

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE	
Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living	
REPORT OF	
Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living	
FOR SUBMISSION TO	DATE
Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee	16 January 2023
SUMMARY OF REPORT	
The Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living provides the Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee with his annual report for discussion.	
Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information	
No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.	
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RECOMMENDATIONS	
The committee is asked to note and comment on the contents of the report.	

Signed:



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

Date: 01/12/2022

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Finance and Cost of Living Portfolio uses the limited funds the council receives to respond to the needs of our residents and communities, deliver organisational objectives and lead on financial inclusion. Direction setting across corporate services is central to this portfolio's oversight of the delivery of We Make Camden and the wider use of corporate resources such as legal, regulatory and democratic services. This report sets out the achievements of the portfolio from March 2022 to November 2022.
- 1.2. As we began to recover from the Covid 19 pandemic, we entered a new crisis as the rising cost of essential expenses such as food, heating, travel and childcare has meant many people simply cannot afford how much it costs to live. Whilst much of the Cost of Living narrative has focused on people being forced to choose between eating or heating, so many of our residents simply will not have either as a choice. To provide a strong political focus, oversight and coordination to this important work this portfolio has taken leadership on the Cost of Living Response Group where Cabinet Members are offered oversight of the Council's response to the challenge of hardship and poverty in our communities. Given the priority of this response and how the Cost of Living crisis cuts across all sectors of the council, although the response group consists of core members, Cabinet have indicated their desire to take part in the response group and are all invited to join update meetings. An overarching report on the group's work will be presented to Cabinet in July.
- 1.3. Financial inequality is not new to Camden and is central to our We Make Camden goals. However, the Cost of Living Crisis means that many residents already struggling are likely to fall deeper into poverty. In recognition of the severity of this crisis, Cost of Living has been added to the finance portfolio to emphasise our ambition to develop a targeted and operative response in Camden.
- 1.4. With each new crisis we face demand for the services delivered by the council have continued to increase, whilst funding from Central Government has decreased. As we prepare to set out our financial position over the next three years in our Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), we have had to consider a significant budget gap and even greater financial uncertainty from central government. From austerity, Brexit, the global pandemic and now the Cost of Living Crisis, Camden as an organisation continues to grow our financial resilience and develop new and innovative ways to ensure our essential services can continue.

2. Cost of Living Crisis

- 2.1. The Cost of Living in Camden has been a disproportionate issue for our communities for some time. Whilst living in the centre of a global city like London carries benefits, it also carries significant pressures in the increased cost of housing, travel, childcare and wider goods and services. Tackling inequality and injustice is at the core of our purpose and ambition. Camden is home to some of the wealthiest households and most successful businesses

in the country, but it is also home to households and communities living in poverty. The current Cost of Living crisis has significantly worsened the squeeze on income and the impact on wellbeing which Camden's communities have been living with for some time.

2.2. Poverty and structural inequality are not new. The Cost of Living crisis comes after a decade of rising poverty. However, the speed and the depth of this current crisis represents a challenge for our entire community. The Council is working to support those most at risk this winter from the sharp increase in inflation over the last six months – and we are also looking at long-term interventions that support those most at risk of harm, and seek to prevent people getting into financial crisis as far as possible.

2.3. The scale of this crisis is such that we cannot protect all Camden residents on our own. We need everyone in Camden to step up to help each other, and we need significantly more investment from government in local support. However, Camden is playing a critical role in responding to the crisis – some of our key interventions this winter are:

- Continuing to invest in our generous Council Tax Support scheme that takes c16,000 households out of paying Council Tax altogether – putting money directly into people's pockets when they need it most;
- Continuing our Holiday Hunger Voucher Scheme to ensure children in receipt of free meals at school can eat during the holidays, and using our data to automatically enrol children eligible for free school meals locally when they make a support claim;
- Investing £2m in our Cost of Living Crisis fund and working with advice partners, community groups, front line staff to get money to those who need it most – we are seeing a significant increase in applications for this fund as the winter continues;
- Using our data to target outreach to those most at risk, and those who we know might not approach the Council for help until they reach a crisis point;
- Working with the NHS to reach out to those who have health conditions that make them more at risk over the winter if they cannot stay warm;
- Working with community partners and our front-line community services to create a network of warm spaces where people can keep warm and access services over the winter;
- Using windfall from our wholly owned energy from waste plant to fund breakfast clubs for all Camden schoolchildren, and fund responsive retrofit works for those council homes most in need over the winter;
- Investing in our community partners and advice partners when they are also experiencing Cost of Living increases to ensure they remain stable and resilient this winter;
- Providing clear routes for Camden to come together to support each other – whether through our Camden Giving donation scheme, our Food

Partnership work to provide sustainable sources of food for food banks, or our Time to Spare volunteering platform.

2.4. The scale of the crisis is not one that can be solved quickly or by the Council working alone. Our response consists of four key areas of work with actions taking place in the short, medium, and long term:

- Direct and focused activity to address the crisis (as outlined above) - including a new £2m Cost of Living Crisis Fund, and ensuring residents are aware of how they can access help and support that builds financial resilience;
- Continuing systemic and transformational activity to address the underlying causes of poverty - including Good Work Camden to provide person-centred employment support, the food mission to address food poverty, and the systemic review of debt to ensure residents can access the advice and support they need to avoid debt;
- Applying a Cost of Living lens to a wider range of policy development; and
- Understanding the impact of the Cost of Living crisis for Camden's people – listening and capturing stories, insight, and advocacy, using data to understand the growing needs and risks, and campaigning for change in national policies.

2.5. Many of the levers to address the Cost of Living crisis sit with the national Government, including taxation and national benefits. Camden has developed a consistent and mature programme to address poverty and support improved incomes for families and households – but in order to truly support people and avoid harm, we need a more comprehensive response from the Government to the systemic issues of poverty and inequality. Some of our key asks to include:

- Invest in a localised place-based response to this crisis, working with local government to:
 - move away from multiple short-term schemes and ensure long-term funding for local welfare assistance schemes to enable hardship funds to be directed to those most in need;
 - direct funding for community and mutual aid programmes; and
 - address the impact of arrears and non-payment for local authorities to ensure that, at this time, we are able to continue to invest in vital community services.
- Increase benefits in line with inflation, and reverse the Universal Credit cuts of £20 per week that were implemented in 2021 that reduced the household incomes of the poorest in society, and ensure that the support offered to the lowest income households meets the average Cost of Living increase;
- Provide free school meals to all children in households in receipt of Universal Credit and lift the income threshold for those on legacy benefits, and provide further national investment for food banks, community kitchens,

and low-cost and sustainable food access programmes with an increase in Child Benefit over the school holiday periods;

- Invest in a national programme of social and affordable housebuilding that prioritises highly sustainable and efficient homes that keep people warm and well; and
- Provide investment for local authorities to lead programmes to improve insulation and sustainable and affordable heating in existing local authority homes.

