

Leader's Annual Report 2024/2025

Introduction

I'm proud to present my first annual report as Leader of Camden Council. Becoming Leader at the end of July 2024, I set out my continued commitment to tackling inequality, to delivering for the people of Camden and to making our borough a fairer place for everyone who lives and works here.

I am grateful for the fantastic work of our previous Leader, Georgia Gould, who was deeply committed to supporting our communities and to ensuring the best opportunities for Camden residents and I wish her all the best in her new role as an MP and Minister. I also want to congratulate Danny Beales and Lloyd Hatton on their election as MPs, and Dinah Caine, Simon Pitkeathley and Mike Katz on their nominations for Peerages. I'm sure that they will continue to show their dedication to public service and bring their experience supporting the people of Camden into their new roles.

In my previous role as Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living I worked hard to ensure that as a Council we maintained our financial stability, in order to continue to provide the vital services and support that our communities rely on. We have also been able to provide focused support for those struggling with the rising cost of living, helping to improve lives through direct financial support, reducing the cost of Council Tax for those who need it, and investing in our community partners who provide vital support across the borough. I took this commitment with me as I stepped into the role of Leader and I'm grateful to be working alongside Cabinet colleagues who are equally dedicated to serving our communities. For this reason, I am using this report to highlight achievements from across the work of the Council and say thank you to the Cabinet and to officers for the dedication and hard work that has gone into these successes.

I want to say a particular thank you to Camden's Chief Executive, Jenny Rowlands, who has announced that she will be leaving the Council in the summer. Her impact on Camden has been immeasurable and I know that her legacy will reflect the great work she has done. I have really valued her support and guidance as I have stepped into the role of Leader, and she is leaving big shoes to fill as we begin the recruitment process for a new Chief Executive.

Camden is a place rich in its diversity, we attract bold ideas, innovation and organisations that are leaders in their fields. We are also a borough in which great wealth and affluence sits alongside deep deprivation and we are working hard, using the levers at our disposal, to ensure that the people of Camden benefit from the wealth and opportunity that they see on their doorstep. We Make Camden, and our four Camden Missions, are a statement that we believe we can and should achieve more for our residents through partnership with institutions and organisations across the borough, than working alone as a Council. Developing this approach has been a key priority for me since becoming Leader and I will continue to put delivering for the people of Camden at the core of what I do going forward.

As a local authority we are often a first port of call for residents needing support, whether that is with housing, social care or schooling. Our most recent 'Outstanding' rating from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection of our Adult Social Care showed the pride that we take in providing the best possible services that our residents rely on. I am proud that despite a decade of local government cuts, being asked to do more with less, we have not lowered our ambition for ourselves, and the people of Camden and I have seen this even more clearly in my day-to-day work since becoming Leader. Over the coming year I want to see us continue to engage with the new government to share our expertise and to advocate for the resources we need to continue to provide outstanding services.

I want Camden to be a place of opportunity, where people can afford to live, to stay and to send their children to our schools. To do this we need to be a borough that builds. I will, therefore, be focusing efforts over the coming year to ensure we can maximise the number of affordable homes we can build. I also want to make the experience of living in a Camden Council home the best it can be, focusing in the year ahead on continuing our housing improvements and looking to improve the energy efficiency of Council homes through retrofitting and, thereby, cutting bills and cutting emissions. I am excited to see what we can achieve for our residents through testing and learning at the forefront of this work in local government.

Community cohesion

In my first months as Leader, I saw how people of all faiths are impacted by the conflict in the middle east - and how that pain is felt across Camden. I also saw how the riots elsewhere in England created tensions and anxieties among people in Camden. We have seen a worrying number of incidents of Antisemitism and Islamophobia reported over the last year. My priority is to ensure that our communities remain safe - and we recognise that cohesion between and across communities is an important part of people both feeling and being safe.

We have invested strongly in our voluntary and community sector as the bedrock of cohesion - investment in services, staff and support that enable people to participate as full citizens. We have worked with our faith communities - so that we can learn from their insights, and so that we can work together on outreach and engagement - particularly on issues of belonging, tolerance and cohesion

We have worked quickly to respond to the cohesion concerns of a variety of faith leaders over the last year including:

- Camden's mayor and the Co-Chairs of our Faith Forum leading a number of cross-faith events to promote cohesion and making clear the Council's position on tolerance and dialogue
- increasing the number of reassurance and engagement patrols conducted by our Community Safety Enforcement Officers (CSEOs), with a particular focus on mosques more than 1,500 reassurance patrols were conducted
- undertaking reassurance calls and visits, including me and fellow councillors, to synagogues and mosques; to understand the impact of these global events on our communities, and to log and be able to respond to issues and concerns

- sending regular communications to voluntary sector and faith partners, including sharing of statements, a letter of reassurance and updates via special bulletins
- based on conversations with the Jewish and Muslim communities, increasing patrols to places of worship in response, making resources available to schools and youth providers in terms of how to support young people and signpost to support services.

Feedback from all our engagement and conversations has fed into the development of the Hate Crime Prevention Champions who will be organisations supporting a continued increase in reporting of incidents and building trust and support into the system

We will continue to take the lead from our communities - who have shown us that they want Camden to continue to be a welcoming, tolerant place where people from all faiths and none come to build better lives. We will continue to listen to our citizens, our partners and our faith leaders to understand the role the Council can play as a civic voice and convener in our communities.

Financial resilience and continued cost of living support

We are working in a challenging financial climate for local government, caused by sustained funding reductions imposed by previous governments, rising demand for services and huge increases in demand-led services such as housing, adults and children's services. At the same time, we are seeing rising costs due to periods of high inflation and increasing regulation. As a Council we have continued to prioritise our resources in a way that focuses on the outcomes that matter most to our residents, and which fit with our core values of tackling poverty and inequality, and of prevention and early intervention.

We are entering the third year of our current three-year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which Cabinet agreed in January 2023, and which is vital to us both being able to meet the challenges we face, whilst remaining financially resilient in order to continue to deliver the services our residents need. We have not been afraid to take difficult financial decisions. I am proud of the robust financial planning we have undertaken, and recent data show us to be in a strong financial position relative to many of our neighbours.

The local government finance settlement announced at the end of 2024 gave us confirmation about the core funding that we will receive from central government this year, with our core spending power increasing by just over 4%. Further to this, in June we expect the conclusion of the government's spending review, which will have significant implications for local government funding and public service reform looking further ahead to the medium-term. As Leader I will drive our engagement in the process.

Our priority across the work of the whole Council remains tackling poverty and inequality and managing the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, continued poverty and hardship for our residents. To ensure we can continue to do this work and in order to continue delivering the best possible public services, we raised Council Tax by

4.99%, raising £7.35 million to fund vital services. These resources enabled us to continue, and to increase, our support through:

- investing £32million in our Council Tax Support Scheme – to ensure that around 16,000 of the most vulnerable households do not pay any Council Tax, and around 6,000 more, receive reduced bills
- doubling Council Tax on second homes – which could generate an additional £5million to contribute to our Council Tax Support scheme and to help fund accommodation for people who have become homeless
- continuing to invest more than £6m a year through the government's Household Support Fund and Camden's own cost of living crisis fund, giving us one of the most generous local offers in the country. 3,835 households were awarded more than £2.2m in grants, with an average of £335 per award
- continuing to invest £1m a year in our Camden Advice Network of voluntary sector partners, who between April 2024 and December 2024 secured £6.8m in new income for Camden residents, made 7,400 referrals and got £118,000 debt written off
- investing in a new data-driven money advice team within the Council, whose aim is to use the rich data we hold to identify and reach out proactively to those residents in or at risk of debt, who do not access help in the community. In its first three months of operations, the team secured more than £250,000 of new income for residents.

