

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living	
REPORT OF Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee	DATE 14 January 2025
SUMMARY OF REPORT The Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living provides the Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee with their annual report for discussion. Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report. Contact Officer: Muhammed Ravat Cabinet Officer Corporate Services 5 Pancras Square London N1C 4AG Email: muhammed.ravat@camden.gov.uk	
RECOMMENDATIONS The Committee is asked to note and comment on the contents of the report.	

Signed:

Councillor Camron Aref-Adib, Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living
Date: 03 January 2025

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 Leadership and Strategic Priorities

- 1.1.1 The Finance and Cost of Living portfolio has oversight of some of the core organisational functions of the Council, such as finance, human resources and our role as an employer, our digital and data services, our strategy and design functions and our approach to contact and customer services. Alongside this it has oversight of key outreach and frontline support to communities including our Tackling Poverty team. As a result, this wide-ranging portfolio touches all parts of the Council and engages the core functions that support the delivery of our We Make Camden strategy for our Borough and the delivery of our four Camden Missions.
- 1.1.2 We Make Camden is the vision that Camden Council shares with local communities for our borough. Corporate Services act as a steward for this vision, with services including Strategy and Design, Partnerships, Participation, and Communications leading aspects of its delivery. Corporate Services work to orient the organisation and local partnerships towards the ambitions and goals articulated in We Make Camden by creating space for cross-organisational collaboration, leading evaluation and learning processes, convening partners, and bringing Camden citizens into deliberations and participations. As such, Corporate Services act to ensure consistency of purpose across the organisation and maintain progress towards our communities' ambitions.
- 1.1.3 The current perfect storm of pressures facing local government is caused by sustained funding reductions imposed by the previous government, rising demand for services and huge increases in demand-led services (such as housing, adults and children's services). Added to this a series of underfunded duties and responsibilities, rising costs - due to the recent period of very high inflation and increasing regulation are driving the financial challenges.
- 1.1.4 In Camden our financial planning, savings and investment are informed by the vision and priorities of We Make Camden. We prioritise our resources to focus on the outcomes that matter most to our communities including tackling poverty and inequality and prevention and early intervention— however our resources are limited by the continuing impact of over a decade of cuts to local government funding as a result of national government policy.
- 1.1.4 We are seeing the cumulative impact of cuts across the public sector play out in significant pressures on our services – whether in housing and homelessness where we have seen a 50% increase in eighteen months of households in temporary accommodation, and increases in need for children's social care interventions, and adult social care support, a similar challenge facing many councils across London. We are now contending both with managing increasing budgetary pressures in services and seeking to plan our resources for impact in the long term. We have continued to set balanced

budgets as a Council in this challenging context, and we will continue to work with our partners, communities and Government to both tackle crisis now and invest for the future.

- 1.1.5 We are continuing to implement our Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) that was agreed in January 2023 which focused on making savings and investments aligned with our We Make Camden vision for the Borough. The Council has continued to deliver on our MTFS agreed in January 2023 and despite these pressures, recent data shows Camden to be in a strong position financially relative to many of our neighbours.
- 1.1.6 Ensuring we are a Council that is responsive to the needs and priorities of our communities is core to the work of Corporate Services. This includes our work to ensure our customer contact teams are accessible and available to residents – and that we have services accessible online and through digital channels. We have relaunched our Camden website including improving content on our most visited pages, improving search and accessibility and streamlining the look and feel. The website is a highly visible part of a wider programme of improvement to ensure that residents seeking information, advice and support from the Council can do so effectively and quickly.
- 1.1.7 A whole Council priority remains tackling poverty and inequality and managing the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and continued poverty and hardship in our Borough. We have invested in a Tackling Poverty team that is focused on addressing debt, financial hardship and maximising income for residents, as well as testing and learning about how best to support people in poverty. Camden is among the few councils in London offering a council tax reduction scheme that provides 100% support to eligible households. Additionally, initiatives like our cost-of-living fund and efforts to increase pension credit uptake exemplify our dedication to assisting those most in need during these challenging times. We are working alongside projects to address people's immediate needs in financial crisis.
- 1.1.8 This portfolio also includes working with the Leader and lead Cabinet Members on our Missions work and how we are embedding a missions-oriented approach to our services and functions as a Council. This includes our Good Life Camden framework and developing our tools and methods for understanding how we are making changes to the lives and ambitions of Camden residents and communities. In 2025 we will publish our third State of the Borough report updating on what we understand to be happening in Camden around the key themes of We Make Camden and reporting on our approach to impacting our four Camden Missions.

1.2 Camden Missions as a Framework

- 1.2.1 The Camden Missions, established through our participatory Renewal Commission and agreed as core to our "We Make Camden" are bold, inspirational ambitions that seek to encourage community and partner innovation and engagement on the issues most important to our Borough. Our We Make Camden Missions are our framework for how we think long-term

change can happen within communities, and how the Council can act as convener, facilitator, steward and market shaper to address the barriers to change on systemic challenges.

1.2.2 The Resources and Corporate Performance Committee received a report on our We Make Camden Missions in November 2024¹ and the Committee has agreed to receive a further update on the Diversity Mission later this year. We have offered individual updates on Missions to all relevant scrutiny committees.

1.2.3 The Council has committed to alongside seeking to address the issues highlighted by our Missions, also seek to become a missions-oriented organisation. This means seeking to transform our organisation to focus on long-term impact, bring in partners and communities to leverage their skills and resources, and think about how to deliver wider public value through our services, organisation and connection to place. We have invested in corporate capacities aligned with our We Make Camden ambitions and our Missions including:

- Design capacity – enabling us to design and change our services aligned with our We Make Camden ambitions
- Data, insight and learning – understanding more about our borough and what works to make real change
- Partnerships and community action – capacity to build relationships with businesses, community partners
- Innovation and impact investment – aligned with our emerging Community Wealth Fund, developing the skills for investing for return aligned with our Missions.

1.2.4 Good Life Camden is our approach to understanding how we are impacting the ambition of our Missions, and more broadly understand the trajectory of change on issues that are important to our communities such as housing, learning, income and social connection. This will be a core element of our 2025 State of the Borough report, and a framework for how we understand how the Council is making change across all our services.

1.3 Financial Health

Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

1.3.1 The Council has faced reductions in real term funding since 2010 and received additional responsibilities without adequate funding. In September 2024, London Councils calculated that local authorities in the city are facing more than £1bn of funding pressures annually as a direct result of being given new responsibilities without sufficient or sustained funding. The Committee

¹ <https://democracy.camden.gov.uk/documents/s121586/Missions%20report.pdf>

received a full update on the Council's finances and position in December 2024².

