 20% increase on the same period in 2022. In February, Routes off The Streets (RTS) conducted a single night 'count' and they saw 113 people, whereas in 2023 there were 58 people seen on a single night in February. This increase is caused by various factors including a reduction in affordable housing; delay in move-on from emergency accommodation leading to fewer vacancies; and an increase in refugees leaving Home Office accommodation homeless and in a destitute situation.

Camden is responding to this rise by ensuring that all people who rough sleep in the borough are provided with a service offer that means they no longer need to bed down on the streets by RTS. To do this, RTS work across the whole borough seven days a week to support anyone rough sleeping. The RTS Outreach team are often accompanied by other specialist services, such as Focus Mental Health Team and substance misuse services. We also have dedicated support for those with limited public funds to regularise their presence in the UK or reconnect and reintegrate within their home country.

To meet the need the council has been awarded over £4million via the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme to increase short and long-term accommodation for people who have slept rough. This funding includes a new 35-bed Housing First Provision, and a 16-bed short-stay hostel on Gray's Inn Road. Additionally, Camden has enhanced its street outreach team to meet the needs of people who are rough sleeping by hiring a nurse and psychologist into the team until March 2025.

In April 2023 we also launched a new integrated drug and alcohol service which includes a designated drug and alcohol service for rough sleepers or those at risk of rough sleeping called INROADS. INROADS works in partnership with Routes off the Streets and conducts joint outreach shifts. They offer advice and information around

health and wellbeing, harm reduction advice and support, including providing Naloxone, one-to-one support with an allocated keyworker, drop-in sessions at local community venues (including the RTS Hub), prescribing for those who need access to opiate treatment and referrals into a range of support groups.

I recognise that we can always do more, however. And this year Executive Director for Adults and Health will be conducting a review of our rough sleeping service making recommendations for improvement which will also feed into a new rough sleeping strategy to be developed later in 2024.

In my role as Chair of London Councils, I've been proud to work I've championed to support homelessness and rough sleeping across the capital. London Councils was part of a pan-London coalition, including the GLA, Bloomberg Associates and homelessness charities which created the London Charter to End Rough Sleeping, launched in December 2023. The Charter enshrines principles and actions needed to tackle rough sleeping. London Councils also began producing a London Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation dashboard in 2023, collating data from across all boroughs on homelessness services. We have used these figures to keep Chief Executives and Leaders informed of the picture across the capital, as well as in lobbying work, with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, in the media and in Parliament.

Children and Adults Safeguarding

The safety of Camden's children and adults who draw on care and support is the most important priority for me as leader of the council. I hold quarterly sessions to review our safeguarding performance and make sure I am hearing directly from staff and those who access support from Camden.

Our children's safeguarding service is in a strong position. In July 2023 Rashida Biag, previously named Director of Children's Safeguarding and Social Work, became the Director of Prevention, Family Help, and Safeguarding, bringing together two directorates and giving her oversight of the system from early years, through early help and into safeguarding, and ensuring joined up working. Nana Bosu has been appointed as the new Director of Relational Practice and will join in early June 2024 to bring further capacity and focus on our practice model, workforce and quality assurance across the whole system a nationally recognised early help system and this continues in 23/24 to be in the top quartile of local authorities for investment in early help. Camden scored highly in the Department of Levelling up and Communities early help maturity self-assessment.

One of Camden's key strengths in our approach to children's services and early help is that we have maintained investment in early intervention and prevention and we budget for outcomes and value rather than cost. Around one third of the Council's budget on Resilient Families was on preventative services, including early years, family support and youth justice) and Camden has the third highest spend on preventative services per head in England. Our investment in Early Years Help has coincided with a relative drop in rates of children in care and an associated saving of more than £19 million per year, and so without investment, we would likely currently have an additional 200 looked after children in our care.