We Make Camden and our Missions

We Make Camden is our shared vision for our borough and is designed to help the council and our partners prioritise focus and attention, and collaborate with purpose and direction. Our We Make Camden strategy is an ambition for our whole borough, not just the council. Our four missions seek to challenge the way the council works, and the way we work with our communities, to achieve things beyond what the council can do alone.

Our missions are not the only things that are important to us, but they focus issues that need a diversity of contribution and a commitment to collective problem-solving to address. We recognise that the council cannot solve these issues on its own. We Make Camden helps us align with others across our borough on what is important and to orientate corporate priorities and resources appropriately.

We are excited that national government have adopted a missions methodology, and that London Councils and the GLA working with London boroughs will look to support missions through the London Growth Plan and other programmes. Camden has offered to support the Government and London Councils in thinking about the development and implementation of missions in government.

Our four Camden missions are:

- Diversity - By 2030, those holding positions of power in Camden are as diverse as our community – and the next generation is ready to follow
- Young people - By 2025, every young person has access to economic opportunity that enables them to be safe and secure
- Food - By 2030, everyone eats well every day with nutritious, affordable, sustainable food
- Estates and neighbourhoods - By 2030, Camden’s estates and their neighbourhoods are healthy, sustainable and unlock creativity.

As part of our We Make Camden missions approach we agreed to publish an annual State of the Borough report that transparently reports on the data and insight we hold about our communities in the areas highlighted in our We Make Camden strategy. This is our commitment to share with citizens and partners what we know about our community – so that we can from this shared understanding identify issues and potential solutions together. We are about to publish our third annual State of the Borough report which will include update on the work of each of our We Make Camden missions in individual “State of the Mission” updates.

Updates on Missions

This year we took a comprehensive missions update to Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee on our missions work ¹– and our missions approach. We are keen to encourage all scrutiny committees to engage with our missions work to bring councillors and communities into the process of understanding and helping deliver these cross-cutting programmes. We also took an update on our We Make Camden partnerships approach aligned with our missions². We know that councillors as community leaders are key partners in understanding, making real and delivering our missions.

Our approach to missions development over the last two years has included:

- Deepening our understanding our missions – using data, insight and feedback from our community partners to understand more about the specific issues contained within our missions, so we can develop hypotheses and plans for how we as a council, intend to make change and the areas in which we want the expertise, ideas and resources of our partners and communities.
- Developing mission teams and partners – we have developed partnerships around each of our missions from community partners, anchor institutions as well as across our own services – with a focus on partners that want to own or contribute their own thinking on missions.
- Funding test and learn activity associated with our missions in our communities – working with Camden Giving we have been distributing funding for missions-aligned activity in our communities through micro-grants – called the We Make Camden Kit. Since 2021 this has funded over 300 projects across the Borough. This year we launched the We Make Camden Project

¹ [Our We Make Camden Missions Approach, Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny, November 2024](#)

² [We Make Camden Partnerships, Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny, November 2024](#)

Fund, distributing £400,000 in grants for projects and programmes aligned with our Missions.

- Developing projects, programmes and interventions aligned with our missions – aligned with our understanding of the key issues in our missions, developing council-led test and learn projects that can tell us more about what works to make a difference in our missions, and also what opportunities there are to make changes that have a big impact on our missions (like looking at our approaches to procurement, employment and funding).

Our State of the Missions report coming out later this year will include comprehensive updates on our four We Make Camden missions, however, below I have highlighted summaries of the key focus areas of our Missions, and projects and programmes that are defining our approach.

Our **Youth Mission** was established recognising the specific impact of the pandemic on the educational experiences of young people and concern about how this would impact their economic opportunities. We have been delivering since 2021 within the context of the continuing impact of the pandemic on young people and their wellbeing and education, the cost of living crisis, and more than a decade of national decisions to reduce funding and investment for local authority education systems and youth services. We recognised the urgency of the mission given the impact of the pandemic on a generation of young people – which is why we set ourselves the interim deadline of making real impact and progress by 2025 – separate to the longer-term ambition of fulfilling the mission overall, by 2030. We have a universal offer and five priority cohorts, care-experienced young people in the youth justice system, young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHP), disabled young people and school non-attenders. One key Youth Mission project this year has been Google working with Camden Learning, Camden Council and Camden schools to develop an AI Campus for pupils in the borough – the first of its kind in the world. The aim of the campus is to help ensure that a diverse range of children and young people can take advantage of all the opportunities offered by this next generation technology – as well as deepen their knowledge of related subjects, including maths, further maths, physics, and computer science. A total of 32 students from every Camden secondary school was selected for the inaugural cohort, which started in November. Wider benefits for Camden schools and their pupils will include mentoring, masterclasses and work experience placements offered by Google and other local tech companies, as well as enrichment sessions offered across a range of related subjects for both primary and secondary aged pupils. While Google wants to grow a more diverse community of AI practitioners to ensure that the benefits of AI are shared more widely, the company is also keen to extend its support to the Camden community by offering wider education, training and career opportunities for local young people in the STEAM sector.

The **Google-sponsored AI Campus**, which was opened in November 2024 by the Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, will be education-led and overseen by Camden Learning in collaboration with Camden schools. It will have clear links to the primary and secondary curriculums and progression onto further and higher education, apprenticeships and careers in the fast-growing STEAM sector. The new campus is based at the Camden Learning Centre, in Charrington Street, Somers Town, which has a history of being used by all Camden schools for computing and technology.

The Camden Learning Centre building is being rebranded as part of the London AI Campus plan.

Our **Estates Mission** focuses on the role of estates, neighbourhoods and places in supporting people to live well and have flourishing lives. We are focused on the role that people, place and power can play in addressing the wider social determinants of health, recognising that Camden is a place with significant health inequalities between communities.

We have worked over the last few years to engage intensively on all our Camden estates. We door-knocked estates around the borough to understand what was important to tenants and leaseholders, and also held estate action days in a number of places to dive deep into opportunities for change. From this we have built a rich understanding of the ambitions and capabilities of our estates and communities that has fed into our mission.

One key project over the last year has been our vacant spaces programme, where we know that the spaces and places on estates for coming together and community action are critical to how people feel about their communities. In response to inaccessibility or lack of availability of community, social enterprise and small and medium enterprise spaces in the borough, we have developed a programme to transform Camden's under-used spaces on estates into productive, socially valuable spaces. We want to create spaces with public value and contribute to social infrastructure. Our pilot vacant spaces project on Hilgrove Estate, seeks to find uses with the local community for a multi-bay garage. We partnered with The Winch and Public Works to carry out engagement and a viability study. A further investment was made on making the site safe and welcoming for residents. We will now be carrying out a soft market testing exercise for a small number of sites to understand the viability of both commercial market interest and voluntary and community sector market interest and social value priorities for their locations.

Another exciting Estates Mission project over this year has been the Peckwater Estate partnership with Adidas and Arsenal where these partners will support the refurbishment of a football pitch on this estate by summer 2025. This came about following the tenant participation Estate Action Day held in September 2023. We heard strongly from residents, the importance of the pitch for youth engagement and opportunity. Arsenal in the Community have committed to return to the pitch from 2025 to provide free access sessions twice weekly. NW5 Community Youth Project, a local voluntary sector organisation and strategic partner of Camden, will also be providing physical activity opportunities on the pitch. Arsenal through their partnership with Adidas are investing in the refurbishment of the sports pitch at Peckwater Estate through their No More Red campaign. We are working closely with their team on each aspect including the renewal, launch and long-term usage of the pitch for residents to access free sport and physical activity sessions alongside partners NW5 Youth Project based on the estate.