2.6. We will continue to pressure Government to provide a comprehensive and coherent response to this crisis at the same time as doing all we can in Camden to support those most at risk and most in need.

3. Debt and Financial Hardship

3.1 Our Cost of Living Crisis Fund offers residents and families a payment of up to £500 to help with soaring energy bills and essential everyday costs such as food or rent. The fund prioritises those in greatest need and households are able to receive the maximum of two payments in a year.

3.2 The launch of the Cost of Living Crisis Fund in September 2022 has been very successful. Some headlines are:

- 1188 referrals since mid September totalling nearly £0.5m
- 61% of referrals are Black, Asian or other ethnic groups
- 48% of referrals have children
- 74% of applicants are women
- Every ward is represented, the highest being St Pancras and Somers Town, Kilburn, Haverstock, Regents Park and Gospel Oak
- Every age range is represented from under 18s living independently through to over 85 year olds.
- 78% of awards are cash payments to help with energy, food, clothing or essential household items
- Referrals are coming from a wide range of services and organisations including community groups, advice partners, schools and health partners

3.3 The Council has also successfully implemented the government funded energy rebate scheme for Council Tax payers with all funding awarded totalling over £9m. In addition, £2m of Household Support Fund was awarded to families and pensioners between April and September 2022 with a further round taking place between October 2022 to March 2023 which will be used to continue to support families during school holidays and to top up funding for the Council's Cost of Living Crisis scheme.

3.4 Over £27m from the Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund was awarded to businesses to support them with business rates.

- 3.5 Alongside delivering this work, the Council has launched a new online Council Tax move in/out form that streamlines the process and enables residents to apply for discounts and exemptions at the point of completing the move in form, ensuring initial bills are right first time. The Council also worked with residents and partners including Age UK Camden and disabled groups to launch a new automated menu system on the main Contact Camden number making the system easier to navigate with shorter durations. Lastly a significant restructure took place to merge Council Tax and Business Rates with the Benefits Service under one Head of Service. The new structure went live in September and delivers £500,000 annual saving.
- 3.6 At the end of Quarter 2 the year to date Council Tax figures were 0.33% above expected target, in actual cash terms it means we were £560,000 above our cash target of £85.77m (to achieve the budgeted 95% collection rate). Our year-to-date business rates collection rate is down 0.65% on profiled income, which is £4.17m below our cash target of £379.87m for the year to date (to achieve the budgeted 95% collection rate).
- 3.7 Collection of income across the Council remains challenging however and a new cross-organisational review is starting in Quarter 3 to look at how the Council can continue to improve its collection processes whilst identifying and supporting those in greatest need.
- 3.8 Work continues to improve residents' experience of contacting the Council. In the first six months of the year, Contact Camden received over 280,000 calls covering 30+ different services. The welfare line continues to play a critical role in supporting residents facing hardship, debt or homelessness. A discovery exercise will be starting towards the end of 2022 to look at developing a whole-organisational approach to improving residents' experience of interacting with the Council.

4. Financial Resilience

General Fund

- 4.1. The Council continues to face significant financial challenges following the global pandemic, and the ongoing Cost of Living crisis, which is having a lasting impact on the Council and its financial position.
- 4.2. Since 2010, as demand for the services we provide has increased in volume and complexity, particularly in health and social care, government austerity has significantly reduced our funding levels. Between 2010/11 and 2022/23 we will have had to make savings of c£197m.

- 4.3. The Council is currently forecasting a further medium term budget gap of c£40m by 2025/26. The significant inflationary and demographic pressures facing the Council along with the ongoing uncertainties regarding government funding mean that the actual budget gap could be significantly higher.
- 4.4. The Council is currently developing a new Medium Term Financial Strategy to ensure that council remains financially resilient. This will involve making difficult decisions about Council services and the lack of adequate funding from the government will continue to have an impact on local services.
- 4.5. The 'fair funding' review is a planned review of the methodology that determines how much funding each authority receives each year. The methodology is very complex and has not been updated since 2013/14. A 'fair funding' review was first announced in 2016 but has been delayed a number of times.
- 4.6. Recently the government minister for 'Levelling Up' announced that there would not be a review during this Government Spending period, which runs to March 2025.
- 4.7. In the absence of a review of local government funding the Council has received a series of one-year settlements, meaning it has no certainty about the level of funding it will receive over the medium term, making strategic financial planning very difficult.
- 4.8. The further delays in reviewing the way funding is allocated to local authorities means the Council continues to operate in an uncertain financial environment with no clear picture of the level of funding it will receive over the medium term.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

- 4.9. Over the past seven years the HRA has faced significant financial pressures, between 2016/17 to 2019/20 the Government mandated that rents had to be reduced 1% year on year, at a time when the Council was facing rising costs from inflation, fire safety and repair pressures putting significant strain on the HRA. In addition, during the last two years no specific grants have been made available to alleviate the financial pressures on the HRA resulting from the pandemic.
- 4.10. The outlook for the next few years continues to be challenging due to a range of factors. Managing and maintaining the Council's social housing stock includes the cost of repairs and fire safety measures as well as significant pressure on the cost of energy across the stock.
- 4.11. The ongoing financial pressures facing the HRA mean that the potential funding gap is forecast to be between £6.5m and £15m (with the mid-forecast being £8m) by the financial year 2025/26.