- 1.3.2 Despite these challenges the Council developed and agreed a new Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) in January 2023 covering the financial years 2023/24 to 2025/26. 2024/25 is the second year of the Council's current three-year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), agreed by Cabinet in January 2023. The delivery of the MTFS is vital if the Council is to meet these challenges, helping it remaining financially resilient and continuing to support local residents and businesses through investing in vital services. The robustness of the Council's financial planning, across both its day-to-day revenue services and its capital investments, is a vital component in successfully delivering upon the aims of We Make Camden.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

- 1.3.3 The Council's HRA continues to operate in an extremely challenging environment with significant cost pressures across a range of services. In order for the HRA to remain financially stable, the Council will need to continue to take difficult decisions. This will include the delivery of savings already agreed as part of the current MTFS and will require further budget savings to allow the Council to set a balanced HRA budget over the medium term.
- 1.3.4 The HRA's financial position has been greatly damaged by a range of austerity-driven policies over the past ten years. These include the bedroom tax, rent increase guidelines being changed from the Retail Price Index (RPI) measure of inflation to the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) as a base, the removal of rent convergence, government-increased Right to Buy discounts, the roll-out of Universal Credit and the enforced rent reductions in the period 2016-2020. Government policies are estimated to have resulted in a cumulative loss in rental income by 2024/25 of £168m.
- 1.3.5 We are now facing a national housing crisis, which is particularly acute in London with a lack of properties at affordable rent in the private sector, aging stock with historic quality issues and rapidly increasing housing demand for social and affordable housing evidenced by increases in homelessness approaches and an increasing waiting list for social homes across the Capital.
- 1.3.6 A key element of the Council's financial strategy for the HRA is ensuring that there are sufficient resources to fund capital investment in the stock through the Asset Management Strategy (AMS) and to deliver estate regeneration and the delivery of much needed new homes through the Community Investment Programme (CIP). The HRA's detailed budget and rent setting report along with a Housing Investment and Asset Strategy is scheduled to be reported to Cabinet in January 25.

1.4 Procurement

- 1.4.1 The Procurement Act 2023 introduces a new procurement regime for local government and came into effect from October 2024. The National Procurement Policy Statement is yet to be published and will shape further the priorities and principles under which local authorities are expected to make investment in goods and services. Over the coming year we will be working closely with services and teams to implement the Procurement Act changes and consider how our wider Camden levers such as the Community Wealth Fund, our Camden Business Forum and our engagement with small and medium enterprises can contribute to a wider national ambition to diversify the pool of partners who access government service contracts.
- 1.4.2 Camden has a robust and effective procurement central team that works with services around the Council to support procurement of goods, services and work aligned with our We Make Camden ambitions and our values. We deliver significant social value through our contracts and seek to work with procured partners to ensure they are engaging and working in our Borough in a way aligned with our Camden approach.
- 1.4.3 This year, the University College London Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (UCL IIPP) published a report on mission-led procurement entitled "Mission-led procurement and market-shaping: Lessons from Camden Council". The report was produced as a collaboration between UCL IIPP and Camden Council, building on the partnership that co-chaired the Renewal Commission and engaged residents to devise the We Make Camden Missions. We are exploring how the lessons of the research and recommendations from the report can be applied in our local context, with a view to implementing changes that better enable delivery of the ambitions articulated in We Make Camden.

1.5 Our Capital Programme

- 1.5.1 The Community Investment Programme (CIP) is a key pillar of the Council's capital programme and is a significant financial investment by the Council in providing social housing that provides people and families with affordable, stable housing. It is one of the most significant investments and levers we have to support people out of poverty and financial hardship. It has continued to develop and deliver a range of schemes throughout 2024. CIP's programme targets are set out and regularly reviewed by the Council's Cabinet and in 2022 Cabinet agreed to extend the programme's scale and ambition with a target of delivering 4,850 homes, including 1,800 social rented homes. To date, the programme has delivered over 1,700 homes, 70% of which have been affordable.
- 1.5.2 Over the last year there has been great progress in delivery against a backdrop of a challenging economic outlook of increased build costs, high interest rates and uncertainty in the market. In 2024 CIP completed three residential schemes that have delivered 169 homes in Tybalds estate, Agar Grove estate and Central Somers Town. In addition to this, CIP completed the Council's first workspace at Liddell Place and Highgate Newtown Community

Centre. 67% of the homes delivered in the year have been genuinely affordable homes. Throughout the year works have continued on three other residential projects, Abbey Phase 3, Godwin and Crowndale and Agar Grove estate Phase 2a. Abbey Phase 3 will deliver the final phase of the Abbey Area Masterplan, where phases 1 and 2 have delivered 121 homes and a new community centre and GP practice. Godwin and Crowndale will deliver 10 new four-bedroom family homes to help ease overcrowding while Agar Grove Phase 2a will deliver 94 genuinely affordable homes as part of the fourth phase of the estate redevelopment. This year, works have also commenced on site at Camden and Chester Road Hostels, a scheme that will help the Council provide much needed Temporary Accommodation capacity for homeless families.

- 1.5.3 2024 has also seen the signing of two Development Agreements for Bacton Phase 2 and Camley Street. Bacton Phase 2 will complete the delivery of the Bacton estate redevelopment and will see the delivery of around 400 homes, 117 of which will be genuinely affordable. The appointment of the partner was done through a competitive dialogue and through this process the Council has been able to secure an increase the amount of affordable housing that can be delivered on this site. The second Development Agreement signed, on Camley Street, will allow the delivery of around 350 new homes, 50% of which are expected to be genuinely affordable, as well 200,000sq ft of Knowledge Quarter-led commercial space which will create around 1,000 jobs in the light industrial, life sciences, technology, and digital industries.
- 1.5.4 The last couple of years have demonstrated that one of CIP's key strengths is its versatility in providing new homes and community facilities responding to available funding. Thanks to variety of projects in CIP's pipeline, the Council has been able to secure additional grant to 'flip' homes earmarked for private sale into affordable to be used as temporary accommodation – contributing to tackling a significant pressure on our finances from the cost of providing temporary accommodation. CIP's ability to respond to changes is based on the flexible delivery model used and demonstrates the value it brings to the Council and residents of Camden.

1.6 Treasury Management

- 1.6.1 The Annual Treasury Management Strategy for 2024-25, approved on 4 March 2024, reiterates Camden's core investment priorities: security of capital, liquidity, and yield. This approach ensures prudent financial management by safeguarding investments, maintaining liquidity to meet daily operational needs, and optimising returns when security and liquidity are satisfied. During 2023/24, the Council demonstrated full compliance with treasury and prudential indicators, affirming effective governance and control.
- 1.6.2 Interest rates remained relatively high and stable, as the Bank of England focused on reducing inflation to its 2% target. This economic backdrop influenced the Council's strategy, prioritising internal borrowing over new external debt due to the higher associated costs. Internal borrowing saved the Council £1.8 million over the period, while external borrowing remained stable

at £294 million, reflecting Camden's commitment to cost efficiency and controlled financial exposure.

