

<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARD(S): ALL</b>
<b>REPORT TITLE:</b> Report of the Cabinet Advisor on the Estates Mission	
<b>REPORT OF:</b> Cabinet Advisor on the Estates Mission	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO:</b> Housing Scrutiny Committee	<b>DATE:</b> 21 February 2023
<p><b>SUMMARY OF REPORT:</b></p> <p>The Cabinet Advisor for Camden’s Estates Mission here provides the Committee with their report, including recommendations, for discussion.</p> <p><b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to information:</b></p> <p>No documents that are required to be listed were used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Nathan Koskella Cabinet Officer The Cabinet Office Camden Council 5 Pancras Square London N1C 4AG Email: <a href="mailto:Nathan.Koskella@camden.gov.uk">Nathan.Koskella@camden.gov.uk</a></p>	
<p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b></p> <p>The Housing Scrutiny Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Note and comment on the report including recommendations.</li> <li>(ii) Note the proposal to bring an update on the work to deliver on the recommendations made by the Cabinet Advisor within the next year.</li> </ul>	
<p>Signed <b>Councillor Eddie Hanson</b> - Cabinet Advisor for Estates Mission</p> <p>9 February 2023</p>	

## **Section 1: Background**

- 1.1. The Leader and Cabinet of Camden Council in 2022 appointed four additional Councillors as *Cabinet Advisors* to provide evidence-based recommendations and policy-making support to the Cabinet.
- 1.2. The Cabinet Advisors are appointed by the Leader, in conjunction with the wider Cabinet, to engage, research, and develop recommendations in a particular policy area, working with one or more Cabinet Members, other Councillors, groups across Camden and the wider community.
- 1.3. These posts are non-executive roles and do not sit as part of the Cabinet. While they do not have decision-making powers and are limited to collaboration and recommendations, the Leader and Cabinet have committed to thoughtful consideration of their findings and recommendations.
- 1.4. Cabinet Advisors present their findings in a report to Scrutiny in its policy and oversight function, to provide an opportunity for discussion of their findings. Following this, this report will go to Cabinet, alongside a report outlining the views of scrutiny and a response from the relevant Cabinet member. This will allow Cabinet to consider the report, the views of Scrutiny and the Cabinet member together and formally decide whether to accept the recommendations.
- 1.5. Cllr Eddie Hanson was appointed to the role on the topic of Camden's Estates Mission, the Council's drive to link the borough's cultural institutions to our council estates and to provide opportunities for residents' creativity to flourish.

## **Section 2: Introduction**

- 2.1. I, Eddie Hanson, was elected as a councillor for Kilburn ward in May 2022.
- 2.2. I was appointed that month as the Cabinet Advisor for Estates Mission by the Leader of Camden Council, Councillor Georgia Gould. I held various voluntary roles in the community before becoming a councillor, including chair of a District Management Committee; chair of the board of trustees for a local Community Centre; a primary school governor; and I am the founder of an organisation that mentors young people into employment and seeks to give them a better start in life.
- 2.3. As someone who lives on an estate and previously grew up in an estate, both in Camden, over the years I have witnessed and experienced first-hand some of the challenges that some families and residents who live on estates may face.
- 2.4. Therefore, it is with great delight that I have been presented with this opportunity to try to advise and assist the Cabinet of Camden Council on the journey to making estates in Camden happier and healthier.

