

<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS:</b> All
<b>REPORT TITLE</b> Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Better Homes	
<b>REPORT OF</b> Cabinet Member for Better Homes	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b> Housing Scrutiny Committee	<b>DATE</b> 25 February 2025
<p><b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b></p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Better Homes provides the Committee with their annual report for discussion.</p> <p><b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b></p> <p>No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b></p> <p>Muhammed Ravat Cabinet Officer Corporate Services 5 Pancras Square London N1C 4AG Email: <a href="mailto:muhammed.ravat@camden.gov.uk">muhammed.ravat@camden.gov.uk</a></p>	
<p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p> <p>The Committee is asked to note and comment on the contents of the report.</p>	

Signed:



Councillor Sagal Abdi-Wali  
Cabinet Member for Better Homes

Date: 07 February 2025

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 As Cabinet Member for Better Homes, I am honoured to present this annual report, detailing our collective efforts to provide safe, high-quality, and affordable housing in Camden. Over the past year, we have faced a number of significant challenges, including financial pressures on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), rising repair demands, and increasing temporary accommodation needs. However, through determination, strategic planning, and an unwavering commitment to our residents, we have continued to make progress in delivering improved housing services and advocating for necessary national reforms.
- 1.2 A key focus of this year has been addressing the long-standing financial strain on Camden's housing budget. Historic underfunding and the rising cost of maintenance have put considerable pressure on the HRA, requiring us to take a strategic approach to balancing resources while ensuring residents receive the high standards of service they expect. We continue to work closely with London Councils to push for a long-term rent settlement and additional financial support to ensure the sustainability of social housing. Our lobbying efforts have been crucial in making the case for systemic reforms, including fairer financing models and enhanced tenant protections.
- 1.3 We have advanced our Housing Transformation Programme, streamlining processes and investing in improved digital services. Our introduction of WhatsApp, SMS, and live chat services has made it easier for residents to report issues, receive updates, and access information. This shift towards more accessible, real-time communication has been well received and has contributed to increased tenant satisfaction. Additionally, through improved resource allocation and targeted training for staff, we have enhanced the efficiency of our case management system, ensuring a more responsive approach to repair requests and resident concerns.
- 1.4 Fire safety and building compliance remain at the forefront of our priorities. Over the past year, we have made significant progress in aligning Camden's housing stock with the requirements of the Building Safety Act. We have submitted Building Safety Case Reports, developed a comprehensive five-year compliance plan, and continued to implement fire safety measures across our estates. Most high-rise buildings now meet critical safety standards, with 94.95% of tenanted homes equipped with smoke detectors, 99.3% with valid gas safety certificates, and 100% requiring carbon monoxide detectors fully compliant. Our commitment to fire safety is further reinforced by our extensive investment in emergency lighting upgrades and structural fire-stopping works.
- 1.5 Tackling overcrowding has been another area of focus. To address the shortage of larger homes, Camden has pursued a targeted acquisition

programme, prioritising family-friendly housing solutions. Through mutual exchange schemes and new property acquisitions, we have taken steps to alleviate overcrowding while ensuring that residents have access to well-maintained, suitable housing. Our Temporary Accommodation Purchase Programme (TAPP) has secured £20 million to increase the availability of council-owned temporary accommodation, reducing reliance on expensive private sector options and securing long-term stability for families in need.

- 1.6 The private rented sector (PRS) remains a major challenge, with high rents and poor property conditions affecting thousands of Camden residents. Our licensing schemes have been pivotal, with 94% of licensed properties requiring improvement works, most commonly in fire safety. Our enforcement teams have tackled over 800 tenant complaints related to unsafe PRS housing, with targeted legal action and fines issued to rogue landlords. Meanwhile, our Renters' Rights Hub has seen a 45% increase in engagement, providing vital support to tenants navigating the complexities of the private rental market.
- 1.7 Neighbourhood-based services have also been strengthened, bringing housing teams closer to residents and improving service coordination. Our estate management and landlord services have been restructured into a single 'Neighbourhood' team, aligning housing services with social care and health support. This integrated approach ensures a more responsive, resident-centred service model. Additionally, our efforts in domestic abuse prevention have been reinforced through our partnership with Camden Safety Net, delivering enhanced support for survivors and embedding specialist domestic abuse expertise into our housing allocation processes.
- 1.8 As we look ahead, we remain dedicated to tackling the structural challenges in housing policy while continuing to deliver high-quality, resident-focused services. By prioritising tenant engagement, improving service efficiency, and pushing for necessary national reforms, we will ensure Camden remains a place where everyone has access to a safe and secure home.

## **2. Financial Pressures and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)**

- 2.1 Camden faces substantial financial strain within the HRA, driven by historic funding cuts and insufficient national support, exacerbated by rising costs for maintenance, repair, and safety compliance. As reported by London Councils, boroughs face a cumulative £700 million deficit within HRAs due to rapid cost increases, rent freezes, and safety requirements that outpace rental income. London Councils welcomed the recent national decision to retain 100% of Right to Buy (RTB) receipts locally and the additional £500 million in Affordable Homes Programme funding, but boroughs are advocating for a long-term 10-year rent settlement and comprehensive debt review to truly stabilise social housing finances.

- 2.2 Camden's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) aims to secure £7.51 million in savings by 2025/26 to balance the HRA. However, inflationary pressures, high repair costs, and a growing temporary accommodation demand place continued pressure on HRA budgets. Camden has used reserves for five consecutive years to manage annual shortfalls, an unsustainable approach requiring concerted government support. A strong recommendation has been made to expand lobbying efforts, aligning with London Councils to advocate for a 10-year rent settlement and an overhaul of HRA financing.
- 2.3 Since 2016, Camden's Housing Revenue Account has lost out on a potential £168m due to rent caps and reductions enforced by the previous government. As a result, rental income for the HRA is £32m lower in 2024/25 compared with what it would have received if the policy had been kept consistent at CPI + 1%. We estimate that the HRA receives, on average, £10k of rent per property annually but requires £14k to provide management and maintenance including capital investment.
- 2.4 At the same time, there have been major pressures on revenue budgets in recent years. This is not an issue exclusive to Camden – across the country, many councils are experiencing extreme challenges on their HRA budgets. These include:
- Cost inflation: Brexit, Covid and the war in Ukraine all contributed to inflation reaching a 40 year high in November 2022 with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) at 10.7%, which has put unprecedented pressure on the costs of energy, repairs, maintenance, and housing services. While CPI has fallen rapidly since, sitting at 2.3% in October 2024, costs remain permanently higher and as noted above, rental income has not kept pace. Inflation in contracts is often delayed and stored up, materialising when they are reprocured, so the full impact is taking several years to play out.
  - Interest Rates: while the Bank of England base rate has fallen since the high of 5.25% between September 2023 and August 2024, it is still higher than at any time since the financial crash of 2008 and a return to the historically low interest rates of the period 2008 to 2023 now seems unlikely. High interest rates are one of the major sources of overspend against the HRA's 2024/25 budget.
  - Fire & Building Safety: the Council has had to find additional funding for fire and building safety works – a forecast £296m capital expenditure in the 10 years from 2017 to 2027. The Council has only received £91m in government grant for the fire safety works on the Chalcots, Cromer and Birkenhead Street Estates but the remaining £205m capital expenditure and an annual revenue budget of £4.5m has had to be funded entirely from the HRA's own resources – rent and service charges paid by tenants and

leaseholders. To date, no external government funding support has been made available.

- New pressures on repairs budgets have emerged as councils struggle with the consequences of over a decade of underfunding and underinvestment on the part of government. These include works to remove and prevent damp & mould and an increasing workload of legal disrepair cases.

2.5 The Cabinet [set the rents and budgets for the HRA for 2025/26](#) on 15 January 2025. The report identified £7.45m of budget pressures relating to the issues above to be funded by a 2.7% increase in rents (CPI+1% increase, the maximum possible under government rules), increases to service charges, existing Medium Term Financial Strategy savings, and some new savings. At the same meeting, the Cabinet agreed the [Housing Investment Strategy](#) including £350m additional capital investment in Camden's housing stock over the next five years part-funded by the sale of empty, small or unsuitable homes with significant repair costs. Further details on the Strategy can be found in section 6.

2.6 Camden is lobbying government to fix the finances of council housing. We have banded together with other major local authority landlords, led by Southwark Council, to produce a report entitled Securing the Future of Council Housing. The report sets out the scale of the challenge it faces and makes a number of recommendations including a one-off capital injection to stabilise HRAs and the re-opening of the 2012 self-financing deal. We have responded to consultations on the future of social rents and the right-to-buy scheme, although the options put forward by government are not yet sufficient to fix council housing finances in the long-term.

2.7 Camden is also bidding for additional capital funding under the Warm Homes Programme and the Affordable Homes Programme to help improve the energy efficiency of the stock and support regeneration schemes respectively, but again the funding available does not match the scale of the challenge.

### **3. Neighbourhoods**

3.1 We have now completed the reorganisation of our service, bringing together both Landlord Services and Estate Management into a single 'Neighbourhoods' team. This team is dedicated to delivering resident-facing services across our estates. As part of our broader commitment to place-based, joined-up services, we are moving towards five Neighbourhood areas, aligning our approach with social care and integrated health models.

3.2 In 2024, The Neighbourhoods Pilot went live in Kentish Town, reimagining housing services by adopting a place-based, collaborative approach to address local needs effectively. Housing officers, caretakers, community safety teams, and repairs services are integrated into neighbourhood teams,

working alongside other public and voluntary sector partners. The model emphasises co-location, with teams sharing office space to foster closer working relationships, and regular collaborative meetings to address complex cases swiftly.

- 3.3 A devolved budget allows frontline staff to respond flexibly to emerging housing issues, such as resolving disputes and improving living conditions. This approach enhances service accessibility, empowers residents, and fosters stronger community ties, ensuring that housing services are proactive, responsive, and connected to the broader social infrastructure in Camden. The Neighbourhoods pilot will begin expanding across the Borough, creating five Neighbourhood areas, and aligning our approach with social care and integrated health models.