- 1.6.3 Camden's investments peaked at £684 million in August 2024, achieving an average return of 5.09%. This performance underscores the Council's ability to balance capital security with competitive returns through a conservative investment approach. The strategy remains focused on highly rated institutions, ensuring minimal counterparty risk while maintaining sufficient liquidity to meet the Council's operational demands.
- 1.6.4 Our Treasury Management Strategy, which is updated annually sets out strict criteria on our approach to borrowing and investment including minimum ratings for all of our investment counterparties. As all of the main ratings agencies now consider how they incorporate Environmental, Social, and Governance risks alongside the traditional financial risk matrix to assess counterparty ratings, any financial institutions with poor/weak ESG approaches are generally less well rated or likely to be subject to a negative rating and would therefore not meet the council's high bar for investing. This remains a live issue under that is being monitored and discussed continuously by us and colleagues across Local Government, and we stand ready to consider and respond to emerging guidance and best practice.
- 1.6.5 Risks from interest rate volatility, liquidity constraints, and market unpredictability are mitigated through robust cash flow monitoring and prudent management. While debt rescheduling remains unattractive under current market conditions, Camden's emphasis on internal borrowing continues to provide significant financial benefits. The Council's approach, as detailed in the 2023/24 Treasury Management Report and Mid-Year Strategy for 2024-25, exemplifies sound fiscal responsibility and strategic adaptability. The Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny has reviewed the Treasury Management report regularly and provided scrutiny to this area of the portfolio.

1.7 Camden Climate Investment 2027

- 1.7.1 In 2022, the council launched Camden Climate Investment, to help tackle climate emergency, becoming one of the first councils in the country to successfully raise a climate bond. In total £1 million pounds was raised to fund a range of projects across the borough, which were selected based on feedback from the 2019 Citizens' Assembly.
- 1.7.2 During the year the council continues to invest this money into local projects including New Healthy School Streets on Belsize Lane and Lyndhurst Gardens, Electric Vehicle Charging Points across the borough, solar energy installation on Council buildings and the replace Camden's fleet of diesel and petrol vehicles with greener alternatives.

2. Delivering Impact Across the Portfolio

Cost of Living and Community Support

2.1 Household Support Fund (HSF)

- 2.1.1 Camden Council's dedicated response to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis reflects the strong commitment to supporting the borough's most vulnerable residents through targeted financial interventions and innovative outreach efforts. Recognising the profound challenges posed by rising energy costs, inflation, and economic instability, the team has worked tirelessly to design and implement initiatives that provide immediate relief while fostering long-term resilience. This work not only demonstrates the Council's ability to adapt to evolving community needs but also underscores its mission to reduce inequalities and empower residents to overcome financial hardship.
- 2.1.2 Phases 5 and 6 of Camden's Household Support Fund (HSF) allocated £6 million to low-income households, providing essential relief through cost of living grants, energy vouchers for low income pensioners and school holiday hunger vouchers. This initiative targeted pressing concerns such as rising energy costs during the colder months, a primary issue for many Camden residents. Alongside direct financial aid, HSF has funded vital welfare rights advice work, both in the Council and supporting Citizens Advice Camden's Financial Wellbeing Project.
- 2.1.3 Camden's Cost of Living Fund, launching in 2025 will complement HSF providing over £1.25 million in crucial financial assistance, openly accessible to communities. These combined efforts demonstrated Camden's adaptive approach to addressing the complex challenges of the cost-of-living crisis.
- 2.1.4 The HSF and Cost of Living Fund have supported various outreach efforts to identify underclaiming groups and tailor services accordingly. This has included regular outreach sessions across VCS settings, schools, and tenants' forums, ensuring equitable access to resources. By October 2024, these funds were distributing an estimated £55,000 weekly in awards, maintaining a consistent pipeline of support despite high application volumes, which reached approximately 250 per week.
- 2.1.5 Both funds exemplify Camden's strategic use of limited resources to achieve maximum impact. The combination of proactive and reactive awards ensures a balance between immediate relief and sustainable outcomes. These efforts align with Camden's mission to strengthen community resilience, reduce inequalities, and empower residents facing the brunt of economic instability.

2.2 Pension Credit Uptake Campaign

- 2.2.1 The Pension Credit Uptake Campaign, launched in October 2024, was supported by a large communication campaign. In partnership with Age UK Camden and the GLA, it has so far successfully secured circa £250,000 in new annual Pension Credit income for 55 Camden households.
- 2.2.2 A dedicated team of five staff made over 780 calls, securing a 20x return on the £8,000 staffing costs associated with the campaign. Beyond monetary support, the campaign built trust with hesitant residents through tailored assistance, including phone consultations, eligibility checks, and applications.

For example, one pensioner gained an additional £148 per week, significantly improving their financial security. The campaign's success demonstrates the value of proactive engagement in reaching vulnerable groups.

- 2.2.3 Efforts to extend the campaign are already underway, with plans to reach an additional 100 pensioners identified through benefit entitlement checks. Camden's approach has also included strategic partnerships with organisations like Age UK, which provide supplementary support for residents requiring more intensive assistance. These collaborative efforts ensure a holistic approach to addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by pensioners in the borough.
- 2.2.4 The Pension Credit Uptake Campaign aligns with Camden's broader strategy to tackle economic inequality and ensure residents receive their rightful entitlements. By combining targeted outreach, personalised support, and effective partnerships, the initiative demonstrates Camden's leadership in leveraging proactive welfare strategies to enhance the financial resilience of its residents.
- 2.2.5 One pensioner shared their gratitude: "I had no idea I was entitled to this support until the Council reached out. It's made such a difference—I can now afford my basic needs without constantly worrying about bills." Such personal experiences highlight the transformative impact of Camden's campaigns in restoring financial dignity and stability to its residents

2.3 Warm Welcome Spaces

- 2.3.1 The Warm Welcome initiative, now in its third year, remains a vital support network for Camden residents, particularly during colder months. Over 50 organisations actively participate in the programme throughout the year, with approximately 40% hosted by voluntary and community sector (VCS) providers. These sites, managed collaboratively by Camden's services and VCS organisations, provide accessible spaces where residents can seek warmth, community, and support. This initiative has become a cornerstone of Camden's approach to addressing seasonal vulnerabilities and supporting residents in need.
- 2.3.2 During winter, Warm Welcome sites enhance their offerings to meet heightened demand and ensure residents are informed about statutory services and local activities. These provisions not only provide physical relief but also connect individuals with additional support networks, fostering resilience and strengthening community ties. By continuously adapting to residents' needs, the initiative underscores Camden's commitment to partnership-driven solutions and reflects its dedication to supporting the borough's most vulnerable populations year-round.