Community Investment Programme

- 4.12. The Community Investment Programme (CIP) is our ambitious plan to invest in schools, homes and community facilities in Camden. It's our answer to government spending cuts.
- 4.13. In September 2022 we committed to expanding the Programme and making an additional £1.3 billion investment that will see the Council increasing the numbers of social and affordable homes in Camden.
- 4.14. This additional investment will mean building a total of: 4,850 new homes, including 1,800 council homes; and 350 Camden Living Rent homes for nurses, teachers, key workers and other middle-earners.
- 4.15. Our expanded Programme will enable the Council to continue building larger, energy-efficient homes that provide Camden families with the space they need, help to tackle rising bills and lower carbon emissions. The new investment in CIP includes a hybrid approach for the delivery of the Camley Street scheme which incorporates both direct delivery and developer agreements to ensure that the Council is able to develop new social and affordable housing as quickly as possible.
- 4.16. CIP will also help renovate thousands of existing council homes, as part of the Council's Better Homes Programme.
- 4.17. The CIP is perhaps the part of the Council's operations which is the most exposed to wider economic conditions. Inflation throughout the construction supply chain has been exacerbated by a cluster of factors – Covid, the war in Ukraine and European Union (EU) exit. Inflationary pressures has led to higher tenders and greater risk across CIP and may impact on future business plans.
- 4.18. The post-Covid economic environment has also led to a number of interest rate rises which feed through the rates available to the Council through the Public Works Loan Board (PWL) and commercial borrowing. This impacts the overall affordability of the programme and may impact the viability of individual schemes if they are heavily reliant on borrowing to fund them.
- 4.19. The CIP programme is also reliant on the sale of new houses to repay the upfront borrowing used to fund the building of social and affordable housing. The value of sales are driven by the property market, which has been volatile in Camden in recent years. Changes in the property market can affect both the amount and the timing of sales which in turn impact the Council's ability to service its borrowing.
- 4.20. The Council will manage these financial risks through a comprehensive series of checks and balances, including sensitivity analysis when developing business cases, regular and detailed monitoring of expenditure and receipts, with oversight by senior officers and regular reporting to Cabinet.

Green Bond

4.21. The Climate emergency is one of the key challenges facing the Council.

One of the ways we are planning to tackle this crisis is by using Local Climate Bonds (CMI). The CMI offers an alternative source of funding (that sits alongside the council's other sources of borrowing for infrastructure including developer contributions, capital receipts and the HM Treasury's Public Works Loan Board— to fund the delivery of the council's overall investment plans whilst diversifying our funding base available for capital projects.

4.22. A CMI is a loan instrument (that operates in a similar way to a bond) and following the launch provided our residents and other interested investors the opportunity to invest their money into projects that reduce carbon emissions in the borough.

4.23. The Council formally launch its inaugural local climate bond this year and set a target of £1 million (to be raised over a period of 3 months) to fund a range of local projects across the borough, which were selected based on feedback from the 2019 Citizens' Assembly. On the 28 June the council reached its £1 million target.

4.24. The funding is being used to support projects including Healthy Streets work, Solar Panels on Housing Estate roofs, the installation of electric charging points and 'greening' the Council's transport fleet.

Temporary Accommodation Update

4.25. In 2019 we launched the Temporary Accommodation Purchasing Programme (TAPP) to buy back a limited number of ex-Right to Buy 1, 2 & 3 bedroom properties. The TAPP programme initially set out to provide more than 70 in-borough properties to be used as temporary accommodation for our homeless households.

4.26. Due to the success of the initial programme the Council launched TAPP2.

4.27. The Council has now purchased 109 properties to use as good quality in borough temporary accommodation meaning more families can stay in Camden close to their support networks and saving the Council money on purchasing expensive nightly temporary accommodation. By the end of the programme the Council aims to purchase 140 properties.

5. Resident-centred working

5.1. Resident centred working across the organisation ensures we are doing all we can to support our most vulnerable. During the Covid 19 pandemic we rolled out our Covid vaccination bus which had great success in offering vaccinations across the community. The bus team recently delivered their 8000th vaccination to people for whom the main vaccination programme presented too many barriers to engagement. The success of the work and the importance of reaching out to communities to tackle healthcare inequalities

has shaped our Camden Mobile Health Bus. The Health Bus tackles inequalities in health outcomes by creating opportunities for specific communities to engage with health discussions and check-ups. To date, the bus has focussed on early detection of diabetes, clocking up nearly 1,000 prevention checks for mainly Black and Asian communities across the borough.

- 5.2. The expectation for 2023 is to introduce cancer screening to the Health Bus. The visibility of the bus and the wraparound outreach has proven to be an effective means of engagement with residents. This has led to the recent pilot of both 'Cost of Living' and 'Green Energy' buses, where expert advice can be given and work carried out to help those residents most in need during the current crisis.
- 5.3. The pandemic demonstrated the dedication and commitment of council employees. We continue to reflect our values and ambition to become a truly inclusive borough for our residents, and organisation for our employees. As an employer we want to strive towards ensuring our workforce reflects our ambitions for the borough. Our work on anti-racism, inclusion, wellbeing and development are all central reflecting our value.

Design Journey

- 5.4. Camden has invested in strategic design capacity across the Council to lead the work of changing our organisation to respond to the challenges of the 21st century, and to work with services and teams across the organisation to support them in transforming to better reflect the needs, priorities and resources of residents and communities. We want to design services that help everyone thrive, and make the borough the best place to live, work, study and visit.
- 5.5. During 2021 and 2022 we have continued to build design capacity and expertise in the Council – both by bringing staff into the organisation but also by supporting existing staff to learn and grow as designers themselves. We have increased capacity around service design, design research and delivery management to support our wider ambitions in supporting transformation across the Council in a way that is directed by resident and community voice.
- 5.6. Some of the key work occurring across the design community in the Council includes:
- Continuing to support the delivery of our We Make Camden missions and challenges including around supporting estates to be sustainable, creative and healthy, supporting young people to access economic opportunity and supporting a sustainable food system to tackle food poverty. Work is ongoing around supporting a circular economy in Camden as part of our climate emergency commitments, and addressing digital exclusion and digital access;

- Building on our commitment to being an anti-racist organisation to develop our design capacity with equity and justice at its heart, including developing an inclusive design practice that sits across our design teams at the Council, and an approach to recruitment and retention that seeks to increase diversity in all forms in our design teams;
- The team is developing the Good Life Camden index – our approach to understanding how residents are doing in the Borough, and more clearly understand the impact of our services and programmes on making a difference. This will be an important part of the first State of the Borough report that will be shared with partners and communities in March 2023;
- Work is continuing with the Camden’s Women’s Forum to lead and coordinate the Council’s efforts to combat violence and domestic abuse against women and girls;
- The Council is conducting a discovery on how we support customers to have improved experience of contacting us – through whatever avenue they use whether online, by phone, by email, and through whatever service – this is occurring parallel to ongoing work to improve our website and our online contact capability;
- Working with People, Inclusion and Organisational Design to share design mindsets and support staff to actively lead and transform their services as part of the Camden Imagines work.