### 3.2 **Housing Services**

- 3.2.1 We are currently reviewing our operational approach to ensure full compliance with our regulatory obligations as a registered provider of social housing. This includes a comprehensive review of all policies and procedures, engaging with both internal and external stakeholders, including our District Management Committees and Resident Panels.

### 3.3 **Tenant Visits**

- 3.3.1 Following intensive tenant participation work on our estates, we have launched a new programme of tenant visits. The first tranche of residents identified for visits includes:
- Residents aged over 70
  - Residents who have not reported a repair in the past 12 months
  - Residents who reported damp and mould 12 months ago but have not had a follow-up visit since
- 3.3.2 We are also trialling a new 'visiting' application for our Neighbourhood Housing Officers, which will enable real-time updates to our housing system.
- 3.3.3 While the primary purpose of these visits is to verify that the original tenant remains in occupation, they also present an opportunity to collect vital data on vulnerabilities. Additionally, we are working alongside Building Safety teams to identify residents who may require a Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessment.

### 3.4 **Domestic Abuse**

- 3.4.1 We have successfully launched our new Domestic Abuse policy and procedure, with training rolled out to Housing Officers and additional sessions

offered to colleagues in Estate and Property Services to strengthen their ability to provide support.

- 3.4.2 We continue working towards Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, a best practice framework endorsed by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner. This accreditation enhances how local authorities respond to domestic abuse through a coordinated approach across Housing and Repairs. Significant progress has been made in embedding the DAHA framework.

### 3.5 **Domestic Abuse and the Neighbourhoods Service**

- 3.5.1 In April 2024, a new DVA procedure was introduced within the Neighbourhoods Service, which supports Council tenants experiencing domestic abuse. This framework establishes a survivor-led approach, ensuring safety and comprehensive support for affected tenants and their household members.

### 3.6 **Expanding Domestic Abuse Identification and Support**

- 3.6.1 In September 2024, Camden launched a 'Domestic Abuse Early Detectors' Network for frontline staff working across Repairs, Caretaking, Property Management, Cleaning, and Transport Services. This network provides staff with the tools to identify and respond to domestic abuse through a structured DVA procedure. A bespoke training film was co-created with staff to support this initiative.
- 3.6.2 Utilising the community expertise and unique access of these teams, the network strengthens pathways to domestic abuse support, ensuring survivors can engage with officers who are deeply embedded in their communities and trained to provide trauma-informed support. To date, over 250 staff members have completed this training, with further sessions scheduled throughout 2025.
- 3.6.3 We have embedded domestic abuse expertise into the Allocations Process through the establishment of a DVA Points Assessment Panel. The panel was developed in response to research highlighting that assessments of abuse risks conducted by professionals without DVA expertise often underestimate key risk factors, including the likelihood of domestic homicide.

### 3.7 **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**

- 3.7.1 Following insight collected during our Intensive Tenant Participation Programme, ASB was raised as being a key concern for a significant proportion of residents. As a result, we established a multi-service ASB working group, that compromised the Community Safety, Housing, and Adult Social Care teams to trial a pilot within our Community Safety Team to oversee the delivery of the ASB Taskforce programme with an emphasis on priority issues such as ASB reporting, resident engagement, enforcement and

case escalation. We have now reviewed and strengthened our ASB Policy to adopt a more robust, risk-based approach to managing reports of anti-social behaviour on our estates.

3.7.2 We are currently developing new procedures to support this approach, alongside a training programme for Neighbourhood Housing Officers to ensure effective implementation.

### 3.8 Resident Safety

3.8.1 We have successfully reduced overdue Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) through close collaboration with colleagues in Estate Services.

3.8.2 To maintain these improvements, we are transitioning towards a business-as-usual approach for managing communal areas, enabling us to proactively address concerns and issues as they arise.

### 3.9 Leaseholders

3.9.1 Following, Cllr James Slater's well received Cabinet Advisor Report on *Improving Services to Camden Leaseholders and Advocating for Leaseholders*, the service has been working to adopt the recommendations laid out in the report, which included:

1. Improving how Major Repairs and Leaseholder Services work together and communicate.
2. Improving quality assurance and how contractors are held accountable for their work.
3. Introducing a CRM for Leaseholder Services to better communicate and track correspondence.
4. Improving accessibility and transparency of written communications (service charge bills, consultation documents).
5. Improving and promoting Leaseholder and freeholder information on Camden's website.
6. Completing an annual audit of best practice from other boroughs.
7. Introducing an additional formal councillor role, in line with the responsibilities of a Deputy Cabinet Member, to work with the Cabinet Member for Better Homes to ensure leaseholders voices are thoroughly represented and heard across council departments
8. Providing more information online about the roles and responsibilities of different teams within Camden and how to contact them.

3.9.2 The Leaseholder Services team designed an Action Plan outlining key initiatives to restructure the service, improve IT systems, and enhance



customer correspondence tracking. A full review of IT systems is underway, focusing on rationalising and optimising tools for managing customer contact, correspondence, and case handling. The review is still in its discovery phase, with a recommendations report expected soon. Currently, Leaseholder Services lacks a call monitoring system, but plans are in place to adopt a new telephony system after a successful rollout in Contact Camden. Additionally, a manual exercise, conducted in May and June 2024, demonstrated strong performance in responding to correspondence within the target of 10 working days.

- 3.9.3 A major restructure has been finalised following a consultation process and implementation began in January 2025. The new structure aims to simplify operations with specialised teams handling areas such as lease management, service charges, income recovery, and dispute resolution. Alongside this, a Service Design Project has led to tested prototypes, a toolkit for ongoing improvements, and a roadmap for future service enhancements. These initiatives are geared towards improving efficiency, transparency, and customer service in Leaseholder Services.
- 3.9.4 A Deputy Cabinet Member position was created in July 2024, as recommended in the Cabinet Advisor report. Cllr Slater was appointed to the role to continue working closely with leaseholder services, meeting with Camden Leaseholder Forum and local leaseholder groups, and advocating on behalf of leaseholders to ensure that the council is listening and meeting the standards we expect.

## **4. Estate Services**

### **4.1 Caretaking Support and Response Team**

- 4.1.1 A review of this team is scheduled for 2025, following a delay due to the wider reorganisation. This review will focus on defining their role to ensure we are making the best use of resources while maintaining a consistent standard of service for all residents.

### **4.2 Traffic Management Orders (TMOs)**

- 4.2.1 Following the successful implementation of the Maiden Lane Scheme, we have now completed consultations on a further 10 estates.
- Physical works have been completed on two estates, with PCN enforcement ready to commence.
  - Work is ongoing for the remaining estates, though challenges have emerged, including difficulties with line marking and contractor access.

4.2.2 Before identifying the next tranche of estates for the scheme, we will review lessons learned to address any issues and refine our approach for future rollouts.

### **4.3 Quality and Assurance**

4.3.1 We will be developing a Good Neighbourhood Management Policy, encompassing all aspects of estate management, with a particular focus on safety and overall estate conditions.

4.3.2 A key element of this policy will be the development of an estate/block inspection process, involving Neighbourhood Housing Officers and our Estate Services team to establish clear quality measures.

4.3.3 Additionally, we will be reviewing ways of working to ensure that estate services colleagues have the right tools and resources to continue delivering high-quality, affordable services across our estates.

### **4.4 Sheltered Housing**

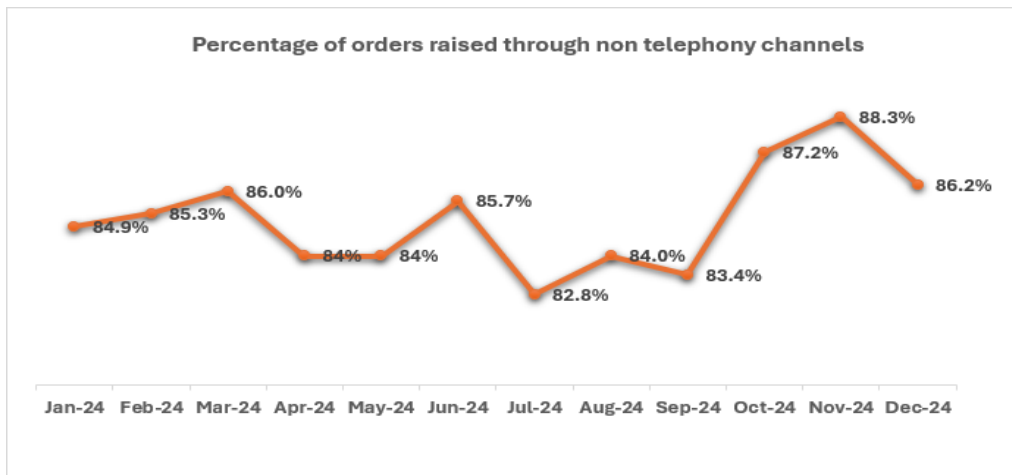
4.4.1 Following the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Ageing and Older People and the government's response in the Independent Older Persons Housing Taskforce report (*Our Future Homes: Housing that Promotes Wellbeing and Community for an Ageing Population*), we will be reviewing our offer to older people seeking sheltered housing.

4.4.2 This review will ensure our provision aligns with best practices and supports wellbeing, independence, and community integration for an ageing population.

## **5. Property Engagement and Customer Services, including Capital Works and Repairs**

### **5.1 Housing Repairs Contact Centre**

5.1.1 The Housing Repairs Contact Centre continues to evolve and adapt to meet our residents' needs and expectations. Throughout 2024, we have seen a significant shift towards omnichannel services for reporting repairs, including WhatsApp, SMS, webchat, and multilingual support.



5.1.2 This transition has greatly improved accessibility and customer satisfaction. The ease of reporting repairs through digital platforms, particularly WhatsApp, has led to a notable decrease in telephone interactions, making the contact line more accessible to those most in need of the service. WhatsApp has become the preferred channel, allowing residents to conveniently share visual evidence of issues directly with the team.

