

## **Leader's Annual Report**

### **Introduction**

I presented my last Leader's Annual Report in January 2020 and outlined my commitment to continuing to deliver our communities' vision for their future – to making Camden a fairer, more equal and just place, one in which everyone has a voice. I am proud to present a report to the Joint Chairs that outlines the many ways in which the Council, working with our communities, has stayed true to that purpose, in truly unprecedented circumstances.

Over the course of two difficult years, full of loss, grief, and uncertainty, we've seen overwhelming compassion and kindness. I want to begin by paying tribute to Council officers and staff, and colleagues across the public sector, for their work in keeping people safe, well and cared for during the pandemic. Covid-19 has tested us all, but I have seen first-hand the commitment of social workers, care staff, teachers, public health experts, environmental health, libraries and housing officers and others to doing their best for our citizens day in and day out, regardless of circumstance or new challenges. I have seen their creativity and ingenuity in making services remote and making them safe in person again. I have seen their willingness to step forward and put themselves at risk to make sure our citizens are cared for. I want to thank them for their energy, their commitment, and their sacrifice during the last year.

At the outset of the pandemic, I made a number of commitments to our communities about how the Council would respond. Delivering on these commitments has required near continuous adaptation and creativity from Council staff and partners, and I am proud of what we've managed to do. I have worked closely with colleagues around London – to share information, to share ideas and best practice, to lobby and engage Government to ensure that Councils are receiving the funding we need to deliver both an emergency response and our day-to-day critical services.

Councils have also spent these last two years delivering the core services that keep our communities running – repairing homes, teaching children, collecting recycling and waste, planting trees, and cutting grass in our open spaces. We have seen the importance of these basic services in providing basic quality of life for our citizens and supporting them to live healthy and decent lives. After a decade of austerity, local government, working with the NHS and with our public health teams, has been at the forefront of both this pandemic and keeping our communities going in hard times, and has shown incredible resilience and capacity for adaptation.

We have worked to reduce the spread of the virus and get more people vaccinated working with the NHS. We have acknowledged and sought to address the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on Black, Asian and other ethnic communities, and sought to keep safe those most at risk from social, economic, and personal harm.

Despite this work I know the scarring effect that this pandemic will have on some of our most vulnerable citizens. Covid-19 has deepened the inequalities of wealth, income and power that were already the primary concern of Camden's communities before the pandemic. We are committed to working with our communities to tackle

poverty, injustice, and inequality as an urgent and foundational challenge for Camden - for our citizens and for our shared future.

Camden is a committed anti-racist organisation, and this pandemic made clear the systemic racial inequalities in our society that put people from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds at higher risk of catching, contracting and dying from Covid-19. Early in 2020 the Council stood up a working group of senior officers and members to review data and insight about the impact of Covid-19 on our diverse communities, and what the Council could do to change these causes and protect residents. This became the “Building Equal Foundations” report which included a clear action plan for the Council and partners and was published and agreed by Cabinet in winter 2020. I am proud of the work that has been delivered, working with Councillors and communities, to ensure the Council has a clear and public commitment to tackling racism and its impacts on the lives of our citizens. We have made real change as an organisation as a result of this work – renaming homes and schools in Camden to better reflect our values and our diverse communities and ensuring all Camden staff undertake anti-racism training. I look forward to continuing to work with Councillors, staff and citizens on this important work.

In Camden we believe one of the core purposes of local government is to enable everyone to reach their full potential. Doing that means preventing harm, tackling inequality and injustice, creating a compassionate and comprehensive safety net for the most vulnerable, and creating a platform for the ambition and creativity of people, businesses and communities to thrive and flourish.

Our High Streets are critical parts of our communities, and we know how difficult the past eighteen months has been for small businesses in Camden. The Council redeployed staff from around the organisation to ensure that business grants were paid out as quickly as possible, using our discretion where possible to focus funding on the most vulnerable sectors and those most important to our Borough. Throughout the pandemic, our high streets and local centres have been more important than ever to our communities and we have been taking action to support them through the pandemic and into a robust and reimagined future through our Camden Future High Streets Programme, recognising the vital role our high streets will play in the economic and social recovery of the borough.

From July to October 2021, we organised the first Camden Together festival – building on the strength and success of our Cultural Camden partnership – showcasing the best of Camden’s rich, diverse and vibrant cultural landscape through music, dance and public art. After a period in which we have been isolated from each other, having the opportunity to come together in celebration of our shared heritage of art and culture has been so important. I am really excited to see how the Cultural Camden partnership continues to work in and with communities over the coming year to highlight and invest in our artists and creative neighbourhoods.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of having a safe, decent, accessible home – to shelter, to recover, to work, and play. Camden’s Community Investment Programme (CIP) has continued to deliver new homes over the last year and I am proud that tenants and leaseholders on Wendling and St Stephens Close have shown their trust in us by voting to support regeneration of their estate. Camden

Council is one of the largest local authority builders in the country – building over 1000 new homes in the borough, including 602 Council homes and 78 intermediate affordable homes. In recognition of our strong track record and our plans for the future, in 2021 we received £86m from the Mayor of London's Affordable Housing Programme to build 569 socially rented homes over the next seven years.

Camden 2025 has shaped how we work as a Council and how we work with residents, businesses, community groups and communities. Camden 2025 was a call to action to our citizens, businesses and institutions to work with us - we made a commitment to bringing about real social change in partnership with our communities by putting participation and citizens voices at the heart of everything we do. I am proud that during this pandemic, when many usual communication channels have been more difficult, the Council has continued its work to deepen our relationships and networks in our communities. We completed the first Health and Wellbeing Citizens Assembly, the results of which have fed into our new Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The Good Life Euston project has been a shining example of the power of partnership working in helping us to work together to deliver Camden 2025. This has been an inspiring collaboration between us, UCL's Institute for Global Prosperity, Camden Giving, the developers and most importantly a group of local young people and residents in and around Euston station, who were trained and employed as citizen scientists to conduct ethnographic research to develop a citizens wellbeing index. All this means we will be able to measure the impact the Euston development is having on people's lives now and hold the Government to account in making communities lives better in the future. Many of the citizens engaged have inspiring stories of the impact being involved in this work has had on their own lives and access to further opportunities, which you can read more about on the Camden Giving website.

Continuing on the partnership theme, following the first wave of the pandemic, we established our Renewal Commission as our commitment to long-term change in light of the impact of Covid-19, and in investing in grassroots and community activity that stimulates real economic, social and ecological change to achieve a fair, just and sustainable Camden. During Covid-19 we have stepped more deeply and differently into our communities, and the Commission brought together a range of community members, partners and activists to develop long term plans to address food insecurity, youth opportunity, the sustainability of our estates and the diversity of our leadership. I was very pleased to present the findings of the Commission to Cabinet in December 2021. To support this change we have established We Make Camden, our programme to invest and build capacity in our communities to deliver on our shared renewal ambitions.

Our Camden 2025 Strategy was written together with our residents, businesses, and communities. We heard people's hopes, fears and ideas of Camden and we also heard that they wanted to be part of shaping and making the future. We heard that the Council should be a partner, a helping hand, a champion, a sharer, and a facilitator. Our shared vision for Camden 2025 was to make Camden a safer, healthier, more equal and more accessible Borough - a place where everyone has a chance to succeed and nobody gets left behind. What we heard about most strongly

in speaking with residents was concern about the deepening inequality in our Borough - in income, wealth, housing, access to employment, health.

The critical challenge emerging from this pandemic will be the number of people, families and children living in poverty. We are not just seeing more people enter poverty, but an increase in the depth of poverty. We are seeing more people having to make impossible choices - between rent, heat, food, school-clothing, internet access and access to learning. We will see the impact of this poverty play out over decades - in lost education, in lost wages and stalled job progression, in increases in homelessness and housing instability. I call on Government to properly fund the welfare state – from universal credit to local government – to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and ensure they are lifted out of, not pushed further into, poverty.

Alongside working with our citizens, Camden 2025 set out the Council's commitment to reflecting on what we can do better and how we can change to better meet the needs of our community and the challenges that face us. In January 2020, before the pandemic took hold, we invited the Local Government Association (LGA) and Councillors and Chief Officers from other Councils around the country to review our services in partnership with our Councillors, citizens, businesses, voluntary and community sector partners. These last two years have been a real test of what the Peer Review said were Camden's strengths – our relationships with our communities, our commitment to continuous improvement, our strong senior leadership team.

Cabinet has endorsed the officer proposal that the Council embraces all of the recommendations of the 2020 LGA Corporate Peer Review. We were privileged to welcome our lead Peer Challengers, Cllr Phil Glanville the Mayor of Hackney, and Tom Riordan, Chief Executive of Leeds City Council to the December Cabinet meeting to discuss their findings and the outcome of their recent return visit to Camden to assess our progress. The feedback from RCP Scrutiny committee was also welcomed following their consideration of the report on 13 December. Officers will now take this work forward and we look forward to reviewing progress over the coming year.

Every person, family and community in Camden will have their story of Covid-19. These will be stories of challenge, of grief and loss, of generosity and kindness, of change and disruption, of resilience. We must make it easier for people to stay healthy, easier for them to feed their families, easier for their children to access education, easier for people to access good and affordable housing, easier for them to access regular and decent income. Councils have long shown they can step in and make a real impact on homelessness, hunger and poverty - when the Government invests in a local response. Despite a decade of cuts, Councils have not lost their ambition or creativity - they remain Government's best and most effective partner and need this to be reflected in the way that Government funds and empowers them.