Our **Food Mission** development was rooted in the poverty and inequality we saw in accessing nutritious food during the pandemic – and also the whole community response to the issue of food insecurity. We have continued to see a challenging context for tackling food insecurity with the cost-of-living crisis causing a significant

increase in poverty and constrained household budgets. We have made significant investment and ensured a strategic focus on supporting households to access sustainable food and a cash-first focus that is linked into our wider tackling poverty approach. However, our food mission goes beyond immediate relief. We aim to address food insecurity by tackling its root causes and seeking food system change.

We are working closely with a number of community partners and organisations to make change across our three key outcomes for this mission:

- residents are food secure and no longer need to rely on crisis food provision
- residents eat a healthy and balanced diet
- food is a foundation of children's and young people's flourishing lives.

As part of our Food Mission, we have invested strongly in supporting access to food in schools to address child hunger. In 2023 we funded the Camden School Breakfast Programme which has supported more than 3200 children to have a free breakfast every day. We have also worked with Word on the Curb to undertake research to increase free school meal take-up in schools and to support the distribution of more food by secondary school pupils who need different support and services to ensure they access nutritious food during the school day. We are working with Lifeafterhummus Community Benefit Society to support the collection and redistribution of surplus food waste. They are now providing food through the 5 Pancras Square council offices café to both staff and visitors.

The **Diversity Mission** is explicitly focused on ensuring that the leadership of organisations (public, private and third sector) in Camden, reflects the diversity of our communities. It also includes a cross-sectoral challenge of ensuring a next generation of leadership is supported, encouraged and enabled to move into leadership roles. Since 2021, we have made decisive movements to improve the diversity of our own organisation. Our internal work since 2020 has included the launch of our Race Equality Action Plan, the formation of an Inclusive Recruitment Working Group, signing the Camden Disability Charter and achieving Bloody Good Employer status. Camden is the first council to voluntarily publish our gender, black, Asian and other ethnic and disability pay gaps, and we are also publishing our pension pay gap. We have made significant progress in diversifying our council leadership. We are now representative of our communities within the top thirty leaders of the Council - 39% of our directors are now from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds. Parental leave is available from the first day of employment and paternity leave doubled this year for staff. We are now looking to engage organisations and institutions across our borough to build a movement for change, drawing on our experience.

As a council, we play an important leader of place role in convening the borough as well as being operationally involved in networks and partnerships that are delivering the missions. May this year, will see the fourth annual **We Make Camden Summit**. The summit brings together partners and community leaders to reflect on our progress over the last year in delivering our missions and in fulfilling our We Make Camden ambitions. We will continue to bring together council leaders, partners and communities each year as part of a commitment to working in the open on our missions, as well as galvanising and convening innovation and investment capacities

around our missions. This year we will also reflect on the Community Wealth Fund pilot launch and our work to support national Government missions alongside our own Camden local missions delivery.

We are currently testing how the partnership aspect of missions can be strengthened by developing a clearer role and asks for organisations to contribute. Part of this is by onboarding a group of missions ambassadors and testing with them, what these roles could and should mean in practice to get the most impact. Partners expressed willingness and appetite to be involved in this at the 2024 Summit, and work is underway to explore this further. These organisations include Phoenix Court Works, the British Museum, University College London (UCL), Roundhouse, University of the Arts' Central St Martins (UAL CSM), Arsenal FC, Camden Giving and Word on the Curb.

Community Wealth Fund

Another key element of our missions approach is the development of our Community Wealth Fund which will focus on our youth and diversity missions. It will also be committed to sharing power with citizens and communities through participatory investment-making.

We agreed the establishment of a community wealth fund in July 2023. This year marks an exciting step forward for our work on the Camden Community Wealth Fund (CWF), as we enter the pilot phase. The aim is to fund and grow a more inclusive economy in our borough, supporting businesses, organisations and people here in Camden to develop their ideas and grow their impact in the borough. I'm proud that Camden is developing innovative solutions in a difficult financial climate, supporting those who may be systemically excluded from finance via more traditional routes. We are doing this in a way that involves our residents in the development and decision making on how we invest the fund in Camden.

The pilot phase will launch two models that focus on identifying the participation approach for the Fund's full launch in 2026. Our goal is to establish a participation approach that builds resident trust in local government and fiscal institutions, is cost-effective, and has a material positive impact on risk-adjusted return. This is a key priority as there currently aren't any large-scale participation approaches in investment that we can use as a model for the fund.

The first pilot will invest in businesses which advance Camden's Youth Mission. In January 2025, a diverse group of 15 young people (aged 16-26) started working with us on our Youth Investment Panel, bringing invaluable experience in areas aligned with Camden's Youth Mission. These young people will play an active role throughout the investment process over the course of the year—from fund design to final investment decisions—applying their experience and knowledge so that the investments made create economic opportunities for young people. In late January I joined cabinet members Camron Aref-Adib and Sabrina Francis and Camden officers, to take part in a facilitated introduction session with the young people, to introduce ourselves to the participants. We will continue to meet with them

throughout the year. The CWF team hopes to open applications to youth-focused businesses in the summer of 2025 with investments made by early 2026.

The second pilot will invest in businesses which advance Camden's Diversity Mission, focusing on providing investment to diverse entrepreneurs. The fund will facilitate large-scale participation with residents (1000+) through online and in-person sessions, convening a diverse group of citizens including corporates, academic institutions, and community organisations alongside individual Camden residents. We are using our convening power as a council to give us a unique advantage in delivering an investment strategy and a fund that can generate financial return and social benefit. We hope to open applications later this year.

Public affairs and engagement with new government

A new national government taking office following the General Election in July 2024 has offered Camden an opportunity to make the case for national policy reform that aligns with our values, responds to the needs and priorities of our communities, and reflects our mission-oriented approach to change. As a local authority with extensive experience and expertise in public service design, delivery, and reform, we are confident that we have learning and insights that will help the new government to respond to the challenges facing Camden's communities and the UK more widely. In Camden, we are approaching the task of engaging with national policy development with humility and in the spirit of partnership and shared endeavour.

Since the General Election, I have been pleased that Camden has received visitors from other local authorities, government departments, and think tanks who have been interested in how we work and what we have managed to achieve locally. These visits, alongside Camden's wider engagement with the local government sector and with national government, have highlighted the national relevance of Camden's missions approach, our citizen engagement and participation expertise, our test and learn approaches to service improvement, and our models of relational practice. Camden has compelling stories to tell about each of these aspects of how we work, which highlight their impact and make the case for wider adoption.

While the government has been defining national plans for public services that are critical to its missions, I am pleased that Camden has contributed to consultations and engagement exercises in order to reflect our experience and represent the interests of Camden residents. The Council meeting in November featured a themed debate on Camden's response to the government consultation on its forthcoming 10-year plan for health in England, and I am pleased that the debate helped to shape the final submission to the government. Separately, Cabinet members have led responses to consultations and engagement on topics ranging from planning policy and housing to the national curriculum, social care, and special educational needs and disabilities.

We now have a national government that is committed to engaging with local government and is receptive to our sector's experience and expertise. A government

that treats councils as partners, not punchbags. The Government has expressed an interest in learning from and working with Camden, following our Outstanding rating from the Care Quality Commission inspection of our Adult Social Care service. In the year ahead I look forward to building stronger relationships between Camden and the Government, taking opportunities to communicate Camden's insights and learning, and continue to advocate for Camden's communities.

