

<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS:</b> All Wards
<b>REPORT TITLE</b> Insight, Learning and Impact Report – Quarter 2 2023-24	
<b>REPORT OF</b> Executive Directors of Adults and Health, Children and Learning, Supporting Communities and Corporate Services	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b> Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee Resources & Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee	<b>DATE</b> 14 December 2023 18 December 2023 19 December 2023 19 December 2023
<p><b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b></p> <p>This report focusses on Quarter 2 2023-24 using a broad range of measures from each directorate and division across the organisation. This quarter, directors have been asked to provide a narrative covering key areas of challenge, opportunity, and learning (both current and future needs).</p> <p>This report is divided into two main sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A summary which highlights key responses from directorates and highlights particular cross-cutting themes;</li> <li>• A detailed summary of individual service responses Quarter 2 2023-24 across each of our three Directorates.</li> </ul> <p>Appendix A contains the data dashboard with key measures and latest data from services across the Council.</p> <p><b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b> No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> James Coumbe – Portfolio Lead for Insight and Improvement London Borough of Camden 5 Pancras Square, London N1C 4AG 02079745965 / <a href="mailto:james.coumbe@camden.gov.uk">james.coumbe@camden.gov.uk</a></p>	
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION</b></p> <p>The Scrutiny Committees are asked to note the report, including the most recent data and trends and the emerging challenges identified, that relate to the services that fall within their respective remits</p>	

Signed: Jon Rowney, Executive Director Corporate Services  
Date: December 2023

## **1. INSIGHT, LEARNING AND IMPACT REPORT**

- 1.1. Camden has been moving away from measurement for control and towards measurement for learning, while recognising the ongoing need for both vertical accountability to central government, and horizontal accountability to people and place, for core service delivery. This is a direction of travel in keeping with the ambitions set out in The Way We Work: towards creating space for innovation and learning, working beyond organisational barriers, understanding our impact and delivering We Make Camden while learning from the experience.
- 1.2. Towards this goal, starting with this new Insight, Learning and Impact report for Quarter 2, Directors have thought about the key issues they would like conversations to focus on, and have provided a short narrative on the following points:
  - What are the biggest risks or challenges to their service delivery i.e. what needs organisational attention to mitigate possible impacts on delivery?
  - What is the biggest opportunity i.e. where could they most benefit from support to deliver improvement?
  - What their services have learned in the last quarter e.g. from the latest data or evaluation, regional or national research etc, and
  - What they want or need to learn in future i.e. what do you need to find out to help drive further improvements to delivery?
- 1.3. The quarterly corporate data dashboard has continued to be produced, providing the latest performance data for the key measures from all the services across the Council, and which accompanies this report as Appendix A.

## Key risks

- **Financial challenges and pressures** continue to be risks across a number of service areas:
  - Inflationary pressures across multiple services (e.g. ASC service providers, development, property services)
  - Uncertainty of funding streams (e.g. Housing Revenue Account, long term funding, income streams)
  - Increasing service demands (ASC, Environment, Public Safety, Property Services)
- **Staff retention** remains a challenge across a number of service areas, particularly in Supporting Communities, but also in Law and Governance and Adult Social Care (ASC)
- **Regulatory change** continues to present challenges requiring attention, for instance disrepair claims and planned changes to regulatory standards in housing. Tenant engagement activity already underway will help inform the response.

## Key opportunities / areas for future learning

- **New models of delivery** e.g. Early Help / Neighbourhood working. How will developing early help offers and neighbourhood working models support reduction in demand pressures on services and improved service delivery?
- **New technology.** Having built significant organisational capacity around data, design, and technology we now need to ensure we focus on the cultural change and learning offer that enables decision-makers to make the best use of this capability. Use of technology is being explored by services and others are seeing successful implementations.
- **Workforce planning.** A greater emphasis on workforce planning is needed to help alleviate recruitment and retention challenges.
- **Changing regulations.** The changing regulatory environment provides the Council with the opportunity to reset its service offer and standardise its approach to the delivery of repairs. There are a number of imminent changes to Building Regulations, most notably those around second stair cores. The more certainty there is around these the better that the Council can plan for the future.
- **Responding to climate change.** Organisational / service development with regards to the impacts of a changing climate and how services, alongside communities, can change to adapt/design service delivery to improve future resilience to climate risks.

## 2. Overview of key themes

### 2.1. Corporate Services response summary

	Risks	Opportunities	Learning	Gaps
<b>Finance and Audit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRA financial instability</li> <li>• Inflationary pressures</li> <li>• Cost of Chalcots</li> <li>• Uncertain long-term funding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MTFS savings</li> <li>• Forecasting medium-term pressures</li> <li>• Service budget management.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-London collaboration for financial challenges</li> <li>• Benchmarking assumptions</li> <li>• Financial forecasting accuracy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncertainty over medium-term financial position</li> <li>• One-year settlement expected in December 2023.</li> </ul>
<b>People and Inclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HR service capacity</li> <li>• Diversity and inclusion</li> <li>• Response to conflicts and transformations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CRM implementation for HR</li> <li>• Workforce planning improvements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce diversity and inclusion progress</li> <li>• Positive pay gap report findings</li> <li>• Anti-racism progress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HR 'front door' CRM</li> <li>• Anticipated resourcing pressures.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy, Design, and Insight</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment sustainability</li> <li>• Organizational capacity for new work and transformation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear project sponsorship</li> <li>• Mission delivery; Community Wealth Fund progress.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mission-oriented delivery insights</li> <li>• Regional, national, and international interest in policy design.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data and evidence to support missions</li> <li>• Cultural change for data, design, and tech utilisation.</li> </ul>
<b>Law and Governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Struggle to recruit experienced lawyers</li> <li>• Significant numbers of complaints particularly relating to Housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership working across the council to reach out to our diverse resident base</li> <li>• Leading on the response to the Housing Ombudsman areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal services have seen an increase in demand for enforcement.</li> <li>• Central Complaints continues to see a significant increase at all levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal need to keep abreast of new digital solutions in relation to court and tribunals.</li> <li>• How to increase electoral roll ahead of 2024 Mayoral elections</li> </ul>
<b>Digital Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to improve collaboration with services / resistance to change.</li> <li>• Adherence to legal and regulatory compliance, data security, and ethical standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging residents, and understanding their needs</li> <li>• Streamlining our engagement processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact Camden compiles valuable data on citizen experiences, which serves as a robust evidence base for enhancing customer journeys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of appropriate data owners</li> <li>• Future tech champions</li> <li>• Digital literacy</li> </ul>
<b>Equality and Community Strength</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resettling Afghan refugees from bridging hotels to new homes</li> <li>• Tackling Poverty - increases in fuel prices which will deepen the Cost-of-Living crisis.</li> <li>• Equalities - lack of governance</li> <li>• Community Partner Fund – timeline slippage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borough of sanctuary</li> <li>• Camden Equity Network and the Camden Equity Assembly</li> <li>• Underspend Repair budgets passed onto VCS community spaces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in homelessness/rough sleeping by asylum seekers</li> <li>• Financial interventions are short lived</li> <li>• Over 25 Voluntary and Community Services (VCS) food partner site visits completed to develop a better understanding of the provision within Camden</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising cross council awareness</li> <li>• How to publicise support to Private Rented Sector residents</li> <li>• Developing process re-design across the Council with more equalities focus</li> <li>• A more efficient way to value VCS rents' is being considered</li> </ul>