Cyber Defences

5.7. The global cyber security threat level continues to grow, with local and central government remaining a significant target for criminals. Work to improve technical controls leveraging our investment in Microsoft 365 ‘E5’ tools, and incident readiness has continued at pace. Considerable progress has been made to prepare or update disaster recovery processes and procedures to restore critical systems should an incident occur.

Refugee Response

5.8. Camden has always welcomed refugees, offering a place of sanctuary for those in most need of help. The Borough is currently home to three main groups of refugees:

- Around 350 Afghan refugees who arrived in Camden in August 2021. Initially there were 1,818 Afghan refugees living in three Bridging Hotels, which were procured by the Home Office, following the Afghan airlift. There is now one Bridging Hotel. Camden Council has committed to finding homes in Camden for 20 households. This is known as the Camden Pledge and supports refugee households in their journey from refugee to resident. This will be achieved through a mixture of council properties, housing associations properties and the private rented sector. We anticipate that by the end of 2023, 13 families will be living in Camden Council managed homes, as council tenants.
- Over 500 Ukrainian refugees have arrived in Camden since March 2022. The vast majority of refugees are “guests” living in the homes of Camden resident “hosts”, under the Government led Homes for Ukraine initiative.
- Over 600 asylum seekers, from several countries. The majority are living in five “Contingency Hotels”, which is the initial accommodation procured by the Home Office for people seeking asylum, and who are making their asylum claim or awaiting their asylum decision. We also have around 50 people living in Home

Office dispersed accommodation in Camden; dispersed accommodation is where people move to after, what is meant to be, a short stay in initial accommodation, until they receive their asylum decision or exhaust their appeals.

- We also helped 24 Syrian families to settle in the UK as part of a Home Office Resettlement scheme. This consisted of 86 beneficiaries who have been assisted to integrate into schools, training, employment and education for adults. The majority of these families are still living in Camden, though a small number have chosen to move to new areas. Camden Council supported the families to achieve their indefinite leave to remain and live independently. We are currently looking at how we can support these families to apply for citizenship.

5.9. Camden Council has developed a comprehensive wrap support offer to the refugees who are living in the borough. This includes providing safeguarding checks, schooling, and help with employment and training, access to health services, as well as working closely with voluntary sector partners.

5.10. Under the Government's Homes for Ukraine (HFU) scheme, hosts are eligible to receive a payment of £350 per month. This contributes towards the costs of providing a home to their guest, such as food and utilities. In recognition of the Cost of Living crisis, from November 2022 Camden Council began to pay hosts an additional £200 per month, for months seven to twelve of their hosting arrangement. Camden Council was one of the first local authorities in the country to make additional payments to hosts.

5.11. The Refugee Programme Office in Camden are aware of the challenges faced by Ukrainian guests looking to rebuild their lives in the UK, the uncertainty caused by the short tenure of the HFU scheme, and the lack of clarity from central Government. Officers are actively working across the Council to ensure that host/guest relationships are stable and enabling, and that homelessness risk is identified as quickly as possible and addressed.

6. Recovering from Covid- The Future of Work

6.1. The pandemic showed us the commitment and dedication of Camden staff, as the organisation strove to keep the safety and wellbeing of our employees a priority. As we recover from the pandemic and enter the Cost of Living Crisis, our employees enter new challenges and we as an employer strive to make sure we create a work place where everyone feels valued, safe and respected.

6.2. We want everyone to be connected to Camden the place and the community. How we work beyond this, will be shaped by our services, with community need at its heart. Therefore, from April 2022, as a minimum, all staff need to spend at least some time each week in Camden. We recognise that there have been many benefits to working more flexibly during the pandemic, particularly for staff with caring responsibilities or those with disabilities. We want to build on this and achieve the right balance for staff, the organisation and the community.

Wellbeing

6.3. As an employer we want to ensure our workforce wellbeing reflects our ambition for the Borough. We have committed to everyone in Camden being

able to live a healthy and independent life by 2025, which includes Camden employees. Our wellbeing offer has been available since 2020 and has helped support the reductions in potential long-term absence helping our employees to feel happy and connected to Camden as a workplace. We have continued to add to this over the course of 2022.

6.4. For more than six years we have been accredited Timewise Employer in recognition of our commitment to offering flexible working for our employees to have a happy work life balance. Throughout 2022 we have continued our partnership with Timewise to review our flexibility and flag bear Fair Flexible employment. We will be launching an updated approach to this by 2023.

6.5. The sudden and tragic death of our colleague last year within our buildings led us to rapidly put in place bereavement support for staff, which subsequently led to the development of our “Suicide Prevention Action Plan” with guidance from the Samaritans and Public Health. As part of this we are asking staff to complete suicide awareness training by the Zero Suicide Alliance which will form part of our mandatory learning officer 2022-23.

6.6. To support and enable staff through all stages we are:

- Providing seminars on mid-life and pre-retirement financial planning and facilitating access to 1-2-1 advice from independent financial adviser
- Establishing an active Menopause and Perimenopause community and have begun delivering events and seminars to continue to promote mid-life wellbeing which will include information on health issues, exercise and nutrition. We are also updating our Menopause Commitment.
- Providing a Return to the Workplace induction and wellbeing focus for those who have been away for a period of time e.g. career break, maternity leave, paternity leave, adoption, sickness etc.

Ensuring every employee has access to development

6.7. As we continue to find ways to support staff gaining the knowledge and skills they need to progress not just as employees but as individuals, we continue to work to find new ways to develop skills and deliver positive outcomes such as expanding learning resources pack topics, offering shorter online sessions to enable staff to access sessions during their working day and offering sessions to wider staff groups through our Knowledge Café talks.