## **Covid-19 and the Council's response**

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the lives of everybody in Camden, touching upon all parts of the way that we live. 375 people have tragically lost their lives in our borough, families and communities have lost loved ones, people have lost jobs and children have missed out on education.

The challenges we have faced due to the Covid-19 pandemic have been unprecedented, but I am proud of the way the Council has continued to support our communities through the most challenging of times. In March 2020, as the World Health Organisation declared the COVID19 outbreak a global pandemic, we formally pledged that no resident would go hungry and no Council tenant would be evicted from their home due to Covid; that no care worker would lose their livelihoods because they fell ill; and that we would keep vital services running, even if they had to be delivered in a different way.

Following that pledge we have stepped in to provide food support, access to digital devices for school children, financial support and advice to businesses, and support to the NHS in their roll out of the Covid-19 vaccination programme. The hard work of everyone across the Council has meant that we have also maintained core public services including schools, children's centres, libraries, repairs, waste and recycling - whilst ensuring they are responding to the crisis.

The Council delivered direct support to hundreds of citizens who were required to shield from Covid-19. We distributed 140 tonnes of food (approximately 280,000 meals) and arranged direct delivery of 17,000 food parcels. We have also provided funding for a network of food providers across the Borough meaning no one in Camden is more than 0.5km from a food hub and a source of support. We have also built [Find Food](#) to enable people to find sources of healthy food during the pandemic. We have created a long-term food partnership Alliance working on keeping people fed now and addressing hunger in the long-term.

We developed a £3 million hardship fund to support residents struggling with their finances as a result of COVID-19. The fund included emergency one-off payments to help residents with no savings or money in their accounts, a 3-month break from paying Council Tax for those on the lowest incomes, as well as extra support including benefits advice.

Poverty and financial insecurity in Camden have increased significantly in the last year. We are proactively working with households in private rented tenancies at risk of losing their homes to offer them support, and we are engaging with landlords in Camden to access more housing for at risk families. Since the outset of Covid-19 we have housed over 705 people experiencing rough sleeping, including utilising Covid emergency response accommodation when needed to keep people safe and provide them with wrap around support.

We knew that businesses in the borough were being hit incredibly hard by the lockdowns and moved swiftly to provide support, making over 24,000 grant payments at a value of £164m and providing guidance and advice on how to operate safely. As lockdowns eased we used planning powers to allow businesses to operate

outside on pavements and worked with the community on making high streets safer, widening pavements and introducing streateries in places such as Belsize Park.

Our voluntary and community sector (VCS) has risen to the extraordinary challenges of the past two years, playing a key role in supporting our communities through the hardest times. Recognising the VCS' key role in the pandemic effort, the Council has invested over £2 million in the sector, including rent waivers, additional investment in advice partners and local ward Councillors have contributed Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to support local projects. We also worked closely with our VCS partners at the start of the pandemic to set up a Time to Spare platform for volunteers in Camden who wanted to help – working together in a new way to co-ordinate the good will and support in the borough. We want to continue to build on these strong partnerships and are proactively working with new mutual aid groups and networks to enable them to access advice and support in managing and sustaining volunteers.

Camden's schools have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to ensure that children and their families have received the support and reassurance they need, and that pupils have been able to keep learning whilst schools were closed. We know that the pandemic has widened inequalities in our borough, as well as nationally, and that the impact of this is likely to be seen in widening gaps in educational achievement. Schools, at the heart of their communities, have been supported by Camden Learning to move lessons online, which has included providing laptops and internet access to children who didn't have this at home. The Council set up a Crowdfunding campaign to end the digital divide for Camden's pupils, which raised nearly £62,000. In Camden, more than 5,900 laptops were distributed to children and young people, including allocations from the Department of Education to vulnerable pupils and Year 10 students, schools themselves buying hundreds of devices from their budget, the Crowdfunding campaign, as well as generous donations from businesses.

We have worked closely with the NHS and hospitals to put in place a system that no Covid positive person is discharged into a Camden care home, and to support care home and care staff to access testing, appropriate protective equipment, and vaccination. We established a PPE hub for Camden and for North Central London, delivering to frontline services, care homes and partners and community groups. We have been working with our community partners and our frontline staff to ensure they are vaccinated according to the national priority groups. Building on our existing commitment to paying all care staff a London Living Wage, we have worked with our commissioned services to ensure staff received appropriate sick pay if they contracted Covid or had to self-isolate.

The vaccine has changed the pandemic in our community and around the country, and we have worked to support the NHS in their delivery of this programme. We redeployed over 150 staff to support the programme, as well as other critical work such as mass testing in the community and in schools, and ensuring a Frontline Presence Team were out in communities providing support and reassurance.

The Council mobilised a lateral flow testing service in the community for residents without symptoms, as well as activating a Local Contact Tracing service, in

partnership with the National NHS Contact Tracing Service, which has proven effective in reaching residents that the national service has been unable to contact and therefore help to stop the spread of the virus in our communities.

Supporting the vaccination programme locally has been critical to ensuring we reach all citizens in Camden and support them to get a Covid-19 vaccine. Our ongoing support includes a wide-ranging communications campaign, including targeted community engagement, events with our Bangladeshi and Somali communities, and more recently specific communications and partnerships work aimed at supporting young people to come forward to be vaccinated.

We retrofitted a Council accessible transport vehicle to be the “vaccine bus” which has now made 146 stops over 29 locations around the Borough, working with mosques, community centres, business improvement districts and markets to get people the vaccine as close to home and work as possible. Over 5973 people have had a vaccine dose at one of our vaccine bus events.

Most recently, the Council’s focus has been on supporting residents during the wave of the omicron variant. This latest wave posed challenges for care settings regionally. In Camden we provided refreshed infection prevention and control training, our 24/7 consultant on call service continued over the Christmas period and beyond and we have worked across North Central London (NCL) to support safe discharge pathways.

As a Council we have continued to support the NHS in delivering the covid-19 vaccination programme. Our ongoing support includes a wide-ranging communications campaign, including targeted community engagement, events with our Bangladeshi and Somali communities, and more recently specific communications and partnerships work aimed at supporting young people to come forward to be vaccinated. The first episode of our Word on the Kerb podcast had over 29,000 views and the second was viewed over 18,000 times. We are continuing to promote this preferred channel of information to young Camden residents.

Approximately 167,000 of our residents aged 18 and over have received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and approximately 151,000 their second dose. This equates to approximately 66% and 59% of the adult population. Coverage significantly increases with age; 81% of residents over 50 years have received the first dose compared to 58% of residents aged 18-29. To date 102,000 have now received their booster. The council has successfully bid for over £450,000 to support vaccination community engagement and outreach.

This pandemic is not over yet, but I know working with Camden’s communities we can keep the most vulnerable safe and move forward.

## **Renewal from Covid-19**

Whilst the pandemic has impacted upon the lives of all our residents, it has not done so equally. We know that Covid-19 has exacerbated longstanding inequalities in our community and our society, exposing and deepening the poverty divide and

highlighting the insecurity that many of our citizens endure on a daily basis. In the last year, every form of inequality in our society has widened, from health inequalities to economic inequalities, gender inequalities, and environmental inequalities.

The Council now has an opportunity to harness what we have learned throughout the pandemic to make sure that we renew in a way that tackles the fundamental inequalities and injustices that sit at the heart of the Covid crisis. We must ensure that recovery is felt in the places that people live their lives, in their schools, on their estates, their high streets and community spaces. To succeed in this, we know it must be a joint effort in partnership with our citizens and local organisations.

In October 2020, we partnered with the Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose at University College London to set up a Renewal Commission, which has been helping us to set a pathway for the Council, our partners, and local institutions to follow, to make sure everyone who lives in Camden can have a stake in the wealth and opportunity on their doorstep, and every young person in Camden has access to economic opportunity that enables them to be safe and secure. The Renewal Commission published its report in December 2021 and the recommendations were approved by Cabinet. Through our work with the Renewal Commission we have been taking a missions-based approach to working with anchor institutions and communities to shape an inclusive and sustainable local economy as we renew after the pandemic. The missions-based approach will allow us to bring partners together in a different way to achieve greater long-term impact. The four missions are drawn from community objectives, feedback from stakeholders and partners and learning from existing Council projects and programmes about what works and what can be accelerated to have real impact. The missions are:

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

These missions recognise and build on strong work already in place – but also recognise that to make systemic change we need to go further, and we need to bring more partners together. The diversity in leadership mission, for example, builds on the excellent work as set out in the Building Equal Foundations action plan – with an explicit focus on leadership and decision making, and recognises the role that groups and organisations across the borough need to play if we are to achieve the missions.

The missions are helping us to share ownership with our citizens over how we want to tackle the challenges ahead. As part of the work to set, and work towards, the missions, we've been developing our approach to working to enable action from citizens and partners. Under the banner of 'We Make Camden', we've engaged people and partners in the borough in the missions through pop up events, community conversations, pledges of support and calls to action. All of this

culminated in a Communities Taking Action week in September which saw people from across the borough share their ideas and actions in relation to the missions. To support people to turn their ideas for the missions into reality, we've partnered with Camden Giving to make a 'We Make Camden kit'. This is an offer of support, funding and access to space and resources. Funding decisions are made by a panel of Camden residents. You can read more about this work at [wemakecamden.org.uk](http://wemakecamden.org.uk).