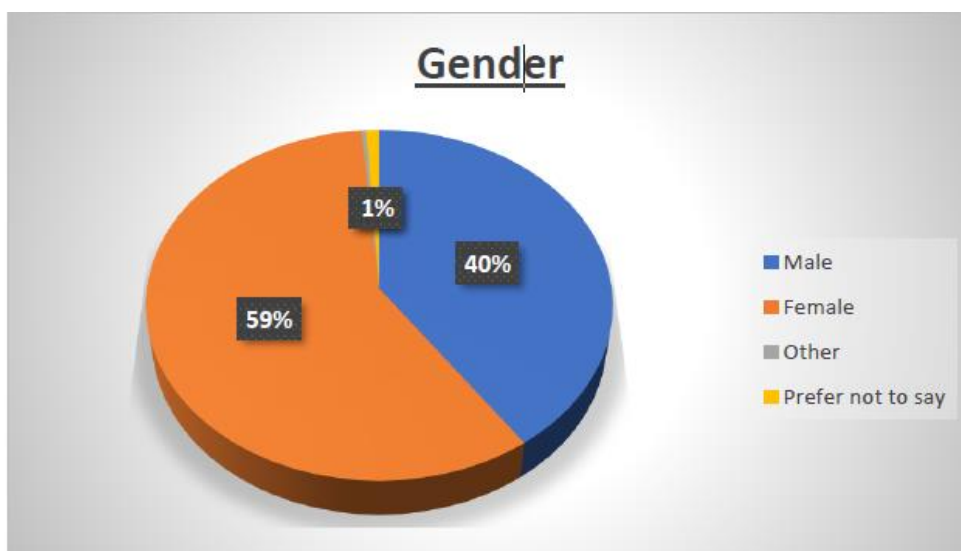
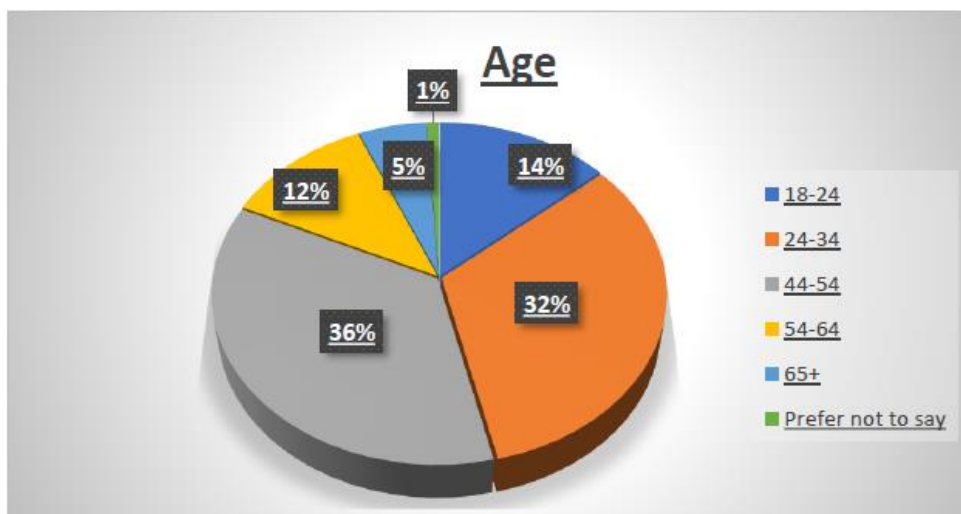
- 2.5. The leadership of the Council have set a goal that by 2030, **Camden's estates and their neighbours are healthy, sustainable and unlock creativity**. The recent coronavirus pandemic brought a lot of challenges; but equally it brought some opportunities to make things better for our residents. Since the start of 2021, Camden's partners and communities have been working together to understand how we can ensure all of Camden's homes, estates and neighbourhoods are healthy and sustainable.
- 2.6. As it is not a secret that life can be very different depending on where someone lives in Camden, it is admirable that the Council's leadership has asked the important question of, "What would it look like if Council homes, neighbours and estates enabled everyone to live happy, healthy, fulfilling and sustainable lives, no matter where someone lives in Camden?"
- 2.7. The rich diversity of residents who live on our estates in Camden is a very important truth of our community, and it must be acknowledged and reflected in everything we do here. Truly seeing and understanding what and who our estates are made of is the best way to ensure that Council services are best delivering happy, healthy, fulfilling and sustainable lives for our residents.
- 2.8. Due to the diversity and mix of residents we have on our estates, the decision-making about them by the Council and partners, when it comes to improving the lives of residents who live there, to designing public spaces and shared spaces on estates, and especially when it comes to choices that would affect residents that have to live with these choices, it **is vital that a wider group of residents are reached and more voices heard**, not just the loudest voices.
- 2.9. For this piece of work, I will be focusing on how we can **share power** and support community-led activity more effectively. To inform my recommendations, I have engaged with various stakeholders including residents, businesses, Councillors, District Management Committee (DMC) chairs, schools, Council officers, Cabinet members, cultural and arts institutions and previous written work in this area.