2.4 Holiday Hunger Initiative

- 2.4.1 The Holiday Hunger initiative supported over 9,000 households by providing families with children on Free School Meals with £60 supermarket vouchers

during school holidays. This targeted intervention addressed the seasonal rise in food insecurity, offering critical assistance to families who rely on free meals during term time. The initiative played a significant role in ensuring these households had access to essential food resources during vulnerable periods.

- 2.4.2 In addition, the Cost of Living Community Response Fund for 2023-24 facilitated collaboration between 36 lead partners and over 100 community delivery partners. These partnerships supported primary school networks and voluntary sector organisations in providing after-school and holiday activities, including wraparound support, homework clubs, and access to warm meals. This comprehensive approach aimed to mitigate the broader challenges faced by families during school holidays, fostering community support and resilience.

Debt and Welfare Initiatives

2.5 Council Tax Support Scheme

- 2.5.1 The Council Tax Support Scheme plays a crucial role in Camden's response to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, providing essential financial relief to low-income households. The scheme ensures that council tax remains affordable for vulnerable residents, directly contributing to reduced arrears and supporting household budgets during challenging economic times. For the 2023/24 fiscal year, the scheme is estimated to cost the Council approximately £33 million, reflecting Camden's commitment to protecting residents facing financial hardship.
- 2.5.2 Currently, over 22,000 residents benefit from the Council Tax Support Scheme, with around 16,100 of them, including 5,300 pension-age claimants, receiving 100% discounts. These residents are entirely exempt from paying council tax, enabling them to allocate their limited financial resources towards other essential needs. This significant level of support ensures that the scheme remains a vital lifeline for many within Camden's diverse community.
- 2.5.3 Camden's scheme remains one of the few in London offering reductions of up to 100% for eligible claimants, demonstrating the Council's leading role in prioritising equity and inclusivity in its support initiatives. Subject to consultation outcomes, Camden is likely to be one of only two London councils to continue providing this level of comprehensive support into the 2025/26 fiscal year, highlighting our unwavering commitment to the borough's most vulnerable residents.
- 2.5.4 This initiative exemplifies Camden's broader approach to tackling inequality and mitigating the effects of economic pressures. By maintaining and enhancing the Council Tax Support Scheme, Camden underscores its dedication to standing together with its residents and ensuring that no one is left behind amidst ongoing financial challenges.

2.6 Ethical Debt Relief Framework

- 2.6.1 Camden's revenues teams are working together to improve the experience for residents owing money to the Council, particularly where households owe multiple debts. Recent segmentation analysis by Fair4All Finance indicates that 37% of Camden's population—approximately 85,000 adults—are financially vulnerable, with around 60,000 experiencing severe destitution. Many of these residents lack access to formal credit, resulting in debt concentrated in priority bills such as council tax and rent. Camden's debt relief initiatives aim to alleviate this burden while safeguarding the borough's financial sustainability. The teams are designing services based on evidence from creditors in other sectors, which demonstrates that improved customer support and engagement can result in better outcomes both for debtor and creditor.
- 2.6.2 The Council's integrated approach includes short-term financial assistance delivered through a unified application process. Residents facing immediate financial distress can access grants between £100 and £300, which can be applied for up to three times in a six-month period. This streamlined process builds trust and engagement with Camden's communities and voluntary sector partners. The framework also incorporates welfare rights advice to identify underclaimed benefits—estimated at £124 million annually in Camden alone—and proactively engages residents to maximise their income streams.
- 2.6.3 A key component of Camden's strategy is the Corporate Debt Approach, designed to provide joined-up and ethical services for residents with multiple debts. This approach ensures greater empathy and collaboration between council departments, offering tailored repayment solutions that align with residents' financial circumstances. We will be consolidating welfare rights teams and enhancing their capacity to improve service efficiency and achieve better outcomes for financially vulnerable households.

2.7 Affordable Housing Support

- 2.7.1 Camden faces significant challenges in managing temporary accommodation (TA) amidst increasing demand and rising costs. The borough has seen a sharp rise in homelessness presentations, with a 50% increase in households requiring TA over the past 18 months. This pressure is exacerbated by a lack of affordable housing and high-cost private rental options, leading to a forecasted £12.4 million overspend on TA this year. The average cost of securing private rentals has risen by over 30% in the past year alone, further straining Camden's resources.
- 2.7.2 To address these pressures, Camden has prioritised investments through its Temporary Accommodation Purchase Programme (TAPP), which has successfully added 181 properties to the Council's portfolio to support families. This approach not only reduces reliance on expensive private rentals but also ensures that families are housed in stable, council-managed environments. Additionally, redevelopment projects, such as the 248-250 Camden Road site, will deliver 39 new temporary homes, and the Chester Road project will add 50 more, providing high-quality, family-focused accommodations.

- 2.7.3 Camden's TA strategy also incorporates innovative solutions to address financial constraints and housing quality issues. The Council is exploring ways to increase its asset base while aligning housing stock to meet residents' needs more effectively. This includes redeveloping underutilised spaces and investing in homes specifically designed for vulnerable populations, such as single homeless individuals and those with social care needs.
- 2.7.4 The broader strategy integrates community investment to improve housing quality and expand supply. Camden's efforts to stabilise TA costs while addressing long-term housing challenges reflect a commitment to ensuring all residents have access to safe, stable, and affordable housing. These initiatives are a vital part of the borough's response to the housing crisis, safeguarding financial sustainability while prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable residents.

2.8 Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs)

- 2.8.1 Camden's Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) scheme provides vital financial assistance to residents facing a shortfall between their Housing Benefit (HB) or Universal Credit (UC) housing costs element and their rent. The scheme, which is cash-limited and discretionary, aims to alleviate poverty, safeguard residents in their homes, and support vulnerable people during crises. DHP is particularly targeted at helping those who are transitioning to employment, dealing with personal crises, or struggling with debts, ensuring fair and equitable support for those most in need.
- 2.8.2 Between April and September 2024, Camden awarded a total of 316 payments, which included 166 repeated awards and 150 one-off payments, addressing both immediate and ongoing housing-related challenges. These efforts represent a strategic use of resources, with £218,195.71 already spent in the first half of the financial year and a forecasted total expenditure of £622,578 by March 2025, fully utilising the government allocation to maximise support for residents.
- 2.8.3 Applications for DHP are evaluated based on individual circumstances, including household income, expenses, health conditions, and any steps taken to manage rental liabilities. Awards are typically short-term and meant to provide emergency relief, though backdated awards may be considered under specific conditions.
- 2.8.4 The policy highlights Camden's commitment to reducing homelessness and its associated costs, especially for vulnerable groups. For instance, the scheme takes into account the potential pressures on priority homeless accommodation, ensuring resources are allocated efficiently to reduce long-term housing instability. Camden also proactively advises claimants to maximise their income by applying for other state benefits they may be entitled to.