Since the missions were developed, we have been working across Camden to mobilise new partners and community actors - supporting the community to own activity to tackle these challenges so that they can drive and co-own these missions with the Council. Some examples of this work include:

- *Diversifying school governorship and the Black Curriculum:* Camden Learning is beginning a series of conversations with Black and Asian school governors, and governors from other ethnic communities to understand their experience, and be led by their ideas about how to diversify school governor boards and make them more inclusive. They have also partnered with The Black Curriculum to deconstruct, reconstruct and decolonise the curriculum, working with schools on themes around literature, art and politics. This will join up with Camden's Anti-Racism Hub, run by UCL Academy.
- *Youth employment offer:* A youth 'entitlement' offer is being developed with young people, who are working with the Roundhouse, the Winch, the Design Council, and the Council. 38 young people and 33 system stakeholders have been collaborating over the latter half of 2021 to co-design, develop and articulate an offer for young people – and build the design skills of young people involved in the process. Young people involved in this work have been trained as peer researchers and conducted research with other young people in their network.
- *Youth activists:* A group of 12 young Camden residents aged 16-25 are co-designing and co-delivering an action plan to tackle the unequal way people experience policing and education. They have been given a budget by the Council to decide how they want to deliver the work, and will be making recommendations to the Council, police and other key partners. Since February 2021, the activists have developed visions on Education and Policing that they want to work towards through the project, as well as practical ideas to test and take forward. These ideas include the development of a police charter, developing and testing alternatives to school exclusions, and lobbying on stop and search.
- *Find food digital campaign:* Voluntary sector partners and the Council came together to tackle two issues related to food insecurity - meeting crisis need in the community, and people finding and connecting to support. A digital platform was developed with partner organisations across the borough and the collaboration between partners is leading into longer term thinking linked to the mission. The work also produced a shared data and insights map for partners and organisations across the borough to use to better understand need. The Council has received funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to extend this work and better understand how data can be shared with VCS partners to help achieve the food mission.
- *Ossulston Estate:* Community organisations Hopscotch, Refugee Kitchen and Think & Do are running a pop-up based at the Tenants and Residents

Association Hall. They have been working with local people to develop a schedule of activities to bring people on the estate together, such as greening, cooking and tailoring workshops. The Council and these organisations will be supporting individuals and groups to then turn their ideas into social action.

- *Vacant assets on estates:* the Council is undertaking a programme of work to transform unloved and under-used spaces on estates into places that bring value to the people that live there – and in doing so, respond to the inaccessibility or lack of availability of community, social enterprise and SME spaces in the borough. A discovery phase has been completed to identify viable spaces, and now business cases are being developed for the use of these spaces.
- *Denyer House:* £80,000 of CIL funding has been allocated to resident led design of the public realm on Denyer House estate – with an emphasis on improving community safety without the need for gates and keys.
- *Resident led budgeting at Hilgrove Estate:* we're testing a new model for estate communities to lead on designing, managing and receiving services and public realm improvements at hyper-local level, building on their strengths and reflecting local priorities. The Council is working in close partnership with The Winch and North Camden Zone to develop this approach. It builds on three Hilgrove Assemblies with residents which took place over the summer focusing on the built environment, mental health and community connectedness, and community safety.
- *Establishing a food co-op:* The council is working with Cooperation Town to establish a food Co-op in a TRA hall on an estate. This is part of an effort to move away from food banks-based provision of food support, and instead experiment with alternative delivery models. This will be a space to store large scale supplies and provide a number of communities with ingredients.

Camden's high streets play a crucial role in community life and our local centres were more important than ever to our communities during the pandemic. We have been supporting our high streets through the pandemic and in to a robust and reimaged future through our Camden Future High Streets Programme. Working to our vision for high streets as accessible, vibrant, places at the heart of their communities, as set out in our [High Streets Prospectus](#) this has included a wide range of actions and interventions. Examples include our successful Streateries programme alongside the issuing of fast-tracked pavement licences, creating additional space for outdoor dining and social distancing, supporting our hospitality industry and creating places for residents to enjoy.

Over the course of the summer in 2021 we ran our High Street Action Group, bringing diverse experts together to help us unlock some of the key challenges we face in our high streets and are looking now at how we can take these discussions forward into action with our partners.

The pedestrian crossings of Tottenham Court Road have been enlivened through Yinka Illori's colourful designs delivered through the Asphalt Art project as part of the Mayor's Let's Do London Campaign. We are in the initial stages of work focusing on Kilburn Town centre, with Life in Kilburn and TfL with initial seed funding through the GLA's High Streets Challenge Fund. We are looking forward to working with the

local community, businesses and partners in Kilburn, including the London Borough of Brent, to develop this.

We're using up to £600,000 of our Additional Restrictions Grant to provide business support to help with business recovery and resilience in our main high streets including £250,000 for our Business Improvement Districts to carry out a range of events, marketing and promotional activities in their areas. We have launched our High Streets Spacehive Crowdfunding platform and have ring fenced up to £360,000 of funding to support grassroots high streets projects that can demonstrate real benefits for our high streets, businesses and the communities they serve. Camden's High Streets are places full of innovation, entrepreneurship, creativity and community connectivity, and I am really excited to see in the coming year how these pilot programmes develop.

After these challenging times cultural events are happening in Camden once again and our Camden Together Season has been celebrating our rich, diverse and vibrant cultural landscape through music, dance and public art. The programme has encouraged residents to experience culture in Camden's world-renowned venues as well as high streets and treasured green spaces. These activities have been supported by our 'Artists in communities' grant fund, which we created this year to support local freelancers and creatives to run activities in our communities. This has been a fantastic welcome back to the culture our borough has to offer and I look forward to more of this activity in the months to come.

Retrofitting our Council homes is a central component of our action plan to achieve net zero. We have analysed all of our stock with data scientists and we have developed a programme that can be adapted and mobilised as and when funding solutions are established. As part of this work, our approach to developing our 'Green New Deal' programme is to help address the global climate emergency, improve the quality of homes in Camden and to capture employment and economic benefits for our community as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The principle we are adopting is to integrate employment, skills and local economic benefit into the design of the housing retrofit programme from the outset. More than a traditional social value procurement model, the approach will establish a firm partnership with contractors to design-in community engagement, additional employment and upskilling of new and existing workers to reflect the demands of growing market for green construction. While funding solutions will dictate the pace of delivery, the primary elements of our approach includes:

- articulating a clear delivery framework to identify labour and skill demand requirements and align training and employment support within the programme of capital works;
- establish clear expectations, targets and enabling mechanisms to underpin a partnership approach to delivery with contractors;
- engage with residents to communicate the benefits of the housing improvements and target work experience, training and employment opportunities; and
- work closely with colleges and training providers to reshape the skills offer to meet the demands for new and update training in green construction skills.

Building on existing specialist facilities at the Kings Cross Construction Skills Centre and the networks created by the Mayor's Construction Academy, the Council is bringing together partners to maximise the local impact of over £700 million of capital spend over the life of the retrofit programme. While significant, the impact for Camden can be scaled sub-regionally and across London to be a major driver of COVID-19 recovery. Where managed across boroughs and with RSLs and other public landlords, we believe that London has a major opportunity to set a national standard of practice; making a market for retrofit design and delivery and leading the delivery of green construction skills.

## **Refreshing Camden 2025**

In 2018, the Council's work with residents, businesses and communities culminated in our Camden 2025 vision – a call to action to everyone in the borough to work together to bring about real social change. Over much of the past two years, the pandemic has exposed and exacerbated health, educational and housing inequalities felt by so many of our residents, making even clearer the important role the Council plays in supporting the most vulnerable.

We know that the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on the lives of our Black, Asian and other ethnic communities. The growth of the Black Lives Matter movement has highlighted the extent of racial inequality in our society, which has been widened by the pandemic. In summer 2020 we worked with our communities to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and to develop actions that will help us to tackle racial inequalities in Camden and we published our findings and our commitment to making Camden a more equal and inclusive borough in our Building Equal Foundations report.

Reflecting on these experiences, the long-term changes that continue to shape demand for Council services and the wider social and economic identity of our Borough, Cabinet committed in July 2021 to look again at Camden 2025 and work with our communities on a refresh. This work is helping to ensure that our strategic priority document meets the challenges of our current context and that our vision held with our communities adapts to meet the new challenges we are facing as we emerge from the pandemic.

Camden 2025 brings together a shared way of dealing with the challenges Camden faces, built on conversations with citizens and their understanding of these challenges. This spirit of shared endeavour with our partners and citizens is something we have been taking into the work on the Camden 2025 refresh, so that our whole borough can respond together to the challenges we now face.

In November 2021, we held a We Make Camden summit, which brought together partners and citizens from across Camden to reflect on the last three years and what we want to achieve together. We heard powerful examples of action from a range of citizens and partners, with a real shared commitment expressed in the room to do more together to support and build on this energy. The summit will now be an annual

event, continuing our collective focus on what we have learnt and can build on in order to go even further together.

## **Key Achievements**

We are proud to have continued to make significant achievements and progress against our Camden 2025 ambitions.