6.8. Some of the development has moved back into the classroom where in-person sessions prove beneficial. We continue to enable staff to undertake apprenticeship qualifications. Camden staff are also undertaking qualifications with universities based in the Borough enabling the mainstreaming of professional development needs supported with levy funds.

- 6.9. We have developed a workshop to support staff progression in terms of writing job applications, interview skills, career planning and strategies for applying for jobs and developing expertise.
- 6.10. Creating initiatives that promote social value in the work we do is another priority we have been working towards since we received information for the desire from internal research in 2019. Initiatives such as our Volunteering Programme which allows staff a day per year to volunteer to a Camden based cause, payroll giving scheme -where staff can contribute to the social value agenda in a tax efficient way and redeployment projects throughout the pandemic such as food bank, lateral flow test centres and the Camden Health Bus.

Workforce inclusion and all staff Networks

- 6.11. One of our biggest priorities as an organisation is becoming truly inclusive. At the time of writing, and when we will have our scrutiny meeting on this paper, we will be in Black History Season which lasts from October to December. We continue to endorse having a Black History Season rather than month, to celebrate the contributions and achievements of Camden and the UK's black communities and will continue to endorse this until the recognition of Black History and accomplishments are entrenched in the everyday lives of Camden.
- 6.12. We are taking widespread organisational action to make sure our workplace is a place where everyone can belong. Following our organisation wide Race Equality Action Plan and our inclusive recruitment working group, our latest Inclusion Pulse Survey and the increased representation of Black, Asian and other ethnic staff at more senior levels in the organisation reflect the achievements of our work.
- 6.13. To take targeted action towards becoming an anti-racist organisation for both staff and residents, in April, we set up Race Equality Catalyst Groups in our three directorates to create their own action plans. We also have Women of Colour and Men of Colour progression network for staff to focus on the barriers faced in career development.
- 6.14. In March 2021 we began the development of our Anti-Racism learning offer. In partnership with In Diverse Company and 10 Anti-Racism facilitators across the organisation. The learning offer consisted of an Education Session, to understand how racism shows up and its destructive impact, reflection sessions to reflect on actions individuals have taken following the education sessions and sessions for managers.
- 6.15. In October 2021 we moved into Phase 2 of the work, which saw us bring the offer fully in-house, six Anti Racism Facilitators to deliver the work for six months on secondment. In total we have now delivered education sessions to 3,352 employees (82% of the organisation) and have also delivered manager sessions and reflection sessions.

- 6.16. We are now moving to Phase 3 of the Anti-Racism Learning Offer and will be embedding anti-racist behaviour and thinking deeper into the organisation by: delivering face-to-face Education Sessions for staff whose first language is not English, reaching out to staff who have not attended an Education Session, ensuring all new starters and re-joiners have access to the Education Session, ensuring our managers are engaged with their learning offer and show commitment to their team and creating more opportunities for staff to deepen and expand their learning, providing an anti-racism e-learning module as part of our mandatory learning suite. Plans are also in place to deliver Education, Reflection and Manager session every quarter to new joiners in a similar way to how we deliver managers induction.
- 6.17. We are continuing to learn and develop in this area, in the 2021 pulse survey, Black women responded more negatively to almost all questions than any other intersection of gender and ethnicity. This was really concerning. To understand this further, we undertook focus groups with Black women across the organisation. We then ran a series of sessions for managers based on the insight that had been shared, where managers committed to taking action to improve the experience of Black women at Camden.
- 6.18. This year, we have seen some positive shifts in Black women's experience at Camden. 5% more Black women believe Leaders at Camden are committed to creating an inclusive workplace culture and 3% more Black women believe they will be supported by their manager were they to be bullied and harassed.
- 6.19. Another priority from our Race Equality Action Plan was to prioritise creating safe, trustworthy and accessible routes for our employees to report discrimination. A working group was set up late 2021 which was made up of staff network members, members of HR and Union leaders to look at the current reporting process and how to implement a more restorative approach. This work is shaping up well and we hope to be able to consult on the approach in the next few months.
- 6.20. The development of our employees has also shared the way we approach our recruitment. We now have an Inclusive Resourcing Advisor to advise managers on hiring, and an Inclusive Recruitment Working group who have encouraged a series of changes. These changes have had positive impacts across the organisation, for example we have recruited 60 volunteers to our Inclusive Recruitment Volunteer Programme to bring diversity to the recruitment process, have trained 130 managers on our Inclusive Recruitment workshop and have highlighted the need for interview panels to be diverse in gender and ethnicity. We also introduced anonymised recruitment for Senior roles through BeApplied. From December 2020 – December 2021, we had 22 jobs that were advertised via the BeApplied Platform:
- o 50% of appointments made have been from Black, Asian or other ethnic backgrounds, 46% have been white candidates and 3% of appointed candidates have not declared their ethnicity.

When we look at our headcount data from Dec 2020 to Dec 2021, we can see an increase of number of Black, Asian and Other Ethnic staff at Level 4 and above.

Dec 2020	Dec 2021
Black 15.59%	Black 16.94%
Asian 8.11%	Asian 8.73%
Mixed 4.63%	Mixed 4.71%
White 61.22%	White 57.74%
Other 2.00%	Other 2.21%

LGBTQI+ inclusion

6.21. We continue to ensure lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer identity staff (LGBTQI+) inclusion is also at the forefront of our organisation inclusion goal. We entered into Stonewalls Workplace Equality Index, the definitive benchmarking tool for employers to measure our progress on lesbian, gay, bi and trans (LGBTQI+) inclusion. We ranked 47th out of around 450 organisations, improving on our ranking by over 200 places since our last submission. We were the highest ranked council and achieved a gold award. This is great recognition of the work we have done, and continue to do, around LGBTQI+ inclusion.

6.22. Employees now have non-binary gender options on Oracle to inform their employers how they identify and allow the organisation to understand more about our non-binary staff, which is imperative to ensuring all employees can bring their full selves with them to work.

6.23. We have also ensured that everyone in our organisation has the option to add their gender pronouns to their email signature. This is a great way of showing our commitment to trans equality and allyship.

6.24. Our Commitment to Trans Equality has been updated to reflect our ongoing support and allyship. Generally, we have updated the language throughout to ensure it is more inclusive, particularly around non-binary identities and how we use pronouns. It was launched during Trans Awareness week in November.