2.8.5 With a robust review mechanism, Camden ensures transparency and fairness in DHP administration. Applicants have the right to request a review of decisions, and the Council maintains a focus on publicity and fraud prevention to ensure the scheme benefits those it is designed to help. The discretionary nature of DHP allows Camden to respond flexibly to evolving housing challenges, providing essential relief to residents navigating financial difficulties.

2.9 Strength in Benefit Take-Up

2.9.1 Camden continues to demonstrate success in maximising benefit take-up for eligible residents, directly addressing financial insecurity and reducing inequalities. Through proactive identification efforts, the Council seeks to ensure households entitled to financial support can access vital resources, bolstering their financial resilience. This commitment reflects Camden's ongoing dedication to supporting low-income families and improving overall economic stability within the community.

2.9.2 Key to this success is the Camden Advice Network (CAN), supported by a £1 million annual investment over seven years. Since its launch in 2020, CAN has enabled over 47,000 new referrals, securing more than £40 million in unclaimed welfare benefits for residents. This proactive and community-focused approach not only enhances immediate financial support but also empowers households to build sustainable financial resilience, tackling the root causes of economic instability.

2.9.3 Debt reduction has been another significant achievement of Camden's benefit take-up initiatives. Residents have received assistance in managing and reducing both priority and non-priority debts, collectively lowering financial burdens by more than £1.6 million. These efforts highlight Camden's holistic approach to financial well-being, addressing immediate challenges while fostering long-term stability for its residents.

2.9.4 The impact of CAN extends beyond direct financial support. The network's partners have successfully secured an average of £2 million per year in additional trust and foundation funding, amounting to a £14 million return on a £7 million investment. This external funding ensures the sustainability and expansion of services, enabling a greater reach and a more robust safety net for vulnerable residents.

2.9.5 Adding to its social value, the network engages over 120 active advice volunteers who play a crucial role in supporting residents. Their contributions enhance the accessibility and responsiveness of services, ensuring that Camden's initiatives are not only financially impactful but also deeply embedded within the community. This integrated approach positions Camden as a leader in leveraging benefits take-up to create meaningful, sustainable change for its residents.

3. Workforce and Organisational Health

3.1 HR and Inclusive Workforce Initiatives

- 3.1.1 Camden Council's commitment to inclusivity is reflected in its proactive approach to pay equity. Voluntarily reporting gender, ethnicity, and disability pay gaps since 2015, Camden stands out as one of the few local authorities to exceed statutory requirements. The ethnicity pay gap highlights a historical overrepresentation of White staff in senior positions. However, concerted efforts have yielded progress, with Black, Asian, and Other Ethnicity staff now representing 29.5% of senior grades and 38.46% of Level 7 Chief Officers. This aligns closely with Camden's residential population, where 40.48% of residents belong to these ethnic groups.
- 3.1.2 Recruitment and retention strategies are underpinned by measures that foster diversity and equity. Camden has implemented mandatory anti-bias training for all hiring managers and established policies to ensure diverse shortlists for senior roles, such as the diverse shortlist initiative piloted for Level 5 positions and above. Mentorship and leadership programmes, including the reverse mentoring initiative, provide underrepresented staff access to career development resources. To date, 171 staff have benefitted from the mentoring schemes.
- 3.1.3 Apprenticeships remain a cornerstone of Camden's workforce strategy. Currently, 122 apprentices are enrolled across the Council, including 65 new recruits and 57 existing staff. Notably, 70% of apprentices who remained at Camden after completing their programmes have progressed to new roles. This reflects Camden's commitment to retaining and advancing talent. Programmes such as the Town Planning Level 7 apprenticeship have also produced graduates who continue to contribute to the Council's success.
- 3.1.4 Camden's support for underrepresented groups extends beyond recruitment, with robust staff networks enhancing inclusivity. Longstanding networks like the Camden Black Workers Group, the Rainbow Network, and the Disability Network now operate alongside three recently launched groups for Muslim, Jewish, and Women staff. These networks, coupled with initiatives like the Reporting Discrimination Hub, ensure employees have safe spaces to voice concerns and access resources. The Discrimination Hub highlights the Council's commitment to empathetic and proactive solutions to workplace challenges.
- 3.1.5 Transparent pay practices are integral to Camden's strategy of fostering an inclusive workplace. Investments in wage restructuring have increased the minimum salary to £30,790, equating to £16.41 per hour—18.5% above the newly announced London Living Wage of £13.85. This £1 million investment reflects Camden's commitment to addressing income disparity and ensuring competitive compensation, particularly in London's challenging economic landscape.
- 3.1.6 Flexibility and wellbeing are central to Camden's HR strategy. Policies like Leave Banking and pilot programmes for flexible working have enhanced accessibility and employee satisfaction. The Council has partnered with organisations such as The Runnymede Trust to examine and address

disparities in flexible working access for Black, Asian, and Other Ethnicity staff. Such initiatives ensure all employees, regardless of role or background, can benefit from equitable work conditions.

- 3.1.7 Wellbeing is an integral component of workforce development at Camden. The Council provides trauma-informed coaching, financial wellbeing seminars, and health initiatives such as mindfulness workshops and resilience training. In 2024, over 160 staff accessed the expanded Employee Assistance Programme, which now offers four professional support areas. This holistic approach to employee support underscores Camden's recognition of the link between wellbeing and productivity.

Digital and Data Services

3.2 Digital Services for Residents

- 3.2.1 Camden's digital transformation programme has significantly enhanced service delivery by prioritising citizen-centric design and streamlined processes. The newly launched Camden.gov.uk website, a key milestone of this programme, offers a more accessible and responsive digital platform for residents. This update enables users to report issues, manage council payments, and access support more efficiently, contributing to a reduction in response times and improved satisfaction rates across multiple services.
- 3.2.2 The introduction of a new Customer Relationship Management platform is seeking to improve the resident experience by consolidating various touchpoints into a unified system. This multi-channel platform integrates communication through email, web chat, SMS, WhatsApp, and social media, ensuring consistent and cohesive service interactions. The intention is that Camden residents can experience streamlined navigation and quicker resolutions, reflecting Camden's commitment to responsive and accessible services.
- 3.2.3 Additionally, Camden's investment in its Digital Product & Service Team has brought modern digital skills in-house, such as user research and website analytics, to continuously refine and improve resident-facing services. The establishment of the Content Design Studio has revamped over 10,000 pieces of citizen-facing content on our website, ensuring clarity, accessibility, and relevance for all residents, regardless of digital literacy levels.
- 3.2.4 These advancements are part of a broader strategy to build a sustainable, citizen-focused digital system for our residents. Camden's approach ensures that all residents, regardless of technical ability, can easily access vital services, furthering its mission to foster digital inclusion and improve the quality of life for its communities.