	Risks	Opportunities	Learning	Gaps

## 2.2. Children and Learning / Adults and Health response summary

	Risks	Opportunities	Learning	Gaps
<b>Camden Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools requiring improvement to achieve 'good' status in next inspection (2024)</li> <li>• Project board and support for each school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased attendance service capacity to target persistent non-attenders in schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shift in parental attitudes toward school attendance - adaptation in messaging needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch and evaluation of new attendance framework</li> <li>• Monitoring effectiveness of new attendance service capacity</li> </ul>
<b>Adult Social Care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased waiting times and lists in Support and Safeguarding teams.</li> <li>• Care market and voluntary sector sustainability challenges.</li> <li>• Providers handing back contracts due to financial issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional national funding for workforce expansion.</li> <li>• Early Help offer development to prevent need escalation.</li> <li>• Market sustainability funding improving provider service rates and investment.</li> <li>• Care at Home and Accommodation Plans for sustainable provision.</li> <li>• Strong commissioning capacity for partnership and quality improvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insightful weekly reporting on waiting times for social care interventions.</li> <li>• Benchmarking and understanding challenges in statutory reporting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration of technology for demand management at the front door.</li> <li>• Ongoing restructuring for skill/resource optimization.</li> <li>• Advancement towards integrated neighbourhood working.</li> </ul>

	Risks	Opportunities	Learning	Gaps
<b>Health &amp; Wellbeing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Substance Misuse service transfer complexity impacting service development.</li> <li>Staffing and capacity pressures affecting priority services like smoking cessation.</li> <li>Data quality and transfer issues requiring additional resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New substance misuse service focused on user care and professional networks.</li> <li>Co-designed service spaces and peer naloxone programs.</li> <li>NHS Health Check targeting at-risk groups for CVD prevention.</li> <li>Accredited Mental Health First Aid courses for staff, benefiting residents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognition of data cleansing needs for the drug &amp; alcohol service.</li> <li>Consistent Long Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC) fittings indicating progress toward targets.</li> <li>Understanding of smoking cessation service rate dynamics.</li> <li>Overachievement in NHS Health Check targets and participation rates.</li> <li>Positive feedback and improvement in Making Every Contact Count (MECC) and Mental Health Awareness (MHA) training outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuation of the integrated drug &amp; alcohol service implementation.</li> <li>Enhancing LARC activity and Stop Smoking group support.</li> <li>Data acquisition for health equity audits.</li> <li>Increased engagement in MECC and reducing non-attendance in MHA training.</li> </ul>
<b>Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sufficiency of placements for our children with complex needs including children with disabilities and care experienced young people</li> <li>Workforce retention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National reform around family help</li> <li>Restructure of Children's Safeguarding and Social Work (CSSW)</li> <li>Improved performance reporting in PowerBI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taking learning from quality assurance activity so that it makes a difference to the quality of practice.</li> <li>Complaints annual report to focus on learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making better use of technology to assist smart working</li> <li>Create Edge of Care Service</li> <li>Consider ways of closer multi-disciplinary working</li> <li>Residential provision for children with disabilities where there are concerns in relation to welfare.</li> </ul>

### 2.3. Supporting Communities response summary

	Risks	Opportunities	Learning	Gaps
<b>Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) overdue items</li> <li>Complaints</li> <li>Rising rents/arrears</li> <li>HRA financial challenge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review Regulatory and Legislative frameworks.</li> <li>Rent arrears improvement plan</li> <li>Place based cross collaboration through Neighbourhoods Pilot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Domestic Violence and Abuse (CVA) insight</li> <li>Review complaint themes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coherent customer view and case management system</li> <li>Agile working solutions to enable resident facing teams to deliver real time data</li> </ul>
<b>Property management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inflation pressures on repairs and maintenance.</li> <li>Recruitment and retention challenges.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of in-house teams through apprenticeships and training.</li> <li>Improving efficiency with IT and compliance systems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sustained satisfaction with repairs.</li> <li>Increase in non-telephone communication for repair services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for clear service standards and responsibilities.</li> <li>Policy work to manage repairs budget and Housing Revenue Account sustainability.</li> </ul>

	Risks	Opportunities	Learning	Gaps
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget constraints limiting investment. Procurement challenges with contractors.</li> <li>Pressure from damp and mould cases.</li> <li>Housing disrepair claims causing budget pressures.</li> <li>Barriers in delivering fire risk assessment actions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deep retrofit pilots and financial model development for large scale retrofit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High volume of repairs reflecting service pressure.</li> <li>Recruitment of Building Safety Managers for Building Safety Act compliance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asset management strategy development to prioritize capital program and bridge investment gaps.</li> </ul>
<b>Regeneration and Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shortfall in statutory planning income. Delays by developers in submissions of major planning applications affecting income.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investment in staff development to improve retention.</li> <li>Agile recruitment processes.</li> <li>Commercialization of digital planning products.</li> <li>Improved accessibility to open data and mapping resources for staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Income challenges presented in Planning Performance report.</li> <li>Increase in pre-application requests and decisions.</li> <li>Research for Local Plan informing revised policies.</li> <li>First Regeneration Board highlighting the benefit of area-based approaches.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilization of AI and machine learning to enhance service delivery and decision-making.</li> <li>Feedback and learning from estate action engagement.</li> </ul>
<b>Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial constraints on housebuilding.</li> <li>Inflation and interest rate impacts.</li> <li>Regulatory changes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lobbying for favourable economic conditions.</li> <li>Innovative delivery models.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong housing delivery and private sales performance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparing for Building Regulations changes.</li> </ul>
<b>Environment and Sustainability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff retention.</li> <li>Competition for drivers affecting Veolia.</li> <li>Service demand vs budget.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climate programme engagement for stronger delivery.</li> <li>Place-based investment.</li> <li>Greening Camden's Transport Fleet.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aligning Climate Action Plan with broader frameworks and recommendations.</li> <li>Enhanced customer view via GovMetric data.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adapting services for climate resilience.</li> </ul>
<b>Public Safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High demand for environmental health regulatory services.</li> <li>Difficulty meeting food standards/safety inspections.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of effective service models.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for full access to crime and safety data platforms for better trend analysis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding demand drivers.</li> <li>Full access to crime and safety data for planning.</li> </ul>

	Risks	Opportunities	Learning	Gaps
<b>Culture, Arts and Events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writers' strikes affecting film office.</li> <li>• Resident challenge on public space activation.</li> <li>• Securing cultural programme budget.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-council and sector partnerships. Reaching broader audiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive resident feedback and attendance up to 25k.</li> <li>• Cultural events' impact on connectedness and pride in neighbourhoods.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessing economic impact of cultural programmes.</li> <li>• Audience composition.</li> <li>• Developing commercial events portfolio.</li> </ul>
<b>Recreation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legacy of Covid and cost of living crisis means challenging environment for our communities often leading to conflict with staff.</li> <li>• ASB impacting our teams and the enjoyment of the wider public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning from developments such as the recent work on women's safety by Leeds University and Making Space for Girls</li> <li>• Changes in our building usage</li> <li>• Recommissioning of the Grounds Maintenance service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacking key satisfaction and user information, particularly in green spaces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community/Parental involvement</li> </ul>



### **3. CORPORATE SERVICES**

#### **3.1. Finance and Audit**

##### **3.1.1. *Risks***

The biggest immediate risk facing the financial position of the Council is the financial stability of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The HRA overspent by £13.1m in 2022/23. This was a result of significant inflationary pressures on energy and repair costs along with emergency action to tackle damp and mould. In January 2023 the Council agreed Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings for the HRA but the ongoing inflationary pressures mean that the HRA will need to identify further savings or cost control measures over the medium term to protect its financial stability.