These include:

- Building the first new council homes in Camden for a generation, building new school buildings and community facilities.
- Building 1,096 new homes in Camden through our Community Investment Programme and HS2 replacement homes, including 602 Council homes (with 169 HS2 replacement homes), 78 intermediate affordable homes and 371 homes for sale. We are prioritising the building of new family sized council homes - there are over 450 children living in new council rent homes built by CIP.
- Providing good quality, below market rental homes to over 100 tenants through our Camden Living programme. 63% of our Camden Living tenants are public sector 'key workers' and a quarter are children of social housing tenants in Camden, supporting our determination to protect Camden's mixed communities.
- Worked with over 1200 people through Good Work Camden initiatives, including our Neighbourhood Job Hubs, apprenticeships, and construction skills teams, to support more than 900 people into work (since the beginning of 2020/21). Others have progressed into education or training or started their own businesses.
- Acting on the recommendations of the Camden Youth Safety Taskforce to prevent serious violence and build a better borough for young people in partnership with our communities
- Investing over £165m in our school estate through our Community Investment Programme (CIP) as well as £2m every year in Camden Learning, which supports all of Camden's schools and their students. Over 17,000 Camden pupils are learning in improved educational environments as a result of CIP investment and all Camden schools have continued to be rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.
- Supporting parents and children across the borough through Camden Sure Start, from the moment parents know they are expecting a baby, until the child is 5 years old. We have five children's centre hubs to make sure that parents and children get the support they need wherever they live in Camden.
- Receiving an 'outstanding' rating for our Youth Offending Service, which is committed to providing opportunity and support to vulnerable young people in Camden.

- Holding a Health and Care Citizens' Assembly, which brought together a representative cross-section of local residents to set goals and expectations for the future of local health and care services.
- Holding the first Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change to be run by a local authority in the UK, responding to the recommendations with a Climate Action Plan for the borough, the first of two plans to 2030.
- Doubling the length of Camden's segregated cycle network and reducing Camden's CO2 emissions to 40% below 2005 levels.
- Leading by example on carbon reduction by creating Somers Town Energy, a low carbon district energy project connecting 550 homes to low carbon energy and reducing their bills.
- Working with Camden Community Law Centre, Citizens Advice Camden, Age UK Camden, and the Mary Ward Legal Centre to offer free support for the tens of thousands of residents who were required to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme
- Establishing the basis for over 4000 new homes in the borough through the adoption of the Kentish Town Framework, consultation on the draft Camley Street and West Hampstead frameworks and progress with our Site Allocations. Meanwhile we have used our Short Term Lets Action Plan and planning interventions to protect residents from the worst impacts of the deregulation of the planning system.
- Maximising social value from new developments in the borough to deliver Camden 2025 priorities. Since 2015 we have secured £28m of Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy, £10m of Local Community Infrastructure Levy for ward level priorities, as well as £10m every year from developments to support our affordable housing, transport, inclusive growth and environmental projects.

## Championing our Children and Young People

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Our new draft education strategy, Building Back Stronger</i></li> <li>• <i>2021 educational attainment</i></li> <li>• <i>The merger of Carlton and Rhyl Schools</i></li> <li>• <i>The new Resilient Families Framework</i></li> <li>• <i>Our refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy</i></li> <li>• <i>The Youth Safety Task Force and Youth Review</i></li> <li>• <i>Safer Camden Network evaluation and learning</i></li> </ul> |
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Camden 2025 sets out our communities' vision for Camden to be an amazing place to live, work and grow up, a place where everyone has a chance to succeed, and no one is left behind. Camden's new education strategy, *Building Back Stronger*, has been developed jointly by the Council and Camden Learning and will play a crucial role in ensuring that we can achieve this ambition for all children in Camden schools.

Following Cabinet's approval of a proposed strategy at its meeting in October 2021, the Council invited everyone with an interest in education in Camden to contribute their ideas, energy and inspiration as part of a six-week, formal public consultation. The consultation ran from Friday 22 October 2021 until Monday 6 December 2021 and the outcomes of that consultation, and amendments made to the strategy as a result, were considered by Cabinet on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2022. Cabinet approved and endorsed the new education strategy.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought schools' vital role at the heart of their communities into sharp focus. Its wide-ranging effects have exacerbated pre-existing inequalities nationally and locally and are likely to widen gaps in educational achievement. Camden's schools have been on the front line, working tirelessly in very difficult circumstances to respond to the pandemic and mitigate its effects. At the same time, they have also faced a range of further challenges, including falling pupil numbers, rising numbers of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, and a harsh financial climate.

*Building Back Stronger*, reflects the Council, local schools, and Camden Learning's shared determination to deliver a radical and genuinely local response to these challenges, built on our common values. It affirms the transformative power of education and its potential to combat inequalities and change lives. It also reflects our collective conviction that a truly local education system, with schools rooted in their local communities and collaborating for the benefit of all Camden pupils, offers the best chance to equip our young people to be happy, successful, engaged, and inquiring citizens of the future.

Although due to the pandemic formal examinations were cancelled in 2020 and 2021, we can still see evidence of the work of Camden Learning to make our schools the best in the country. All children and young people in Camden now learn in a school that is rated "Good" or "Outstanding" by OFSTED. In 2021, based on teacher assessments at Key Stage 4 (GCSE), 76% of students earned above a grade C/4+ in both English and maths, and the percentage of A level students achieving A\*-C was 87% (compared to 88% nationally).

Following a comprehensive consultation led by Camden Council, and a decision by the Council's Cabinet in March 2021, Rhyl Community Primary School expanded to include the site of Carlton Primary School from September 2021. Both schools supported the merger, which was decided upon after falling school pupil numbers in the area meant both schools risked becoming financially unviable in the future. The school sites and facilities will remain in use for the school's local community and for the benefit of children and their families. The Council is also working closely with the school and the local community to develop a Community Hub on the Grafton Road site to include innovative new early years, family and community support services on the premises.

The refreshed Resilient Families Framework was approved by Cabinet on 2 September 2021. It sets out Camden's approach to supporting children, young people and families in the borough and forms Camden's Early Help Strategy. It also outlines the collective commitment of Camden Council and members of the Children's Trust Partnership Board and defines the associated priorities and

ambitions that we have for children and families in Camden. In doing so, it builds on the ambitions set out in Camden 2025 for all children to have the best start in life and for no one to be left behind.

The priorities and aspirations in the refreshed Resilient Families Framework have been shaped with children, young people, families and key partners, both within and outside the Council, and this work continues. The refreshed framework describes how we work within and across services and organisations to improve outcomes for Camden families, children and young people. Where services are open to all (universal services) we will target delivery both in scale and intensity for those families, children and young people who are most in need. This universal proportionalism approach forms the basis of our work to tackle disproportionality and inequality in outcomes.

In our work to support and safeguard children, I know that there is no greater responsibility than as corporate parent to our looked-after children. There were 187 children looked after by Camden as of March 2021, 85% of whom are from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds. I am proud to have such a diverse group of looked after children in our care. Our new Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-24 – agreed by Cabinet in February last year - actively encourages everyone to feel confident and proud of who they are, acknowledging, embracing and celebrating our respective ethnicities, genders, sexualities, and social backgrounds. The strategy sets out a strong commitment for every looked-after child in Camden to have a sense of belonging and be supported to make the most of their lives. The strategy's priorities respond directly to The Camden Promise - a list of commitments to children and care leavers - developed and agreed by the young people themselves and endorsed by the Corporate Parenting Board.

We continue to act on the recommendations of the Youth Safety Task Force to help prevent serious youth violence and build a better borough for young people in partnership with our communities. In June 2021, a major review of Camden's youth offer was announced, which will examine the broad range of existing provision and activities for young people aged between 13 and 18 years old, and for those up to 25 years old with a learning disability. Whilst this work is badged as a Youth Review, the breadth of activity is wide and as well as youth work other areas in scope are sport, leisure, music, arts and culture as well as employment and training. It covers the Council's own provision through the Integrated Youth Support Service as well as that provided by the Voluntary Community Sector, leisure centres, libraries, art centres and parks/green spaces.

The review aims to develop recommendations for a new Camden Youth Offer that will build on existing strengths, is bold, ambitious and accessible for everyone, with a clear framework for young people to choose from knowing what's on offer, where it is and when it's on. The future offer will be sustainable and support the recovery for a generation who have been disadvantaged by Covid-19. The review is currently in the engagement stage with a report to Cabinet in March 2022 with findings and recommendations

The Safer Camden Network (SCN) tested ways of working to develop community-led approaches to tackling youth and community safety. This programme of work ended

in 2021 and the Council has been actively engaged in learning from the work. An independent evaluation of the programme has shown that work with the Camden Somali community was well received, and individual projects in Gospel Oak were highlighted as good practice. Its recommendations will be taken forward through future work, including the Working Better Together pilot, which arose as a direct result of the SCN learning, and will test practical ways to implement place-based neighbourhood working, including testing how we can work in a hyper local way and continue innovation in how we engage and involve residents. We are also continuing working with the Camden Somali community in a proactive way to address a broad range of issues through the Camden Somali steering group.

I would like to thank the Cabinet Members for Young People and Cohesion, Cllr Abdul Hai, the Cabinet Member for Best Start in Life, Cllr Angela Mason, the Cabinet Member for Promoting Neighbourhoods and Communities, Cllr Anna Wright, and the Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, Cllr Nadia Shah, for all their continued commitment and leadership across this work.

## **A Sustainable Camden**

- *Our commitment to tackling the climate emergency*
- *Somers Town Energy*
- *Clean Air Action Plan 2019-2030*
- *Progress since the Camden Citizen's Assembly on the Climate Crisis and our Climate Action Plan*
- *The Camden Climate Pledge*
- *Developments supporting Active Travel*
- *Healthy School Streets*
- *Ongoing resident participation*

Camden has made clear that we regard continued global heating as evidence of a climate emergency, and that we are committed as a Council and a civic leader to doing all we can to reduce our carbon emissions. Camden has already reduced the carbon emissions of its estate and operations by 51% since 2010, and 43% below 2005 levels across the borough as a whole, but reducing it further will require some significant changes in the way we live, travel, work, eat and spend. In September 2020, to make sure we continue to do everything we can, the Council amended its Constitution to ensure that environmental impacts are taken into account in its decision making.