### **Section 3: Diversity and Why Our Estates Are Vitaly Important**

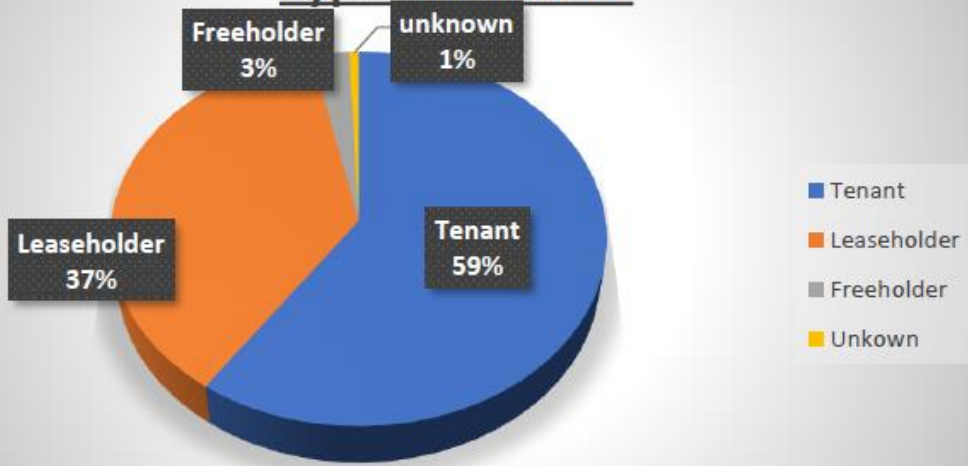
- 3.1. Our estates provide homes for people and should be safe places for residents to be. Our estates are very different to other houses, and in fact estates can actually offer more opportunities for a closer-knit community. An estate's halls are where residents can put on events and community gatherings. The halls can act as a hub where residents can go to find community, support each other, and share skills and ideas with one another. Estates with these halls

can also earn revenue from the hall's usage to inject back into their community.

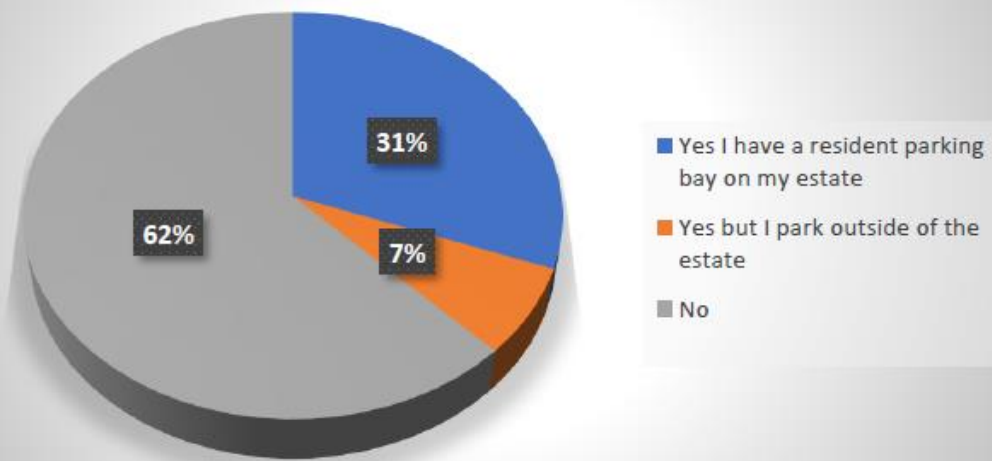
- 3.2. Some estates have play areas and multi-use games areas (MUGAs) that allow children who live there to be able to go outside and play and have a place where they can get exercise and meet other children. Some families have reported that since living on estates, their children have made more friends and they feel happier letting their children go out and play around the estate.
- 3.3. There are however still families on some estates who would not feel that their children would be safe going out to play on their estate. This is due to various reasons, including cars and traffic driving dangerously around the estate; anti-social behaviour taking place; or even simply because these families do not know who is around, given that people come from outside into the estates who do not live there (e.g. if strangers walk their dogs on the green spaces or park their vehicles on their estate and leave).
- 3.4. For this piece of work, **I carried out a survey of 300 Camden residents to give me their views** on why Estates are vital and important. As the below images show, the residents are a mixed group across demographics.