In addition to the current inflationary pressures the HRA has faced a number of challenges in recent years that have significantly impacted its financial resilience including the impact of the pandemic that saw no specific government support for the HRA, government legislation that resulted in reduced rents for four years and more recently capped rent increases below the rate of inflation, reducing potential rental income to the HRA by c£75m, and the need to fund the response to the Chalcots. While the Council has received some funding from the government to address capital costs for the Chalcots and a financial settlement from the contractor these have not fully covered all the costs associated with the Chalcots evacuation and subsequent capital expenditure to the Chalcots estate.

In the General Fund the Council agreed a new MTFS in January 2023 which will help to strengthen financial resilience over the medium term. However, the financial and operating context for the Council remains challenging. The Council's financial position is stable but characterised by high degrees of uncertainty about the long-term rates of inflation, future demand for services and the long-term funding settlement.

It is important that services continue to work to deliver services within budget and continue to identify emerging cost pressures as early as possible.

##### **3.1.2. *Opportunities***

The Council needs to take action to bring overspends under control across the HRA and General Fund to support the Council's financial stability.

Directors need to continue to work with finance colleagues to understand and forecast medium term pressures facing their services including pressures caused by changes in demographics, national and local legislative and policy changes and inflationary pressures.

##### **3.1.3. *Learning***

Officers have been working with peers cross London has help to identify common financial challenges across London boroughs, this will help to support lobbying efforts to government for a fair financial settlement for the Council and show the true level of funding required to deliver Council services.

Officers have also been working with peers across London to compare assumptions about future funding and cost pressures as a check to ensure the Council's financial planning assumptions are reasonable and broadly in line with our peers. This helps to support sound medium term financial forecasting.

#### 3.1.4. *Gaps*

The draft financial settlement should be received in December 2023, along with confirmation of rules regarding council tax and rent setting for the Council. This will help to inform the Council's position over the medium term, although it is likely to be a one-year settlement so the Council will continue to operate with a good deal of uncertainty over the medium term. The Council's priorities for investments over the medium term will support the Council's ability to forecast medium term cost of services and support the forecast of the Council's medium term financial position.

### 3.2. **People and Inclusion**

#### 3.2.1. *Risks*

The current biggest risk for HR delivery is capacity and resilience of the service. Increased pressures in resourcing, alongside new streams of work to support staff through the Israel Gaza conflict and in response to Housing Transformation has stretched the service in the short to medium term. We are currently looking at our service delivery model to enable resources to be realigned to need, focusing on talent acquisition and implementing a CRM to support HR Services.

#### 3.2.2. *Learning*

Data published in the last quarter has continued to show positive progress in HR's work on workforce diversity and inclusion. This year's pay gap report is positive with mean and median pay gaps slightly favouring female workers but within the 5% threshold we set ourselves. The Council's ethnicity pay gap has also improved with a 10% reduction in the performance related pay gap. HR also published the pension pay gap this year alongside the main pay gap report, which shows that historical pay gaps and continuing difference in working patterns between genders have on income and living standards in retirement. On average for every £1 of pension males receive, women receive 75p. This year's pulse survey completed in this quarter had a 30% response rate and showed a powerful story about the Council's progress and focus for the future. 81% of the organisation told us they felt they belonged which is an increase in 26% from last year and 93% said they felt able to call out discrimination, which is an increase of 19% from last year. 89% said they felt we were making progress to become an anti-racist organisation, which is a testament to our work in this area. A clear area to continue to place focus was career progression at Camden, with 66% saying they thought this was fair.

#### 3.2.3. *Gaps*

Moving forward this quarter HR needs to experiment with the implementation CRM at the HR 'front door' which will help employees and managers contact the service easily and help the team streamline and process queries more efficiently. HR also needs to focus more on workforce planning to get ahead of the resourcing pressures the Council is experiencing, particularly in Housing, Property and Repairs.

### 3.3. **Law and Governance**

#### 3.3.1. Risks

The Legal service continues to struggle to recruit experienced lawyers and consequently the service is reliant on agency staff. In addition, there is a significant rise in dis-repair cases which is putting further pressure on Legal Service. A review of the service is currently being undertaken which will set out options for addressing these challenges.

Committee services continues to have technical problems with the webcasting /AV equipment in the Council Chamber. The supplier has provided ongoing support and implemented a ticketing system to monitor the issues, but there are ongoing concerns over its operation.

There has continued to be a significant increase in the number of complaints received by the Council, particularly relating to housing (The number of stage 1 complaints has increased by 21% from Q1 (2023/24). The increase is driven by complaints in housing support services and repairs). The Housing Ombudsman has started to increase the severity of their findings on cases escalated to them for review and at the end of October 2023 communicated their decision to commence an investigation under paragraph 49 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme into the Council's handling of leaks, damp and mould, complaints and repairs.

The Elections team are gearing up to prepare for the 2024 London Mayoral election. Work is also underway to prepare for the next General Election which includes the plan to use 5 Pancras Square as the Count Venue and developing a comprehensive project planner to ensure the smooth running of this high-profile election. There is a risk that a snap General Election could be called whilst implementing the changes from the Election Act 2022.

#### 3.3.2. *Opportunities*

Support is being provided to deliver the Legal Services review.

The Central Complaints team is working closely with service areas to ensure ongoing improvements and will be part of the group that leads the response to the Housing Ombudsman. Support would be beneficial to ensure successful implementation of any recommendations.

The Electoral Services team would benefit from increased partnership working across the council to identify opportunities within each service areas to promote and reach out to our diverse resident base.

#### 3.3.3. *Learning*

Legal Services have seen fluctuating demand. There has been an increase in demand for enforcement in certain areas which has required significant input from the Legal teams.

The Central Complaints team continues to see a significant increase in the number of complaints submitted at all levels. The focus from the Housing Ombudsman is in-line with their focus on other London Local Authorities.

#### 3.3.4. *Gaps*

The Legal division need to develop and keep abreast of digital solutions in relation to court and tribunals. An upgraded version of Norwell is being implemented and it will be important to ensure the service extracts better performance and trend data to improve insight and workload management.

The Electoral Services team are exploring how to maximise the Councils resources to increase electoral registration across the Borough.

### 3.4. **Equalities and Community Strength**

#### 3.4.1. *Risks*

Afghan families are facing significant challenges transitioning from temporary hotel accommodation to permanent homes, requiring complex, cross-council coordination. Asylum seekers living in contingency hotels experience a sense of powerlessness and risk homelessness due to expedited asylum processes.

The threat of rising fuel prices could exacerbate the existing cost-of-living crisis, placing additional financial strain on already vulnerable populations. Demand for the new money advice self-referral form has led to a backlog, causing delays in providing financial assistance to those in hardship.

The lack of effective governance structures for equalities work poses a significant risk, particularly in the face of increased interracial tensions, where reactive, rather than proactive, service delivery may not deliver the best results. As the workload expands beyond the pace of team growth, there is a risk of inefficiency and inadequate response to community needs.

In the Community Partner Fund, any delay in decision-making regarding expressions of interest could result in delayed notifications to applicants, causing financial and operational disruptions, especially for organizations depending on this funding.

#### 3.4.2. *Opportunities*

Camden's journey towards becoming a borough of sanctuary showcases the ability of local services to adapt and reach vulnerable refugees, ensuring equitable access to council services for these new residents.

There is an opportunity to build capacity within services to develop and implement an income maximisation programme to help tackle poverty. This initiative aims to offer frontline staff in Camden and the voluntary sector the tools to provide more consistent and timely financial support to residents.