Camden has sought to lead by example on carbon reduction, further expanding Somers Town Energy in 2020, which now connects over 500 homes, a primary school and new community centre to a low carbon energy centre. 2020 also saw the construction of a new "private wire" connection to the Francis Crick Institute to supply electricity to the building. The 2019-2030 Clean Air Action Plan has already begun to deliver improvements. The plan has set the standard for local authorities by lobbying for World Health Organization AQ limits in national legislation. Locally we have seen a 40% reduction in annual mean NO<sub>2</sub> and 18% reduction in annual mean PM<sub>2.5</sub> from 2018 to 2020 (average across Camden's automatic monitoring sites) and we have secured funding to begin delivery of a number of projects:

- The London-wide Idling Action Project to cut pollution funded by Mayors Air Quality Fund, and leading by example through a new borough-wide Traffic Management Order to prevent engine idling.
- Securing Good Growth funding to reducing emissions from the canal boats Regent's Canal by installing electricity charging points
- Securing £100k from the DEFRA Air Quality Fund to provide zero emission infrastructure for polluting ice cream vans

I believe that the climate emergency is also a social justice issue and it is our democratic responsibility both to ensure that we are tackling the climate emergency, but also that hard decisions do not disproportionately impact the most vulnerable. In 2019 the Citizens Assembly brought together a demographically representative group of people to create concrete commitments about how we will meet our collective responsibility to our shared planet.

Since the conclusion of the Citizen's Assembly, Camden has adopted the Climate Action Plan. Climate Action Plan highlights across our own estate include switching our corporate and schools estate to 100% renewable electricity supplies in October 2020; launching a programme to replace all street lanterns with high efficiency LED, with over 50% of the work complete by January 2021; and, securing over £1 million of Government funding for energy efficiency retrofits to Council housing and corporate buildings.

Climate Action Plan progress can also be seen around the streets of Camden. We completed Camden's first "sustainable urban drainage" raingarden on Camley Street in December 2020 to build resilience to climate change. Tree coverage is increasing, with 579 trees planted during 2020/21, which includes 218 new trees.

As well as the Climate Action Plan itself, we established a Citizen's Panel to monitor plan progress. The Citizen panel has met throughout the pandemic and the first Annual Review of the Climate Action Plan was published in November 2021.

We have also continued to deliver climate action with partners, developing a new programme with a local community energy group "Power Up North London", which builds on the success of the community funded solar array at Hampstead secondary school. The Council has also worked closely with the universities on a significant funding application to the national Green Heat Investment Programme, which aims to decarbonise the energy systems serving the university estate.

To support wider climate action across Camden-based organisations, March 2021 also saw the launch of our new Camden Climate Pledge through our Climate Change Alliance business network. Our Climate Change Alliance membership increased to 366 business network members in 2020, up 46 from the previous year, who are working together to reduce their carbon emissions with the advice and guidance of the Council – 76% of the CCCA members report year-on-year carbon emission reductions, with reductions of 23% on average. In 2020, 46 members were awarded carbon certification. This has contributed to a 45% reduction in commercial and industrial emissions since 2008.

We have continued to support active travel across the borough, to create a healthier and more sustainable model for transport. In the past two years the Council has more than tripled the length of the segregated cycle network in the borough to over

24km. A range of other walking and cycling measures have been introduced since the pandemic, including implementing: over 75 new bike hangars providing secure cycle storage and helping enable cycling; over 100 new dockless bike hire bays to provide dedicated spaces for hiring bikes and removing street clutter, and incentivising the uptake of electric transportation (another key recommendation of the Citizens Assembly); widened pavements in numerous locations to create additional space for pedestrians; 12 new “cycle permeability” schemes allowing cycles to travel contra-flow on one-way streets; and around 12 new “continuous footways” that prioritise pedestrians over motor vehicles at side road junctions. In addition, in the last 12 months we have added around 150 Electric Vehicle Charging Points, meaning there are now around 350 in the Borough.

Since March 2020 we have introduced 15 new Healthy School Streets (taking the total number of schools benefiting from a Healthy School Street in Camden to over 20). These schemes are helping to make it safer and easier for children to walk, cycle and scoot to school by making the streets outside schools free from traffic at the start and end of the school day and align with the Citizens Assembly recommendation to deliver more car-free zones or days in Camden.

As well as the Citizen’s Assembly and Citizen’s Panel, we have continued to take other opportunities to engage with residents and develop the public’s understanding of the climate agenda through “circular economy” initiatives such as the Library of Things, which opened at Kentish Town Library in August 2021, and public information collaborations have also continued with Think and Do, including the “climate take-over” of the Camden New Journal in January 2021.

Our commitment to working jointly with our residents does not end here and over the next year I look forward to working collaboratively with residents, community groups, businesses, and my political colleagues in shaping our Borough and our nation to address the urgent challenge of the climate emergency.

I would like to thank the Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Camden, Cllr Adam Harrison, for his leadership on this urgent and critical priority.

## **Safe, Independent Lives**

- *The impact of Covid-19 and our support to the vaccination programme*
- *Our support to adult social care providers and residents*
- *Our support to homeless people and those at risk of homelessness*
- *Our response to food needs caused by pandemic*
- *The Health and Care Citizens’ Assembly and Health and Wellbeing Strategy*
- *The refresh of Supporting People, Connecting Communities*
- *Charlie Ratchford Court and wider work to support people with disabilities*
- *Our “outstanding” Youth Offending Service Inspection outcome*

The Covid-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for the Council, in particular how we ensure the safety and independence of some of our most vulnerable residents. The pandemic has also highlighted and amplified health

inequalities and shown how deep-rooted injustices continue to blight our society. I am proud of the Council's efforts during this emergency to safeguard the vulnerable – young people, those at risk of financial hardship or hunger, those at risk of homelessness, and older people receiving care. As ever we have done this by working closely in partnership with health organisations at a local and regional level, and with voluntary and community groups that have been so vital to the community response throughout this crisis.

I saw first-hand the evidence of our partnership working approach as a member of the Camden Borough Vaccination Coordination Group which the Council set up to support our health partners deliver the Vaccination Programme in Camden. The Group worked with live data to inform the nature of the Council's support for health partners, leading to initiatives including hyper-local outreach and the introduction of a vaccination bus, which is being deployed to ensure that all Camden communities have opportunities to easily access the vaccine. This has proved incredibly popular in the community and has helped to increase vaccine uptake in parts of the borough where vaccination rates were low. Camden has worked hard to increase confidence, increase convenience and address complacency:

- Increasing confidence. The Council has actively collected intelligence on the issues that most affect different groups when it comes to beliefs or concerns about the vaccine, and to has responded accordingly to provide nuanced and targeted information. Activities have included events (webinars) for communities in specific local areas, for particular religious groups, for different employment categories and by age range. These were led by a trusted figure for that group, and have included clinical representatives where appropriate as well as other figures able to address concerns or misinformation. Our successful MECC (making every contact count) approach has been modified to address issues related to Covid-19 vaccination, equipping individuals (Camden staff members, and employees or representatives of other trusted organisations) to be able to engage residents in conversations about the vaccine and signpost them to quality information where relevant. These bespoke approaches have been in addition to standard communication campaigns, themselves informed by and responding to local concerns, with information disseminated via standard 'above the line' channels as well as through our networks and partners, to increase informal information sharing via trusted sources.
- Increasing convenience. The Council, in collaboration with the NHS, continues to use data and insights to inform a programme of activities designed to make vaccination as convenient and accessible as possible to a range of residents. Data on areas of lowest vaccine uptake across the borough is being used to determine the location of Camden's 'vaccine bus', which offers eligible residents the opportunity to be vaccinated closer to where they live. Partnerships with local organisations the Queen's Crescent Community Association and the Kiln Theatre have enabled the Council and the NHS to set up hyper-local pop-up vaccine sessions, in locations that are known to and trusted by residents – again to increase convenience and trust in getting vaccinated. Like the vaccine bus, promotion of and booking for these pop ups have been organised through local voluntary groups.
- Addressing complacency. In addition to our clear communications messages and encouragement to residents to get vaccinated when eligible, the Council

seconded four members of staff directly into the NHS to support the 'Call and Recall' programme. These individuals are drawing on skills from their local contact tracing work to engage eligible residents by phone, leading to an increased number of vaccination slots booked. As younger age groups have become eligible for vaccination, there has been less positive response to a phone call approach and so the Council is mobilised plans for a scheme of street level outreach in areas of low uptake, along with door knocking to engage residents and encourage vaccination.

The pandemic led to significant pressure placed on care providers across care homes, extra care and homecare services. The Council has supported providers throughout the pandemic to ensure residents and staff can operate safely. The Council provided free PPE to all care providers starting in March 2020 to ensure care providers had sufficient access to face masks, aprons and gloves. Officers maintained regular contact with care providers to offer advice and support and deliver the latest guidance from national and local sources. The vaccination programme for care homes and extra care services commenced in December 2020 and was run in effective partnership between the Council and CNWL, with all staff and residents offered a first dose of a vaccine by January 2021 and further opportunities for vaccination made available since the start of the vaccination programme. 94% of care home residents have had both doses of the vaccine, and 85% have now had a booster dose. 98% of staff have had both doses of the vaccine, and 31% have had a booster dose. 76% of homecare staff have had a first dose of the vaccine, 61% have had a second dose, and 15% have now had a booster dose.