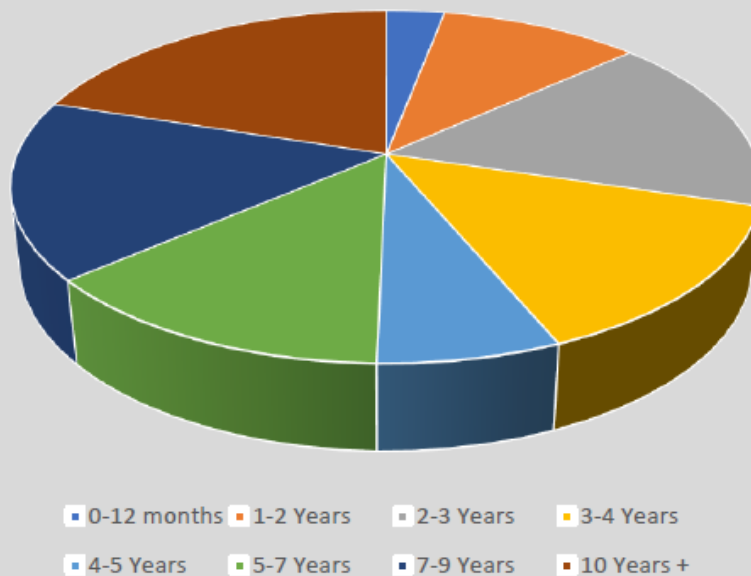
### Type of resident

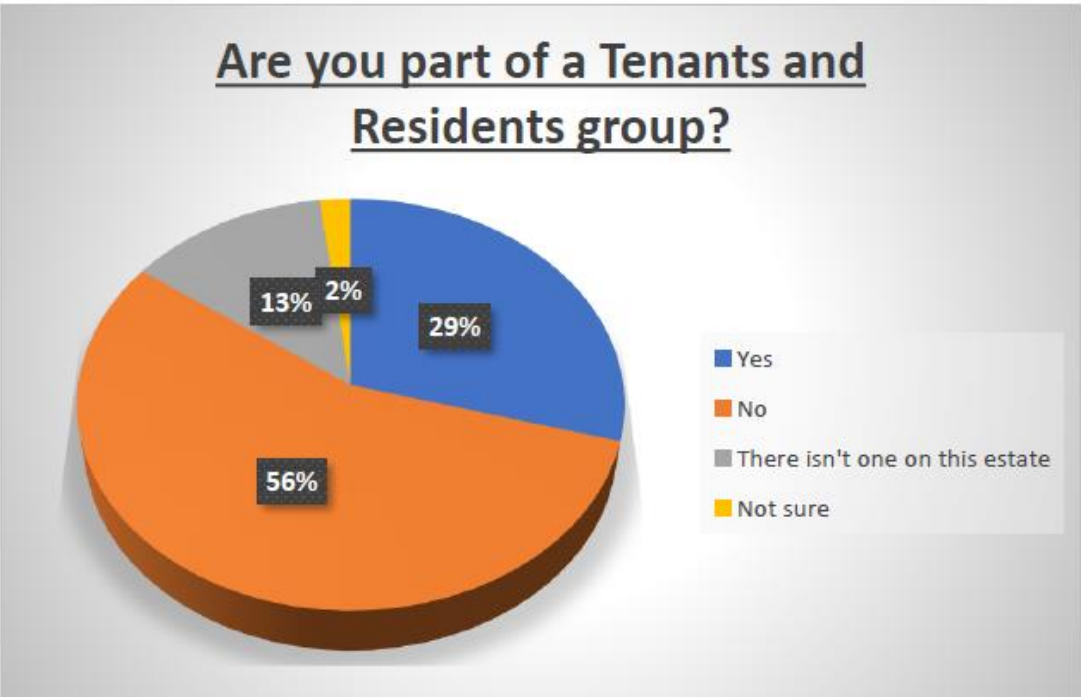


### Do you own a car?



### Length of time living on current estate





**Section 4: Feedback Findings**

4.1. Here I include in visual form some results of my study:

**Positive feedback:**



## Feedback to be worked on:

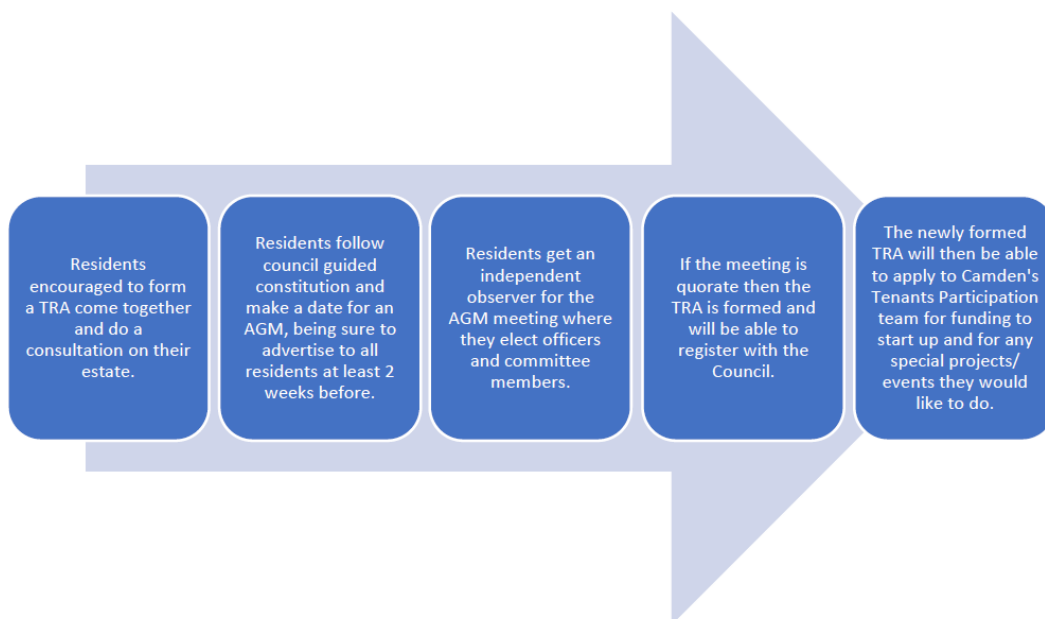


- 4.2. Something that stood out for me was when residents told me that they felt a stronger sense of community, and as though they are taken more seriously and are listened to more by the Council, when they had a Tenants and Residents Group (TRA).
- 4.3. Issues with works that residents wanted to see carried out, either to improve individual homes or communal areas within an estate, **seemed to be resolved more effectively and efficiently once those estates had resident group in place**. Some also mentioned the influence of the DMCs in help getting things done.
- 4.4. Some of those interviewed felt as though their resident groups could involve private renters—such as students, for example—who could **bring a different perspective** to the group.
- 4.5. Residents feel they should be more involved in recruitment of Council staff and Council decision-making. They should be trained by the Council to feel

better equipped to get involved in decision-making: some residents feel as though the Council presently 'do tick box exercises' for decision making and that their voices are not heard for vital decision-making on their estates.

- 4.6. Some also feel that their views are not respected and are taken for granted due to mistrust with the Council, so they don't feel confident working with the Council any longer.
- 4.7. Some residents in TRAs who have been successful in their roles have benefited from mentorship to grow in their roles and become more confident in dealing with challenges and affairs that come with those roles.
- 4.8. My research reinforces the conviction that the TRA is one of the main vehicles used to empower residents in Camden on estates, and they carry weight. They are supported by a designated team in the Council, the Tenant Participation Team, and for the Committee I provide a reminder below the steps to form a TRA:

**Process of forming a Tenants and Resident Group:**



- 4.9. The DMCs also play a significant role in Camden in empowering residents. The DMCs are really influential: the Cabinet Member in charge of housing attends every DMC meeting, and every DMC has got a budget of around £140,000 to spend on their members, their TRAs and other resident groups.