Expansion of the ideas around the Camden Equity Network and the Camden Equity Assembly to generate meaningful cross over and co-design between our partners and our communities. More targeted work around defining our work in Modern Slavery, Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism seems particularly crucial.

Discoveries of underspend in capital and repair budgets open doors for realigning these funds with property management for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), to address infrastructure capital and repair needs.

#### 3.4.3. *Learning*

Recent data indicates a worrying increase in homelessness and rough sleeping among those who have received positive asylum decisions, underlining the importance of early intervention strategies for these individuals.

Although there is a cash first principle in Camden, the CoL Crisis Fund impact assessment demonstrated that financial interventions, although helpful, are short lived. Income maximisation advice provides longer term assistance, however, many are already claiming all they are eligible for and/or working but still unable to make ends meet.

A deeper understanding of the systemic equalities issues, such as institutional racism, has emerged, highlighting the necessity to focus on overlooked communities, including the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller populations. Proactive measures are needed to address known data weaknesses and disparities.

Insights gained from visiting over 25 VCS food partner sites have highlighted the extensive support network within Camden, the challenges of food provision, and the need for better-equipped facilities and storage spaces.

#### 3.4.4. *Gaps*

Council awareness of the shared responsibility and collective effort needed to support refugees arriving in or living in the borough. The borough of sanctuary ethos will be the guiding light for this effort. The refugee programme office will be hosting drop-in sessions available to all staff.

There is a need for a better understanding of how to effectively reach and publicise support services to the Private Rental Sector and hard-to-reach residents, ensuring that no vulnerable group is left out.

The council needs to focus on process redesign with an emphasis on equalities, ensuring that all services align with Camden's broader ambitions and statutory obligations, and that equity becomes a central aspect of all council operations.

Identifying more efficient ways to assess and value VCS rents is crucial, and there is learning from other London Boroughs to be explored. We need a deeper understanding of the food supply chains in Camden, and better knowledge of community and estate assets and vacant spaces.

### 3.5. **Digital & Data Services**

#### 3.5.1 *Risks*

The primary risks and challenges to our service delivery lie in the need to continue our improved collaboration and relationships between Heads of Services and DDS Delivery Leads. Fostering these relationships is essential for achieving seamless

service delivery, improving operational efficiency and the alignment of services with overarching organisational objectives and priorities.

Ensuring that digital efforts adhere to legal and regulatory compliance, data security, and ethical standards is a potential challenge. Failure to meet these requirements can lead to severe data breaches and security issues.

Maintaining technology and eliminating technical debt presents a significant challenge, especially as we transition to more modern tools and services. This technical debt can hinder our operational efficiency and innovation.

The successful rollout of new IT solutions and changes requires effective digital change management, particularly in a culture where communication may be ineffective. The risk of resistance to change can hinder service improvements.

Operating in service silos and not looking beyond these boundaries remains a risk. This approach can impede our citizen-centred approach, leading to fragmented service delivery.

### 3.5.2 *Opportunities*

The most significant opportunity for DDS lies in focusing on outcomes, engaging citizens, and understanding their needs and pain points. Understanding pain points, serving underrepresented groups, and addressing service issues can lead to improved service delivery.

Streamlining engagement processes, appointing single points of contact, and ensuring that they have decision-making authority can enhance service delivery and satisfaction.

Leveraging data and evidence for change, through qualitative and quantitative research, is essential. Speaking directly to citizens and understanding their perspectives can drive better digital products and content.

Encouraging Supporting Communities and Supporting People Services to envision their transformation over the next few years and the role of digital, data, and technology presents an opportunity for innovation and service improvement.

### 3.5.3 *Learning*

DDS? have made significant strides in establishing self-service tools and have dedicated efforts to improve policies, guides, and streamline procedures. It is essential to continue fostering a culture of self-service among within the council, enhancing the overall experience, and reducing unnecessary calls to the IT Service Desk.

The involvement of Delivery Leads in facilitating collaboration between Service and DDS has provided DDS with greater access to Heads of Service and their objectives. This improved access enables more effective collaboration and a well-informed approach to the service's work.

Encouraging officers to approach DDS with an understanding of the problems they aim to solve, rather than predefined solutions, has been instrumental in enhancing operations and strengthening collaboration with Services.

The implementation of a single point of contact from the front-line Service streamlines engagement, empowers critical decision-making, and plays a vital role in overcoming challenges.

Engaging in primary research, which involves direct communication with citizens, has proven invaluable in improving digital products and content. This approach has deepened the understanding of the needs of the citizens that DDS aims to support, particularly those who are digitally excluded or less confident in using digital services.

Experience has shown that initiating early conversations with Contact Camden before Services send communications to residents allows us to proactively address potential issues by suggesting necessary alterations and preparing for increased demand.

Contact Camden compiles valuable data on citizen experiences, which serves as a robust evidence base for enhancing customer journeys. The primary focus of DDS? is on collaborating with Services to ensure this data is effectively harnessed to suggest and implement improvements.

#### 3.5.4 *Gaps*

To effectively manage both existing and new data sources, it is essential to identify appropriate data owners and data stewards within Services. These individuals play a pivotal role in populating relevant information about the data sources and ensuring that this information remains up-to-date.

It is recommended that each service appoints a dedicated "future tech champion." These champions should work closely with DDS to enhance their understanding of business architecture, software application mapping, and the adoption of future technologies. This collaborative effort aims to find innovative ways to leverage digital technology to better support the specific business needs of each service.

Digital literacy skills are critical to Camden delivering positive outcomes for residents. We need Hiring Managers to consider the digital skills of candidates as a critical part of the recruitment and selection processes – this is important right from leaders and senior managers to those across teams.

### 3.6. **Strategy, Design and Insight (SDI)**

#### 3.6.1. *Risks*

SDI have been engaged over the past few months in an intensive recruitment campaign, with some people moving on to new roles in Camden and elsewhere. The Council's commitment to inclusive and diverse recruitment has meant that SDI has put a lot of resource into this campaign, including: revising the wording and process to increase clarity and accessibility, holding open house events to provide more detail and colour on the teams and roles, open invitation to chat with staff to learn more about the role, and more diverse sifting and interviewing panels. Ensuring these new people land well in the teams and can settle in effectively is a priority and a risk over

the next few months. Recruitment, in a high turnover service, will continue to be a priority but SDI needs to reflect on how best to do it in sustainable way whilst ensuring leadership capacity can focus on project deliver and service development.

In terms of delivery risks for SDI, the service would identify reduced organisational capacity to engage in new work, change and transformation is an ongoing risk, with business as usual and the various external crises taking up organisational attention and management. Carving out meaningful space to engage in work, such as supporting delivery of the WMC missions, requires a level of capacity that is regularly impacted by responding to new pressures. Focused Member-led sessions on mission delivery have added significant value and focus on individual missions, and work continues on cross-cutting elements that support that approach e.g. the state of the borough routine, Good Life Camden framework, and the development of the Community Wealth Fund (with a decision in principle made in July and rapid progress on recruitment to key roles)

#### 3.6.2. *Opportunities*

Opportunities exist to support delivery through increased clarity and accountability of sponsorship and oversight, where uncertainty and ambiguity hinders progress. The SDI experience of delivery for services shows that where there is clarity on the work, it has been well received and added value. An emphasis on practical frameworks, communities of practice, and internal story telling will continue as we work to embed different aspects of mission delivery and design led work.

#### 3.6.3. *Learning*

Recent publications, conferences and interactions have shown more appetite and interest regionally, nationally and internationally, for mission-oriented delivery and for policy design and design research. SDI teams expect to be learning more from others and are actively sharing their experience as sector leaders (e.g. presenting at the recent SD InGov conference).