The start of the pandemic saw a swift response across health, housing and voluntary and community sector partners under the "Getting Everyone In" initiative to keep homeless people safe and housed. This included close working to ensure that those newly in accommodation had access to support to improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing. This close working has continued as the Covid vaccination programme has been rolled out to support as many homeless people as possible to get vaccinated, working collectively to remove barriers to achieving this. This has generated a great deal of learning around how to support homeless people and created opportunities to build on our already successful support.

The Council's early work in responding to the food needs of those shielding and the clinically extremely vulnerable led the Council into a much bigger space around emerging levels of increased poverty in the borough. The rise in the use of food banks and the needs of those families the Council made direct contact with to provide food support is demonstrating the potential for much longer-term economic support to families to overcome the impact of the pandemic on their families.

Even prior to the pandemic, demand for health and social care services was rising – people are now living longer with multiple long-term conditions and the patterns of disease are changing. In response to these new pressures, and in spite of the pandemic, in 2020 Camden held a Health and Care Citizens' Assembly, which brought together a diverse and representative cross-section of local residents to set goals and expectations for the future of local health and care services. These expectations have informed the development of the of our new Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2030. This strategy addresses the significant challenges

and builds on the many opportunities we have in Camden with a long-term population health approach. It can be understood as a permanent shift in approach, with ambitions brought about through a better partnership working on specific, shorter term priorities. We pledge to work together to deliver the very best universal services, while proudly placing most of our energies on improving health outcomes for our most disadvantaged residents. We will learn from Covid-19 and together build back a fairer and healthier Camden - there will be no return to the status quo.

In December 2020 a renewed version of Supporting People, Connecting Communities was published. This strategy reaffirmed Camden's commitment to strengths-based working – focussed not just on what people need to meet their basic care needs, but on the whole person, with desires, abilities, and assets of their own - and presented a refreshed set of principles and priorities that would underpin the next phase of adult social care transformation. The strategy was published at an uncertain period, just prior to the 'second wave' of the Covid 19 pandemic, and in the spirit of renewal. The most significant developments have been the implementation of What Matters, the Camden Approach to Adult Social Care, and the Named Worker practice model for people with a learning disability, both of which put relational working at the centre of adult social care practice.

Charlie Ratchford Court is the Council's first in-house extra care service comprising 38 new homes, for people with a range of care and support needs, to help enable them to maintain their independence for as long as possible. As agreed by Cabinet in February 2020, we have developed an innovative support model co-produced with residents, which focuses on an individual's abilities, rather than what they cannot do, and helping them to stay independent. Charlie Ratchford Court has been a 'Whole Council' project, built by the Council through our Community Investment Programme and has required collaboration across Adult Social Care, Housing and Building Management services to implement this unique service. It will feature in the 2021 London Festival of Architecture, the theme of which is 'Care', as an example of how carefully considered design can act as an enabler to deliver innovative support and care services that help people to live active, healthy and independent lives. We have completed new specialist accommodation on Mayford Estate for adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities and a new accessible flat for a family with multiple needs.

Planning Together (Camden's learning disability partnership board) has been discussing what people with learning disabilities in Camden want and need to live a good life. In early 2021, the Synergy Self-Advocacy group for people with learning disabilities told us that the thing they missed most during lockdown were their friends and social interaction, that they want real choices and options when it comes to accessing new and meaningful activities and that they want to do things with other people who have learning disabilities, but also be supported to access mainstream activities, and be a "*real part of the community*." This learning has informed the 'Synergy Manifesto' and is Camden's mandate for change. The Living a Good Life Project will help to achieve this change. The project is being scoped by Camden's Learning Disability Service (CLDS), Integrated Commissioning and Children & Young People's Disability Service (CYPDS). We will coproduce the project with adults and young people with learning disabilities, their parents and carers and with

providers of day opportunities and activities to help us achieve the best outcomes for people with learning disabilities.

Lots of work has taken place over the pandemic to highlight lived experience perspectives. For example, an equal partnership Co-Researcher group (all who have links in Camden either as residents or supporting autistic adults who do not have an accompanying learning disability living in Camden) have codesigned and coproduced participatory research exploring the pathway of care and support for autistic adults without an accompanying learning disability. This work provides an opportunity for systemic change where autistic people and those who deliver services can engage in equal partnerships with autistic-led solutions driving through change.

I was proud that our Youth Offending Service (YOS) was rated 'outstanding' by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation in January 2020, placing the service as one of the top performers in the country. The inspection covered the Council's multi-agency YOS and our work alongside the police, schools and health services to support young people to reduce and prevent offending. It also covered Camden's wider youth work, including youth early help, social work and community safety. The inspectors said our service "values the children, young people and families they work with" and they praised the Council's "effective, collaborative leadership". Their report also outlined that staff work "enthusiastically, and efficiently, to understand the issues affecting children and young people, developing services and projects to address these," and provided key examples such as Camden's early intervention work, setting up a new team to tackle knife crime and supporting young people out of gangs. Camden YOS were also praised for "making sure each child or young person was treated as an individual", with provision tailored to meet their individual needs.

I would like to thank the Cabinet Member for a Healthy and Caring Camden, Cllr Patricia Callaghan, the Cabinet Member for Young People, Equalities and Cohesion, Cllr Abdul Hai and the Cabinet Member for the Best Start in Life, Cllr Angela Mason, for the energy and leadership shown in delivering these achievements.

## **Creating an Inclusive Economy**

- *Impact of Covid and Universal Credit claimants*
- *Council Tax Support Scheme*
- *Universal Credit uplift ending*
- *Good Work Camden*
- *Supporting people with disabilities into employment*
- *Supporting businesses*

The impact of Covid-19 on our economy is still unfolding, but it will be profound and long-lasting. In Camden, Universal Credit (UC) claims rose by 9,526 between April 2020 and April 2021 – an increase of 183% and impacting households in every ward. Most of this increase was seen in the first two months of the pandemic – the number of Universal Credit claimants doubled from 8,033 in March to 16,099 in May 2020.

Camden's previous decision to invest in its Council Tax Support scheme ensures that those who have become unemployed and liable for Council Tax can receive 100% support. As such the Council has also seen a significant increase in both new claims and changes in circumstance for its Council Tax Support scheme with a net 1,271 increase in claims over the last year. 22% of our CTS claims are from households receiving UC, up from 15% a year ago and 73% of working age claims are receiving 100% support. Camden continues to urge government to share more data with local authorities so that we can ensure take up of Council Tax Support for all eligible UC claimants.

In response to the pandemic, the Government increased the standard living allowance element of Universal Credit by £20 a week. It has been credited with keeping millions out of poverty during the pandemic by campaigners and boosting budgets by £1,000. However, the Government withdrew this uplift in autumn 2021, despite strong opposition from Councils such as Camden, local and national organisations, who argued that it would push many of our most vulnerable residents into poverty. We now estimate that there are 945 residents in Camden most at risk of falling into poverty due to the removal of the UC uplift.

Although prior to COVID-19, Camden's economy was performing well and had a low unemployment rate, the borough was also characterised by deeply entrenched economic inequality, where the full benefits of Camden's economic growth were, regrettably, not distributed equally amongst all who live or work here. This inequality has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Good Work Camden began development in September 2019 and has been scaling up throughout the pandemic to support more residents into work, but also to drive long-term reform and a new approach to building a more inclusive economy.

In line with the Council's aspirations around early intervention and prevention, Good Work Camden is focused on helping residents early and in the right way, providing support based on relationships and working with individuals' strengths and at their own pace. Neighbourhood Job Hubs have now been established for Gospel Oak, Regent's Park and Kilburn. Throughout the pandemic, relationships with neighbourhoods have been retained through the local promotion of services and through the development of partnerships with trusted community organisations, despite the necessity of providing support remotely.

We have developed the service in response to need by establishing a flexible support fund which can provide small grants to overcome barriers such as short-term training or equipment needs and by instigating online 'neighbourhood cafes' which bring job seekers together informally to support each other on their journey. A Universal Basic Services pilot is underway, testing the impact on people's lives of providing internet access, training and a device. The Council has commissioned specific support for people seeking to set up their own businesses through an alternative approach which teaches people to start trading without taking on debt or a formal business plan.

The Council regularly convenes and supports the family of employment support providers in Camden – the Employment and Skills Network (ESN) – facilitating

collaboration and providing training in support of shared priorities such as improving the quality of CV writing advice, supporting people with mental health issues and techniques for delivering remote support.

Good Work Camden services are available to all Camden residents looking to improve their employment situation, but we are also developing new and bespoke approaches to supporting young people, people with disabilities and health conditions, parents, and those being supported by the Council's homelessness services. Since the beginning of 2020/21, Our Neighbourhood Jobs Hubs have worked with over 400 people, supporting around 160 into work. In addition, our apprenticeship and construction skills teams worked to train and place around 420 people in employment throughout the pandemic, but also took on the challenge of the government's Kickstart scheme – working with employers to facilitate the creation of 220 placements for young people – around 70 of which are in the Council.

As well as delivering support that is open to all, we recognise the need to develop support for residents facing specific labour market challenges. Too many disabled residents, D/deaf residents and people with long-term health conditions are locked out of the labour market and the benefits good work can bring. In response we are designing a new approach to employment support for Disabled people, D/deaf residents and people with long-term health conditions. To ensure that the work is led by local residents Camden has partnered with Camden Disability Action (CDA). Work commenced in April 2021 and the development of an evidence base to inform the design of a service is well underway. We've worked with CDA to: connect with local people and hear their stories of labour market challenge and success; train residents in social research and provide them with the tech needed to enable them to gather stories from other residents; and convene residents and provide space for them to reflect, discuss and make sense of the stories collected. These stories will enable us - CDA, residents and Camden - to get under the surface and develop a strong understanding of the challenges and opportunities in Camden that we need to respond to.