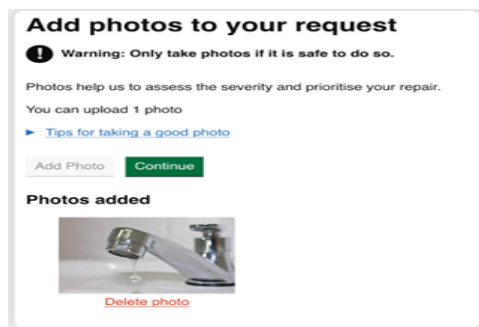
## 5.2 Improving the Online Customer Journey

5.2.1 In December 2024, Madetech was introduced as a new online platform, replacing the decades-old residents' account system. The key motivations for this change included:

- Developing a user-friendly product aligned with the government's standard policy for digital product design.
- Removing barriers related to account verification and the cumbersome password reset process, which had previously discouraged digital engagement.
- Enabling residents to query the system using their postcodes.
- Allowing users to upload photos directly to the repair system, enhancing reporting accuracy.
- Providing a platform to report new issues, such as damp and mould.
- Offering real-time assistance by allowing customers to speak with an online officer at any stage of the process.
- Sending confirmation texts or emails for each action taken, ensuring transparency.
- Giving customers the flexibility to reschedule or cancel appointments easily.

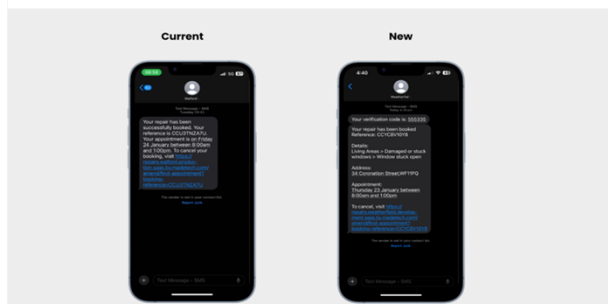
- Enabling customer feedback at the end of every interaction, fostering continuous improvement.
- Introducing repairs tracking, so customers can stay informed about next steps and timelines.

5.2.2 These enhancements have collectively transformed the online customer journey, making it more efficient, transparent, and user-friendly. We know 1 in 7 jobs were raised online, and more were raised via web chat/WhatsApp and SMS. With these new features and all new additional options, customers will prefer to raise new repair requests, track existing jobs, and provide feedback while speaking to us online and staying up to date with service news from their local authority.



#### More Detailed SMS/Email Confirmations

For those using our confirmation messages, **problem details are now included**. Tenants can more easily tell multiple issues apart if they've reported more than one repair.



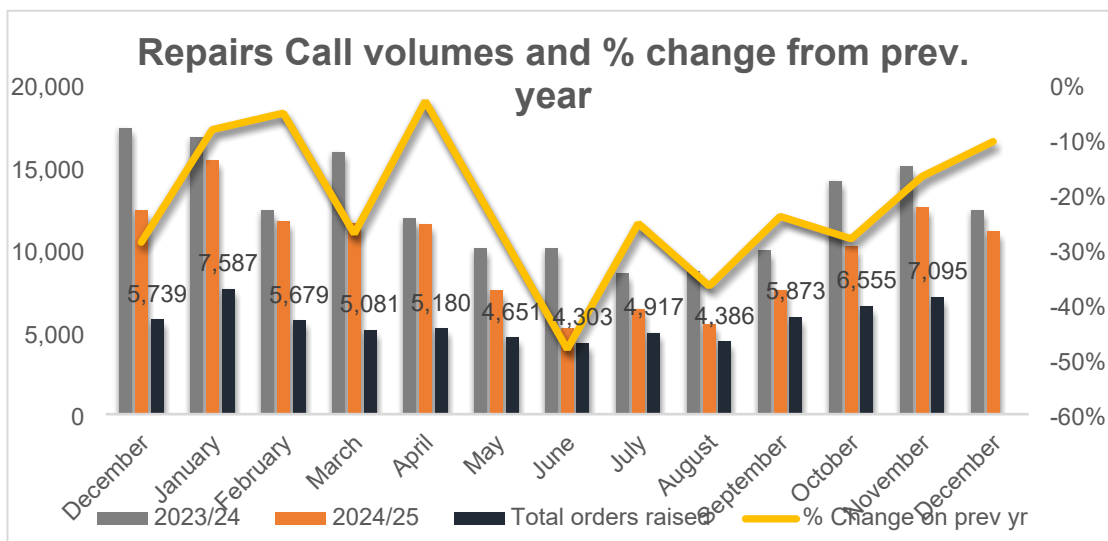
### 5.3 Being proactive rather than reactive

5.3.1 Housing repairs have introduced SMS Service Updates in the last 12 months. We text residents to update them on communal repairs affecting a whole block or area, and provide regular, accurate, and timely news on the repair. Initially, the service was introduced for lift repairs. Due to popularity, we expanded it to Communal heating issues. To date, we have sent 56,000 SMS messages to residents with information about when the service breaks down, the estimated time of completion and when it is returned to service.

Period	Lift service	Communal heating
Jan-24	252	0
Feb-24	282	0
Mar-24	4,499	0
Apr-24	2,852	0
May-24	2,633	103
Jun-24	3,694	1,067
Jul-24	4,055	21
Aug-24	3,856	102
Sep-24	4,708	302
Oct-24	6,253	1,119
Nov-24	10,174	1,722
Dec-24	6,915	1,620
	50173	6056

#### 5.4 Volume of calls

2023	2024	% difference
145,647	116,006	-20%



#### 5.5 Future developments

5.5.1 As we progress, we will prioritise enhancements to our contact centre channel shift by actively involving our resident panels. By gathering feedback and insights from our residents, we are already pinpointing areas for development and improvement and ensuring that our communication methods align with their preferences. Regular engagement with these panels will enable us to adapt our services more effectively, streamlining processes and providing a more user-friendly experience. Our commitment to continuous improvement will not only strengthen our relationship with residents but also enhance overall service delivery, making it more efficient and responsive to their needs.

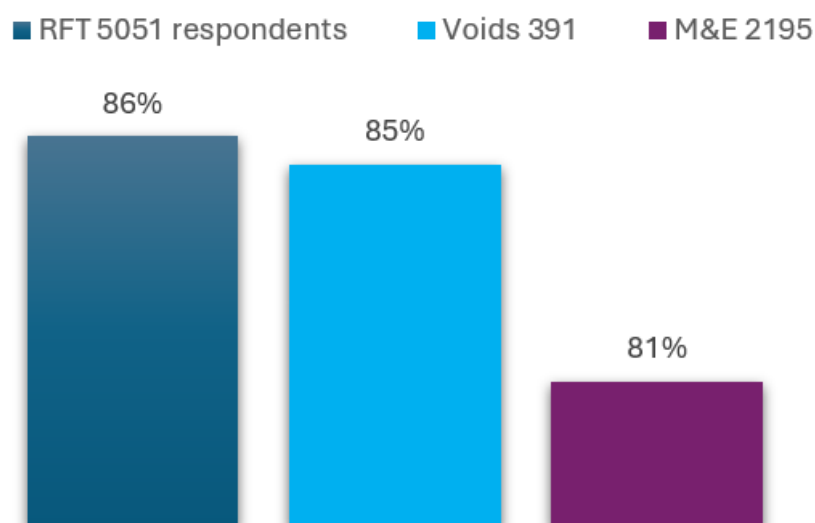
## 5.6 Customer satisfaction

5.6.1 We actively engage with our residents to assess overall customer satisfaction with the services we provide. Customer feedback is central to our mission. At the end of every interaction channel, we strive to give customers the opportunity to share their thoughts and feedback on the services that impact them. Currently, we conduct surveys on the following areas:

- Reactive Repairs
- Major works
- Case management
- Customer service (all channels)
- Service updates

5.6.2 70% would recommend Webchat to report a repair - 2,875 responded to the survey.

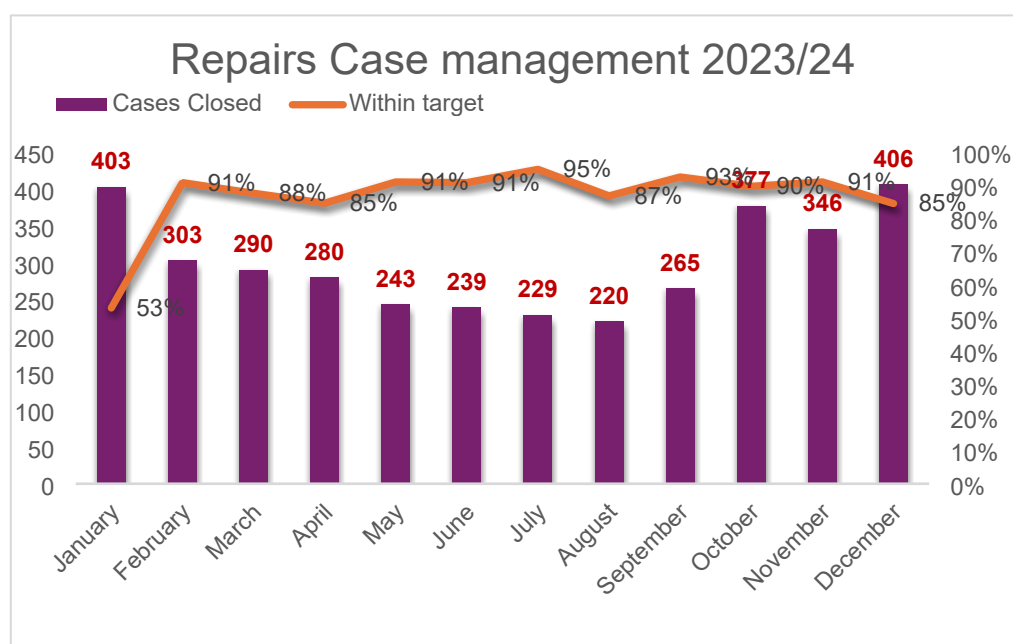
### Overall Satisfaction with the Repairs Service



## 5.7 Case Management

5.7.1 This year, we have seen an increase in housing repairs complaints and enquiries, reflecting both the growing demand for our services and the rising expectations of our residents. While this increase presents challenges, it also highlights the importance of our role in maintaining safe and comfortable homes. We have taken proactive steps to address this, including allocating additional resources, enhancing our reporting systems, and improving communication to ensure timely responses. By actively analysing the trends behind these complaints and enquiries, we are identifying key areas for improvement, reinforcing our commitment to delivering reliable and responsive housing repair services.