Camden is one of the 75 local authorities in the first wave of the rollout of family hubs in 2023/24. We have Family Hubs in five localities across the borough that offer a range of primary prevention services. The longer-term vision for family hubs is to develop our current youth centres into youth hubs using an 'affiliate' approach, where other community venues including schools, libraries community centres are recognised as important local hubs for families and networked together under the Camden Family Hubs umbrella.

An increase in activity at the front door following the cost-of-living crisis has been mitigated by an increase in resource at the front door. (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) MASH function became a standalone service with a dedicated Service Manager role for the first time, ensuring strong oversight and response to the increase in referrals. The strengthened MASH service ensures that we are able to respond to an increase in activity.

Recruiting and retaining social work and family workers in Camden is a cornerstone to safeguarding. Being open to a range of routes into social work expands our social work talent. Our first Frontline cohort of 8 students successfully moved into permanent roles in September 2023, and we have also increased our intake with 12 new frontline students joining us in September 2023. Our new step up to social work students were identified and started their programme in January 2024, and will join Camden in September 2024. In March 2024 we also recruited 3 social work apprentices.

During an Ofsted focused visit in October 2023 to review Camden's work with young people that are subject to children in need and child protection plans, inspectors praised staff and practitioners 4242 were recognised for their direct work with children, demonstrating their sensitivity, skill and knowledge in the field. In particular, Ofsted inspectors note that:

"Workers enjoy working for Camden. They appreciate the opportunities of working in a diverse community, with flexible working arrangements and well-managed caseloads, enabling them to spend time with children and to effect change in families. Corporate and political leaders place immense value on social workers and the work they do. They

recognise the importance of considering their wellbeing and controlling caseloads. They have secured resources to embed service changes, aiming to strengthen the environment for social work practice to flourish."

Preventing and responding to safeguarding continues to underpin our approach to Adult Social Care in Camden. During 2023 we have been focused on:

- improving our systems and processes to ensure that despite the growing pressures our social work teams are facing we are reducing immediate safeguarding risk and managing increased demand, waiting times and complexity
- continuing to prioritise our long-term work on integrated prevention and early intervention which we know will have the greatest impact on reducing safeguarding risk over time

Over the last year we have seen a continuation in the post-pandemic trend of more people with more complex needs contacting Adult Social Care for support. This has meant that some people will have waited longer than we would like for assessments and reviews. Whilst we will always prioritise people where there is a concern about their wellbeing and safety or where they are at risk of abuse, one of the key priorities in 2023 was also to address our backlog. We were able to secure additional staffing resources to help us with this and as a result we have seen an overall reduction in the numbers of people waiting for reviews and assessments.

In September 2023 we began a review of our integrated Mental Health Social Work arrangements with the Mental Health trust. This has led to a series of recommendations which are enabling us to improve our safeguarding processes and build a new and innovative model of integrated mental health services for the This work will be realised during 2024. December 2023 a restructure of our operational adult social care services began. This is currently being implemented and is enabling a range of improvements all of which strengthen our safeguarding approach:

The council is constantly reviewing our practice and last year we created a new Multiple Disadvantage team to support practice development across Adult Social Care but also to support our most complex safeguarding work.

2023 has also brought a focus for us on new population groups experiencing increased safeguarding risk in Camden. In particular we have been working with colleagues and partners across the Council to support refugees and asylum seekers, and homeless people experiencing multiple disadvantages.

We have been working closely with Housing colleagues and external partners to review how well Adult Social Care supports rough sleeping services and the single adult

homeless pathway. This work is enabling us to strengthen safeguarding and build more integrated and holistic approaches.

We have also worked in partnership with Childrens' services, NHS colleagues, Community Safety and the Home Office to set up new arrangements to ensure oversight and the safeguarding of refugee and asylum-seeking individuals and families who are living in Contingency Hotels in Camden. This has included the running of fortnightly drop-in sessions where we facilitate opportunities for hotel residents to meet directly with council staff to discuss any concerns they have about their safety and wellbeing and where we provide information, advice and training to hotel staff about our services and our safeguarding processes.