#### 3.6.4. *Gaps*

The service expects to invest more to start filling data and evidence gaps in support of the Missions, and to work on developing the SDI approach, which brings together the Strategy and Design team, Insight, Learning and Impact team and the Cabinet Office. An emerging insight is that, having built significant organisational capacity around data, design, and technology SDI now needs to ensure we focus on the cultural change and learning offer that enables decision-makers to make the best use of this capability.

### 3.7. **Participation, Partnerships and Communications**

During the summer the service continued the intensive tenant engagement programme which enables honest and open conversations with all the Council's tenants over the course of the year – via letters, door knocking and estate action days.

In partnership with Somers Town Community Association and Central St Martins (CSM), a 10-week testing phase of the Extended Project Qualification began, applied to participation and social action projects. Nine residents from the local area are



taking part in the course and will receive an accredited qualification from University Arts London (UAL) on completion.

In July, Leader Georgia Gould and Keir Starmer MP co-hosted a Camden roundtable which brought local anchor institutions and corporates together to talk about all the ways they can be a good neighbour and contribute to the borough.

Also in July, the Council collaborated with the GLA to contribute to their 'Future of Participation' event series. This included the Leader speaking alongside the Deputy Mayor Dr Debbie Weekes Bernard and a panel of participation activists about power of participatory of approaches.

The cost of living crisis continued to be our major campaigning focus as all channels and networks were used to promote the help and support available from the Council, partners, and government. In Q2 this included the free school meal offer for students, and financial support for school uniforms – which we promoted in a 'back to school' Camden New Journal (CNJ) insert.

Our Summer in Camden campaign this year was bigger than ever, promoting a wide range of events and activities to all Camden residents. We promoted this across all channels, including with a feature in the Camden summer magazine and a dedicated CNJ wrap.

In the health space, the Council celebrated the NHS' 75th anniversary with a local campaign. The Council encouraged MMR vaccines for primary school children with a Camden-specific campaign, including a dedicated toolkit for GPs and community partners with assets, outreach to asylum seeker hotels including translation into 17 languages and promoting the vaccine bus. The Council continued to promote the COVID-19 and flu vaccines to those who are eligible via all channels.

Internally, the service continued to focus on and signpost to support for colleagues around the cost-of-living crisis and wellbeing and supported senior leaders at a Holmes Road depot staff engagement event. The service marched at London Pride in July, supporting the development of march materials and covering the day across our internal and external channels. The service also used its channels to celebrate Trans+ Pride in London, UK Black Pride, South Asian Heritage Month and Bi Visibility Day.

The service has been preparing for major elections which could be held next year. This has included ongoing engagement with major broadcasters and beginning planning campaigns regarding voter registration and ID.

In terms of issues handling, the service worked quickly to reassure parents, pupils and staff regarding the issue of crumbling concrete. The service also worked to prepare for further scrutiny of Camden's housing ahead of a full hour's debate on the notice served by the housing regulator to Camden at full council. The service is proactively working on more housing and development stories.

Proactively, the service has published a number of engaging stories celebrating Camden's diversity – this includes media releases announcing Black History Season and the screening of the Women's World Cup final. We developed multimedia

coverage of Camden students' success on GCSE and A-level results day and supported parents to apply for schools, shared information about moving onto secondary school and raised awareness of the importance of school attendance.

Camden took the opportunity to celebrate Camden's Tessa Jowell Court and Plot 10 being nominated for the prestigious British Architects (RIBA) Stirling Prize 2023.

At the end of the quarter, the service began media preparations for a Government announcement on HS2/ Euston. While speculation was ongoing, the service arranged a live interview on BBC London News to set out Camden's case for HS2 coming to Euston and what the Council would want a station redevelopment to offer. This work led to significant media engagement. The service also commissioned a film to highlight the impacts of the 'Euston pause' in construction.

In September, the service presented at the Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee, sharing its approach to channel use and evidence-based, multi-channel campaigns. The service included a case study on its cost of living crisis communications campaign to show Members how it puts insights and professional knowledge into practice.

Throughout Q2 the team has carried out research into new and changing platforms, including X, Threads and WhatsApp, and created briefings on these for Cabinet Members and Directors. In addition, the service has been looking into how to utilise some of its more under-used channels better such as LinkedIn and further developing video output to enhance engagement in priority issues for the Council.

## **4. CHILDREN AND LEARNING**

### **4.1. Camden Learning**

#### **4.1.1. *Risks***

Ensuring that both schools currently Requiring Improvement (Ofsted) are found to be at least good at their next inspection in 2024. Each school has a project board and individualised support.

#### **4.1.2. *Opportunities***

The newly increased capacity in the attendance service, with posts commencing this month, will allow greater focussed work in schools with the most persistent non-attenders.

#### **4.1.3. *Learning***

The recent Public First national report on school attendance ([ATTENDANCE-REPORT-V02.pdf \(publicfirst.co.uk\)](#)) found that parental attitudes towards school attendance have significantly changed. This requires an adjustment to messaging and understanding of the causes of school absence.

#### 4.1.4. *Gaps*

Launch of the new attendance framework, alongside monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the work of the new capacity within the attendance service with schools.

Continued high focus with schools at risk of not being good through the SRAS (schools requiring additional support) process.

## 4.2. **Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding**

### 4.2.1. *Risks*

Sufficiency of placements for children with complex needs including children with disabilities and care experienced young people is a challenge because there is a higher level of demand. The increase in the volume of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and 16 and 17 years olds who are homeless has led to pressure on the commissioned Pathway beds. This higher level of demand has created pressures on the placement budget as there is also a commensurate shortage of in-house fostering placements. Covid was a turning point for several fostering households who retired, but were unable to be replaced at sufficient pace. A more strategic approach to planning and commissioning of placements is underway including increasing the capacity to assess potential carers coming through. It is notable that there is an increase in the volume of referrals and a commensurate increase in the numbers of children in care. Previous and current MTFs savings were made from the placement budget based on declining numbers. Work is underway to right size the placement budget in line with the change in trend and inflationary costs in a competitive environment.

Workforce retention. This remains a national and regional challenge in social care, and while agency rates in social care in Camden (presently 11.8% for whole Children & Learning directorate) are relatively good compared to London, the service is engaged in several regional and local initiatives to widen the pipeline. The challenge of retaining social workers in child protection requires an investment in their professional development and that of those who supervise and support them.

### 4.2.2. *Opportunities*

National reform around Family Help poses an opportunity for delivery model that balances help and safeguarding, building on Camden's successes while meeting new national requirements. A Pathfinder bid has been submitted to the Department For Education (DFE) as the first step towards the service's intentions.

The restructure of the Safeguarding and Social Work Service will support this with the newly designed teams going live over November. The aim of the restructure was to bring experienced managers closer to the frontline, increased capacity in the quality assurance function, focus on practice development through the formation of a social care academy and bringing the systemic supervision function inhouse with the creation of new posts.

### 4.2.3. *Learning*

How we take learning from quality assurance activity to the frontline staff so that it makes a difference to the quality of practice and in turn outcomes for children.

#### 4.2.4. *Gaps*

Better use of technology to assist social care staff to meet their responsibilities in relation to case management. An Edge of Care Service to prevent Family Breakdown. Residential provision for children with disabilities where there are concerns about welfare.

## 5. **ADULTS AND HEALTH**

### 5.1. **Adult Social Care**

#### 5.1.1. *Risks*

Increased waiting times and growing waiting lists in the Support and Safeguarding teams are causing pressure in the system and residents are having to wait for longer than expected for our services. Reducing waiting lists is a top priority for the service and it has an action plan to address this.