5.7.2 We handled 2,464 Stage 1 complaints; Members Enquiries were 947 and MP enquiries were at 166.



5.7.3 In 2024, we engaged with the Housing Ombudsman as part of their paragraph 49 investigation process, providing a valuable opportunity to assess and enhance our services. Following their investigation, we have carefully reviewed their findings and are actively working on implementing their recommendations. These steps are focused on improving our complaints handling processes, communication with residents, and overall service delivery. By addressing these recommendations, we aim to build greater trust and transparency, ensuring our residents feel heard and supported. This ongoing work demonstrates our commitment to learning, growing, and delivering the highest standards in housing services.

## **5.8 The Consultation team**

- 5.8.1 Our focus for 2024 has been on building on and expanding the deep and powerful engagement we have with our resident panels. These focused groups of real residents use their diverse experiences and backgrounds to help co-design improvements to the future of Camden services.
- 5.8.2 At the beginning of the 2024, we launched the Housing Customer Experience Oversight Panel, which is a new way for residents to hold to account the senior managers responsible for delivering the housing and property services they rely on. The panel deep-dive into complaints and other feedback and invite service managers and contract managers to attend panel sessions, to explain why certain complaint/feedback themes (for example missed appointments) are reoccurring and what changes they are making to address them. The panel has been successful in its first year and we are now increasing the size of the panel from 6 to 10 residents
- 5.8.3 The Housing and Property Residents Panel has gone from strength to strength again last year, and we have increased the size of this panel too. They have hosted heads of service, directors, and even the Leader of the Council, who have all taken away valuable insights which helped shape our approach on topics from fire safety to our participation and engagement, and from our Antisocial Behaviour policy to our online repairs reporting platform.

## **5.9 Repairs**

- 5.9.1 The Council completes 125,000 repairs orders each year, including servicing items. Satisfaction with completed repairs generally remains steady at over 85%, this is measured by independent phone surveys. However, we do see dissatisfaction with the longer waiting times for non-emergency jobs. This is because the repairs team has had to adapt and take on fire safety work, establish a dedicated team for proactive damp and mould management, and allocate resources to promptly tackling disrepair claims. This means that there are fewer resources available for day-to-day non-emergency repairs and diary wait times are longer.
- 5.9.2 We can see that waiting times are also driving many of the complaints we receive, and the service needs to make sure residents are kept up to date when delays are encountered. To help with this, the service has appointed a 'lessons learned lead' who is evaluating complaint findings and helping the team put in place changes to our service. Officers are fully focussed on improving the operation of the repairs service and that the fundamentals are improved – such as keeping appointments and tracking follow up appointments so that repairs are completed in full.
- 5.9.3 Given the limits on our resources, a major priority is to maximise productivity across the repairs service. Part of this work is driven by improvements to our



systems, with an upgrade to our “ROCC” system to make scheduling of appointments and tracking of works orders more efficient. New reporting tools are also helping repairs managers to proactively manage absences and unproductive time in their teams. This is increasing the number of visits completed each day.

- 5.9.4 The Council is currently managing 420 claims, down from over 500 at the beginning of the financial year. The Council has a dedicated team of technical resources to proactively manage repairs that are subject to claims and we are reaching out to all residents, asking them to contact us if they have an unresolved issue. The Council has also recently appointed an experienced Disrepair Programme Manager who will co-ordinate work across housing, repairs and legal services, and help unlock cases where, for example, a household needs to be decanted and they have complex needs to accommodate.
- 5.9.5 A major focus of the team in 2025/26 will be to review its repairs policies and procedures, looking ahead to the introduction of Awaab’s Law, which starts to take effect in October 2025, and making sure it fully meets regulatory requirements. The repairs service will update the Housing Scrutiny Committee and District Management Committees (DMCs) as policies and practice are updated. This will include the overall repairs policy, how it will implement Awaab’s Law, its approach to adapting the service for vulnerable residents and its policy on aids and adaptations.
- 5.9.6 Other strategic work will be focussed on the re-procurement of our mechanical and electrical contracts which cover communal heating, estate lighting, electrical supplies, lifts and other systems such as door entry. The new contracts will build in learning from the current arrangements in place and introduce new key performance indicators and mechanisms to incentivise performance. The new contracts will be subject to leaseholder consultation and will go live in April 2026.
- 5.9.7 In February 2025, Cabinet will consider a report that recommends bringing in house the repairs and servicing of individual heating systems. This will cover 14,000 homes is a great opportunity to build on our existing apprenticeship programmes, focus on local employment, and develop a team that can manage our current heating systems and be trained to support the transition to renewable systems such as heat pumps. Should Cabinet approve the report, the new in-house service will go live in April 2026.

## 5.10 Voids

- 5.10.1 Changes as part of the Housing Restructure have been made and a new senior management team are overseeing the repairs, lettings and housing management functions. Two new contractors have been appointed to work

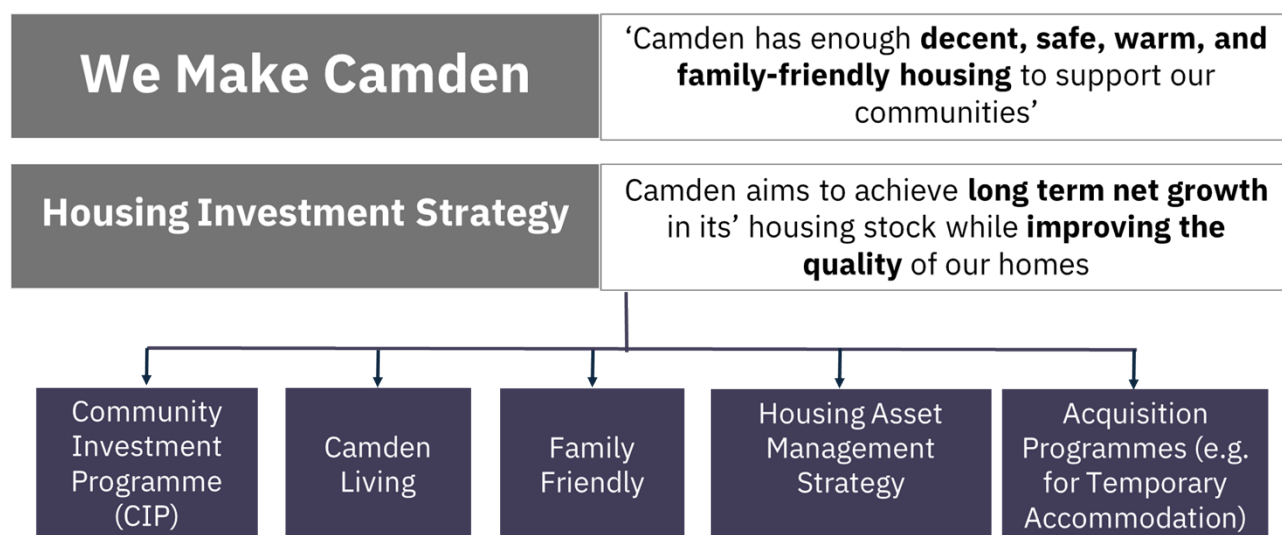
specifically in the Hampstead area as well as an additional supervisor for three months in that team. The gaps in staffing in this area has had an impact on performance across the board.

5.10.2 We have started making properties available for letting as soon as a surveyor has assessed that only minor or routine works are needed. Viewings are now taking place as soon as it is safe to do so. Previously, we had been waiting until all works were completed. Works and lettings are now happening at the same time.

5.10.3 The Allocations service is undergoing a major restructure that will reduce the number of teams involved in the lettings process without reducing the staffing numbers. The new structure has 3 Lettings Managers each managing 7 Lettings Officers, this has replaced the Moving Home and verification teams.

5.10.4 We have commenced a pilot where property inspections take place before the tenant moves out. This helps us to offer the resident advice on moving home and for us to complete a works specification in readiness of the property becoming void. This will mean that a works order can be raised as soon as we receive the keys when someone moves out. We are reviewing properties that achieved rapid turnaround times in both the repairs and lettings process to identify key success factors and apply these insights to streamline future operations.

## 6. Housing Investment Strategy



6.1 In January, Cabinet approved a new Housing Investment Strategy for Camden; this sets out our commitments to ensure long term growth in the housing stock, achieve improvements in the quality of our homes, and to actively manage our stock so it responds to local needs.

- 6.2 This strategy sits beneath the We Make Camden vision and brings together a range of Council programmes related to the management, growth and diversification of our housing stock. It will create a holistic means to assess the overall housing stock; in numbers, size and quality, and ensure that the Council is well placed to make informed and pragmatic decisions where it needs to amend programmes to respond to local needs and ensure that the Council is making the best use of available resources. Collectively the Council expects that the programmes under this strategy will ensure the Council achieves net growth in the housing stock, that they will deliver improvements in the overall quality of homes and that our homes are more suited to the needs of local residents.
- 6.3 Under the Community Investment Programme, the Council will continue to build the next generation of council housing. This programme has delivered 1,780 homes so far, of which 70% are affordable. A further 330 homes are currently under construction and will be part of the total of 4,850 homes Camden is set to deliver, including 1,800 social rented homes.
- 6.4 The strategy also sets out an important role for Camden Living, a Camden Council owned company group set up to improve housing opportunities and provide genuinely affordable rented housing in the Borough. Camden Living Limited (CLL) was set up by the Council in 2016 to widen housing opportunities for Camden residents. Its current focus is on intermediate rent, but an application to become a Registered Provider is being made to the Regulator for Social Housing.
- 6.5 A key component of the strategy is a new Housing Asset Management Strategy, which sets out in detail how the council will manage and invest in its existing stock.
- 6.6 The main aims of the strategy are to:
- Make sure the Council can meet regulatory requirements
  - Generate resources for investment in Council homes
  - Identify the best option for homes that provide poor accommodation or have very high investment costs
  - Increase the number of better-quality homes for residents and meeting priority needs on the waiting list
- 6.7 The Housing Asset Management Strategy sets out the Council's investment priorities over the next 5-years and sets a plan to invest £670m in its homes to ensure they are safe, warm and dry and well-maintained. This includes current investment allocations of £320m and an additional £350m to be invested during the strategy period. Part of this funding will come from the

release of empty, small or unsuitable homes with significant repair costs, generating up to £265m which will be directly reinvested into council homes.