6.25. In June 2022 we celebrated Pride month. Activities included

- Trans Awareness workshops for services and all senior leaders in the organisation, delivered by an external organisation: Gendered Intelligence. These workshops provided a supportive space to better understand challenges faced by Trans colleagues, including a shared language and awareness of gender identity.
- Pride March: On Saturday 2 July we joined millions of others to march in the biggest ever Pride in London Parade. This year's event was the first since the outbreak of the pandemic and welcomed thousands to the capital to celebrate Pride's 50th anniversary. Camden councillors, staff and their family and friends came together to celebrate Camden's proud history of fighting for equality and progress.

6.26.To mark Trans Pride we shared developed resources to help us build a better understanding of what it means to be trans, and of trans equality including how we can support our trans colleagues and communities and how to be a trans ally.

Disability Inclusion:

6.27.In December 2020 we signed the Camden Disability Charter, which we developed in collaboration with Camden Disability Staff Network to commit to a range of actions towards becoming a more inclusive organisation for our disabled colleagues.

6.28.The Charter sets out our commitment to:

- Access to support for all Disabled staff including ensuring high visibility of Camden Disability Network which provides safe spaces for disabled staff, campaigns for and celebrates disabilities rights and awareness.
- Fairer recruitment including providing appropriate reasonable adjustments within our recruitment process.
- Disability leave: we have committed to providing an additional ten days leave over and above our standard leave entitlements to attend appointments in relation to an employee's disability.
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Camden has taken the employer pledge, demonstrating a commitment to changing how we think and act about mental health and disability in the workplace.
- Senior Disability Sponsor: we have two senior leaders as Disability Sponsors in Tariq Khan and Nick Kimber, they ensure disability issues are visible and championed across the organisation.

6.29.In the charter we committed to introducing a Wellbeing Passport, which we launched April 2021. The wellbeing passport provides a tool for employees to have open conversations with their managers about adjustments or arrangements they feel needed. This can be in relation to physical or mental health support. The passport ensures that conversations do not need to be continually repeated, for example if an employee moves role, and gives reassurance that staff have the support they need. In our recent inclusion pulse survey over 60% of respondents [34% of the organisation] were aware of the Wellbeing Passport. To ensure continued visibility and understanding of the Wellbeing Passport, we run regular Wellbeing passport sessions for staff, so far to 361 staff.

6.30.Work has also started on centralising budgets for reasonable adjustments to make the process easier and slicker for our staff to access. It also allows insight to be gained about trends and equipment that is required so that we can better accommodate these in the future.

6.31.From November 2021 we began running Neurodiversity Awareness Sessions lead by neurodiverse staff, developed articles and stories from

neurodiverse staff and launched Learning Resources_for employees which also includes information on workplace support.

6.32. In October we launched our Disability Inclusion Learning Offer. This came about following in depth research into the experiences of our disabled staff and data from our Inclusion Pulse Survey in 2021. This showed that disabled staff felt less supported than non disabled staff as such we have partnered with a specialist organisation Inclusion London, following a competitive tender process. The Disability Inclusion Learning Offer is aimed at all people managers, HR colleagues, teams involved in our equalities and inclusion work and will consist of Disability Education sessions followed by Reflection sessions a few months later.

6.33. We are also celebrating Disability History Month [15 November to 15 December] activities include hosting our own internal podcast about disability awareness and wellbeing, talks and seminars, daily articles and promotion of resources to support disabled people, their managers and colleagues.

Recruitment, Retention and Pay

6.34. We have a long history of leading the way on fair pay and have been an accredited employer with the Living Wage Foundation since 2012. To lower the gap between the Council's lowest and highest paid employees, we increased the pay of our lowest paid staff from 1 January 2015 with the introduction of a minimum earnings guarantee set above the London Living Wage level. We continue to build on this and a minimum salary increase to £24,771 (£13.20 per hour) came into effect 1 April 2022. All our contractors are also required to report annually against their delivery of the London Living Wage.

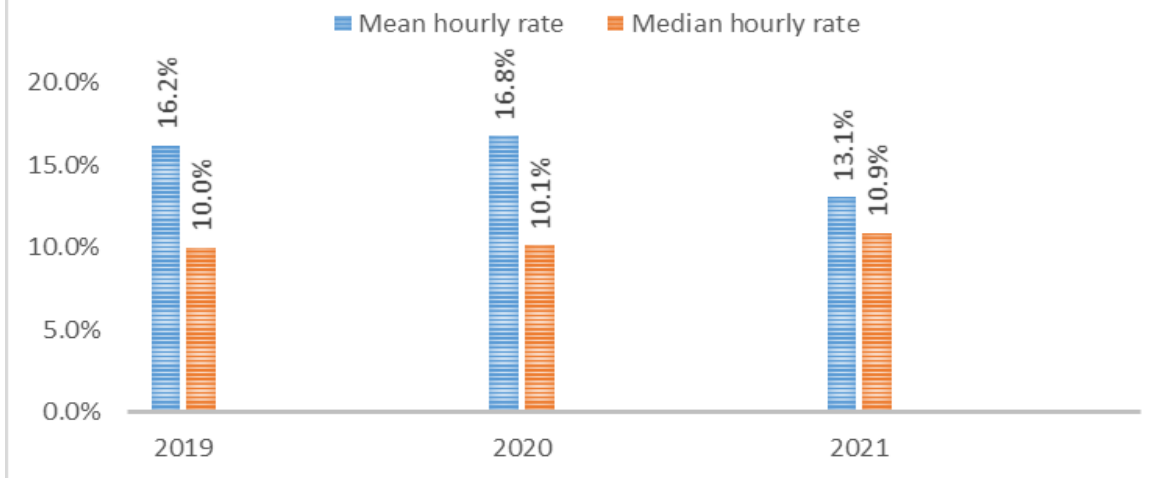
6.35. We offer a generous scope of discretionary payments in comparison to other public sector bodies. The My Reward scheme continues to allow employees to receive £40 vouchers and non-consolidated 1% or 2% of salary payments in recognition of their achievements. Cost of living and performance related salary increases enables employees to receive a pay increase of up to 6% each year.