The care market and the voluntary and community sector is fragile and facing sustainability challenges. There are pressures due to the increased cost of service delivery and on-going recruitment challenges. Two local providers have recently “handed back” contracts to the Council as they were unable to continue delivering. There are a number of providers raising financial sustainability issues including the London consortium provider of equipment, NRS. These challenges are being managed through focussed work by commissioners in partnership with providers and finance colleagues.

#### 5.1.2. *Opportunities*

Additional national ASC workforce funding will enable the recruitment of additional Social Workers, Occupational Therapy and Care workers to help address the back log.

Development of an Early Help offer in Adult Social Care which will aim to prevent escalation of need and support people to stay independent for longer. Additional Market sustainability and improvement national funding has supported increased rates for care provider services and investment in their workforce. The service is improving the annual uplift process so there is a more consistent fair approach and better oversight of the whole market.

Transformation programmes Care at Home and the Accommodation Plans will ensure there is the right provision in place with contracts that support strengths based neighbourhood working and are funded more sustainably.

The service continues to have strong commissioning capacity and expertise to work in partnership with providers. This ensures a focus on quality assurance and improvement as well as building knowledge around market sustainability across the whole care market including the VCS.

### 5.1.3. *Learning*

ASC data and insight team has undertaken extensive work to build a weekly report that gives an accurate view of how many people are waiting for reviews and other types of social care intervention. The next phase for this work is to build it into the business intelligence tool, qlik sense. This will allow practitioners, team managers and senior management to see an accurate view of the work being done across the service, including caseload levels and activity. The report was used extensively during 'waiting list focus week'.

In preparation for CQC assurance, an overview of statutory reporting has been produced which benchmarks Camden against its nearest neighbours, in order to deepen understanding of any challenges in the statutory data and to ensure the service has a clear narrative, with a plan to improve these measures.

### 5.1.4. *Gaps*

Use of technology and digital support to help with demand at the front door. A project is being scoped to develop an online referral and supported assessment process which will help residents contact the service easily and help staff streamline and process referrals more efficiently.

A review of current structures, systems and processes is well underway through the Support and Safeguarding review and planned restructure. This will ensure that there is the right skill mix and resource in place to manage demand and that throughput of work and productivity is maximised whilst still offering a quality service to residents. Move to integrated neighbourhood working will bring local services in neighbourhoods together to work more creatively and effectively with residents.

## 5.2. **Health & Wellbeing (Q1 2023/24)**

### 5.2.1. *Risks*

In the first quarter, the new Substance Misuse treatment provider CGL prioritised the safe transfer of service users from previous service providers. The data quality, data transfer process & some unknown prescribing issues meant significantly more time & resource was needed to resolve these issues than anticipated, which has impacted on other areas of service implementation & development.

System pressures are affecting staffing, capacity, & prioritisation of smoking cessation in GPs & pharmacies.

NHS Health Checks latest activity is significantly higher than previous quarter. The plan is to carry out a Health Equity audit into NHS Health Checks to ensure the higher activity is resulting in improved service access to at risk groups.

MECC uptake by Camden Council staff relatively low this quarter & a low number of training participants were available for post training follow-up. In terms of Mental Health Awareness (MHA), though reduced, DNA rates are still a concern, particularly for the larger courses like Mental Health First Aid (MHFA). The provider is testing different efforts to resolve this issue & improve attendance.

### 5.2.2. *Opportunities*

The new substance misuse service began on 1 April 2023, and CGL have dedicated the first 6 months of the new service safely settling service users who transferred into their care. Whilst a transfer of care can cause anxiety this has for most people been ameliorated by the establishment of good professional networks & the new service site in Kings Terrace. The site was co-designed with local service users, is a psychologically informed space & is a significant improvement on the service locations prior to April 2023. The service implemented a peer-to-peer naloxone programme in May 2023 resulting in the co-production of a proactive naloxone peer group. These are individuals with lived experience who have are able to deliver naloxone training to other service users, members of the public &/or partner agency staff. Naloxone peers are active at the service & across the borough, having delivered training to Community Safety Officers, Camden Council staff, hostel staff & attendees at community members at neighbourhood events.

NHS Health Check aims to identify individuals who are at risk of developing a cardiovascular disease (CVD). One of the wider objectives of this national programme is to help reduce inequalities in the distribution & burden of behavioural risks, related condition & multiple morbidities.

A high number of staff completed the accredited Mental Health First Aid course, which provides knowledge & skills to support individuals. This is of strong benefit for residents.

### 5.2.3. *Learning*

In Q1, Camden's integrated drug & alcohol service started as a brand new service. There was a need for a significant data cleansing exercise to be undertaken by previous providers prior to April 1. This resulted in a reduction of numbers of people in treatment as historical and out of borough cases were closed.

There has been timely access to Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptive (LARC) offer particularly through specialist sexual health services. There were 384 LARC fittings during Q1 & activity has remained stable from the previous financial year. If the level of activity remains consistent, LARC delivery partners will be on track to achieve their end of year target of 1100.

For Stop Smoking services, the success rate is slightly below target (55%) across the service in quarter 1 at 53%. This is partly due to a new provider mobilising the service, whilst all efforts were to minimise disruption & to ensure that service users remained the primary focus. It is important to note that whilst the success rate for the service was slightly lower this quarter, 201 smokers were treated by the community provider alone, 279 across all settings.

For Q1 2023/24, 5.9% of the eligible population received an NHS Health Check, which has exceeded the annual target of 5.2%. Over 90% of GP practices delivered as least 10 NHS Health Checks in Q1 2023/24.

MECC Training performance in quarter 1 has been positive, with good attendance and feedback received from attendees. In Q1, 43 participants receiving training, an increase of 9 from Q4 last year, against a target of 63. The training has seen

particularly good uptake from Voluntary & Community Sector Organisations. Participants reported a 100% improvement in all post-training measures. Regarding Mental Health Awareness (MHA), 158 people were trained during Q1 across the courses available. The data represents an improvement over Q1 for the previous year, when 85 were trained.

#### 5.2.4. *Gaps*

Working with commissioners to continue implementation of the new integrated drug & alcohol service, & on-going service development.

The service will be having discussions with CNWL & City of London around implementing the Transfer of Care process for vulnerable & at-risk groups not eligible for E-services which may offer more opportunistic LARC activity. CNWL will also conduct a needs assessment to introduce provision of stop smoking support in a group setting.

For NHS Health Checks, data needs to be obtained to conduct health equity audit. For MECC, the service will focus on increasing engagement with Camden Council teams, by attending meetings to improve awareness and doing regular communications pushes to build awareness. Ongoing promotion of MHA training & direct engagement with teams for closed courses should help with reducing DNAs.

## 6. **SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES**

### 6.1. **Housing**

#### 6.1.1. *Risks*

Increased complaints and the service's response, in particular, how it embeds any learning.

Ensuring the Council's estates and blocks are compliant and safe dealing with a backlog of Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) management actions and legacy approach to management of communal spaces. Managing risks in terms of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), ASB and safeguarding and the service's ability to have oversight of this.

Rising rent arrears remains a key challenge for the Council. A combination of factors have meant that tenants are increasingly struggling with their finances; rising heating charges and overall cost of living means that the service is seeing tenants are less able to pay rent.

#### 6.1.2. *Opportunities*

A review of current policies and procedures to reflect any changes in regulatory or legislative frameworks. Resident facing teams now sit under a single head of service so a more broad approach is being taken to mobilising resources to address risks such as overdue FRAs.