- 4.10. The DMCs also can request reports from various departments of the Council, such as key performance indicators and demonstrations by the Council on how their services are benefiting residents.
- 4.11. I feel the Council is trying to open up ways to be answerable to residents and bring them on their journey; **but some residents feel there is more to be done**. The Council has acknowledged that they want to do more to support and engage with residents, and this is indeed why I have been commissioned to do this report.
- 4.12. Residents I spoke with generally feel confidence in the leadership of Camden to continuously be trying to improve things for them, especially at a time when the supply of resources keeps getting less and less from local Government.

### **Section 5: The Sharing of Power and the Power of Co-working**

- 5.1. Based on the interviews I have conducted and the lived experience I have, I do not believe we can have estates where residents are happier, healthier, feeling fulfilled and living sustainable lives without **looking at how we share power and support community led activity that will serve everyone**.
- 5.2. I agree with this statement in the Camden Renewal Commission report: **“What if we lived in a borough where our leaders were representative of Camden’s many diverse communities, and where young people from underrepresented communities were better supported on their leadership journeys?”** I cannot stress enough the importance of supporting young people from underrepresented communities into leadership because the majority feel the system in place does not serve them or work for them.
- 5.3. I think what needs to be done is **the people and organisations who are making decisions on behalf of people who live on estates should reflect those communities in diversity and lived experiences**.
- 5.4. From my research, some residents are giving up on having a real voice on what happens on their estates, even when they get involved in decision-making platforms such as on boards, groups, committees. Unfortunately they do not feel the support to grow or feel at liberty to genuinely contribute their own lived or professional experience.
- 5.5. I think because of the various challenges of our time—climate change, COVID-19, the murder of George Floyd—a lot of emphasis has been placed on inclusivity, equality and diversity in the workplace, committees, boards and other voluntary groups. This new or shift in the way of working, of “not

business as usual” has put some leaders in uncomfortable positions, namely those who did not have diversity and inclusivity at the top of their leadership agenda before these challenges.