Adult Social Care

In February this year the Council received a rating of Outstanding from our Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection of our Adult Social Care. With this, Camden has become the first local authority in the country to receive an 'Outstanding' rating under the new CQC Assurance framework.

The report followed a thorough self-assessment in July 2024 and an onsite visit by CQC inspectors in November 2024 and gave the overall effectiveness of the Council's Adult Social Care services an impressive score of 89%. The report also particularly highlights Equity, Partnerships, Safety and Leadership as outstanding, recognising the considerable work the Council has been doing in Camden for many years to change culture and practice, and reduce inequity.

Some highlights from the report include our incredibly high score on equity, with CQC recognising the priority focus it is given in Camden and what the council is doing to dismantle the obstacles that mean outcomes and life experiences are not equal across the borough. This came through particularly strongly in the way staff talked in the focus groups with the inspectors. The CQC has noted how much positive work we have done – for example through our Equalities Data Action Group and the impact of the council's anti-racism work on our workforce.

The CQC inspection team was impressed by how our entire organisation understands, supports and values adult social care, and recognised that we have excellent relationships with partners. There are some really notable examples in the report of how our adult social care service works with other services, including with children's services and with housing, and how we collaborate with partners and providers.

The CQC was very positive about distributed leadership across our services, with our partners and across the council, including our elected members leading the way in their communities. Colleagues working in adult social care and related services were noted as showing leadership in their work every day. The inspection has given us a huge amount of learning as a council, and we are open to working with neighbouring boroughs and colleagues to share this learning and practice going forward.

Community Safety

We all know how Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) has had a dreadful impact on the lives of residents and businesses, nationally, and particularly in London. For instance, youth and drug-related crimes are surging, and we are experiencing this first-hand in

Camden. Tackling crime and the causes of crime are a priority for me as Leader and for the Council. I am proud of the work we have done this year to try to make Camden a safer place for our residents, particularly our focus on tackling violence against women and girls, youth violence, drug-related crime, and ASB. These are all key priorities set out by the Camden Community Safety Partnership Board, which sees us bring together the Council, police, health services, and community organisations to deliver a coordinated response to tackling these challenges.

Having listened to the concerns of residents and businesses, this year we have carried out an ASB Review and Taskforce pilot, strengthening our enforcement and looking at long-term impact. The ASB Taskforce was piloted from February to July 2024 and included dedicated officers working across housing, community safety, health, and legal services to adopt an intelligence-led approach in tackling ASB on estates.

The joined up working of our multi-disciplinary Community Safety Enforcement service, with 22 dedicated on-street officers, has this year achieved a significant increase in enforcement actions, targeted interventions on commercial waste and unlicensed street trading, and enhanced ASB enforcement across our public spaces and estates. This work remains a key priority, ensuring Camden remains a place where everyone feels safe in their homes and communities.

We are working with our communities to proactively tackle youth violence and exploitation. Our Reducing Youth Violence and Exploitation service plays a crucial role in safeguarding young people, working closely with partners across the council, schools, and voluntary sector organisations to provide coordinated support. Prevention is central to our strategy, with initiatives such as the Community Guardianship Project empowering young people to take an active role in community safety, fostering resilience and engagement. Additionally, our locality-based youth hubs continue to provide safe spaces and meaningful activities, ensuring that young people have positive opportunities that deter them from getting into high-risk situations.

As part of our efforts to ensure everyone has a safe place to call home, our Routes off the Streets outreach team successfully supported 255 people into accommodation from December 2023 to June 2024, with expanded emergency housing during severe weather. We know that there are often multiple and complex reasons that lead people to sleeping rough, and so we are working closely with health services, such as the cross-borough Mental and Physical Health Pilot, to provide better support. The Community Drugs Partnership is also working to reduce drug-related harm, with sub-groups focused on criminal justice and mental health, while efforts are made to increase access to treatment and address co-occurring issues, particularly with high-strength opioids. Over the coming year we will continue to work towards our goal of making rough sleeping rare, brief, and non-recurring by working in partnership and advocating for systemic change.

This year we have continued important work to tackle violence against women and girls (VAWG), maintaining our partnership-based approach through the VAWG Board, which brings together police, health services, and community groups. We have adopted the Women's Night Safety Charter, we are also strengthening our

licensing policy to enhance women's safety, as well as carrying out women's safety walkabouts with residents to better understand how we can make areas of the borough safer for women and girls. This year, the "Call It Out" campaign has been a rallying call for communities to work together and to call out and safely challenge any inappropriate behaviour they witness on Camden's streets. I am proud that we have also gained Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation to improve the housing support we are providing for those experiencing domestic abuse. In March, we published our first survivors' handbook to ensure those who are experiencing domestic abuse, have access to clear information about their housing and legal rights and what housing support is available.

Secure, safe, warm homes

A key focus of my leadership so far has been addressing the long-standing financial strain on Camden's housing budget. Historic underfunding, years-long insufficient national support and the rising cost of maintenance have put considerable pressure on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), requiring us to take a strategic approach to balancing resources while ensuring residents receive the high standards of service they expect. As a landlord to more than twenty thousand families, our priority is to ensure we are providing secure, safe, high-quality and affordable housing to our residents.

As reported by London Councils, boroughs face a cumulative £700 million deficit within their HRAs due to rapid cost increases, rent freezes, and safety requirements that outpace rental income. Nationally, the 2016-20 social rent cut alone, reduced council landlords' rent revenue by £2.4 billion over four years. Further rent caps have reduced revenue by a further £900 million. Councils in England are also spending £1.7bn a year on temporary accommodation for homeless households, up 62% over the last five years. A record 109,000 households in England are living in temporary accommodation, including more than 142,000 children. Locally, changes in social housing rent policy and other shifts outlined above have led to more than £150 million lost in annual revenue for Camden to spend on the improvement of social housing.

Camden's medium term financial strategy aims to secure £7.51 million in savings by 2025/26 to balance the HRA. However, inflationary pressures, high repair costs, and a growing housing need demand, place continued pressure on HRA budgets. Camden has used reserves for five consecutive years to manage annual shortfalls, an unsustainable approach long-term, requiring concerted government support.

Amidst these crises, the previous government passed the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 to introduce Ofsted and CQC-style inspections for social housing providers against the Regulator for Social Housing's four [consumer standards](#). As a landlord, we are expected to make informed investment decisions to be able to improve the quality of our housing stock, as well as have a deep understanding of the needs of tenants which should inform the way the Council communicates and engages with tenants. The maladministration rates issued by the Housing Ombudsman have increased by more than 300%.

Despite the significant structural challenges across the sector, Camden is ambitious and wants to deliver services at and beyond the baseline set by the Regulator. In order to do so, a generationally significant transformation of our housing and repair model is required. This is to see our housing services both in the context of our wider council services and our shared ambitions articulated through We Make Camden of helping people grow, live and age well, and to tackle inequality. We Make Camden and The Way We Work set both a direction and an approach to our work – establishing a focus for transformation that our services are:

- relational – prioritising building trust with people we will have long-term interactions with
- accessible – ensuring our services are responsive and designed to respond to people’s priorities with a focus on creating digital era services
- driven by data – using our data to continue to improve – and continue to understand inequalities of access and outcome for our residents
- connected to our tenants and their aspirations for their lives and communities.