3.3 Data-Driven Insights

- 3.3.1 The Insight, Learning, and Impact team supports the organisation to use data and evidence in decision making, through several tools and skillsets. The annual State of the Borough report, which brings together data, both

qualitative and quantitative, about the outcomes experienced by residents in the borough, aligns to We Make Camden and the Good Life Camden resident wellbeing framework. The report also focuses on the Missions, reporting on the change and learning over the year. The next report will be published in May 2025, and the team has been collecting qualitative evidence from residents, collating quantitative evidence from reliable sources (GLA, ONS, DWP etc) and from partner organisations.

- 3.3.2 Camden's Data and Analytics Team continue to serve as a central point for the definition and coordination of key enablers required to realise the organisation's ambition to be the pioneering leader in the use of data that measurably improves citizen's lives.
- 3.3.3 The geospatial team have continued to provide mapping support and training to the services and the development of web-based mapping solutions to enable informed decisions using spatial data – so that data can be broken down to ward levels and not just at a Borough level. A highlight has been the creation of a Community Investment Programme dashboard map trialled with the advanced ArcGIS Online mapping tool. The team has been instrumental in the establishment of the London Geospatial group which fosters collaboration between geospatial professionals across the capital.
- 3.3.4 The building of a data catalogue and development of a data maturity assessment to establish a data governance framework is well underway. This ongoing work will ensure services have strong data foundations with trusted, curated, well managed, and good quality data. There has been ongoing creation of dashboards to provide operational insight for services with a particular focus this year on housing voids, neighbourhoods and Contact Camden.
- 3.3.5 A thorough design and proof of concept evaluation took place to select a new Master Data Management solution which is now going through procurement. Once implemented this will give our services a joined up holistic view of people and places from disparate data sources. 2024 also saw a growing community of professional Data Analysts embedded within services to provide decision support using a variety of tools and methodologies. These analysts are aligned to the Digital and Data Profession Capability Framework.

3.4 Cybersecurity and Data Protection

- 3.4.1 Camden has made significant strides in enhancing its cybersecurity infrastructure and data protection measures to safeguard sensitive information and maintain operational resilience. Central to these improvements is the adoption of a cloud-first strategy, which enhances security, flexibility, and cost-efficiency. The Council has also completed a major network upgrade, including updates at key sites like the Town Hall, ensuring robust connectivity and data integrity across all operations.
- 3.4.2 A critical investment in cybersecurity tools has fortified Camden's defences against emerging threats, with proactive measures like two-factor authentication providing an additional layer of security. By adopting advanced

practices in ethical AI and ensuring stringent data governance, Camden ensures that its use of innovative technologies adheres to the highest standards of security and transparency. These measures align with Camden's commitment to empowering staff and residents while fostering trust in digital services.

3.4.3 Efforts to optimise legacy applications have reduced complexity and enhanced system performance, making Camden's IT ecosystem more agile and reliable. The integration of tech architecture disciplines facilitates seamless connectivity between new and existing technologies, ensuring a streamlined and scalable digital environment. This strategic approach supports Camden's broader aim of delivering secure, efficient, and citizen-focused digital services.

3.4.4 By addressing cybersecurity and data protection holistically, Camden not only protects sensitive data but also fosters organisational resilience. These enhancements position the borough as a leader in leveraging secure digital infrastructure to deliver impactful services to residents and stakeholders, ensuring the safety and accessibility of its digital ecosystem.

3.5 Contact Camden

3.5.1 Camden Council is committed to transforming the way residents interact with services, ensuring every citizen has a seamless, accessible, and positive experience. Our ambition is to create a more human-centred, connected, and flexible approach to service delivery, underpinned by innovative tools and technologies. By placing citizen needs at the heart of our design and delivery, we aim to build trust, improve satisfaction, and ensure equitable access for all. The Citizen Experience Standard is intended to help staff to deliver this and includes frameworks and tools to help services consider citizen journeys, providing a toolkit containing materials to improve ways of working, support development of new systems and guide staff behaviours, all in support of a good citizen experience. The standard forms part of 'The Way We Work' and a suite of wrap around support is provided to help services engage with the standard effectively.

The following practical tools have been used in several areas to drive improvement:

3.5.2 5 Pancras Square Face to Face services – The research guide tool was used to improve citizen engagement in a survey relating to face-to-face services, allowing the capture of much richer qualitative data.

3.5.3 Leaseholder Services – A design team used the self-assessment tool with staff in Leaseholder Services to examine the experience currently offered to the council's residential leaseholders. The team ran three workshops – one with senior staff, one with frontline staff, and one with leaseholders themselves. These identified clear priorities to focus research, which was then used to shape and guide research planning. Staff and senior managers broadly agreed on where the key priority issues lay.

- 3.5.4 Contact Camden Operating Model – The citizen experience standard was used to underpin the design of a new operating model for Contact Camden, based on working with citizens in a more relational way. Contact Camden’s new target operating model went live in May 2024, alongside the launch of new contact centre technology platform. The model is now successfully embedded and had led to a reduction in call abandonment and of call waiting times across all services. Call demand has increased year on year, with the period May to December seeing an overall increase in demand of around 6,000 calls. Despite the increase in demand the abandonment rate has reduced by 10.6% and call wait times have reduced by over 2 minutes on average. As a result there has been a steady increase in customer satisfaction scores, with December showing a 10% improvement in customer satisfaction against May. The new contact centre technology platform provides a suite of new features to improve citizen experience. Several of these key features are now in place, improving access to the council for residents.
- 3.5.5 Auto-Attendant – When contacting the council citizens can now say the reason for their call and they will be routed to either the contact centre, service or individual as appropriate. This avoids the need to listen to a long menu of options and has reduced the overall call time by over 2 minutes. The auto-attendant is self-learning and refines call routing based on success. Where a citizen is unable to use the auto-attendant, the citizen is routed to a reduced version of the traditional menu. When needed, calls can also be routed to a human operator to be directed (for example for vulnerable citizens).
- 3.5.6 Queuebuster – The nature of call demand means that during peak times wait times can increase significantly, for example during the annual main billing period the council experiences a spike in calls from residents. Queuebuster functionality allows a citizen to select an option to hang up and receive a call back when they reach the front of the call queue. This is currently in pilot phase and has received 100% positive feedback from residents choosing to use this option and has led to a 50% reduction in abandoned calls.
- 3.5.7 Webchat – An initial pilot of live agent monitored webchat is in place for our leaseholder services. This allows leaseholders to ask questions online, supported by staff from Contact Camden. The webchat will provide some automated signposting to information on our website but at all stages allows the resident to communicate live with a Customer Relationship Officer in the Transactional Services team who support leaseholders.
- 3.5.8 Through the Customer Experience priority programme in DDS, these additional functionalities will be scaled out across other council services throughout 2025, providing a more streamline, holistic and channel agnostic experience for citizens.