We know that by supporting people as early as possible, and focusing on what matters to them, we can help them to stay well and independent and reduce the risk of needing more support or becoming isolated in their communities. This is essential to preventing abuse and neglect. This work is long term in nature, and we have been committed to it for some time.

Our work on Adult Early Help has progressed considerably during 2023. We have completed an initial discovery exercise which has enabled us to understand the issue and current landscape in depth. For us, Adult Early Help is for adults who are facing or are at risk of facing overwhelm, due to competing stresses in their lives. Part of this is about multiple disadvantages. Part of this is about people falling through the gaps of support. They may not be eligible for statutory support or are not receiving the right kind of help.

We now have a clear vision of what effective Early Help could mean for adults in Camden, we have developed a set of assumptions to be tested and have planned a small-scale test-and-learn pilot which will launch in May 2024. This will employ 5 staff over an 18-month period to test out our Adult Early Help interventions with residents who are currently falling through gaps in Camden's complex network of support services.

During 2023 Camden's Health and Care partnership, chaired by the Council, has overseen the development of Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (or 'INTs'). This work aims to co-locate staff and practitioners who provide health and care services in Camden in each of our 5 neighbourhoods. INTs will operate at a 'neighbourhood level' and provide integrated and coordinated care for residents with a range of care and support needs. The INTs will bring together primary, secondary and adult social care, as well as aspects of community services, to ensure that the support people receive is holistic, strengths-based and helps them maintain their independence, safety and wellbeing at home. During 2023 we have made considerable progress. We have:

- begun our test and learn approach in the East
- appointed a Neighbourhood Coordinator for the East INT
- identified a building for the East INT to move into in June 2024

- restructured Adult Social Care and Community Health Service teams so that our separate organisational structures mirror our 5 geographical neighbourhood patches
- begun to bring the wider East staff team together to co-produce the new way of working

The East INT will be launched in Summer 2024 and will test new ways of integrated working and closer working practices between health and care services and will in turn inform future models of care to be developed in the other neighbourhoods.

As a statutory partner of the Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board, it is our ongoing ambition is to ensure that all residents and people who work with adults at risk in Camden know about our safeguarding adults' policies and know how to respond should they come across a concern or risk. We do this by promoting and maintaining cohesive partnership working and supporting our frontline practitioners and service providers to help reduce the risks of safeguarding issues, such as social isolation, self-neglect, financial exploitation and scams.

Camden's Safeguarding Adults Partnership has had a busy year during 2023-24:

- We launched the Camden Safeguarding Adults Board strategy 2023 – 2028 which has set out our priorities to raise awareness of abuse, prevent abuse from happening and to empower people and communities to raise concerns where they are worried about a resident.
- We developed a short video to support our focus on raising awareness about safeguarding amongst our diverse communities. "Camden's approach to safeguarding adults in the borough" has been co-produced with partners and made available in a range of languages.
- We published a Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) in relation to 'Matthew' who was a victim of cuckooing whilst living in a flat in Camden and died unexpectedly in 2020. This Review identified multi-agency lessons to be learnt and made recommendations to improve practice and working together. This includes updating the Camden Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board (SAPB) "Multi Agency Cuckooing" guidance which supports agencies and staff to become more aware of cuckooing when individuals may be at risk of coercion and sets out the multi-agency safeguarding reporting process to follow if worried about a resident. The board will be overseeing this work over the coming year.

I would like to thank cabinet members for Councillor Marcus Boyland and Councillor Anna Wright for their leadership around safeguarding as well as all the staff that work with deep commitment and love to keep residents safe.

Pan London Work

The challenges we are facing in Camden are not unique to our borough. We have been working across London to share expertise and resources, to drive forward change at a London level and to use our collective voices to advocate to government for adequate funding and support in order to keep delivering for our residents.