The work to respond to these priorities and align housing and repairs services will require a very significant cross-council corporate effort, now underway. Our Housing Transformation Programme will enable us to respond, providing the necessary multi-disciplinary resources and focus to help us achieve compliance and financial viability in the short and medium term, with the ambition to become a leading social landlord. This year achievements include:

- the commencement of the housing investment strategy, ensuring growth of the right kind of homes and setting a clear path for improvement of people’s homes
- marshalling of corporate resources to make radical and wholesale system changes across digital systems and use of data
- designing a new participation model to ensure that tenants’ voices are central to our work.

Fire Safety

Since 2018/19, we have been delivering the Resident Safety Programme, developed in response to the Hackitt Review of Fire & Building Safety and Phase 1 of the Grenfell Inquiry Report. A key priority has been fire safety works in council homes, with more than £200 million of the council’s own resources invested to date along with an additional £100m in grants secured for façade remediation.

We will complete the works to the Chalcots in 2025/26 and this will see an A1 fire-rated façade with improved thermal performance for residents. We have also assembled a strong team to meet the requirements of the Building Safety Act 2022 with building safety cases being prepared for our 188 tall buildings (those higher than 18m). We have allocated £4.5m each year in revenue funding to meet the requirements of the Building Safety Act 2022 and the Fire Safety Act 2021, and in our housing investment strategy, we allocated a further £70m to cover any works arising from the completion of building safety cases.

Our work is informed by the Housing & Fire Safety Advisory Panel, which is an independently chaired group consisting of tenants, leaseholders and councillors with representation from the London Fire Brigade. Recently the panel has considered the council's emerging response to the Grenfell Phase 2 report, key data on performance and reviewed the approach to building safety cases. Their independent scrutiny strengthens our commitment to transparency, and the development and delivery of the Resident Safety Programme.

As a council we are committed to best practice in fire safety. The Government's response to Phase 2 of the Grenfell Inquiry Report is expected in 2025, but we are not waiting to act on key recommendations, instead, we continue to develop and enhance the Resident Safety Programme to ensure all council homes remain as safe as possible.

Damp and mould

Responding to damp and mould issues, especially for tenants with specific vulnerabilities, has been a key priority for our housing and property services teams, this year. We have made great progress in improving conditions in our properties, working across council teams and taking a holistic, well-being focused approach. From January to November 2024, the team visited more than 3,000 homes, proactively engaging as well as responding to tenant concerns. We now see an average of fifteen new cases a day compared to 100 new cases per day for this time last year.

Good Work Camden

In 2024 there were 36,920 enterprises operating in Camden and in the last year we've seen a net increase of 585 new business openings. When I became Leader, one of my key priorities was to harness the relationships with businesses and institutions that the Council has, to benefit the people of Camden. The work of Good Work Camden (GWC), the Council's flagship employment and business support programme is key to this. Good Work Camden includes neighbourhood-based employment support, the Camden Young Talent Team (including Camden Apprenticeships) and the Euston Skills Centre. GWC also convenes the Employment and Skills Network and the Inclusive Business Network.

Since the start of 2024, through the neighbourhood job hubs, 337 people have received one-to-one support and we have delivered 291 work, training or self-employment outcomes. In addition to the one-to-one support offered at our Job Hubs in Gospel Oak, Kilburn and Regent's Park. We have also developed a range of resources and workshops, such as a monthly CV surgery, interview practice sessions and employer insights sessions organised by our employer outreach officers. We also offer specialist support and advice around applying for roles within the NHS.

In May 2024 we hosted our annual Good Work Camden Jobs & Skills Event. The event saw 50 stall holders, 32 employers and 18 local providers/community groups

sharing live vacancies, training opportunities and additional services with the 270 residents in attendance.

Camden's Disability Job Hub was built on principles agreed by a group of disabled residents and on research completed by Camden Disability Action. The hub was launched in April 2023 and more than 75 residents have been onboarded. Eight have been supported into paid employment, seven have been supported into paid work experience placements and 10 have been supported into education and training. Many soft outcomes achieved as well, including comprehensive reasonable adjustments assessment, advice and guidance. The Disability Job Hub commissioned Purple Tuesday to deliver Disability Equality training to all Good Work Camden staff and also launched an eight-week skills for work training programme for our learning disability residents, led by the learning disability work ready coach. Additionally, the first Camden Autism Pathways to Employment course, co-produced with Aspirations, took place in March 2024 and September 2024. This is a pioneering, free, five-week employability programme for autistic Camden residents, designed to create peer mentor opportunities and deliver employability support, and involved real employers in a mock job interview day and inclusive recruitment upskilling programme.

We provide specialist support to our refugee communities, this includes supporting refugee residents into education and voluntary work programmes. We supported 47 Afghan residents to enrol for new courses and training opportunities including qualifications in English and maths and in areas including first aid and food hygiene, and Ukrainian residents, one who has begun a master's degree in marketing management and another who has started a construction skills qualification at the Euston Skills Centre.

In September, we launched our "goodwork" website which features up-to-date news and events, plus access to a range of employment and training opportunities. In addition, Camden convenes a collection of local partners, colleges and specialised support organisations which make up our Employment and Skills Network. The aim of the network is to improve cross-referral pathways, share opportunities across the borough and build the capacity and capability of local employment support practitioners. The capability programme is designed according to feedback from members about support and training that would be useful to them. In October 2024, we held our first in-person forum since the pandemic, the focus was on inclusive recruitment and 16 members attended. Future sessions will include the impact of housing on employment, supporting carers and equality and diversity. Alongside this, we are working with Timewise to deliver training on negotiating flexibility with employers and we also aim to deliver modern slavery training in the new year.

Our Inclusive Business Network (IBN) continues to encourage and promote good work standards. The network has grown steadily over the past year, with 43 local organisations now members. In 2024, the Network hosted quarterly training sessions on topics like flexible working, equality, diversity and disability inclusion. We recently

trialled a reflection session following the delivery of diversity training, which helped participants deepen their learning and apply it practically.

In February 2024, we opened the new Euston Skills Centre (ESC), which serves as Camden Council's primary hub for construction training and job brokerage, now operating from a purpose-built facility at the former Maria Fidelis school site. Funded in part by HS2 assurance monies, the centre offers residents training in various construction fields through partnerships with the College of North West London, including Level 1 and Level 2 diplomas in multi skills, carpentry and joinery, plumbing, and electrical installation. As an accredited Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) test centre, the ESC provides the training necessary for residents to earn a five-year CSCS card, a pre-requisite to work safely on site. The centre also offers weekly Level 1 construction in the built environment courses, alongside specialist guidance on CV writing, job search, and interview skills.

GWC's Regents Park Job Hub is co-located at the ESC, offering additional support services for local residents pursuing employment and training. In partnership with Camden's Adult and Community Learning team, the service facilitates english as a second language classes, digital inclusion programs, and literacy and numeracy skills training. As a result, the centre now offers a comprehensive range of support services aimed at helping residents access valuable training and employment opportunities. In line with the growing demand for sustainable skills, the Euston Skills Centre has installed green skills bays, where residents can train in emerging technologies such as air source heat pumps, solar thermal and photovoltaic systems, and electric vehicle charging. Camden aims to further develop its green skills training to prepare residents for future roles in sustainable construction and retrofit projects, ensuring that the ESC remains a key resource for workforce upskilling in line with evolving industry needs.