Given the existing labour market challenge, Camden recognises the necessity for immediate action. As such, Good Work Camden is working alongside Adult Social Care and Integrated Learning Disability Service to recruit a specialist SEND employment advisor to integrate into these services and provide holistic and dedicated employment support to residents. Amongst many integration opportunities, the SEND employment advisor will be integrated into the Good Work Camden programme, Camden's Employment & Skills Network, and will work alongside Good Work Brokers to engage with employers and support residents into employment opportunities that meets their individual needs.

Good Work Camden also seeks to develop new offers of support for businesses to help them create more roles which pay well, offer opportunities for progression, and are designed in a way that means they are accessible to all. Through a cross-borough partnership with Islington, Hackney and Tower Hamlets, we are creating new routes into the knowledge economy for under-represented groups. We have developed partnerships with Google to offer professional certificates for Camden residents and with LABS to provide access to affordable workspace for new

businesses. Since the first lockdown in Spring 2020, the Council has distributed over £163 million in Covid Business Grants and developed business support projects to catalyse recovery and renewal in partnership with our Business Improvement Districts.

I would like to thank the Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation, Cllr Richard Olszewski, and the Cabinet Member for Investing in Communities, Culture and an Inclusive Economy, Cllr Danny Beales, for their crucial role in driving this work forward.

### **Investing to Create an Affordable and Accessible Camden**

- *Our Community Investment Programme continues to deliver new homes and community facilities*
- *The current developments under construction*
- *Estate Ballots with residents endorsing plans for West Kentish Town and Wendling*
- *Our Voids Programme and improvement so far*
- *The re-launched Caretakers Service*
- *Completion of the new Edith Neville Primary School*
- *Investment in digital infrastructure in libraries*

Inequality in Camden is a complex issue, but we know that one of the key causes is the lack of affordable housing, and the cost of housing for low-and-middle-income households, particularly those in the private rented sector. We are particularly concerned about the impact that increasing housing costs are having on the ability of new and growing families to remain in Camden in the long term.

In July 2019, the Cabinet committed to continuing our ground-breaking and ambitious Community Investment Programme, agreeing on investment that will deliver over 500 new Council homes, replacing poor-quality existing homes with larger, safer, warmer homes as well as additional Council homes and Camden Living homes let at below market rent to help key workers on middle incomes stay in the borough.

COVID-19 has impacted on delivery of new homes – creating delays during the first national lockdown - but we worked with contractors on live construction sites to make sure we could continue to build safely and in line with government guidelines.

Despite the impact of the pandemic we have completed new council homes across a range of projects, including:

- 15 new homes including 7 council homes completed on infill sites on Kiln Place Estate in Gospel Oak.
- 38 new affordable extra care flats with a range of shared facilities at Charlie Ratchford Court for people with a range of care and support needs, to help enable them to maintain their independence for as long as possible.
- We completed 10 new family sized council homes at Tessa Jowell Court which are currently being let to tenants.

- This year we completed phase 1b of the regeneration of Agar Grove estate building 34 council rent homes, 23 homes for private sale, a café, and two public squares. All the new homes have been designed and built to the Passivhaus standard ensuring ultra-low CO2 emissions needed to heat the flats and lower fuel bills for residents, typically reduced by up to 75%.
- New specialist accommodation on Mayford Estate for adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities and a new accessible flat for a family with multiple needs.

We currently have 285 homes under construction as well as a new Highgate Newtown Community Centre and a new health and community centre at Abbey Area in Kilburn building on our track record of building new community infrastructure and improving places alongside new delivery of new homes.

In a vote of confidence for the Community Investment Programme, we have also been successful in securing funding from the Mayor of London's Affordable Housing Programme 2021-26. The Council was allocated the full amount it bid for and is among the ten boroughs receiving the most funding. This new allocation of funding will allow us to build on the previous success of the Community Investment Programme and build hundreds of new affordable homes for local residents who need them the most.

We have continued to work closely with communities to develop proposals for their area. We held two successful Estate Ballots with residents endorsing plans for West Kentish Town and Wendling to deliver new homes, improved public space and community facilities. The ballots were the culmination of more than two years' of consultation and engagement which included using a peer-to-peer approach, employing residents of the estate to help us tailor our approach in delivering community-led regeneration.

The West Kentish Town Ballot in March 2021 was the first of its kind in Camden. Residents were given the opportunity to vote online, by post, over the phone or at a polling station on proposals to rebuild the estate and address overcrowding, fuel poverty and community safety. In total, 287 households representing a turnout of 85% voted with an overwhelming 93% supporting the proposals. As of October 2020, this was the largest figure voting in favour of proposals in any regeneration ballot in a London borough so far.

Regeneration of the Wendling and St Stephens Close Estate took a major step forward last July, as 75% of residents voted in favour of new homes for their estate. There was a very high turnout for the ballot, with 72% of eligible residents turned out to have their say. The overwhelming majority putting their trust in the Council to deliver regeneration for the estate. Between 650 and 750 spacious and modern new homes will be built, a minimum of 40% of which will be genuinely affordable including new council homes and homes available at Camden Living Rent. This will include larger family council homes to help end overcrowding.

We know that as many people live in our Council homes also live in the private rented sector in Camden. It is a growing sector, with challenges around affordability, security and quality. Over the next year we want to work with our communities to

ensure that we are doing all we can to protect the vulnerable in rented homes in Camden. The Council is currently developing proposals for a selective licensing scheme for all private rented accommodation in Camden.

A Voids Improvement Programme was established in January 2021 to tackle the loss of rental income incurred by how long voids properties are empty. This was made more challenging during Covid-19. The aim is to ensure that our residents get into their new homes as quickly as possible. A strict performance and reporting framework has been put in place to manage Void performance. This has seen a 10% increase of new lets for the 21/22 financial year as at the end of Quarter 3, compared to the entire void performance of 20/21. With additional performance improvements projected up until the end of 21/22 the Void Improvement Programme is on track to meet its savings target. Further savings and performance targets are in place for the following years to continue the performance momentum and ensure residents can access the right properties for the housing needs quicker.

As well as improving performance, new initiatives have been delivered such as a new virtual tour viewing tool that ensures safe and quick viewings of properties for general needs residents. This specialist viewing tool gives bidders more choice while also providing enhanced information such as floor plans. This allows those who are working or with caring responsibilities easier access to view properties. Not only has this increased acceptance rates but has also been well received by bidders. We reviewed the caretaker service and worked with residents to deliver a new service model. Following a very extensive consultation with over 1,327 residents a new service model was developed which included in-sourcing the cleaning of the external areas of estates, and delivering new and enhanced services. Our caretakers worked throughout the pandemic to keep residents safe and although the launch of the new service was delayed by the pandemic it was successfully launched in September 2020. Resident feedback on the new improved services continues to be very positive.

As well as housing, we also understand the importance of social and community buildings to creating strong and accessible communities. Recognising this we have committed to investing to create the next generation of public sector buildings – not just focused on delivering single services, or single groups of people, but open places that bring people together, support independence and encourage connection.

The new Edith Neville primary school in Somers Town opened in January 2020. Rebuilding Edith Neville Primary School was a top priority for Central Somers Town. After many years spent in outdated prefabricated classrooms, the school now has a new building that the staff, children, and community deserve. The school is at the heart of Somers Town, one of the most deprived wards in Camden. This was part of the first phase of our wider Central Somers Town project which has also rebuilt cutting edge play facilities and a roof-top football pitch for the Plot 10 play project. Plot 10 provides an opportunity for children to play safely, in a supervised environment, outside school hours and during school holidays. The scheme supports working parents, many of whom rely on this wrap-around service.

The new Edith Neville building marked the end of CIP's programme of investment into new and existing school buildings across the borough. Community Investment

Programme has enabled us to invest £165m in our family of schools - keeping our schools together in close partnership, rather than resort to academisation as the only route to investment in schools. This significant commitment now means 17,000 children are learning in the first class, excellent schools they deserve, giving the best start in life.

We have committed £1.5m to put new digital infrastructure in our libraries and have invested in new technology and equipment to support digital inclusion across Camden. We have upgraded our broadband speeds and increased Wi-Fi access within our libraries. We have invested in all new PCs, Macs, laptops, self-serve kiosks, tablets, robotics, e-newspapers and expanded our digital library content. As part of the neighbourhoods' programme, we are also planning to launch new shared spaces – places held in common with our communities to create opportunities for collaboration, knowledge sharing, connection and socializing and activism.

I would like to thank the Cabinet Member for Investing in Communities, Culture and an Inclusive Economy, Cllr Danny Beales, the Cabinet Member for Better Homes, Cllr Meric Apak, and the Cabinet Member for Promoting Neighbourhoods and Communities, Cllr Anna Wright, for their ongoing efforts to deliver improved housing and facilities for Camden residents.

### **Euston & HS2 - fighting for our community**

The impacts of HS2 construction works continue to deepen for our communities. Constant noise, dust, and road closures have contributed to an unbearable living situation for many residents, particularly those living alongside the construction works at Euston.