A rent arrears improvement plan has been created to reviewing how the Council can implement a proactive but supportive approach to rent collection and include ensuring

tenants have access to the support they need, improving the systems that support rent collection, reviewing internal rent collection policies and processes, a rent-first, performance driven culture across teams, reviewing roles and responsibilities within the collection process.

#### 6.1.3. *Learning*

In Q2 the service has audited all current DVA cases, this has given some valuable insight into management of these in terms of risk and the service is putting in place interim arrangements to manage these going forward whilst the new DVA procedure is awaited. The service is also reviewing our ASB and response to noise complaints as part of ongoing work on all policies and procedures in housing.

#### 6.1.4. *Gaps*

The service continues to struggle with the visibility of data in respect of residents and the ability to manage workload through agile solutions. This applies across all of the service areas.

There is insufficient performance management information to effectively drive performance and work is being undertaken to develop additional systems, reporting and measures to address this.

### 6.2. **Property Management**

#### 6.2.1. *Risks*

The pressures facing repairs and maintenance services generally relate to sustained inflation, both in terms of contract indexation and material prices, and the ability to recruit and retain trained staff. The Council is better placed than some landlords as it has large in-house repairs and facilities management teams that can adapt to changing circumstances, however budgets are under significant pressure and this limits the investment that can be made in homes, corporate buildings and schools.

Another area of pressure relates to procurement whereby contractors find it difficult to mobilise traditionally priced contracts due to the market conditions. As a result, the Council is being agile and utilising smaller contractors that can respond to the demands upon the service, however this requires extensive *ad hoc* procurement. The Council is evaluating the medium-term options and considering the use of more flexible forms of procurement such as dynamic purchasing systems (DPS).

In relation to housing repairs, the Council's proactive engagement throughout 2022/23 on damp and mould generated over 5,000 mould surveys and the resulting workload has seen pressure of £2.8m placed on the housing repairs revenue budget in 2023/24. The number of self-reported cases has stabilised however, and the Council has 500 damp and mould cases that are being managed at present. Another area of acute pressure relates to housing disrepair claims where aggressive marketing and uncapped fees has seen the Council's disrepair cases climb above 700 in Q2 2023/24 and an additional £2m of pressure placed on the repairs budget for this financial year. The Council is recruiting additional surveyors with the aim of addressing disrepair claims quickly and minimising the exposure to fees.



The Council has robust arrangements in place to deliver its remaining fire risk assessment actions and these are being delivered through a range of contracts, supply chain partners and in house resources. No access continues to be a barrier to delivery, particularly where work is intrusive. The Council has therefore reviewed its approach to tackling this with revised correspondence that can better secure access through the Courts if required.

#### 6.2.2. *Opportunities*

The Council is able to nurture and develop its in house teams – through apprenticeships, training and the development of its managers. This work is underway and its vital that in an uncertain market the Council retains the skills to deliver the work that is needed to maintain its homes and buildings.

The other area where the Council can improve its efficiency is through the use of IT and this is a major focus of its compliance activity, improvements to repairs delivery and how it engages with residents in relation to repairs. The introduction of improved systems also forms part of the Golden Thread project whereby 167 building safety cases are to be developed for the Council's tall buildings.

A further opportunity relates to the retrofit programme, the Council has a range of deep retrofit pilots underway to tackle its most inefficient homes and is leading work to develop a new financial model for the delivery of retrofit at scale. The work on the new financial model will progress in 2023/24 with a view to a pilot covering 3,000 homes being formally evaluated in early 2024/25.

#### 6.2.3. *Learning*

In Q2, satisfaction with completed repairs was sustained and the Council saw a continued increase in the proportion of residents communicating with the service via a range of channels other than the telephone – using What's App, SMS (text message), webchat or the on line Camden Account, these methods now nearing 80% of all communications.

In line with the wider social housing sector, the number of disrepair cases continues to climb each quarter and this presents a significant risk to the Housing Revenue Account as solicitors' fees for disrepair claims are uncapped. Residents receive relatively little compensation, however fees can often equate to £40,000 or £50,000 per case.

Case management volumes fell in Q2 for property and repairs in comparison with Q1, however the volume of repairs awaiting completion remains very high at just below 7,000. This reflects the pressure on the repairs service and the Council is reviewing the resources and the timescales required to reduce this volume to the generally expected levels of 3,000 to 4,000 jobs in the system at any one time. This may require some work to be programmed and delivered through alternative means, e.g. targeted capital works packages.

During Q2 the Council completed the recruitment of its new team of Building Safety Managers that will deliver the requirements of the Building Safety Act. The team has already registered the Council's tall buildings in the required format, has submitted

two draft safety cases to the Regulator for assessment and is working on the development of the 167 safety cases that will be required across the housing stock.

#### 6.2.4. *Gaps*

The changing regulatory environment provides the Council with the opportunity to reset its service offer and standardise its approach to the delivery of repairs. Some of the pressure upon the service relates to discretionary work, or major repairs carried out reactively. The Council needs to reset and make sure it is very clear on the work it can deliver as a landlord and the types of minor jobs that tenants are responsible for themselves, also the work that can be done reactively and that which needs to be programmed. This policy work will be completed in Q3 as part of its self-assessment process against the new consumer standards alongside work to establish how best to manage the pressures on the repairs budget and make sure the sustainability of the Housing Revenue Account is not undermined by a significant overspend.

Looking ahead to the remainder of the financial year, the Council will be focussing on the development of its asset management strategy. Taking the findings from the 2023 stock condition survey and assessment investment priorities against the resources available. The previous assessment in 2019/20 established that there was a gap of c. £180m between the investment required and the resources available. The asset management strategy will revise this analysis, establish what needs to be prioritised within the capital programme and the options that may be available to bridge the investment gap.

### 6.3. **Regeneration and Planning**

#### 6.3.1. *Risks*

Likely to be a significant shortfall against statutory planning income target in 2023/24. Government fee increase will help close the gap in 2024/25 but too late to make significant impact for 2023/24. Delays to several majors from developers now not due until 2024/25 a significant factor although income target not met in any of last five financial years. May need to revisit target.

#### 6.3.2. *Opportunities*

Investing in staff development at all levels, but particularly senior and principal levels to aid retention and more agile HR recruitment process to attract best talent. Support for how to commercialise the digital planning products the service is developing.

Increase awareness within organisation of Camden's open data and mapping resources and make them more accessible and enable staff to self-serve.

#### 6.3.3. *Learning*

The service took [Planning Performance report](#) to Policy and Performance Committee, this highlighted the income challenges (see above), the increase in number of decisions made in last two quarters, increase in pre-application requests above average performance in major apps determined on time, but below average for minors (but above national targets), an increase in the % of apps approved, now at 94%.

Variety of research undertaken for Local Plan which is going to Cabinet in December 2024, including Local Economic Study, Building Heights Study, Housing Needs Assessment etc, which has been addressed in revised policies as appropriate.

First Regeneration Board held 30 November focused on Camden Town, as a first step it demonstrated benefit of taking an area based approach (as also illustrated by team's work in Kilburn), to help synthesise the activities of Council services and help co-ordinate and prioritise planned and proposed investment which will be set out in a Camden Town Vision and Action Plan.

#### 6.3.4. *Gaps*

How to make best use of artificial intelligence, machine reading, LLMs, etc to improve service delivery, decision making and engagement, and also to understand impact on Camden and implications for our work.

Feedback and learning from estate action engagement.

### 6.4. **Culture, Arts and Events**

#### 6.4.1. *Risks*

Events team generating income from indoor and outdoor portfolio and film office. The market is returning, although the writers' strikes in the US are impacting the film office. Activation in the public realm can still be challenging, push back from residents groups on using spaces to generate income.