Pay Gap

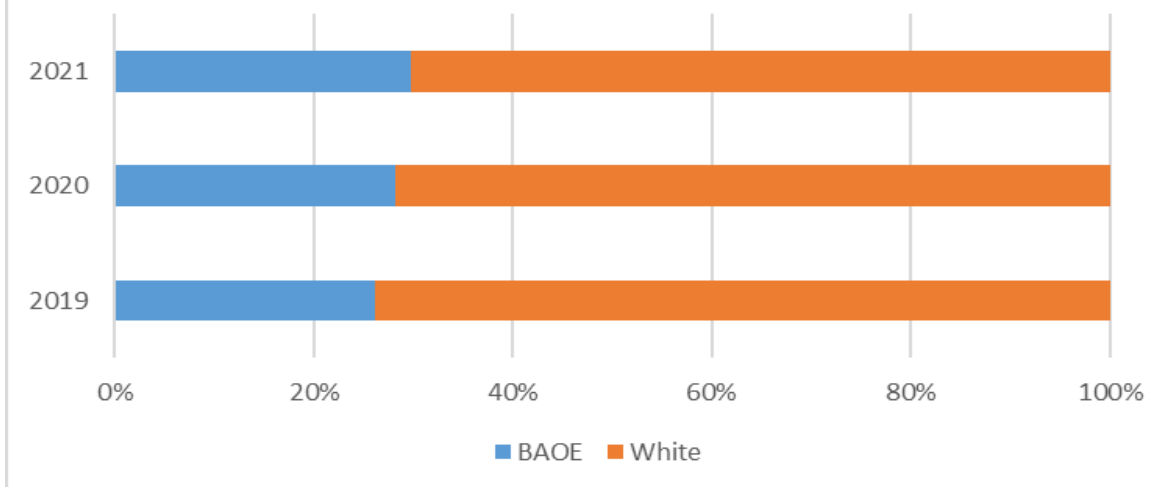
6.36. We are taking a leading position on increasing pay transparency reporting our gender, ethnicity and disability pay gap since 2015. In early 2021 we published more detailed information on the Council's approach to pay and rewards on the Council's intranet and refreshed our "pay exception" process as part of our commitment to openness and transparency.

6.37. We continue to see the progress we are making on our pay gap reporting, particularly a shift towards closing the pay gap between Black, Asian and Other Ethnicity groups and White staff over 2020/21. This has been driven by increasing representation in the higher grade levels. We recognise that this work is ongoing and that there is more work to do and will continue to take the steps to reduce the pay gap across the organisation.

Ethnicity Pay Gap Change 2019 to 2022



Representation by ethnicity in the Upper (top 25%) Pay Quartile



Pay Equity

6.38. We are confident our employees are paid equally for doing equivalent jobs across the organisation irrespective of race, gender or disability. We commissioned independent external legal advice earlier this year to review our Pay Scheme which concluded “there is nothing inherently discriminatory within the Council's pay system.

Cost of Living Support for Staff

6.39. We are also thinking of the impact of the Cost of Living Crisis on not just Camden residents but also our Camden employees. We understand many are already struggling and understand how much of the crisis can be daunting which is why we are looking at options to support and advise our employees.

6.40. We have made a commitment to pay all workforce London Living Wage or above and our Minimum Earnings Guarantee. We are also reviewing the Camden Pay Scheme and included within this is uplifting our Minimum Earning Guarantee Pay Policy as this is currently same as bottom of GLPC pay range. We are also ensuring to take a compassionate approach to pay issues where there is an under payment we are ensuring we work with the member of staff to arrange payment as soon as possible by rapid bank transfer, where there has been an overpayment we agree affordable repayment terms that take into consideration personal circumstances.

6.41. There is a variety of advice available for staff to access for example:

- A free financial advice session with a financial expert by contacting Fluent. We are working towards rolling out a programme of webinars/face to face workshops and webinars for staff.
- We are also offering financial wellbeing support and counselling through our Employee Assistance Programme (Workplace Options), the website also provides a range of articles, checklists and resources as well as webinars during the year on various topics.
- We are promoting the Government Money & Pensions Service support (MoneyHelper and Pension Wise) and working to collate and share advice/signposting information from other Camden services – For example: Welfare Rights; Council Tax; Housing support – advice on tenancy rights, access to Key worker housing schemes.
- We are encouraging employees to join staff networks such as the Camden Carers Network which is a forum for financial guidance on benefits to be shared.

6.42. We have developed an arrange of options for employees to access funds such as:

- Tenancy deposit loan – an interest free loan of up to £3,000 repayable over 10 months to support staff with paying tenancy deposit costs
- Childcare Deposit Loan – an interest free loan an interest free loan of up to £2,000 repayable over up to 10 months to support staff and new starters with the upfront payment of registration deposit/fees and first month of childcare fees.
- Season travel ticket loan – an interest free loan enabling staff to benefit from reduced travel costs by purchasing an annual season ticket, but spreading the cost of over 10 months.
- Immigration loan – an interest free loan of up to £5,000 repayable over up to 36 months that staff can use towards payment, for them and their dependents, of British Citizenship or Indefinite Leave to Remain application fees or the payment of the Healthcare surcharge to the UK Visas & Immigration Service.

- Corporate Gym membership – an interest free loan enabling staff to benefit from reduced price by paying annual membership fee upfront, but spreading the cost over 10 months.
- London Capital Credit Union (and Camden Mutual Credit Union) – not for profit organisations that offer loans and we have arrangements in place for deductions to be made via payroll. Staff that otherwise find it difficult to gain access to credit can potentially access loans with a lower interest rate than standard high street/other lender.

6.43. We are also continuing to support our employees in how they reduce their cost by continuing to allow hybrid working to limit travel costs. We also promote the Cycle to work and City Bike salary sacrifice schemes save staff 32-42% on hire and purchase of a bike and accessories or the cost of City Bike hire.

6.44. Saving for the future is also promoted through our Pension Scheme , Shared Cost Additional Voluntary Contribution (AVC) scheme and London Capital Credit Union.

6.45. We continue to advertise local discounts and other offers on our staff noticeboard Also offers a forum for staff wanting to buy or sell goods, give items away, or find somewhere to live. Work has recently begun to source more local discounts for staff. Lifestyle Discounts are accessible to staff through Kaarp and Civil Service Sports Council (CSSC) for savings on everyday shopping to entertainment and family days out.