4. Licensing Policy Proposals

- 4.1 Camden Council is in the process of completing a comprehensive review of its Statement of Licensing Policy. The draft Policy aligns with the Council's strategic ambition to make Camden a welcoming, safe and inclusive place to spend time in the evening and night-time.
- 4.2 The draft version of the Statement of Licensing policy is currently the subject of public consultation which will close in March 2025. The proposed changes aim to create a more dynamic and equitable licensing environment and also seek to further enhance Camden's best practice approach towards addressing key issues such as inclusivity, accessibility, alcohol related harm and women's safety.
- 4.3 The 12-week public consultation provides an opportunity for Camden residents and a broad range of Camden evening and night time economy stakeholders to comment on the policy proposals. The feedback from the consultation will influence the development of a final Statement of Licensing Policy to be considered by the Camden Licensing Committee in March 2025.
- 4.4 Camden Council has retained the Late Night Levy which continues to provide funding mechanism to help to mitigate key night time economy related issues.
- 4.5 Camden's Late Night Levy has returned to its standard operational model, requiring all funds collected to be allocated in-year starting from 2025-26. This change follows the depletion of reserves accrued during the pandemic, which were strategically used to mitigate evening and night time economy impacts on residents. The Levy continues to support initiatives that enhance safety and reduce antisocial behaviour during late-night hours.

5. Elections Oversight

- 5.1 This year, we successfully managed multiple high-profile elections, including the general election and the GLA elections, ensuring that voters and candidates alike could participate with confidence and ease. The general election, which garnered significant media and public interest due to one of Camden's parliamentary constituencies being the seat of the former Leader of the Opposition and now the Prime Minister, was a particular focus. Our approach prioritised accessibility, transparency, and compliance with new legal requirements, ensuring the needs of all residents were met. We operated a successful general election programme, including polling station management and the election night count, guaranteeing the safety and confidence of candidates and voters throughout the process.
- 5.2 We delivered comprehensive multi-channel campaigns for the Greater London Authority (GLA) and general elections, sharing practical information and deadlines with residents, including encouraging them to register to vote, and apply for a postal or proxy vote if not able to get to their polling station in person. There was an emphasis on raising awareness of the new requirements for photo ID and for residents to check they had accepted photo ID and the ability to apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate if they didn't.
- 5.3 Information was shared across our channels in the months leading up to the GLA and general elections, including printed publications and inserts sent to

either targeted groups of residents or all homes in the borough (including via an all-resident letter, resident magazine, poll cards, council tax bills, cost of living crisis booklet), bus shelter posters, adverts in local newspapers, email to residents receiving council tax e-bills, e-newsletters (main resident, libraries, schools), social media, website news item and digital screens in council buildings. There were additional leaflets on voter ID requirements included in the polling cards distributed for both the GLA and general elections.

- 5.4 Residents more likely to have lower incomes who may be less likely to be registered to vote or have photo ID (based on London-wide GLA surveys 2022-23) were targeted through our printed newsletter to council tenants, and an insert to residents receiving housing benefit statements (which includes residents living in houses in multiple occupation where not responsible for council tax). We also worked with local partner organisations to promote an elections outreach bus, with a council team visiting community centres and estates around the borough to encourage voter registration and check residents had accepted photo ID. We sent information and posters to voluntary sector and public health partners to display. We produced posters and leaflets to help library staff support residents with voter registration and applying for Voter Authority Certificates, postal and proxy votes, and set public library computers and self-service kiosks to display elections information.
- 5.5 Following the announcement of the general election, we repeated everything we could from the above within the timescales, including a new all-resident letter, bus shelter posters, digital out-of-home adverts, weekly adverts leading up to key voter registration / voter ID deadlines in the local newspapers, increasing the presence of our campaign across our digital channels, and stepping up outreach bus activities. Due to the high open rate of the initial email to 35,000 residents receiving council tax ebills (74%), we expanded this to email all council tax account holders (over 87,000), with a still high 67% open rate.
- 5.6 Our publicity drive and outreach efforts around voter rights and requirements had a significant impact. During the time between the announcement of the general election and polling day, Camden processed 20,684 applications to register to vote, 1,401 overseas applications, 6,449 postal vote applications, 1,781 proxy vote applications, and 127 applications for Voter Authority Certificates.
- 5.7 All polling stations across the borough met the requirements of the Election Act, with privacy screens available for electors wishing to show their ID in private. Staff working at polling stations for both the GLA and Mayoral elections received additional training on equality and diversity. Active steps were taken to ensure electors were aware of the additional support available at polling stations, including tactile devices, magnifying glasses, and pencil grip aids, all prominently displayed.

6. Strategic Ambitions and Outlook

6.1 Financial Resilience and Sustainability

- 6.1.1 The operating environment for local government across much of the country is difficult. The immediate outlook for the sector is uncertain, with requests for exceptional government support becoming increasingly normalised and local authorities more generally acknowledging that further acute financial challenges are likely without significant additional funding.
- 6.1.2 Given this context, it is important that the Council continues to regularly review the robustness of its financial position. This allows it to confirm that it can continue to sustainably deliver services, as well the extent to which it has the financial resilience to respond to uncertainties and emerging challenges.
- 6.1.3 A number of benchmarking services have been developed over the last decade, allowing for the comparison of key metrics with other similar local authorities. The Council uses these indices as one part of its review of financial resilience. The most established of these is the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Financial Resilience Index, which compares how local authorities perform across a number of key indicators of financial health in comparison with their nearest neighbours.
- 6.1.4 In all, the most recent data shows that Camden scores as being more resilient than the majority of its 15 nearest neighbours, with higher than average resilience across 11 of the 16 metrics measured by CIPFA.
- 6.1.5 A review of individual metrics reveals that, while the Council scores well on its social care resilience when compared to its neighbours, it does have relatively lower levels of reserves. As a well administered authority which has been able to keep within its budgets and successfully deliver upon savings targets, the Council has historically been comfortable holding relatively lower levels of reserves. Nonetheless, the Council is seeking to reinforce its reserve position through contributing £1.5m per year to its general reserve balance in the General Fund and £4m per year (increased from £3m in previous years) in the HRA as part of its MTFS.
- 6.1.6 It is important that Officers also conduct their own independent reviews of the Council's financial resilience. As part of this, Officers consider the principles contained within CIPFA's Financial Management Code, which are designed to assess local authority financial sustainability, as part of the Council's financial planning and reporting processes.
- 6.1.7 Financial resilience forms an important part of the Council's processes when developing individual business cases and organisational budgets. This includes the use of prudent contingencies for inflation and other unknowns in business cases, as well as frequent, challenge-based reviews of both forecasts and the MTFS. These processes give the Council sufficient financial resilience to respond to a range of uncertainties, whilst also flagging upcoming challenges so appropriate mitigations can be developed.