We have developed a robust approach to expanding apprenticeship and work experience opportunities, with a focus on both internal vacancies and partnerships with local businesses. Through a proactive "think apprentice" approach, we encourage apprenticeship consideration for internal vacancies, backed by an *Apprenticeship Pathway* model designed to transition apprentices into full-time positions where feasible. 150 people have been supported into apprenticeships by the service since January 2024. We have successfully created ring-fenced apprenticeships in partnership with suppliers such as Solace Women's Aid, Wilson James, Sapphire Independent Housing, Lime, and Lambert Smith Hampton. Opportunities with University College London and the Francis Crick Institute have also been secured through planning obligations under S106. Further community outreach includes secondary school engagement and monthly information sessions to build apprenticeship awareness and interest among students and residents, supporting career readiness across diverse sectors, including construction and more.

This year, the Council has established a new work experience brokerage service to support residents aged 16+ in securing short-term placements within the council and with local businesses throughout the borough. I'm proud that 97% of young people in Camden aged 16 to 17 are in education, employment or training.

Health Anchor Partnership

Camden's Health Anchors programme, which was launched with the support of the Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, brings together life science, industry and academic partners to examine how we might address health and healthcare inequalities through non-traditional partnerships. In 2022, life expectancy at birth in Camden was 80 for males, similar to the London and England average, and 85 for females, two years higher than the England average. However, the gap in life expectancy between people living in the most and least deprived areas in Camden is 13.5 years for men and 9.6 years for women. Camden is the fortunate home of many medical and health institutions and in my leadership, I am committed to utilising their power to benefit these residents of Camden. Through a series of roundtable events, we have formed a collaboration between Camden Council, AstraZeneca, GSK, MSD, and UCL. Our shared purpose is to address the health needs of our residents with greatest potential to benefit and whose needs may not currently be fully met. We know that the majority of these residents live in social housing, and we are therefore progressing this work as a key component of the estates mission.

Camden residents' rights and perspectives must come first. For this reason, we have committed to undertaking a deliberative process to form our partnership principles including use of data, citizen insights, topics and themes suitable for test and learn pilots. This agreement will ensure we have a solid foundation for a productive partnership, which carries the weight of an enduring commitment to work together. The agreement itself forms the spine on which we can hang a series of test and learn initiatives. We will draw into these initiatives, different partners, who have engaged in our roundtable events to date. Camden Giving, for example will host a community fund linked to our community champions programme, bringing in our residents on estates to share their proposals for community action and systems change.

HS2 and Euston

For years, residents in Somers Town, the Regent's Park Estate and the Euston area have lived with the disruption of HS2 works. As Leader, I am committed to ensuring that the station development brings real benefits to our residents in terms of jobs, homes, open spaces and community facilities, harnessing the investment in the borough for the greater good. As a council, we have been clear that we should lead a locally-led development corporation working alongside the community, to ensure our residents' voices are heard in the ongoing development process.

During the past year we have held a second community conversation to understand our residents' priorities in response to the Government establishing a Housing Delivery Group for Euston, which aims to deliver thousands of new homes in the area. The output from the community conversation is informing the work of the

delivery group and structuring next steps for engagement around delivering new housing in Euston.

The Council is continuing with the production of the Euston Area Plan and undertook additional consultation last summer to set out what impact the Government's approach to reducing costs for the HS2 station at Euston meant for the plan's approach. We have also been progressing with meanwhile activities, working with HS2 Ltd and the Euston Partnership to look at opportunities to deliver meanwhile uses around the paused HS2 construction sites. This has resulted in the delivery of temporary open spaces at Hampstead Road, including a youth designed play structure, and meanwhile reinstatement of green space at Euston Gardens. The Maria Fidelis Annex building is also being used for the community, led by Old Diorama Arts Centre and we are supporting the opening of a community hub in a refurbished space within the main Maria Fidelis building, providing space for community activities and groups. In addition to this we have secured the use of part of the HS2 construction site for a Driver Training Bootcamp, working with Flannery, HS2, Mace and SCS to support 30 residents to undertake a short training programme associated with Euston Construction Skills Centre. Since opening in January 2024, the Euston Skills Centre has supported 155 residents in to working in the construction sector and 138 residents into construction apprenticeships.

I continue to hold conversations with stakeholders and residents in order to ensure that the council learns fully from residents' experiences at Euston, and use this to influence future construction plans in a way that delivers for the people of Camden.

Climate agenda

Human-induced climate change is driving extreme weather events across the globe, and Camden is not immune. In 2023, the borough experienced its first-ever recorded temperature of 40°C, highlighting the growing threat of extreme heat. This intense heat poses serious risks to people's health and presents significant challenges to both our built and natural environments. In addition to extreme temperatures, Camden continues to face an increasing likelihood of flooding. Following significant rainfall events in July 2021 and August 2022, which caused disruption to public spaces and homes across the borough, the risk of future flood events remains a concern.

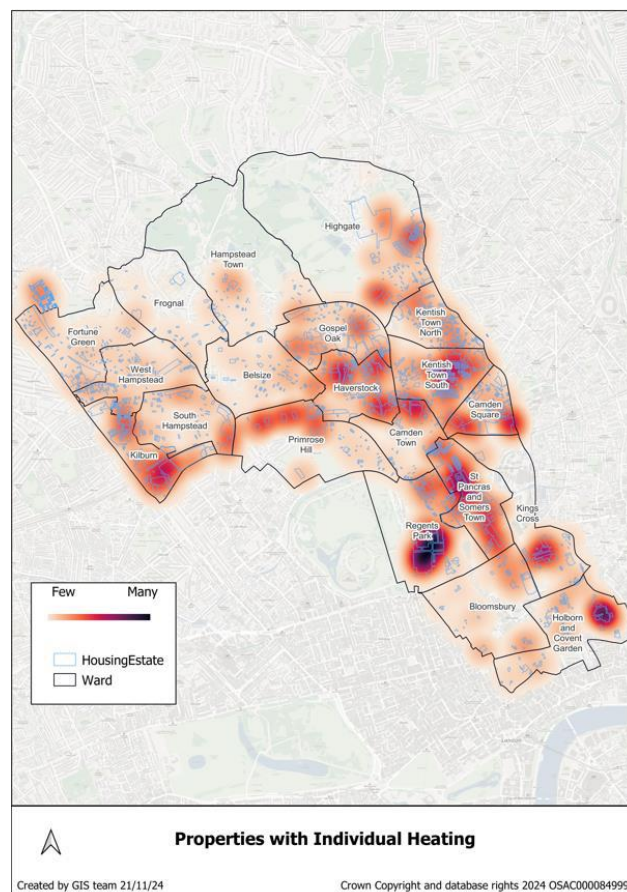
In 2019 Camden declared a climate and ecological emergency and committed to do everything we can to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Camden to 'net-zero' by 2030. The Camden Climate Action Plan, adopted in 2020, sought to strike a balance between the need to act quickly to reduce carbon emissions in Camden, while ensuring that the transition to a low-carbon Camden does not have adverse social and economic impacts on residents.

Energy Security

Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has put the need for energy security in stark perspective. As Leader, I am committed to ensuring that Camden is more

energy independent, secure and resilient, and that Camden moving towards greater energy independence is consistent with net zero and reducing the risk of higher bills. Energy security necessarily entails the smooth transition to abundant, low-carbon energy. By decarbonising, we want our energy to be cheap, clean, and created in Camden, where possible.

The council's current housing stock of 33,000 residences is mostly heated by gas with the estimated total cost of retrofitting all the council's houses in the region of £700m. In addition, 12,000 of our homes are on ageing communal heating systems whose pipework requires energy efficiency improvements. Unfortunately, Camden's stock of pre-1919 street properties and flats (eg in mansion blocks) are the most energy inefficient of all stock as before 1919, homes were built with non-cavity wall construction and are far less energy efficient.