To address the situation residents are facing in our housing blocks, the council took the unprecedented step of offering a voluntary rehousing scheme for its tenants, at significant cost to the council. Many families have already successfully arranged moves to homes away from the ongoing works as a result. We are clear, however, that HS2 Ltd must fund the rehousing of council tenants and leaseholders living alongside the enormous disruption caused by this project. We will keep increasing the pressure on them to ensure they do so.

We also recruited local residents to lead our engagement and offer peer-to-peer advice and support. Residents told us that they found it hard to access information from HS2, therefore we developed a bespoke newsletter which provides regular updates on upcoming HS2 works and public realm improvement works led by Camden (e.g. green spaces).

To ensure Euston is a place that is fit for purpose for local people, we have insisted on the creation of a new Community Review Panel as part of the new Euston Partnership governance with community, voluntary, resident and business representatives able to get involved in the matters discussed by the partnership. We have also set up a refreshed Euston Residents Advisory Group, made up of 30 randomly selected demographically representative residents who have informed the review of the Euston Area Plan and who have produced a set of recommendations for the future of Euston which the Council is working to address.

## **Finances, spending review and cost of Covid**

Covid has had a significant impact on the Council's finances. In total there were additional financial pressures of £68m on the Council's General Fund services during 2020/21 as a result of lost income, as well as redeployed spending to enable us to deliver our wide-ranging pandemic response. The Government's response to the financial pressures facing local government was piecemeal: to support service pressures, the Council received 27 distinct service grants announced at different times through the year. After application of government support, this left a gap of £19m which, in the absence of further government support, had to be met by council resources.

Before the omicron variant and the government's decision to move to 'Plan B' rules in December 2021, most Covid restrictions had ended by July 2021. However, considerable financial pressures have remained on the Council principally from additional demand for adult social care, ongoing lost income from sales, fees and charges, and residents and businesses continuing to face difficulties paying Council Tax and Business Rates.

While the government has made some funding available for 2021/22 Covid pressures, it is unlikely to cover the full financial impact, particularly as it is unclear how the pandemic will develop over the winter and spring or what the longer-term impacts on the council's finances will be.

The Spending Review in October 2021 provided a three-year financial settlement for government departments, however this has not translated into a three-year settlement for local authorities, who have again only received funding for one year. This will be the fourth consecutive one-year settlement for local authorities, making long term financial planning very difficult. There is further uncertainty due to government's 'levelling up' agenda, which is expected to focus on geographic redistribution of funding, taking money away from London boroughs such as Camden, rather than on focusing on addressing inequality across the country including significant areas of deprivation and inequality within Camden.

The financial settlement for 2022/23 has provided an increase in the Council's 'Core Spending Power' compared with 2021/22 but the Council still receives significantly less government funding than in 2010. Considering inflation, Camden received almost 60% less per resident than it did in 2010/11. The government's assessment of the Council's 'Core Spending Power' includes the assumption that Council Tax will be increased by 2.99%.

The government have estimated that the Council's 'Core Spending Power' will increase by 7.7% in 2022/23 compared with 2021/22. However, the actual increase will be 5.5% because the Council has been adversely impacted by the changes to its business rates tax base as a result of the Covid pandemic, with many businesses in the borough continuing to struggle despite the support that has been made available.

Furthermore, within this unpromising outlook for local government as a whole, the financial settlement for individual local authorities such as Camden is subject to

enormous uncertainty due to government plans for funding reforms to local government. The 'fair funding' review, a review of the methodology for distributing funding to individual Councils, and the plan to "re-base" Non-Domestic Business Rates, are both now expected to take effect from 2023/24 and it is not clear what the overall impact on Camden's funding will be.

The lack of clarity of funding in the medium term means that the Council is facing significant uncertainty and risk to its finances with an estimated budget gap of somewhere between £35- £40m by 2025. However, given the level of uncertainty regarding future funding policies and the as yet unknown long-term impact from COVID-19, this figure could be higher.

## **My priorities over the coming year**

### **Tackling health inequalities as we recover from the pandemic**

The past two years have brought into sharp focus the health inequalities across our communities. Our Black, Asian and other ethnic communities in particular have experienced disproportionately the most harmful effects of Covid-19 and as we renew from the pandemic, I want us to bring together our health and care partners to tackle the root causes of these inequalities so that everyone in Camden is supported to live a healthier life.

There are many factors that affect all round health and wellbeing, such as access to nutritious food, economic security, school readiness and social isolation. I want us to build on the work of the Camden Health and Care Citizens' Assembly to tackle these social determinants, to support those who currently experience the highest barriers to living healthy independent lives. This will mean progressing our work to bring together health, social care, housing, community and voluntary sector partners to understand people's needs, and using our strengths-based approaches to provide more effective all-round care in our communities. I'm confident that Camden's Health and Wellbeing Strategy sets this ambition clearly and will help us to work together with our communities and partners to prevent ill health and create a healthier borough.

### **Resident safety**

The safety of our residents, and particularly our young people, continues to be at the front of my mind as I set out my priorities for the borough over the next year. Over the last two years I have met with parents, young people and community leaders, joining conversations to hear about the experiences and commitment of our communities to making our neighbourhoods safer. It is my commitment that we as a Council will continue to do all we can to make our residents and communities safe.

This includes tackling violence against women and girls in Camden and making sure that women are able to live, work and travel around our borough safely. The tragic deaths of Bibaa Henry, Nicole Smallman, Sarah Everard, Nicole Hurley, and, over the course of these past two years, at least another 260 women and girls, have

brought to the fore a national conversation about male violence, and the lengths that women go to on a daily basis to protect ourselves.

Camden Safety Net has been responding to increased demand for its support services during the lockdowns caused by the pandemic, adapting to support women and children in desperate need. Our Domestic Violence and Abuse Action Plan was published in March 2021 and sets out how we will go beyond our investment in Camden Safety Net, to prevent violence against women and to ensure a more integrated response between all our services when a woman contacts the Council in need of support.

In November 2021, as part of the Council's work on the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, we held a full Council debate on Violence Against Women and Girls, hearing from speakers across the borough. We also held a vigil beforehand to remember all the women who have been tragically killed by a man in 2021.

Tackling domestic violence and abuse is a priority for us in Camden. The Camden Women's Forum published their inquiry into domestic violence and abuse in December 2021 with a series of recommendations co-produced with survivors. Cabinet approved an additional £400,000 of investment to implement these recommendations, which include specialist programmes for child survivors of domestic abuse, mandatory training on domestic abuse and perpetrator programmes.

### **Tackling poverty in our borough**

Over the course of the pandemic the Council has stepped in to support our residents more than ever before, not just providing a safety net but actively helping them to access food, financial support, digital access or advice. I'm deeply concerned about the impact that the end to the Government's Furlough Scheme, the end of the Universal Credit uplift, as well as increasing housing, food and energy costs, are having on our residents.

As we now perhaps come out of the pandemic, we must redouble our efforts to tackle poverty and inequality in Camden, working to renew in a way that provides good jobs, fair pay, quality housing and services to residents.

### **Climate crisis**

The climate crisis has been more present in our lives than ever this past year, with increasing extreme weather events and climate warnings taking place in the run up to the UN's Climate Change Conference, COP 26, which took place in October and November of last year.

Camden has set out its long-term commitment to tackling the climate emergency through our Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change and following this our Climate Action Plan. We know we need to share responsibility and action with our communities and our businesses if we are to make real progress. Last year the Council strengthened our commitment, embedding in our constitution the need to

consider environmental impacts in all the decisions we make. We have increased our Climate Change Alliance membership and launched a Camden Climate Pledge through our Climate Change Alliance business network. Whilst we continue our work as a Council to reduce our carbon footprint and improve Camden's air quality, we are also working to enable the whole community to play their part, whether that's cycling instead of driving, or bringing together neighbours to work on greening their estate.

I want us in Camden to continue to show real leadership when it comes to tackling the climate emergency. As we look to the borough and the society that we want to live in after the pandemic, we must place climate justice at the centre and in doing so we can create opportunity and prosperity for Camden.

### **Investing in our neighbourhoods**

We are committed to working with communities to invest in our streets and estates, whether that's insulating homes to reduce energy bills and tackle the climate crisis or improve green spaces, and make it a cleaner, safer environment to move around.

The council has committed to a neighbourhoods mission which pledges that by 2030 our estates and streets are creative and sustainable. This means working with our communities to support creative uses of empty shops and under-used buildings and supporting local initiatives from food growing to cycle repair. It also means working to bring together local services so people can access physical activity, employment support and community activity close to home. This mission is about the Council, partners and communities coming together to provide the right infrastructure to achieve this: the physical spaces, access to funding and the right democratic structures to enable community action and self-determination at local level.

We know our high streets have suffered through the pandemic and through our Future High Streets project and high street fund we aim to support new projects that make them more sustainable and vibrant.

### **Listening to our residents**

We continue to develop our approach to active community participation, working closely in partnership with residents, VCS partners and community groups to understand their priorities and to support them to make the changes they want to see in their borough. We must continue this work, to strengthen and deepen the relationships we have developed with our communities and to make sure that, as a Council, we are listening to our residents about what matters most to them. We must respond by making sure we continue to deliver on the services that matter most and supporting our citizens to take action where they want to see change.

I will continue to put fighting for our communities at the core of what I do. Whether that's standing up to HS2 about the impacts they're having on our communities or making the case at a London and National level for the funding we need to provide quality services, and to invest in an inclusive economy as we renew from Covid-19. I will always make it a priority to stand up for the future of our borough.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS (comments from the Borough Solicitor)**

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

**RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Finance comments of the Executive Director  
Corporate Services)**

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

**REPORT ENDS**