Through my role as Chair of London Councils I have been able to bring Camden's perspective and learning to the work we are doing across London and in addition to the benefits already listed in the report, I have also supported with:

Local Housing Allowance Rates

Ahead of the Autumn Statement in November 2023, we successfully lobbied for Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates to be increased to the 30th percentile of local market rents. LHA rates serve as the upper limits for housing support in private rented properties, applicable to claimants of Universal Credit and Housing Benefit.

In partnership with Alma Economics, we produced a piece of research to estimate the impact of ending the freeze in LHA rates at 2020/21 levels on public sector finances, specifically, the additional public expenditure required to fulfil the higher LHA rates and financial savings from reduced levels of homelessness. The research estimated that an additional 16,500 to 22,000 London households would become homeless over the next six years if the rates freeze were to continue. This piece of research was key to London Councils lobbying on the issue and successfully securing a rise in LHA rates, preventing negative impacts of ongoing LHA rates freezes on Londoners.

Pan-London Pension Credit Campaign

The campaign is delivered in partnership between the GLA and London Councils. It intends to use council administrative data to identify households entitled to Pension Credit who are not yet claiming it. Households are being written to, encouraging them to apply and targeted with follow-up phone calls and support. All boroughs were invited to participate in the campaign and 20 boroughs have applied to do so. The campaign could deliver up to an estimated £10m in financial benefits for low-income pensioners.

So far 8,219 letters have been sent to eligible pensioner households in 17 boroughs by Policy in Practice. Letters will be sent on behalf of a further 4-6 boroughs once they have given their full sign off in the coming weeks. Across London around 22 boroughs are taking part in the campaign with the aim of putting an estimated £15.3 million of

Pension Credit into the pockets of around 5,700 pensioner households. The campaign will run over three months.

Priorities for the coming year

In the coming year, I will be focused on ensuring that the Council is providing services that are responsive and meet the needs of residents, from repairs to support for young people with special educational needs. In difficult financial times, we will be working hard to ensure every pound we spend is making a difference for our community.

We will build on our We Make Camden strategy to bring more partners and residents together to take on our ambitious missions and challenges. We Make Camden sets out our commitment to investing in our communities, our organisation and our staff to achieve our ambitions of a fairer, more equal and more sustainable Borough. We will continue to open up the Council and support the creativity and energy of our communities.

Financial Resilience and Sustainability

A key component of the Council's ability to deliver the outcomes of We Make Camden is strong financial planning to ensure the Council remains financially resilient and makes best use of the resources available. We've faced significant government funding reductions since 2010 and as a result we have been forced to cut close to £230m from our budget. The Government has no sustainable strategy for funding local government, and this is demonstrated by the increasing number of councils issuing section 114 notices – effectively a declaration of bankruptcy.

Our Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sits at the heart of our approach to financial planning in Camden – and an important part of our MTFS involves us looking ahead, predicting the challenges on the horizon and doing all we can to tackle those challenges before they arrive. We've shown that we can both save money and deliver improved outcomes by planning over the long term and by investing and working with our communities and partners.

Over the years, we have continued to rebalance our limited resources and investment towards prevention and early intervention to support families. Combined with our asset-based model of support, this has allowed us to support our citizens and families in need to find solutions early on and improve outcomes, which in turn reduces the need for costly crisis support. While this approach has not completely avoided the need for those more costly interventions, it has allowed us to plan our resources in a more sustainable way.

We will continue to lobby for desperately needed resources for local government.

Cost of Living Crisis

Every day I see the profound impact the cost-of-living crisis is having on our residents and communities every day and I am determined we will continue to do everything we can to support our communities in the absence of sufficient national support. Our £2m Cost of Living Fund has become a critical part of our efforts to support those in most need. Supporting vulnerable residents hit hardest by the crisis remains my top priority and I am committed to tackling inequality in all its forms whilst focusing efforts to address the root causes of poverty.

Ensuring homes in Camden are safe, warm and secure, and investing in our estates and council street properties

Our HRA is under significant pressure through lack of funding, but we are determined to ensure we are doing all we can to invest in the safety of our homes and address fire safety, damp and mould and provide the best possible repairs service.