Securing long-term budget for the cultural programme to deliver events and activities which bring communities together, particularly in the public realm.

#### 6.4.2. *Opportunities*

Joined up approach and partnership working across the council to deliver cultural programmes for residents.

Partnership working across the cultural sector to reach more audiences and create opportunities for grass roots creatives.

#### 6.4.3. *Learning*

Culture Programme for the last quarter, feedback from residents and audiences is they welcome the activity and want to see more. Audience figures of up to 25k attending events. The value of taking culture to neighbourhoods (outside of central London zone) to bring about connectedness and civic pride.

#### 6.4.4. *Gaps*

Economic impact of cultural programmes.

Make up of audiences (how many are from Camden vs visitors to the borough).

Developing the commercial events portfolio, how to best market our spaces, generate partnerships and sponsorships.

## 6.5. **Environment and Sustainability**

### 6.5.1. *Risks*

Staff retention across a number of key services (Sustainability / Highways / Building Control) given the growing number of higher paid roles in both public and private sectors.

Driver retention in the build up to Christmas (Veolia) as logistics and delivery companies increase their rates to recruit HGV / LGV drivers – Veolia mitigating with ongoing retention package and training wider staff / agency for resilience.

Service demand vs budget, particularly in Camden Accessible Transport Solutions and growth in client demand from Adult Social Care / Special Educational Needs.

### 6.5.2. *Opportunities*

Greater organisational engagement in the climate programme would secure stronger delivery impact, including how services develop resilience to a changing climate – use the Environmental Implications Learning and Development module as a mandatory learning module / Further staff Environment Days and action taking place in autumn.

‘Place-based’ development investment recognising and delivering against Camden’s Transport Strategy, Clean Air and Climate Action priorities.

‘Greening Camden’s Transport Fleet’: Rationalisation of in-house vehicle use and investment Zero/Low tailpipe emissions vehicles and infrastructure (depot development).

Developing thinking around Euston Development to factor in area-based development to include Euston Road.

### 6.5.3. *Learning*

A need to shape Camden’s next Climate Action Plan so that it aligns with the Missions and Challenges framework as well as the Climate Citizen Assembly’s recommendations that inform the current Climate Action Plan through to 2025.

Enhanced customer view of services – Camden Accessible Transport Solutions (SEN children) / Environment Services (waste, recycling, street cleaning services engagement work) / enhanced use of GovMetric data for service development (Environment Services).

### 6.5.4. *Gaps*

Organisational / service development with regards to the impacts of a changing climate and how services, alongside communities, can change to adapt/design service delivery to improve future resilience to climate risks.

## 6.6. **Development**

### 6.6.1. *Risks*

The financial challenges facing the HRA put pressure on the Council's ability to borrow and to further increase the scale of ambition of its housebuilding programme through the Community Investment Programme (CIP).

Where appropriate, alternative delivery methods have been employed, evidenced most recently by the procurement of a development partner for the Bacton II site and the ongoing procurement for a development partner for Camley Street.

Build cost inflation and interest rate rises continue to worsen the economic landscape for housebuilding.

### 6.6.2. *Opportunities*

Camden is lobbying the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) for ways in which to change the economic landscape for house building; this includes lobbying for low interest loans which can sit off HRA balance sheet, and increased levels of grant.

### 6.6.3. *Learning*

Housing delivery through CIP remains strong despite these challenges, through a combination of schemes already in contract and new delivery models.

Private sales performance continues to be strong despite the wider market conditions.

### 6.6.4. *Gaps*

There are a number of imminent changes to Building Regulations, most notably those around second stair cores. The more certainty the service has around these the better it can plan for the future.

## 6.7. **Public Safety**

### 6.7.1. *Risks*

The most significant risk relates to the ongoing challenge of responding to the increasing level of demand with regard to the delivery of environmental health related regulatory services (Food Standards and Noise Nuisance). The food safety/standards inspections programme serves as the most pressing example with the regulator (Food Standards Agency) highlighting Camden's inability to deliver the required number of inspections.

### 6.7.2. *Opportunities*

There are opportunities to assess the environmental health related service models in order to develop operating systems which maximise the impact of the available resources/capacity. Further support to evaluate the service data (demand) may well be useful to inform the development of any revised service offer/future service delivery plans in areas such as noise nuisance and food standards/safety.

### 6.7.3. *Learning*

Quarter 2 again highlighted the need for the Council to gain full access to the 'SafeStats' platform which holds London's crime and community safety datasets from key organisations such as the Metropolitan Police, British Transport Police and Transport for London. A data sharing agreement has been signed with the Met Police, however the Council does not have full access to the Safestats system, which is viewed as being an essential component in supporting the ongoing analysis of Camden crime trends/data.

### 6.7.4. *Gaps*

As outlined above, regulatory services need to obtain more information about the drivers behind the sustained increased level of demand. Public/community safety services need full access to the SafeStats system in order to improve the analytical approach towards the development of a range of community safety related plans/initiatives.

## 6.8. **Recreation**

### 6.8.1. *Risks*

Recreation has had some outstanding events in the last 6 months, including the sealing of the Leisure contract with GLL, delivery of the HS2 Green Space works at Regents Park Estate including the opening of the new temporary green spaces at Starcross Yard and a very positive peer review of the library service.

Recreation is however seeing its services impacted by wider influences and the legacy of Covid. The impact of cost of living and other pressures on individuals are creating a challenging environment with aggressive behaviour and racism impacting its teams and the enjoyment of the wider public.

The service is still seeing lower visitor numbers to Libraries, although the trajectory continues to be positive with a nearly 70,000 increase projected for this year from last. Leisure Centre users also continue to improve strongly.

### 6.8.2. *Opportunities*

As a result the service is considering its offer and how best to support Camden communities and presently exploring the under-representation of leisure users by the South Asian community, increasing efforts to make green spaces relevant to groups who traditionally under use spaces in response to the work of Making Space for Girls and Leeds University. Five libraries currently use Open+ technology in the early parts of the day. The service is planning to temporarily move to normally staffed libraries for the winter to increase access for the whole community.

Changes in Council buildings are impacting a wide variety of sites – the Camley Street development will remove depot space, changes at Crowndale, wider proposals at Oasis and Holborn Library as well decarbonisation projects at Highgate and West Hampstead libraries, and Levelling Up improvements at Talacre are all having an impact on the planning for services over the next 2 years.

The recommissioning of the Grounds Maintenance service provides an opportunity to respond to the increased interest and value Camden communities hold green spaces. Increasing the breadth of the offer and opening up how the service works

alongside the community to manage spaces, an important factor to accelerate the Greening Highways initiative.

6.8.3. *Learning*

The service is lacking key satisfaction and user information, particularly in green spaces, as a result of the cessation of a corporate survey and poor alternatives for the scale of Camden's spaces – such as mobile phone information. Support to reach under-represented groups – directly and via marketing – will help the Council to provide services the whole of the community can benefit from.

6.8.4. *Gaps*

Whilst there are stand out cases where the community have come forward to deliver excellent initiatives, there remains the view the Council should fund or deliver services. Without fully enabling the community to do more whole-heartedly, capacity will be limited to support those with less capacity or capability - which is often in the most deprived areas – potential increasing inequality.

**7. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services**

7.1 The Director of Finance has been consulted on this report and has no additional comments.

**8. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor**

8.1 The Borough Solicitor has been consulted and has no comments to add to this report.

**9. Environmental Implications**

9.1 There are no proposals with environmental implications made in this report.

**10. Appendices**

10.1 Appendix A: Corporate Performance Data Dashboard Q2 2023/24

**REPORT ENDS**