6.2 Net-Zero Strategy

- 6.2.1 The cost of achieving a zero-carbon borough exceeds £10 billion and therefore far exceeds available Council budgets. The Council also only has

influence or control over approximately one-third of emissions in Camden. The Council's approach to addressing the decarbonisation challenge therefore seeks to galvanise climate action by everyone living and working in Camden through our Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2020-2025. The CAP sets out a five-year programme of projects and activities across the themes of People, Places, Buildings and Organisations.

- 6.2.2 As part of the Council's approach to decarbonising those parts of the borough under our control and influence, the Council operates a Carbon Management Plan for its own estate and operations. Camden has so far spent or allocated £20.5 million to decarbonisation projects across our own estate and operations which are forecast to decrease emissions by more than 650 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (650tCO₂e) annually. Projects are currently underway to reduce emissions across the portfolio of Corporate, Leisure, Schools and Fleet.
- 6.2.3 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 will be in the region of £225m. The national funding landscape in support of energy efficiency improvements to public buildings and decarbonisation of fleet remains limited. Funding rounds typically only meet approximately 25% of the costs of energy efficiency improvements to buildings.
- 6.2.4 The Council has therefore supplemented successful funding applications to Government with its own budgets and new forms of finance such as Community municipal investment "bonds" and local carbon offsets.

7. Partnering in Camden

- 7.1 Partnerships remain at the heart of Camden's approach to delivering impactful change for its residents. By working collaboratively with organisations across the borough, the Council continues to leverage shared expertise, resources, and community connections to achieve better outcomes. From co-producing initiatives with voluntary sector groups to engaging with national and international organisations, Camden's partnerships ensure that local voices are central to decision-making and that services remain inclusive and effective.
- 7.2 The Good Life Camden framework, developed collaboratively with residents, continues to serve as a guiding tool for aligning and measuring outcomes for people in Camden. Over the past year, the framework has been embedded across Council services and voluntary sector organisations, enhancing cohesion and impact. Notably, Camden collaborated with the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) on a funding proposal to align outcomes with the framework, ensuring community voices are central to project impact assessments. This proposal also integrates the Food and Estates Missions, reinforcing their capacity to deliver tangible benefits to residents.

- 7.3 Efforts to expand the framework's influence include advising the Somerstown Community Association on aligning Future Neighbourhood 2030 priorities with Good Life Camden outcomes. This initiative creates synergies among organisations in the neighbourhood, establishing a model for replication across other areas in Camden. Similarly, Camden Carers has leveraged the framework to shape their Action Plan, ensuring its focus remains on outcomes that directly address the needs of local residents.
- 7.4 Internally, the Council has integrated the framework into its data collection efforts across various services, including Waste, Green Spaces, Climate, Adult Social Care, Early Help, and Libraries. By incorporating Good Life Camden outcomes into surveys, the Council gains deeper insights into residents' experiences and the impact of its services, supporting evidence-based decision-making and improved service delivery.
- 7.5 Externally, Camden has actively shared its experiences of using the framework to influence broader policy discussions. This includes engagements with organisations like the Centre for Thriving Places, the Greater London Authority's (GLA) Measure for Wellbeing and Sustainability, and the Civic Strengths Index. Camden's approach has also been recognised in reports by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Wellbeing Knowledge Exchange Platform and the What Works Centre for Wellbeing, further highlighting its role as a leader in embedding wellbeing frameworks into local governance.

8. Looking Forward

- 8.1 As we approach the upcoming year, our focus remains on ensuring Camden continues to meet the needs of our residents, as set out in We Make Camden, while adeptly managing our resources and financial challenges. Camden Council has a strong set of relationships with national government departments and leadership, and we are seeking to continue to work closely with the national government in order to advocate for policy change that would improve the lives of our residents, support the delivery of the Council's priorities, and ensure a sustainable and impactful local government sector into the future. Camden Council holds a productive set of relationships with influential individuals and institutions in the national policy-making system and is committed to working through these relationships to secure positive policy change.
- 8.2 There are three themes for our engagement with government. Firstly, there are opportunities for Camden to showcase good practice in reforming and delivering public services, particularly where these connect to the five national missions. For example, there is potential to showcase our approach to prevention in children's social care and our emerging ways of working in neighbourhoods, which connect to the government's opportunity and health missions. Secondly, it will be important to advocate for preventative investment in areas such as anti-social behaviour and homelessness where additional joined-up multi-disciplinary capacity for early intervention may help to prevent negative and costly outcomes for residents. Thirdly, we are

committed to advocating for tangible changes that will make a difference to residents in the immediate future as well as long-term reform.

- 8.3 Since the General Election, the Council has engaged with government consultations on topics including planning reform, Right to Buy, curriculum and assessment, and the government's forthcoming 10-Year Health Plan for England, in order to advocate for specific policy changes in these areas. The Council has also hosted visits from Ministers, civil servants, and think tanks to showcase the challenges that Camden faces and the ways in which the Council's services are working to support households and communities. Cabinet Members and officers are closely engaged with a wide range of local government bodies and networks, including those facilitated by London Councils and the Local Government Association as well as professional networks such as the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services and the Association of Directors of Children's Services, with a view to representing Camden's policy positions in these influential spaces.
- 8.4 Camden will continue to represent the interests of our communities through engagement with national government in the coming year. In June we expect the government's Comprehensive Spending Review to conclude, which may have significant implications for local government funding and public service reform in the medium-term, and so the Council will engage where possible in the process. It is also expected that the government will consult on legislative changes that seek to support the delivery of its five missions, and so where possible Camden will proactively engage. The Council's experience is that advocacy and influence is exercised most effectively through relationships, and so there will be an ongoing commitment to developing productive networks at local, regional, and national levels.
- 8.5 Our commitment to supporting vulnerable residents will persist through various initiatives, including the council tax reduction scheme, cost-of-living fund, and programmes like Temporary Accommodation Purchasing Programme (TAPP) that assist those in temporary accommodation or at risk of homelessness. Addressing housing needs remains a top priority, and we will continue to strive towards delivering more affordable homes for our community.
- 8.6 In conclusion, I extend my gratitude to all who have contributed tirelessly this year to serve Camden. I am optimistic about our collective achievements in the coming year and remain steadfast in ensuring Camden remains a borough where everyone can thrive, even amidst challenges.

9. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

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

10. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

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

11. Environmental Implications

11.1 The cost of living crisis is strongly linked to the wider climate emergency, with strong drivers for increasing energy costs rooted in our continuing reliance on carbon-based fuels for our gas and electricity supply. Reducing heat loss and improving the thermal efficiency of homes both benefit households by keeping them warm and well and saving them money and contributes to a reduction of CO2 emissions associated with heating. Alongside this and as part of our commitment to climate mitigation and a just transition to a net zero economy, we are working longer-term to improve the thermal efficiency and sustainability of our housing stock, our commercial property and our Council buildings.

REPORT ENDS