We have set out on a mission in Camden to ensure our estates are healthy, sustainable and unlock creativity. This includes a significant ambition to retrofit council homes in the borough on our estates and street properties, improving insulation and sustainability so residents are living in warmer homes, less prone to damp, in addition to working with households to provide advice on how to address poor heat retention in homes and try to minimise heating costs.

We will continue to use all the levers at our disposal to build new council homes and buy homes to provide secure housing for those facing homelessness and address the severe overcrowding in our borough.

Borough of Sanctuary

I want Camden to build on its record of welcoming refugees and migrants to become a borough of sanctuary for refugees arriving or living in Camden, working with our communities to develop offers which are culturally tailored to meet the diverse needs of refugees and asylum seekers in the borough.

We will provide long term support and welcome for refugees making their home in Camden and taking their journey from refugee to resident, as part of a citizenship pathway.

Climate Emergency

Making the Council's own estate and operations zero carbon through our Carbon Management Plan remains a major challenge given that the financial investment required. This year the council set out our first climate budget, going into granular detail about the investment needed to meet our ambitions. I am proud to continue our work, supplementing successful funding applications to Government with our own budgets and new forms of finance such as community municipal investment "bonds" and local carbon offsets.

The Council has also continued to work with regional partners such as London Councils, the Greater London Authority and Future Cities Catapult to make the case to Government for additional funding for Council retrofit programmes. I will continue to work with and promote the work of the Cities Commission for Climate Investment Coalition (3CI) and for Camden to be a pilot site for new models to deliver net zero neighbourhoods.

Delivering for residents at Euston

Residents have lived with years of disruption, and I am determined that they see real benefit in terms of jobs, homes, green space and community space from Euston.

When HS2 construction at Euston was paused by the government we fought hard to open up meanwhile uses and to make sure our community wasn't left abandoned. Camden Council has secured £75,000 from HS2 Ltd for community safety patrols in Euston in order to tackle anti-social behaviour linked to the major construction site, which has increased since works on the site were paused.

I will continue to be proactive about lobbying for Camden to be given the leadership of delivery at Euston. This means the council leading alongside our key partners in London and our local community in Euston to make our vision for Euston - and the life-changing far-reaching opportunities that it will provide - a reality.

Mission Delivery and ensuring our residents have a strong voice in decision making

We have set out four ambitious missions and I will continue to work with mission leads to ensure we are pushing ourselves to deliver and bringing in the huge resources of partners in the borough. I have been convening anchor institutions to look at what more

they can contribute such as space, funding, capacity and jobs and opportunities for residents. Anchor institutions have been asked to sign up as mission ambassadors where they commit resource to working in partnership to address complex challenges such as food poverty and youth unemployment. The community wealth fund is an important lever to deliver our missions, and this will be a real focus for me this year.

We have set ourselves ambitious targets to ensure that everyone in the borough has the opportunity to be part of decision making that impacts them and contribute to their community. We will continue to make sure this is embedded in all areas of the council's work and to support social action and new opportunities to engage.

Supporting community cohesion

We have sadly seen a spike in hate crime particularly focused at our Jewish and Muslim communities. We will make sure Camden is a place where hate is not tolerated and take head on rising antisemitism and Islamophobia. We will continue to work with police to address hate crime and keep our communities safe. As part of our diversity mission we will invest in celebrating our diverse communities and finding new ways to build connection and resilience working with communities, faith groups and voluntary sector organisations.

Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

The Director of Finance has no comment to add in the context of this report.

Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

The Borough Solicitor has no comment to add in the context of this report.

Environmental Implications

All the programmes and work outlined in this report have positive environmental implications for Camden and are built from, or strongly aligned with We Make Camden, the Camden Climate Action Plan, Biodiversity Strategy and Clean Air Action Plan.

REPORT ENDS