Energy security is the reliable availability of affordable energy, however this reliable and affordable energy security can be in tension with decarbonisation; in particular, when the electrification of heat will increase costs for residents. As a council we are exploring alternative energy efficiency improvements that do not rely on heat source electrification and so both decrease cost and carbon emissions, while preparing homes for heat decarbonisation.

We have a wide-ranging programme in development, including grant-funded works to our homes, zero-carbon upgrades to libraries and schools. We are also looking at new ways of funding and delivering measures at scale. This includes work I am leading to install solar panels and storage to 3,000 council homes using a blend of grant funding, carbon credits and institutional investment, with billing managed through a bespoke billing platform providing the best value possible to residents. It will reduce their bills and their emissions, making energy more affordable and alongside tackling the climate emergency. This project is the first of its kind to be developed at scale and should terms be agreed with investors; delivery will start during 2025/26.

Historically, Camden has delivered both energy efficiency and decarbonisation work. Before 2019, Camden's efforts to decarbonise focussed installing combined heat and power (CHP) networks. Since 2019, it has focused on electrification of heat. Camden's energy efficiency programmes have focused on insulating cavity walls with work on more than 90% of council homes completed. We also have an extensive programme of energy efficiency work underway:

- through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund we have completed works on 86 residences; a further 139 are having designs finalised
- we have upcoming works on Maiden Lane and Alexandra Estate showing how communal heating systems can be improved for 1,200 homes
- our corporate and schools energy efficiency programme is performing well with energy costs reduced and emissions down by 64.5% since 2010.

As Leader, my focus in energy security will be in three key areas:

1. Lobbying to create the enabling conditions for affordable heat decarbonisation, focusing on electricity market reform aimed at decoupling electricity prices from gas and an ask of government to create the legal conditions for the "comfort charge" model to work with housing rents and leases.
2. A heat network review of Camden's communally heated estates with a view to establishing an approach to their improvement. Improving their energy performance would benefit 12,000 Council homes and prepare estates for the affordable decarbonisation of heat
3. A hard-to-treat homes focus as part of the housing investment strategy work with the aim of improving the energy security of residents living in homes built before 1919.

I am pleased that Camden is the lead borough of the retrofit consortium assembled by London Councils to deliver Social Housing Fund Wave 3 projects. The council will help the consortium of other London boroughs deliver £78m of grant-funded works over the next three years. This includes our retrofit at scale project, which will install solar panels and storage to 3,000 homes, and a project to install a communal air-sourced heat pump on an estate.

Before 2030, my goal is for the council to have

- completed its heat network review

- completed phase 1 of the retrofit at scale test and learn project; and to have developed and mobilised phase 2
- driven electricity market reform

In the long term, beyond 2030 complete the heat network review and establish new funding models.

Working with the Government is key to achieving our goals on energy security, particularly around comfort charges and reducing electricity prices.

Another issue lies where comfort charging is not currently compliant with social housing rents and common lease provisions. To combat this Camden proposes a dedicated team with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) lawyers to analyse how comfort charging can be made compliant with social housing rents and common lease provisions.

In addition, current electricity prices are inflated and make decarbonisation unaffordable. In response to this, Camden will call for the government to restart work on electricity market reform with the aim of “decoupling” gas and electricity prices to make the electrification of heat affordable for residents.

Emissions

The council has introduced its first Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan. Formally adopted in November 2023, this plan outlines a two-year programme aimed at enhancing Camden’s resilience to a changing climate. The outcomes of this plan will inform the development of Camden’s next Climate Action Plan for 2026-2030, work on which, is already under way.

As we continue to face the realities of a changing climate, it has become even more urgent to not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Camden but also to build resilience and adaptive capacity for the challenges ahead. This year's report highlights the progress made by the council and our community in both mitigating the impacts of the climate crisis and adapting to the increasing risks we face. Together, we are taking meaningful steps towards a more sustainable and resilient future.

Camden has published four annual reviews of the Climate Action Plan since its adoption in 2020, with the most recent in November 2024. The Annual Review provides a review of all actions from the original Climate Action Plan, actions introduced in subsequent reviews, as well as new actions for 2024-25. The latest annual review also highlights progress made against the new Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan.

2025 will mark the final year of the current Climate Action Plan, after which we will focus on developing the next iteration of the plan, taking into account the scale of the challenges that lie ahead.

The key measure of progress for our climate mitigation programme is the level of borough-wide greenhouse gas emissions (hereafter referred to as CO₂). Additionally,

the council measures its own CO2 emissions across corporate buildings and operations on an annual basis to track organisational progress. Borough-wide CO2 emissions have decreased by 48%, while emissions from our own estate and operations (excluding council housing) are now 63% lower compared to the respective baseline years of 2005 and 2010. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate these reductions in relation to the 2030 zero-carbon trajectory.

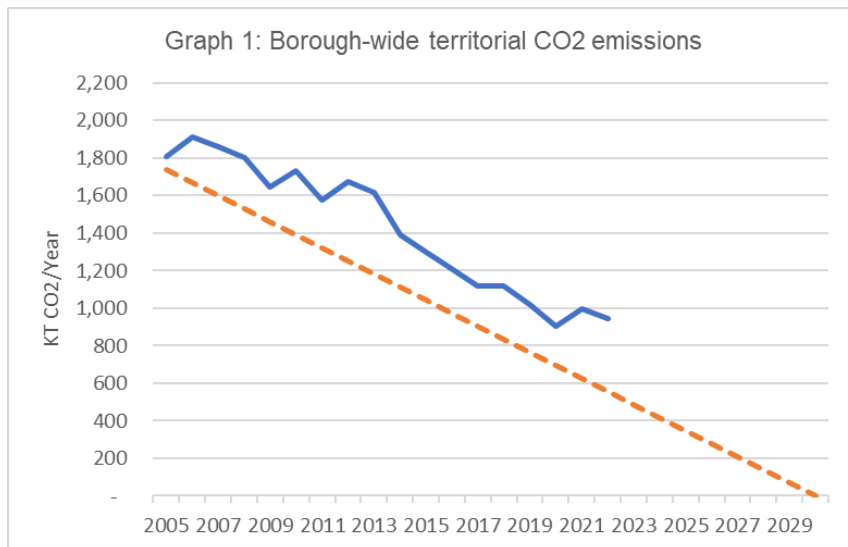


Figure 1 – Borough-wide CO2 reduction to 2022

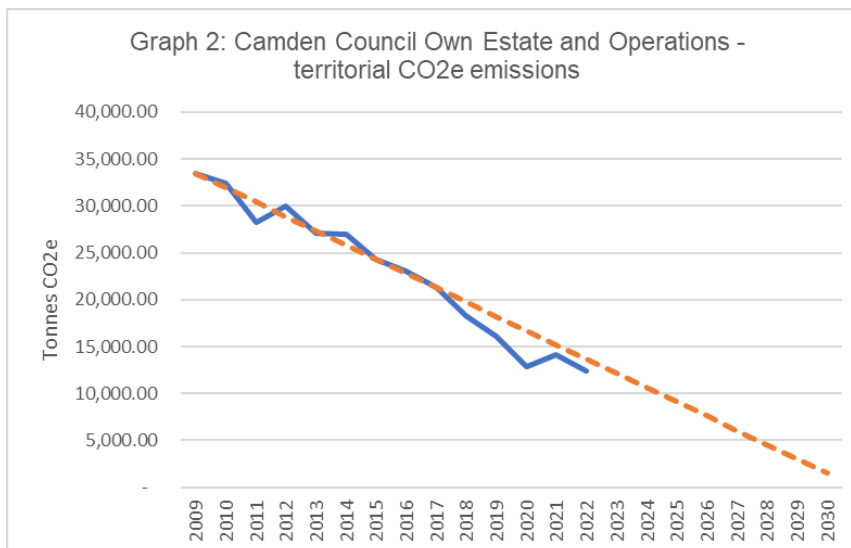


Figure 2 – Corporate estate and operations CO2 reduction to 2023

Supporting Refugees in Camden

Borough of Sanctuary

In June 2024 Camden achieved full accreditation as a Borough of Sanctuary, demonstrating our commitment to helping all refugees living or transient in the

borough to rebuild their lives and take positive decisions about their future. I am grateful for all the work that has been done to ensure that Camden is delivering places of sanctuary, welcome, and dignity for vulnerable refugee and asylum seekers. I am proud that we have now received this award, which reflects our track record and history of welcoming refugee communities into the borough over many years.