6.8 The Family Friendly Housing Purchase programme, approved in December 2022, is now fully in operation and showing significant results. By December 2024, the Council had secured an additional 18 bedspaces and avoided almost £3m in investment costs. This is achieved through the sale of some smaller properties, often with high investment needs, and using the funds to purchase larger family sized homes to meet the needs of the 8,000 people and families on our housing list.

## 7. Capital Works Progress Update

7.1 Contained below is a progress report of the work that has been delivered by the Capital Works team during 2024 along with an overview of current and programmed works.

### Recently Completed Works

7.2 Projects completed are listed in the below table with an example of the works completed at 268 Kentish Town Road. This doesn't take into account the delivery of the fire safety programme which has completed works to a large number of properties borough wide and the closure of almost 3,000 Fire Risk Assessment actions.



Project	Programme
Regents Park Estate - façade repairs	Better Homes
Ferdinand Estate - façade repairs	Better Homes
Royal College Street	Better Homes
268 Kentish Town Road	Better Homes
New Priory Court	Better Homes

Edgeworth / Stevenson / Greenway	Better Homes
Kiln place	Better Homes
Street Properties - various locations	Better Homes
Monica Shaw Court	Better Homes
Camelot house	Better Homes
Brockham house / Calgarth / Chenies	Better Homes
North Villas	Better Homes
Tybalds Better Homes	Better Homes
Tonbridge House plant room upgrade	Mechanical & Electrical
Brookes Court temp boiler	Mechanical & Electrical
Lift packet 6 & 7	Mechanical & Electrical
Southampton Road district heating and plant room upgrade	Mechanical & Electrical
Spedan Close district heating and plant room upgrade	Mechanical & Electrical
Great Ormond Street plant room upgrade	Mechanical & Electrical
New Harmood plant room upgrade	Mechanical & Electrical
Camden Road plant room upgrade	Mechanical & Electrical
Belsize Grove retrofit pilot	Retrofit
Heat Metering - various projects	Retrofit
Brookes Court retrofit pilot	Retrofit
Clyde Court Internal Heating Upgrades	Retrofit
Gamages & West End Sidings Optimisation	Retrofit
Holmes Road hostel	Sheltered /TAG

### 7.3 Works on site

7.3.1 The following Capital Works projects have mobilised and are in progress.

- Henderson Court solar project – the works are almost complete and includes the installation of solar panels throughout the Henderson Court roof, the generated energy will be directed to the residents' energy meters.



<b>Project</b>	<b>Programme</b>
Primrose hill / Kings Henrys Road	Better Homes
Kilburn Vale Estate	Better Homes
St Silas Estate	Better Homes
1-22 Fairhurst	Better Homes
Derby Lodge	Better Homes
Ellerton House / Solent / Maygrove	Better Homes
Regents Park Estate	Better Homes
Clevedon / Parliament	Better Homes
Kenbrook Phase 2 fire safety works	Better Homes
Calthorpe street	Better Homes
Powis House	Better Homes
Bourne Estate Phase 2	Better Homes
Communal Alarms - street properties	Fire Safety
Fire doors and alarms - borough wide	Fire Safety
Various FRA - Camden Town area	Fire Safety
Various FRA - Gospel Oak area	Fire Safety
Various FRA - Kentish Town area	Fire Safety
Various FRA - Hampstead / Kilburn area	Fire Safety
Various FRA - Holborn area	Fire Safety
Georgiana St FRA	Fire Safety
Emergency Lighting - various locations	Fire Safety
Weedington district heating upgrade	Mechanical & Electrical
Holly Lodge plant room upgrade	Mechanical & Electrical
Future Neighbourhoods Internal Wall Insulation	Retrofit
Cost of Living support for residents	Retrofit
Henderson court PV	Retrofit
Levine and Abbots	Sheltered /TAG

## 7.4 Works soon to mobilise

7.4.1 The following projects are either about to mobilise or are in the final stages of procurement.

<b>Project</b>	<b>Programme</b>
Churchway / Wellesley House / Coopers Lane	Better Homes
Tolmer Square /2 Foundry Mews / Linfield / Hyltons	Better Homes
Campden / Leitch	Better Homes
Maitland Park Estate	Better Homes
Beaumont Walk windows and roof compartmentation	Better Homes
Templar House	Better Homes
Commercial properties - fire safety various locations	Fire Safety
Birkenhead estate cladding works	Fire Safety
Amphill High Rise Emergency Lighting and electrical works	Mechanical & Electrical

Regents Park Water tanks	Mechanical & Electrical
Amphill Door Entry System	Mechanical & Electrical
Lift packets 8 & 9	Mechanical & Electrical
Spedan close district pipework and internals	Mechanical & Electrical
Highgate and Newtown remedials	Mechanical & Electrical
Maiden Lane district heating and plant room upgrade	Mechanical & Electrical
Ellerton bulk gas works	Mechanical & Electrical
Mayford district heating and plant room upgrade	Mechanical & Electrical
Retrofit at Scale (solar panels and storage to 3,000 homes)	Retrofit
SHDF wave 2 - Belmont / Chester / Fitzjohns / Street properties (£3.6m of central government grant funding to retrofit 283 homes)	Retrofit

## 7.5 Works in the commissioning process

7.5.1 A large number of projects are in the process of being tendered or scoped and the next phase of the housing capital programme was approved by Cabinet in January 2025. This will see works valued at £670m commissioned over the next five years as part of the Housing Investment Strategy.

## 8. Updates on Rents

8.1 Inflation and external pressures have significantly impacted the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Rising costs in energy, repairs, maintenance, and housing services, driven by inflation, remain high despite a reduction in CPI. Additionally, high interest rates have increased financing costs, contributing to budget overspends. New regulatory requirements, such as the Social Housing Regulation Act and the Building Safety Act, have further added financial pressures, compounding the challenges faced by the HRA.

8.2 To address funding gaps, several actions have been proposed. These include a rent increase of 2.7% starting from April 2025 to generate additional income, adjustments to tenant service charges to support full cost recovery, and the implementation of savings targets through efficiency improvements and budget adjustments.

8.3 Historical policies from the previous government have resulted in £168 million of lost rental income since 2016, significantly impacting the ability to maintain and improve housing stock. Additionally, the previous government's policy changes such as rent reductions and caps have undermined the financial stability of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

8.4 Rising living costs and arrears trends are significantly influencing financial planning, with a particular focus on improving rent collection and managing void properties. To address these challenges, dedicated teams and new software are being utilized to enhance rent collection rates and manage arrears more effectively.

- 8.5 The newly implemented team structures will ensure Income Recovery & Arrears Prevention, Welfare Benefit Advice, Enforcement and Rent Accounting functions will report to an Income Manager, ensuring closer collaboration.
- 8.6 The Rent's Team have an arrears improvement plan that ensures tenants have access to necessary support, improving rent collection systems, reviewing internal rent collection policies and processes, establishing a rent-first, performance-driven culture, and reviewing roles and responsibilities within the rent collection process.
- 8.7 The plan aims to support tenants who are struggling to pay their rent by helping them maximise their incomes and bring their finances under control, while also enabling enforcement measures for tenants to encourage timely payments.
- 8.8 A new IT system called RentSense was introduced in July 2024 on a pilot basis until November 2024. This system helps prioritise activities to address arrears, enable earlier intervention, and provide additional reporting and communication options. The pilot was successful, and we have seen rent recovery targets exceeded, so a new 18-month contract has been issued.

## **9. Fire Safety**

- 9.1 Since 2018/19, the Council has been delivering the Resident Safety Programme, developed in response to the Hackitt Review of Fire & Building Safety and Phase 1 of the Grenfell Inquiry Report. A key priority has been fire safety works in Council homes, with £200 million of the Council's own resources invested to date and a further £55 million allocated to the capital programme from April 2024.
- 9.2 These budgets and expenditures do not include the final fire safety works at the Chalcots Estate, which are scheduled for completion in summer 2025. From April 2025, the Council has allocated an additional £70 million for fire and structural safety capital works, covering up to 8,400 homes.

### **9.3 Ongoing Fire Safety Works**

- 9.3.1 Our extensive fire safety programme involves a comprehensive review of fire safety requirements across all Council homes, many of which have already undergone improvements. The remaining programme is largely focused on communal areas in blocks of flats, with key works including:
- Replacement of communal area doors and flat front entrance doors
  - Loft compartmentation
  - Installation of dry risers



9.3.2 In 2025, contracts will be issued for cladding remediation works on four buildings in the Birkenhead Estate, using government-secured grant funding.

9.3.3 The Council has also maintained its programme of Fire Risk Assessments and all high-risk actions have been addressed. The Council is working to complete all medium and low-risk actions by December 2025, subject to access and new national Gateway processes for approving work on tall buildings.

#### **9.4 Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms**

9.4.1 Significant progress has been made in ensuring carbon monoxide and smoke alarms are installed in Council homes:

- The carbon monoxide alarm programme has been fully completed for 13,089 homes where alarms were required.
- As of January 2025, 94.95% of required homes had been fitted with smoke detection systems, covering 21,121 properties.
- The remaining 1,123 homes are part of the ongoing delivery programme. Where access has been an issue, the Council will pursue legal action if necessary to ensure resident safety.

#### **9.5 Commitment to Best Practice in Fire Safety**

9.5.1 The Government's response to Phase 2 of the Grenfell Inquiry Report is expected in 2025, but Camden is not waiting to act on key recommendations. The Council is committed to taking a best practice approach, continuing to develop and enhance the Resident Safety Programme to ensure all Council homes remain as safe as possible.