- 5.6. The popularity of social media now means that good work is celebrated and not buried underneath the carpet; however, some **residents expressed they are not getting acknowledged or celebrated because they may not be part of the social circle** of the ruling groups. Rewards may not be given to those who deserve them but instead to those with the loudest voice. In certain circles and on some estates, some residents had concerns that for those making decisions on their behalf, the majority of the time have got their mind made up already. Or, that decision-makers have placed residents in those positions who some suspect are to some extent being manipulated by others in authority when they are meant to be neutral or independent.
- 5.7. These suspicions and feelings really put off and deter those who would not normally put themselves forward for these leadership roles in their communities. To put oneself forward, one must often be resilient, diplomatic, strong, hopeful, confident, bold and, in some instances, even “a maverick” to survive in some of these roles. This would make it hard for anyone not already inclined to this style to thrive, especially when they will be made to feel that they do not belong there or that their input does not matter. This is especially the case in areas or groups that that may have lots of experienced people already: in some cases, some residents are even outright told their views do not matter.
- 5.8. I also experienced some residents who want their voices heard, but they do not show commitment to get involved. But they still want to see the change they envisage to happen and come to reality, even if they rely on others to deliver the change for them, or even if others may use unpleasant or inappropriate means and or do not always follow the rules of how best to affect change.
- 5.9. I disagree with this: I believe that even when you disagree with someone or a group, you must respect them and try to see things through their eyes. This is how I have helped deliver some ground-breaking changes. It is not done by just blaming or criticising others, which is too easy. **Being a committed volunteer takes its toll on some people**, so when bringing change to them we must respect their years of service and commitment in their communities. We do this by working with them to bring about positive change, not forcefully and not undermining them, which in some cases causes only more resentment and resistance to change.

- 5.10. I know Camden's leadership is driving inclusivity and diversity on our estates. I believe that how I came to be a politician today myself in Camden is directly because of the Tenant's Voice platforms the Council have put in place. I believe this even though I also feel that if you have not got the grit, toughness, determination and allies, you often still will not survive as there are **so many obstacles** for you not to succeed.
- 5.11. I know because of my personal journey; I feel well equipped to support others in bringing not only the loudest voice or most familiar voice, but more importantly the voices the Council may not normally hear. This is ultimately the way to foster inclusivity and diversity in local leadership.
- 5.12. I am focusing here on how to get the minority voices we would not normally get to our decision tables. As this has been a huge challenge for a very long-time, if I can do it, then I believe my story can inspire others to achieve this, without the rules being bent against them along the way.
- 5.13. Anyone should be able to make it to the top table and be respected equally by those they may come across along the way. What I feel needs to be done I have thus recommended in this report.

## **Section 6: Methodology Based on Cross-Community Stakeholders**

- 6.1. What has informed my views for this piece of work is my lived experience supplemented by interviews I have conducted with various key stakeholders in the community.
- 6.2. As well as residents, various organisations and groups that I spoke to for this piece of work, I also included local businesses and arts and cultural centres. **Some residents feel it is important to bring culture and arts into estates** to reflect diversity, bring out a different demographic of residents to participate in activities and to look at a more collaborative way of working with arts and cultural centres.
- 6.3. Some of the **local businesses would like to engage more on a social basis with the Council, instead of doing just financial transactions with them.** They do appreciate the value of estates in their neighbourhoods, and therefore some of the local high street businesses work with estates to provide support when estates are holding their community events, including: giving vouchers, providing food, goods and services, offering estates gardening tools and equipment and offering their presence in the community.

- 6.4. I agree that businesses, arts and cultural institutions should be “creating community and entrepreneurial opportunity on estates; being good neighbours to the estates and communities they are based within and helping to deliver on the mission objectives”.
- 6.5. I am grateful to have spoken with various arts and cultural organisations who are doing fantastic work in their communities, which was evident. However, they struggle with financing.
- 6.6. Depending on capacity, it would be helpful for the Council to have a co-working relationship with some of these organisations and local estates. Before I get into my principal recommendations, I wanted to highlight as a positive example something that the Council seem to have done well with. **This has been the Council’s work with local artists and residents on estates to implement street art on walls and shed doors, which appear to have a positive effect in reducing anti-social behaviour.**
- 6.7. This has helped to create pleasing environments on estates that reflect creativity, and they are a talking point for residents to engage with one another, therefore boosting community cohesion. Examples of these in Camden are on Tybald Estate in Holborn; Ferdinand Estate in Camden Town; and Webheath Estate in Kilburn, the latter two of which are shown here:

#### **Ferdinand Estate, Camden Town**



#### **Webheath Estate, Kilburn**



## Section 7: Principal Recommendations

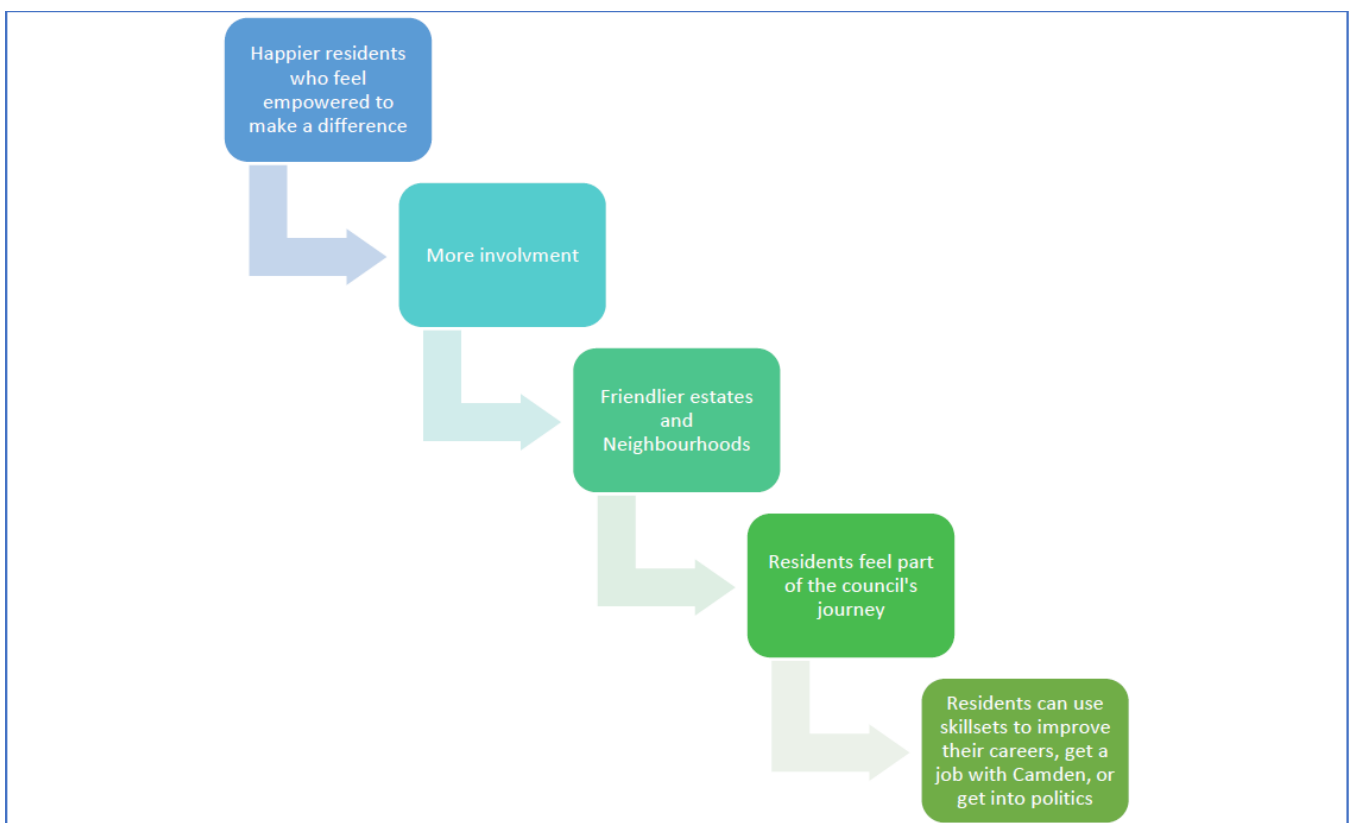
7.1. The Council, in light of my narrative and findings above, should:

- **Consider an audit on the garages and sheds we have on estates.** Some residents wait for a long time, but then report there are abandoned sheds they could be using on their estates. The Council can allocate them to be used and even start collecting rent for them.
- **Engage with and listen to local businesses on the high street, not just the big businesses.** This was what I heard from the majority of the businesses I spoke with.
- **Be honest, fair and consistent with residents.** The Council need not prejudge residents, so that residents will feel confident to have a trusted relationship with the Council. Enhanced staff training should be offered on respecting and treating residents on estates with dignity and not on a prejudicial basis. Officers should not use their powers to penalise residents who disagree with them by labelling the residents to other officers as, e.g., “ones to watch out for.”
- **Be seen to be completing tasks to its best and fullest capacity.** The Council should reply to resident queries in a timely manner, communicate with residents more effectively, listen to residents. And Council officers should communicate more effectively with other Council officers, especially between departments.
- **Do more to assist disabled residents and residents with special needs who may require special assistance.** Only then will we allow them the ability to fully participate, which is their right.
- **Consult with residents when housing officers visit them.** Ask them how they want to improve their estates: this information needs to be gathered and investigated with the trends of responses, and then acted upon by the Council. Other Council staff from different departments should meet and get to know residents on estates.
- **Educate residents about their influence to make change through working with the council and co-working relationships.** This is especially

important when bringing in new agencies to help their estates. It cannot be that estates residents are seen or believed only to be “on the receiving side of charity” or that they “must accept or take whatever they are given.”

- **Provide training for residents on estates on how the council works,** including resident involvement on panels when recruiting new staff and having residents involved in decision-making that affects them and their estates.
- **Offer training to Chairs in TRAs and other community groups;** provide mentoring opportunities to help them flourish in their role and to be the best they can be in supporting their residents.
- **Promote awards for volunteers in Camden.** This should be done even to the extent of e.g., Royal or National awards such nominating for the honours system (e.g., OBE, CBE), especially in recognition of important work done by TRAs/DMCs.

7.2. With the council empowering its residents in the above ways, it will give our residents more of a voice. By offering an academy of training on estates, those in positions of power and giving effect to residents' voices will be able to do so fairly and effectively. By providing mentoring and more opportunities for those who are less represented and heard, the Council will promote more diversity and create a true reflection of our wonderful Camden communities.



## Section 8: Summary and Concluding Remarks

- 8.1. Based on all the data I have collected, the goal of this paper is communication, listening and, to some extent, **a culture change** for the Council to be able to support residents on estates. The positive fact going forward is the leadership of the Council genuinely believes in the importance of delivering a healthy, sustainable and happier community.
- 8.2. Some of the residents I spoke to acknowledge that Camden Council cares, perhaps especially in comparison to other boroughs they may have lived in before or where some of their relatives reside. However, they also feel that the Council can improve on how it engages and empowers its residents, in pursuit of a better co-working relationship, versus a relationship where the Council is directing design top-down.
- 8.3. Some residents said they would appreciate wider involvement from residents on the estates, and they also feel that the Council should put aside more **resources to train residents**. In this way, they would be better able to support the Council in their work on their estates.
- 8.4. While some were concerned that “too many cooks would spoil the broth,” equally some thought that because of the lack of resources of some residents to afford personal development for themselves, these trainings I propose would help, and that is why I have recommended them above. These trainings would not only help the residents to be better supportive volunteers but may also help them in their professional development. If they were able to, for example, get a new job or better job, the whole community would be so much better off. Unemployment, it is well known, brings a lot of unhappiness amongst residents and some households on some estates, especially now during this cost-of-living crisis.
- 8.5. It was clear that some of the residents who were in resident groups focused on communal issues on their estates, while the residents who were not part of any group would tend to talk about their personal concerns and communal issues.
- 8.6. I agree with Sir Michael Marmot that “the extension of people participation in their communities and the added control over their lives that brings, has the potential to contribute to their psychological well-being and, as a result, to other health outcome”. This point reinforces the importance of resident involvement in all processes that may affect their surroundings.

- 8.7. Thus, the Council can improve things greatly by providing residents with sufficient training to facilitate residents working appropriately with the Council.
- 8.8. Some residents spoke about the challenges the cost-of-living crisis has brought, as they need to work extra hours to pay their bills. And so they believe that reasonable rewards should be given when you are volunteer with the Council, which would cover basic costs and expenses acquired when carrying out their voluntary role.
- 8.9. Overall, with the various findings in this report and implementing the recommendations given, especially on the sharing of power and more collaborative teamwork, Camden’s goal to ensure our estates and their neighbours are healthy, sustainable, and unlocking creativity by 2030 is achievable—and will change the lives of Camden residents for the better.

## **Section 9: Required Notations**

### **9.1. Finance Comments**

The Director of Finance has been consulted on the content of this report and has no comment to make at this time.

### **9.2. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor**

The Borough Solicitor has been consulted on the content of this report and has no comments to add.

### **9.3. Environmental Implications**

This report to the Committee should contain no additional environmental implications for Camden. Our policies and strategies which animate the work described in this report are always mindful of aligning with the Camden Climate Action Plan, Biodiversity Action Plan and Clean Air Action Plan.