6.46. Health plans at discounted local government rates are also optional for employees via Simply Health for face-to-face check-ups or appointments, video GP services and 24/7 access to a counsellor as well as cash back on medical expenses e.g. dental, chiropody, physiotherapy, hospital admission etc.

7. Town Hall Refurbishment

7.1. The restoration of the Town Hall is nearing completion with the first weddings held successfully on the first of November and continuing through to Christmas.

7.2. The full opening of the public areas has unfortunately had to be put back into the new year as a result of flooding to the basement during the exceptional rainfall we witnessed in King's Cross in August. Cabinet approved the first stage of the project in January 2016 with the preferred option being to create flexible office space for a partner organisation, which would in turn fund the entire cost of refurbishing and modernising the Town Hall. These benefits are being delivered with the final details of the tenants being concluded.

7.3. The investment in the Town Hall will protect our valued Civic and Community building for generations to come. All of the services within the building have been completely replaced including a change from gas heating to energy efficient Air Source Heat Pumps. CO₂ emissions will be cut by 59% and this will greatly reduce the running costs. The building, once completed, will achieve

BREEAM Excellent which is an industry standard for sustainability that only 10% of buildings get, and an incredible achievement for a refurbishment of a listed building. The works have included significant alterations in some areas and very intrusive works to deal with major problems such as rusting in the steel frame and cracking to the external stone.

7.4. The construction works have already created new jobs and apprenticeships, which will continue through to the operation of the building. When completed there will be affordable workspace made available to local residents and businesses and an exciting programme of events aimed at supporting the local area.

7.5. Despite the challenges of the past two years, including most notably the pandemic, the project remains on budget and will be self-financing at no additional cost to the taxpayer. If it had not been for the flooding, we would have opened in November 2022. The weddings booked have gone ahead to programme as the ground and upper floors were complete. The remedial works for the flooding are well underway and covered by the project insurance along with cover for the cost of delays. This has not changed the income expectation with a preferred tenant agreed and the lease terms being finalised. The commercial income targets as assumed in the business case will be achieved which is positive given the impact of the pandemic.

7.6. Increasingly the focus is moving to the reopening of the Town Hall and events that will happen to welcome the community back into the building which will include a time capsule and tours to see the works undertaken. There will also be a carefully managed return of the Register Office and Democratic functions from the Crowndale Centre. The return of the weddings service has been a useful trail of the plans in place which have gone smoothly and will be repeated for the full return.

8. North London Heat and Power Project

8.1. The North London Waste Authority (NLWA) is a public body, which represents the seven boroughs of Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, and Waltham Forest. It ensures that recycling is processed, and black-bin-bag waste is dealt with.

8.2. From 1971, residents waste has been sent to the Edmonton EcoPark in Enfield, rather to a landfill, where is used to generate electricity for the National Grid. Income gained from energy generation is offset against the cost of waste disposal for council taxpayers. This year, due to price rises in global energy supply markets, the facility will see its income rise considerably.

8.3. Because NLWA owns the facility and works for the public good, any financial benefit goes to its member councils rather than to private shareholders. As such, the NLWA has proposed that these earnings be returned as a 'windfall dividend' to borough councils to help fund crucial services during the UK's cost-of-living crisis. Overall, this 'dividend' is worth £4.75m of which Camden's share is £475,000.

We have given detailed consideration to the best use of this windfall and have announced that we will use this to help people in the borough who are being hit hard by the Cost of Living crisis by funding two projects. The first project we will be working with a specialist charity to help schools in Camden set up breakfast clubs where they are most needed to help children who are receiving free school meals. The second project of the fund will help tenants on low income and in need to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

9. Regulatory Services and Evening and Night Time Economy

9.1. Camden's evening and night time is a significant part of our overall economy, and was ranked the 6th largest in the UK pre-Covid, The Council is committed to developing an (ENTE) Strategy for Camden. Its purpose is to articulate a long-term vision for an inclusive, safe, and diverse ENTE offer in Camden that celebrates what makes the borough special and respects and responds to the different needs and interests of our residents, businesses, ENTE workers, and visitors.

9.2. Our licencing policy review is taking place alongside the ENTE strategy engagement and development process to ensure that the two processes are aligned and with the aim of increasing the number and diversity of voices engaged in the licencing conversation. The two workstreams will:

- Share data collection and analysis;
- Work together to engage of residents, businesses and visitors;
- Examine cross-cutting issues related to the Special Policy Areas in Camden Town and Seven Dials, while also considering broader questions about how Camden's current licensing policy impacts the diversity of licensed venues across the borough.
- Help to develop a nuanced and targeted Licensing Policy and a broader ENTE strategy for Camden by:
 - Understanding of the range and type of licensed premises in Camden and where those premises are;
 - Show local issues such as restrictive legislation and barriers for businesses;
 - Obtain evidence on the impacts of licensable activities in those areas and show under-utilised areas; and
 - Help to develop business friendly policies that balance the needs of all stakeholders.

9.3. We have commenced a comprehensive engagement strategy including in depth engagement of key stakeholders and a suite of area specific workshops and targeted conversations with key stakeholders to gather a cross-section of views from local residents, businesses, patrons of the ENTE and people who work in the evening and night. A commonplace site has been established which surveys the views of stakeholders and invites views about places they love and places that they would improve.

9.4. In February and March 2023, a Citizen's Assembly comprised of randomly selected but representative residents and stakeholders will consider information from the borough-wide engagement to recommend a vision and actions for Camden's evening and night time strategy.

9.5. An Expert Advisory Group (EAG) has been established comprising members from key Camden venues, TfL and the police and representing Disability and Age groups and charities. The EAG's role is to provide informed insights and challenge to Camden Council, guiding the engagement and strategy development processes.

10. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

This report has no financial implications. All resourcing for the activity here is contained within the agreed MTFS and subsequent decisions on the annual budget.

11. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

The Borough Solicitor has been consulted and has no comments to add

12. Environmental Implications

This report should contain no significant environmental implications for Camden. Our policies and strategies are built upon and align with the Camden Climate Action Plan, Biodiversity Strategy and Clean Air Action Plan. The promotion of digital transformation work encourages paper saving, our Cost of Living response considers the links increased energy costs have with sustainability and our food missions work supports our priorities around the cost of living as well as food waste.