9.5.2 This work also aligns with measures to meet the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards for Council homes. The Resident Safety Programme will be adapted and updated in response to any new primary or secondary legislation introduced by the Government. Additionally, the Council's Fire and Building Safety Charter commitments will be reviewed and strengthened to reflect ongoing improvements in fire safety standards.

### **10. Damp and Mould**

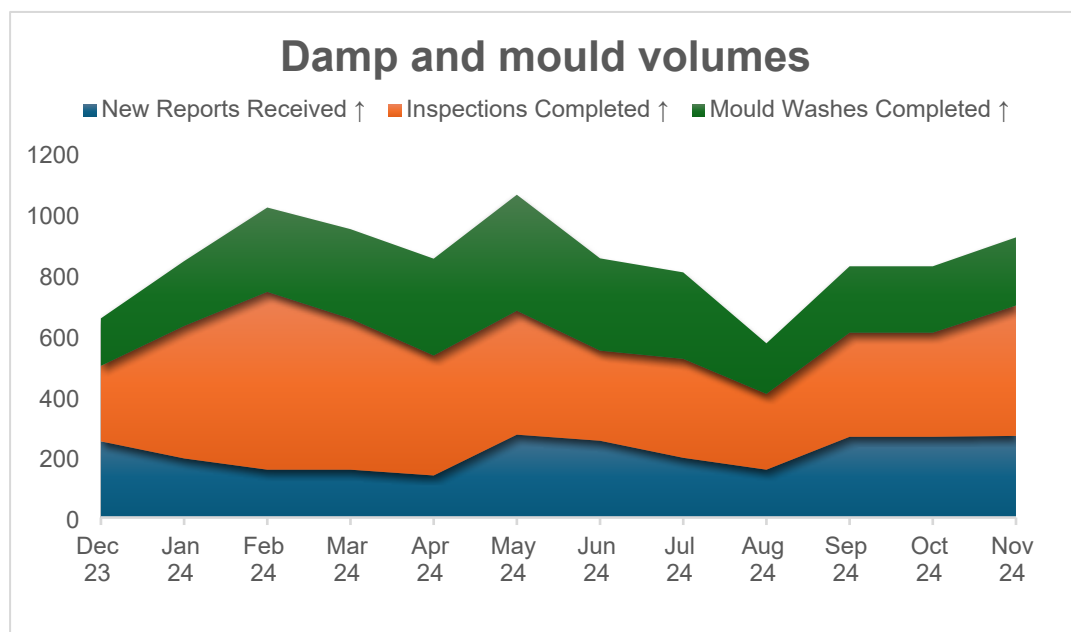
10.1 From January 2024 till the end of November 2024, the team visited over 3,000 homes, demonstrating proactive engagement and responsiveness to tenant concerns regarding damp and mould. A total of 1744 mould washes were completed during this period, significantly contributing to improved living conditions and tenant satisfaction. The amount of emergency cases during this period dramatically reduced and we attended just 15, 24-hour emergencies

10.2 We currently have 463 active cases, with 15 new requests every day on average. This is much less than over the same period last year, when we had

about 100 new requests every day. Five of these cases are considered severe. As set out earlier in the report – we will be looking at how our processes need to adapt so that the Council can meet Awaab’s Law when it is introduced.

- 10.3 Over the past two years, we have actively engaged with over 100 residents who Public Health England has identified as a higher risk. In 2023, we received 218 complaints about damp and mould. So far in 2024, we have received 145 complaints, demonstrating the positive impact of our approach. In most cases, damp and mould are not the underlying cause of the problems.
- 10.4 Across day-to-day and major works projects, 83 households were temporarily decanted since we started this work in 2022 due to severe mould or required work. This ensured tenant safety and minimised disruption during essential works.
- 10.5 Earlier in 2024, over 400 front-line Housing & Repairs staff received training to identify and support residents with damp and mould concerns. We also carried out a damp and mould workshop at the Resident Action Day. We created a Camden staff tackling damp and mould video, which has been shared with other London Councils. Our specially created resident damp and mould videos have had 1000 views.
- 10.6 All our Mould Marshalls received training in April 2024. There are also plans for Management in the Damp & Mould team to have further training and receive a qualification in Surveying Timber & Dampness in properties.
- 10.7 Our Damp & Mould team collaborates with the Major Works team to address properties where underlying structural or fabrication issues may be contributing to persistent damp and mould problems. By identifying and tackling these root causes, we aim to provide long-term, effective solutions that ensure the health and safety of residents while maintaining the integrity of the building.
- 10.8 The team also works collaboratively with various other departments across the council to address damp and mould issues in properties effectively. This includes working alongside Neighbourhood Housing Officers (NHOs), Occupational Health (OT), Social Services, and other teams to ensure the best outcomes for our residents. For example, the team is currently managing a case in partnership with Family Support and NHOs to achieve the best outcome for a family, by addressing the property’s living conditions and prioritising the family’s health and well-being, demonstrating our commitment to a holistic, resident focused approach.
- 10.9 To report damp and mould, residents can use Camden’s established reporting channels, including WhatsApp, SMS, live chat, and more recently, Madetech has been introduced, along with a tailored reporting form, allowing residents

to report damp and mould issues and submit photos directly. This new reporting journey is proving to be a success, with an average of 70 new requests received weekly. The additional information and photos provided by residents offer a clearer understanding of on-site conditions, enabling quicker and more efficient responses to address issues in their homes.



## 11. Tenant Participation Work Update

11.1 This year, we have been working with residents to develop a new model for tenant participation, bringing tenant engagement closer to our We Make Camden participation ambitions and building compliance with the Transparency, Influence, and Accountability standard laid out in the 2020 Social Housing White Paper 'A Charter for Social Housing.' Within this new participation model, our three objectives are to ensure:

- Every tenant and leaseholder has the opportunity to be an active citizen;
- Residents are close to decision making, service design and scrutiny;
- Local networks and active residents are enabled to make positive contributes to neighbourhoods.

11.2 We aim to bring this model and its objectives to life over the next few years. Our main priorities in the first year will be:

- Development of a virtual We make Camden Tenants Group
- Development of tools and resources to equip tenants to take action in their homes (e.g. fixing simple repairs)
- Clearly communicating the range of ways tenants can get involved

- Redesign of our tenant participation team to better reflect our model and objectives

The new model also aims to embed innovation practices from our intensive tenant engagement programme into our day-to-day practice at Housing and Repairs. This programme has successfully:

- Hosted Action Days at 32 estates and neighbourhood areas
- Completed door knocking for 6,610 tenant's doors
- Recruited 300 volunteers from across the council to hold deliberative conversations with residents
- Developed 30 Estate Action plans to address key issues raised by residents

11.3 This work has enabled us to reach deeply within our communities and drive a new relational way of working with our tenants. For example, following the action day at Peckwater estate, the Participation team has been working with the community, NW5 Community Play Project and Arsenal Football Club to explore improving the sports pitch and provide residents with an improved safe space to play sport and lead healthy lives.

11.4 To continue this path, we are committed to delivering 10 Neighbourhood Action Days per year and visit residents via our new tenancy visiting programme.

11.5 We have already begun work to better communicate the different ways residents can get involved by updating our website with the range of options available ([Get involved - Camden Council](#)). This has been supported by the design of District Management Committee microsites, where online, residents can gain updates on DMC activity and reports, monitor the performance of services, and submit a bid for funding ([District Management Committees - Camden Council](#)). This has enabled district management committees to widen their reach and impact, as well as improve transparency between services, resident groups, and tenants.

11.6 In Camden, we are fortunate to have strong housing communities, and to nurture this we have continued work closely with Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs). This year we have delivered learning and development opportunities on fire-safety awareness to TRAs and have offered District Management Committee chairs a course in BSL. In addition, at least 30 of our halls have been equipped with internet connection, with others to be included in the wayleave roll-out in partnership with Community Fibre and Hyper-Optic. A further 12 halls have been kitted with conferencing equipment for online meetings and training.

- 11.7 We also supported tenant and resident associations in delivering a Resident Action Day (previously named Tenant Conference). This day of action aimed to bring together active residents with the council and partner organizations, to share ideas, skills and inspiration for the future of our estates and neighbourhoods. 101 tenants and leaseholders attended on the day, and the feedback received from survey respondents was positive with 86% of respondents feeling like they gained insight or understanding from the day, 84% of respondents feeling inspired by other's experiences, and 92% agreeing that they would like to see more opportunities like this in the future. Building on events like this, our new approach will continue to draw upon the resourcefulness, diversity and energy of communities to get closer to what matters for residents.
- 11.8 Recognising the importance of resident voices in all we do, we have implemented a universal feedback form for all tenant involvement activities facilitated by Camden. This will help us to continuously learn and improve from resident feedback, getting closer to what matters to residents and meet our participation ambitions. Over the next year, we will further improve performance monitoring with the creation of an engagement app, enabling us to measure group attendance and diversity.
- 11.9 2024 has been an exceptionally busy year for the Tenant Participation team, which has been actively engaging and supporting 110 Tenant and Resident Associations (TRAs), five District Management Committees (DMCs), and managing 81 TRA spaces. A significant milestone was the launch of the DMC microsites, an online platform designed to provide residents with easy access to information on DMC meetings, reports, participation opportunities, TRAs, and other local updates. This initiative has improved transparency and accessibility, enabling residents to engage more effectively with housing services.
- 11.10 The team has also facilitated two online deep-dive sessions with residents, focusing on the communal heating pool service. Additionally, they have delivered a range of training sessions, including fire safety awareness, committee roles and responsibilities, funding processes, safeguarding, and Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). These sessions have strengthened the skills and knowledge of residents, empowering them to play a more active role in their housing communities.
- 11.11 This year, the team also reviewed and took responsibility for the management of DMC funding and the application process, introducing an end-of-project evaluation to improve accountability and effectiveness. Work is also underway to review DMC operations and facilitation, ensuring they remain fit for purpose and responsive to residents' needs.

