

THE LEADER'S STATEMENT TO FULL COUNCIL 27 JUNE 2011

Thank You, Mr Mayor

It is a privilege to serve as leader of the Council for a second year. Having been brought up in Camden, I know the life opportunities which are created by our communities, our schools and our Council.

I thank all members of Cabinet – old and new - who have worked so tirelessly to deliver change in the face of the worst financial crisis in Camden's history.

Special thanks to Cllr Jonathan Simpson. Last May, Jonathan was crowned Camden's first "Rock n Roll" mayor. Over the last year, he has established Camden as Britain's unchallenged Rock n Roll capital, and shown us that there is always a "bright side of life"!

We also lost 2 exemplary Councillors last year, Cllr Dave Horan and Cllr Martin Davies. Dave served as a councillor for 20 years, including in my ward, Regent's Park. From Dave I learnt how hard our ward members expect us all to work on their behalf! We should all remember their dedicated record of public service.

Camden's success is based on our enduring values.

- We believe in the dignity and worth of all our residents
- We recognise that the Council works best when it is closest to our communities
- We celebrate the unique social mix in our borough. How together, whatever our class, ethnicity or locality we can work together to make Camden a place where we are all proud to live,
- There is such a thing as community. By the strength of our common endeavour, we can achieve more as a community than we can achieve alone, whether as individuals or as a Council.

Camden's rich fabric of social provision reflects those values. Our services have come under unprecedented attack over the last 12 months. Whilst we have campaigned to protect these services, we have had no choice but to take the painful decisions necessary to secure a balanced budget.

We have not shied away from making those hard decisions. However, our values have guided us in reshaping the council for the future.

Rather than dwell on what we have achieved over the past twelve months, perhaps the most difficult twelve months in Camden's history, I rather want to look to the future.

I want Camden to be in the vanguard of building a new model for local government that will deliver better outcomes for all.

I will focus on three themes that really matter to me and I believe matter to Camden: leadership, Democracy and Community

NEW APPROACHES TO LEADERSHIP

Camden has always been a leading council, working closely with our partners and the community to find new ways to improve services for residents and businesses. Innovation and partnership working are in our DNA. But I want to share our vision for a new approach – one that will deliver innovative solutions on the ground for both individuals and communities.

We want Camden to be recognised as a strong, strategic leader in the community. The ConDem's so-called Big Society model assumes councils should just self-destruct. We know that the Council is a critical force to harness the energy and resources for our local communities. *But the uniqueness of a council and of Camden is it's democratic mandate to work with all our residents and stakeholders to deliver improved lives and better outcomes for everyone that lives, works and visits here.* I am excited about the journey on which we have embarked to achieve this vision.

Our independent Education Commission is a genuine conversation bringing together the voices of all the people who care about "life chances". It will enable us to speak with authority when negotiating

with this ConDem government which is hell bent on fragmenting the education system.

Our Shaping Services initiative is a new way of working with our Camden communities at a local level. Colleagues have participated in these community workshops. We have seen the energy and creativity which we can harness with local service providers, community groups and other partners. These conversations have generated 10 innovative projects to explore new ways of working – from looking at more integrated community provision to addressing youth disengagement.

We are already thinking about how and where this conversation should grow:

- Our Green Summits,
- the new Business Board;
- a Health and Wellbeing Board;

establishing new platforms for partnership working where we harness all our collective energy to address longstanding challenges for the borough.

Our Community Investment Programme brings together our vision for community development with a capital investment programme that will generate £235m of capital receipts up to 2015. We will invest in the future of our communities.

REVITALISING DEMOCRACY

Democracy is also in our DNA. Camden has a proud history of political protest and vibrant local communities who want to be involved in the provision of local services.

There is a danger that the difficult times ahead may lead to cynicism and disengagement from the political process.

In Camden, we must rather revitalise and modernise our democratic institutions.

Our role as ward councillors matters. We were voted in by our local communities. Local people want involvement in what we do on their behalf. They want us to be more accountable.

I want us to reach the less vocal majority of residents by invigorating community participation. We will strengthen existing partnerships and forge new ones to reach those who usually don't participate in civic activity.

Change is underway. We have built on the work of the previous administration developing Area Forums into Area Action Groups. These cost less, attendance is going up and they provide all councillors with an opportunity to collaborate with their communities.

We have recently launched We are Camden, an innovative national pilot showing how technology can reach some of the less vocal majority of our residents and communities through new on-line open forums.

Later this year, we will launch a new Housing Strategy for Camden. A key feature will be a new voice and greater collaboration with our tenants.

I am committed to ensuring that the Council does its best for, and acts as the voice for Camden. At a regional level we have been at the table in the preparation for the 2012 London Olympics to ensure that we get the best deal possible for Camden.

DELIVERY BY THE COMMUNITY FOR THE COMMUNITY

I now turn to the community. In these unprecedented times of public service cuts we must do things differently if we are to minimise the negative impact on our communities.

In Camden we have a proud innovative tradition to service delivery. Our vibrant voluntary and community sector has always been a key partner. I want us to go further and faster with this - promoting new and exciting models of service delivery by the community for the community.

Again, the ConDem government talk of new ways of running services and points to their concept of the Big Society, In Camden, we know that to make this happen, people and organisations need help to get started. The Council will play a role in both leading and supporting them.

We have already identified opportunities to support new models. Responsibility for running Queen's Crescent Market is to be transferred to a social enterprise to be set up by the Queen's Crescent Community Association.

Our focus will be on supporting the community to run services where it is feasible to do so – but we will ensure democratic accountability and we will manage any risks. I believe that this is the right way forward.

Over the next year, the council will lead the way in exploring other areas:

- Alternative provision with community groups for three of our libraries;
- looking at re-provision of two Children's Centres; and
- reviewing options for future play provision.

We are committed to doing more where this makes sense. And we will invest in strengthening the voluntary sector, enabling it to face the challenges of today.

Camden's People's Fund is part of this investment - providing transition funding to give people and organisations longer to adjust to funding reductions and to enable them to find new ways to preserve valued services.

I'm pleased to announce that the first allocations from the Fund have been made:

- £300k to help organisations providing support for older people to redesign their services;
- £150k to help organisations to provide good neighbour schemes;

- £40k for social clubs working with those with Learning disabilities and
- £9k to support youth diversion.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Mr Mayor, I repeat those key words: leadership, democracy and community.

Tonight, I have outlined the path the Labour administration has set for Camden: to be at the forefront of building a new model for local government that will deliver better outcomes, protecting and enhancing all that is good in the Borough.

At the same time, we will not forget Camden's tradition of political protest, We will fight those policies that we believe are harmful to our communities. Particularly the housing and welfare reforms which will cause such devastation for those who live in London.

We must all speak out for Camden if we are to preserve the borough's rich social mix.

As Leader, I will be driven by my love of this borough and my desire to do the best for all the citizens of Camden.

COUNCILLOR NASIM ALI
Leader of the Council
June 2011