In October 2024, the Council re-launched the Borough of Sanctuary forum bringing together community partners active in supporting refugees. I was pleased to open the event at which we celebrated our partnership strength and the many charities and community groups which have contributed to our refugee response. Partnership lies at the heart of what we do, and the Borough of Sanctuary forum will increase our collective impact as well as overseeing new initiatives to support refugees in the borough. To help build this collaboration, we will shortly be launching a new small grants programme, Rebuilding Lives, which will provide the initial resources needed to develop new community-based projects, tuned to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in Camden.

Homes For Ukraine

To date we have been able to offer sanctuary to around 1,000 Ukrainians fleeing war and persecution, made possible by the strength and compassion of our communities. In the last three months, we have been navigating a number of government policy announcements impacting our Ukrainian community – the latest being the introduction of the Ukrainian Permission Extension (UPE) Visa, which will succeed the three-year Homes For Ukraine Visa, and grant an additional 18 months' leave to remain for Ukrainian refugees living with hosts in Camden. We are working with our Ukrainian community partners to support guests to navigate these changes and continue to sustain and support community sponsorship, which is an important element of our wider refugee response.

Supporting Afghan Refugees

The final phases of the Camden Pledge, Afghan resettlement scheme are now well advanced. By the end of March 2025 Camden had resettled 90 Afghan households (312 people) into long term homes in Camden.

This ground-breaking scheme, funded by the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) has increased affordable housing resources for refugee families, by taking houses intended for private sale, back into the Camden housing stock and through buying back former council homes, sold under Right to Buy. I am proud that we are delivering new refugee housing capacity and doing so without creating pressure elsewhere in our housing system.

We are now working closely with our community partners to support Afghan households as they take their next steps in Camden. In May 2025 we will be opening the new community centre, Highgate Newtown Community Partners (HNCP), which lies at the heart of our Highgate Newtown development, where many former Afghan refugees are now rebuilding their lives. The new centre will bring communities together, celebrating our diversity and helping to build cohesion.

Developing long-term objectives

We have strong foundations to build on as we now look to our work to support refugees in Camden in the longer term. Developing our services will help us to respond flexibly to the needs of refugees at a time of global instability and help the many families who have found sanctuary in Camden, to rebuild their lives. Whilst we continue to be a borough of sanctuary for refugees arriving or living in Camden, we also want to build our longer-term integrated support for those, such as the Afghan communities in Camden, promoting cohesion and growth so that families really feel they can become a part of our borough. As Leader, I will continue to make the case to government for safe routes of entry, housing capacity, work opportunities and a culture of compassion and welcome for all refugees.

Priorities for the year ahead

Looking ahead to the coming year, my core priority as Leader is for us to continue to deliver excellent services for the people of Camden, and to keep improving them. Alongside the services we deliver directly, I want us to continue to develop our work with partners and anchor institutions, to ensure we are opening up the best opportunities for Camden residents.

In recent years, as we have stepped in to support our communities through the pandemic and the impacts of the more recent cost of living increases, we have seen how, in times of crisis, we are strongest when we work together; across sector, geography and organisational boundaries. We have seen the benefits that working in a more networked and connected way across Camden can bring.

We have made considerable progress to mobilise a borough-wide response to reducing the inequalities we see across Camden and to focus on what matters most to our communities. Over the coming year, my energy will be focused on continuing to work in this connected way and to secure greater opportunities for Camden residents – whether that is partnering with businesses and anchor organisations to secure employment opportunities or community spaces for local residents, working with developers to not only build more homes but to improve the facilities and local infrastructure, or pressing for the best deal possible for Camden's residents around the Euston station development.

I will also be continuing our engagement with the new government, to seek out further opportunities for collaboration, to showcase the best practice going on in our Council and to make the case for national policy changes that align with our vision for a better Camden.

The greatest collective challenge we face, in Camden and far beyond our borough, is the climate and ecological emergency. This is a crisis that will take a collective effort to meet – which is the approach we took to our Citizens' Assemblies back in 2019 and we continue to take with our Climate Action Plan. Over the coming year we must accelerate our work towards becoming a 'net zero' borough by 2030. Addressing this

challenge requires contributions from across the Council, in all the work we do, as we have set out by embedding a climate focus in our constitution.

As a council we are working on programmes, such as retrofitting our homes and buildings, that will make it more affordable for people to heat their homes, while also having a big impact on the amount of carbon that we produce in Camden. Over the coming year, driving forward our efforts on retrofitting our housing stock will be a key priority for me as Leader. As the lead borough of the Retrofit Consortium in London I am pleased that we will be leading the way in Camden, and supporting others to deliver retrofitting projects to their social housing.

As a social landlord, our priority is to ensure we are providing safe, high-quality and affordable homes. As well as retrofitting our council homes, a priority for the coming year will be furthering our housing transformation work and continuing to improve the experience of our council tenants. Working in the context of huge pressures on our housing department's finances, and whilst meeting our medium term financial strategy savings commitments, we will continue to strive towards our ambition of helping people to grow, live and age well in Camden, and particularly in our own council homes.

To do this, we must also be a borough that builds. It is hard to underestimate the impact of the housing crisis in Camden – on our schools, on our families, on our businesses – on almost every element of our Council service delivery. Housing costs in our borough are extremely high and there are no private rented sector houses in Camden affordable on the local housing allowance. So, to make Camden a place where people can afford to live, to stay and to raise their families, our focus must also be on building more, quality, affordable homes for people to live in. I will be doing everything I can to ensure we are unlocking as much opportunity as possible to do this over the coming year.

I am proud of the real partnership approach that we are taking in Camden to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB), and to making our borough a safer place for residents. We face particular challenges as an inner London borough and tackling these over the coming year will take a joined-up approach, continuing to listen to residents and working with our Community Safety Partnership Board and other key partners. We have made good progress this year, joining up our services through the ASB taskforce and we will continue to take this holistic and partnership approach to tackling these challenges as we move forward.

I look forward to meeting the challenges of the next year, to continuing to deliver outstanding services, to seeing what more we can achieve if we continue to work in partnership, and to bringing about real change which directly benefits the lives of our residents in Camden.

Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

Finance have been consulted and there are no comments to add.

Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

Legal have been consulted and there are no comments to add.

Environmental Implications

This report makes reference to a number of ongoing ambitious work programmes and strategies which contribute to the Council's efforts to improve air quality, increase biodiversity and reduce carbon emissions – all of which have a positive environmental impact and support our work to tackle the climate crisis and to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

REPORT ENDS