- 11.12 In addition to this, new Tenant and Resident Associations (TRAs) have been established at Spencer Rise, 25-46 Albert Street, 15 Belsize Avenue, Seymour House, Barnes House, West Kentish Town Estate, Forge & Mutton, further expanding resident-led initiatives across Camden.
- 11.13 The Tenant Participation team has also played a crucial role in cross-team collaboration, serving as a standing member of key projects such as The Estate Mission Programme, Food Priority Pilot, Think & Do Engagement, and One Kilburn. Additionally, the team has supported Participatory Budgeting at Hilgrove Estate, Somers Town Big Local, and the Greening Infrastructure Project in Hampstead, ensuring that tenant voices are embedded in wider community-led initiatives.
- 11.14 Through these efforts, the Tenant Participation team has continued to build stronger resident networks, improve community engagement, and enhance the overall tenant experience across Camden.

### **Resident Action Day 2024**

- 11.15 The Resident Action Day took place on Saturday, 28th September 2024 at the Crowndale Centre, marking the culmination of months of collaboration and preparation to deliver an event designed for residents, led by residents.
- 11.16 The day attracted over 100 tenants and leaseholders. Attendees included representatives from resident groups, community champions, panel members, community organisers, and other key local partners. The event provided a unique space for tenants and leaseholders to engage directly with council officers, statutory bodies, and third-sector services, fostering stronger links between communities and the organisations that support them.
- 11.17 A highlight of the day was a fireside chat with the new Leader of the Council, Richard Olszewski, where residents had the opportunity to discuss their concerns and aspirations for housing in Camden. The event also featured workshops focused on pressing issues for tenants and leaseholders, creating an open forum for learning and exchange. Additionally, the new DMC microsites were launched, providing a centralised, transparent hub for District Management Committees, ensuring residents have easier access to information, decision-making processes, and participation opportunities.
- 11.18 The idea for this event originated in Spring 2023, when DMC chairs wrote to the then Leader of the Council, Georgia Gould, proposing a Tenant Conference. Their proposal sought to:
- Broaden engagement beyond formal resident groups.
  - Address the diverse and complex issues faced by both tenants and leaseholders.

- Facilitate knowledge-sharing and best practices, particularly around technology use in tenant participation.
- Discuss key challenges such as funding for housing services, collaboration with councillors, and improvements to the repairs service.

11.19 From the outset, it was clear that the event needed to be resident-led. To achieve this, an event proposal was presented to DMCs, leading to eight representatives from across the five districts volunteering to form a working group alongside council officers. This approach ensured the planning and delivery of the event were co-designed and co-organised.

11.20 The working group was formally established in January 2024, with members agreeing on terms of reference and objectives. From then on, the group met every two to three weeks to oversee planning, ensuring the event reflected the needs and priorities of residents. During these discussions, the original name, "Tenant Conference," was revised to "Resident Action Day", following feedback from younger residents who felt the new title was more inclusive and engaging.

11.21 The four key objectives of the event were:

- Encouraging active participation among residents in their communities and housing services.
- Strengthening connections across Camden, enabling residents to share ideas, solutions, and a collective vision for tenant engagement.
- Bringing together Council services, residents, and partner organisations to facilitate learning and collaboration.
- Showcasing the diversity, creativity, and resourcefulness of Camden's tenants, leaseholders, and resident groups.

11.22 By embedding a truly collaborative and participatory ethos, the Resident Action Day demonstrated what is possible when Camden's housing communities, the Council, and key stakeholders come together to co-create solutions and amplify resident voices in decision-making.

11.23 This model of resident-led engagement will now inform future participation initiatives, ensuring that tenants and leaseholders continue to play an active role in shaping the services and policies that affect them.

## **12. Improving standards in the Private Rented Sector**

12.1 The Full Council held a themed debate on the private rented sector on 14 October 2024, hearing from five external speakers with a range of professional and personal experiences of this sector. The Council committed

to continue its support for the private rented sector, ensuring that residents will have a decent, safe and warm home.

- 12.2 The Private Sector Housing service completed a review of the current borough-wide additional houses in multiple occupation (HMO) licensing scheme, evidenced by over two hundred compliance inspections completed in October 2024. The review found that the scheme is resulting in clear improvements in the safety, management and conditions of this type of accommodation.
- 12.3 Of licences issued, 94% have required works to bring the property up to the council's minimum HMO standards, with the most common improvement being fire safety. Inspections found that in 80% of cases the licence holder had either commenced or completed the works required in the licence. Whilst this compliance rate is encouraging, the remaining 20% of properties have urgent works to improve the safety and conditions for tenants which have not been started. Appropriate enforcement action or 1-year licences will be considered for these cases moving forward.
- 12.4 As part of our commitment to tackle poor housing conditions and improve management standards, we are consulting on renewing our borough-wide additional HMO licensing scheme, for a further 5-years from December 2025. This is the opportunity for residents, landlords, businesses and neighbouring boroughs to comment on the proposals for the new scheme. The consultation period ends on 8 April 2025.
- 12.5 The service has started planning for the implications of the proposed legislation to be introduced via the Renter's Right Bill, currently progressing through Parliament. The key impacts on the service will be:
- Introduction of decent home standard for the private rented sector.
  - Increased range of offences that can be subject to Civil Penalty Notices (CPN), including increased maximum fine limits.
  - Private rented sector database – recording details of all private rented accommodation.
  - Likely resourcing challenges due to increased demands for support from private renters.
- 12.6 Camden has been the sole London representative on both the Civil Penalty Notice and Rent Repayment Orders working groups hosted by MHCLG, contributing towards proposed new guidance for these enforcement tools. The council is also one of only 3 Councils nationally to be included in a pilot with the Department of Works and Pensions to obtain information on Universal Credit. This will assist the team with its unlicensed HMO work and improve our ability to secure Rent Repayment Orders against landlords that fail to licence their properties.



- 12.7 The Council has entered into a formal partnership with Safer Renting to provide tenancy advocacy support where private renters face illegal eviction and harassment from their landlords. They will work in collaboration with the Tenancy Relations Officer within the service. So far over 24 tenants have received support from Safer Renting.
- 12.8 The service continues to use all tools available to the council to improve standards and tackle the minority of landlords that seek to exploit vulnerable tenants. To this end a graduate Environmental Health Officer inspected several properties operated by a landlord with a large property portfolio. Financial penalties of over £60k were issued, which were paid in full. The company is now working with the officer to devise and undertake a programme of improvement works across their entire property portfolio.
- 12.9 When private tenants were surveyed in 2020, 51% of respondents were not aware that the Council could help them, with only 26% feeling confident about their rights. Since this time the service has developed the Camden Private Renters website, a dedicated place containing advice and guidance for private renters. We're keen to engage with renters; however, this has proven very challenging. The service is currently working with Members to hold a series of private renter Ward-based surgeries across the Borough, hosted by local councillors, with a speaker from the service and staff from a range of services on stalls to provide relevant advice.
- 12.10 The service continues to fund two Trading Standards officers to enforce a range of legislation in connection with private renting from – Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations, Tenant Fees Act, Safety in Let accommodation and Consumer Rights Act and have issued over £100k in financial penalties so far for related offences.
- 12.11 The service is responsible for the Council's Housing Renewal Assistance Policy, which includes a range of grants designed to improve standards within the private housing sector, with assistance targeted at the most vulnerable groups. The primary assistance is via Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG), to provide adaptations to Camden residents to enable them to remain independent in their home. The grants team has approved 110 DFG's, with adaptations ranging from level access showers, stair lifts and door entry systems.
- 12.12 Camden operates The London Landlord Accreditation scheme on behalf of all London Boroughs, who contribute towards its funding. The scheme aims to raise the professionalism of landlords providing rented accommodation, ensuring that they are aware of their responsibilities. The scheme celebrated its 20th Anniversary in December 2024 and has in excess of 65,000 accredited landlords.

### **13. Update on Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Temporary Accommodation**

- 13.1 Along with the rest of London, Camden is facing a homelessness crisis. In April 2023, there were 634 households in temporary accommodation, increasing to 980 in October 2024, representing approximately 50% growth within 18 months. Across London more than 175,000 Londoners are homeless and living in temporary accommodation – equivalent to 1 in 50 residents of the capital, including 1 in 23 children (at least one child per classroom on average).
- 13.2 Staff recruitment and retention has been difficult in the homelessness prevention service. Roles have been reviewed as part of the service restructure and will see an increase in grade which it is hoped will help with retention and recruitment. The Allocations and Lettings service is also currently undergoing a major restructure. The new structure will create a new property procurement function containing the skills and specialism to deliver a more efficient and less costly TA provision.
- 13.3 The service has identified potential to secure 30 void properties on regeneration estates across the borough and utilise as short life lets as temporary accommodation. The first 20 of these have been fully scoped for works and will be ready to let soon.
- 13.4 The Temporary Accommodation Purchase Programme (TAPP) which involves buying back ex-Right-to-Buy properties for sale on the open market and using them for the purpose of temporary accommodation has seen a total of 159 properties purchased across the 3 allocations (TAPP, TAPP2, TAPP3). There are currently 126 in occupation with the rest anticipated to be available once they have been brought up to Camden's lettable standard.
- 13.5 The redevelopment of Camden and Chester Road hostels into family hostels is severely delayed. The two hostels will deliver 89 additional rooms and has been incorporated into the TA model but has experienced severe delays and is not currently on-site. These are now projected to be available from 2026.
- 13.6 35 units from the private stock on the new development at Agar Grove estate have been allocated for TA use and will shortly be fully occupied.
- 13.7 The service has onboarded a new hotel brokerage company, Jigsaw, for out-of-hours accommodation. As Jigsaw partner with several registered providers, they secure lower nightly rates when booking hotel rooms which helps to lower the overall commercial hotel cost.

- 13.8 It is worth noting that since January 2024, new providers of nightly accommodation have been onboarded which has provided access to 242 rooms, delivering a 30% cost reduction when compared with the average Premier Inn room rate. Without these interventions, it is estimated that the TA bill in 2024/25 would be £4.4m higher.
- 13.9 The service has undertaken some analysis to identify the most expensive providers of nightly self-contained accommodation and continues to take steps to onboard alternative & cheaper accommodation providers. The work to decant households has begun and will deliver an annualised £0.275m saving.
- 13.10 However, the increase in homelessness acceptances means that new entrants to temporary accommodation keep rising while very few households are moving on to settled accommodation. This means that, despite the Council's extensive mitigations described above, it is forecasting an overspend of £12.4m on the temporary accommodation budget in 2024/25.
- 13.11 The Routes off the Streets (RTS) service, funded by the government's Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) 2022-25, has faced reduced grants based on the previous government's assumption that rough sleeping would decline. Instead, socio-economic factors have caused an increase, straining resources. Budget cuts have led to staff reductions and higher caseloads, limiting service effectiveness. A review by Executive Director of Adults and Health and the Portfolio lead for Adults and Health confirms that current funding is insufficient, highlighting the critical need for increased support.

#### **14. Borough Of Sanctuary**

- 14.1 In June 2024 Camden achieved full accreditation as a Borough of Sanctuary demonstrating our commitment to helping all refugees living or transient in the borough to rebuild their lives and take positive decisions about their own future. The award reflects Camden's efforts to deliver refugee facing services, working with our Borough of Sanctuary VCS forum and our strategic partners to deliver places of sanctuary, welcome, and dignity for vulnerable refugee and asylum seekers.
- 14.2 Camden is proud to have received the award which reflects our track record and history of welcoming refugee communities into the borough over many years. Our vision is to work across our communities and our partnerships to create the long-term conditions of growth and integration for our refugee communities, while at the same time building our learning and our expertise into our future ways of working.

#### **14.3 The Camden Pledge**

14.3.1 The final phases of the Camden Pledge, Afghan resettlement scheme are now well advanced. By the end of March 2025, Camden will have resettled 90 Afghan households comprised of 312 individuals into long term homes in Camden. This ground-breaking scheme, funded externally by the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) has increased affordable housing resources for refugee families, by taking houses intended for private sale, back into the Camden housing stock and through buying back former Council homes, sold under Right to Buy. Consequently, we are delivering new refugee housing capacity without creating pressure elsewhere in our housing system.

14.3.2 These households are now integrating further within their neighbourhoods, accessing local schools, learning English, gaining employment, and becoming part of our Camden story. All households have an allocated a support worker from Camden Council's floating support team.

14.3.3 Partnership remains the cornerstone of our approach. For example, we will shortly be opening of the new community centre, HNCP, which lies at the heart of our Highgate Newtown development, where many former Afghan refugees are now rebuilding their lives. The new centre will bring communities together, celebrating our diversity and helping to build cohesion.

#### **14.4 Homes For Ukraine**

14.4.1 We have seen a recent flurry of Government policy announcements impacting our Ukrainian community. Not least of these has been the introduction of the Ukrainian Permission Extension (UPE) Visa which will replace the 3-year Homes For Ukraine Visa. UPE will grant an additional 18 months leave to remain in the UK for Ukrainian refugees living in the borough in host – guest arrangements. However, beyond the 18-month extension the Governments position is unclear and as it stands there is no further funding committed from Central Government for the HFU scheme, beyond the 18 months.

14.4.2 To date we have been able to offer sanctuary to around 1000 Ukrainians fleeing war and persecution, made possible by the strength and compassion of our communities. We are working with our Ukrainian community partners to support guests to navigate these changes and continue to sustain and support community sponsorship as an important elements of our wider refugee response.

#### **15. The Estates Mission**

15.1 Following an all-day breakthrough workshop in July 2024 in which residents, 58 external partners and Camden officers were invited to explore eight opportunity areas, we have refocused the Estate Mission on reducing health

inequalities between those that live on our estates and others residents in Camden. The Mission's three key long term outcomes are that:

- People who live on our estates feel a sense of belonging and connection;
- Our estates are healthy environments;
- and Our residents have the power to shape their local environment

15.2 There are currently three live projects, with another four in the design stage, these include:

15.2.1 Community-led budgeting gives people more agency in how funds are spent in their neighbourhoods. Over the last few years, in partnership with The Winch, residents at the Hilgrove Estate have been able to decide how part of their estate's budget for the following two years would be spent. Residents voted to spend their budget on trying to recruit a caretaker from one of the residents on Hilgrove, sensory play equipment, new bin storage, and new bike storage. This year, the residents have been involved in deciding which bins should be prioritised for new storage as well as how to incorporate sensory play equipment into the two existing playgrounds on the estate. In 2025/26 the Council will be working to recruit a new apprentice caretaker on Hilgrove as well as put in place new bike storage. Residents involved particularly enjoyed the opportunity to meet their neighbours and feel part of their community. They also liked being trusted with making decisions about budgets which impact the area they live.

15.2.2 The Community Champions programme placed a Champion co-ordinator in three areas, each hosted by a community organisation. The co-ordinators work with residents to agree hyper-local priorities to improve health and wellbeing, with a volunteer network of resident Champions developing new ideas and projects that will deliver these improvement priorities. One of the projects on the Regent's Park Estate has recruited 70 Champions to engage with hundreds of residents. A community safety project called Young Guardians, part of our Community Champions programme, started in Regent's Park Estate and is now being rolled out to Ampt Hill Estate. Following a positive evaluation earlier this year we will be expanding the programme into five areas across Camden in 2025.

15.2.3 The Vacant Spaces Programme transforms Camden's underused spaces on estates to create spaces with public value, and contribute to social infrastructure. Our pilot vacant spaces project is on Hilgrove Estate and we are investigating 11 other sites for next year.

15.2.4 Working with Arsenal in the Community and Adidas, we have secured £60k investment into the refurbishment of the sports pitch on Peckwater Estate. This is part of Arsenal's No More Red campaign, which aims to tackle the root

causes of youth violence by providing safe spaces and more opportunities for our young people. We are working closely with their team on the renewal, launch and long-term usage of the pitch so that residents will be able to access free sport and physical activity sessions alongside partners NW5 Youth Project, who are based on the estate.

- 15.3 Looking ahead to 2025, the Estates Mission will focus on deepening its impact by embedding the refreshed governance approach, accelerating key projects, and strengthening community partnerships. We will be undertaking a range of engagement activities, providing spaces and opportunities for communities, including the opening of a new neighbourhood space at 2 Prince Of Wales Road, working with local TRAs and estate residents through a series of creative engagement projects.

## **16. Conclusion**

- 16.1 Reflecting on this year, it is clear that Camden has made significant progress despite a difficult economic and policy landscape. The challenges we have faced - including financial constraints, increasing demand for temporary accommodation, and the need for enhanced fire safety compliance - have required a coordinated and strategic response. Our teams have worked tirelessly to ensure that residents continue to receive high-quality housing services, and I am immensely grateful for their dedication and hard work.
- 16.2 The introduction of new digital services has been a game-changer for tenant engagement and service accessibility. Residents now have multiple channels to report repairs, access information, and track service updates. This transition has not only improved response times but has also given tenants more control over their housing needs. The success of our proactive SMS updates, particularly in providing real-time information on lift and heating repairs, highlights the benefits of our digital transformation.
- 16.3 Our efforts to tackle damp and mould have delivered tangible improvements, with targeted intervention programmes reducing the number of emergency cases and ensuring that long-term solutions are put in place. Over 3,000 homes have been visited in the past year for damp and mould assessments, with 1,744 mould washes completed and an 80% reduction in severe emergency cases. Training for frontline staff and enhanced data collection have further strengthened our ability to identify and resolve issues before they escalate, helping to protect the health and well-being of Camden's tenants.
- 16.4 Our investment in fire safety and compliance with the Building Safety Act has been a major achievement, ensuring that Camden's housing stock meets rigorous safety standards. The successful implementation of our five-year action plan for high-rise buildings demonstrates our commitment to protecting

tenants and mitigating fire risks. Through ongoing capital works and proactive resident engagement, we remain steadfast in ensuring that safety remains a top priority.

- 16.5 The private rented sector remains an area where more needs to be done. While Camden has strengthened its licensing schemes and enforcement measures, systemic change at the national level is essential. Our advocacy for rent controls, stronger eviction protections, and a national landlord registry will remain a top priority in the year ahead. We will continue working closely with key partners, including tenant advocacy groups, to push for meaningful legislative reforms.
- 16.6 None of this would have been possible without the incredible work of our housing teams, who have gone above and beyond to deliver for residents, especially during a time of huge transformation and change. I want to extend my deepest thanks to all staff for their resilience and commitment. A special acknowledgement must go to Glendine Shepherd, Director of Housing, and Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management, whose leadership has been instrumental in driving forward critical housing initiatives. I also want to recognise the invaluable contributions of Gillian Marston, Executive Director of Supporting Communities, whose oversight has ensured the successful implementation of our strategic priorities.
- 16.7 As we look to the future, our focus remains clear: we will continue to invest in social housing, expand support for private renters, and enhance resident engagement. Through collaboration, advocacy, and a steadfast commitment to fairness, we will build on this year's successes and push for further improvements in housing policy and service delivery. Camden's residents deserve nothing less, and we will continue to work tirelessly to ensure that every person in our borough has access to a secure, high-quality home.

## **17. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services**

- 17.1 The Director of Finance has reviewed the report, and his comments have been incorporated.

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

- 18.1 The Borough Solicitor has reviewed this report, and his comments have been incorporated.

## **19. Environmental Implications**

- 19.1 The cost of living crisis is strongly linked to the wider climate emergency, with strong drivers for increasing energy costs rooted in our continuing reliance on carbon-based fuels for our gas and electricity supply. Reducing heat loss and

improving the thermal efficiency of homes both benefit households by keeping them warm and well and saving them money and contributes to a reduction of CO2 emissions associated with heating. Alongside this and as part of our commitment to climate mitigation and a just transition to a net zero economy, we are working longer-term to improve the thermal efficiency and sustainability of our housing stock, our commercial property and our Council buildings.

**REPORT ENDS**