

Leader's Annual Report

Introduction

I am proud to present a summary of the year to the Joint Chairs of Scrutiny.

The last year has been challenging both locally and nationally, but I am honoured to lead a Council that has continued to deliver for our communities – working and supporting the most vulnerable, investing in facilities and new homes, advocating for our citizens to national government, giving a platform for people to shape their services and neighbourhoods.

The last year has been about focusing on delivering on our mandate from communities, and on our shared vision for Camden outlined in Camden 2025. We have continued to work with our communities toward a Borough where we actively tackle inequality in all its forms – inequality of wealth, of opportunity and power.

I believe that the last year has been characterized by the Council continuing on its journey to developing deeper and more trusting partnerships with our residents. Our ambitions and efforts to bring residents into the heart of our decision-making have changed the way we plan and deliver services across the Council. They have made our ambitions for how we tackle the climate emergency more radical, shaped the national plan for the development of Euston Station, participated in sharing out community budgets, and delivered community care with us for some of the most vulnerable.

In the last year, we have worked to ensure that the Council remains financially stable, focusing our resources on delivering the outcomes residents showed us were important to them through Camden 2025¹. I am proud that instead of incrementally cutting front-line services, we worked with our residents to invest in schools, in employment and skills, in youth services, in care and in neighbourhood spaces that provide connection and community, whilst developing a strong plan for the future ensuring we can keep delivering the services that our communities rely on.

Over the last year, we have continued to invest in our communities as part of one of the largest Council housebuilding programmes in London. Camden has built over 850 homes in Camden, and we remain on track to meet our overall target of building 1,100 new Council homes. Over the last year we delivered 38 new Council homes in the first phase of Agar Grove, 14 Council homes at Brayshaw House, 141 homes including 66 new Council homes at phase one of the Abbey Development, a new sixth form centre for LaSWAP secondary school, a new music and drama studio at William Ellis, new classrooms at Parliament Hill and Camden's first Centre for Independent Living, run by disabled people, for disabled people². Since the start of the CIP, the Council has built 109 new and improved hostel bed spaces, alongside 90 new Council homes for tenants displaced as part of High Speed 2 and the redevelopment of Euston. This year we have also committed funding to build a further 1500 homes across the Borough beyond our initial Community Investment

¹ [Camden Medium Term Financial Strategy, 2019](#)

² [Camden Community Investment Programme \(CIP\) Annual Report, September 2019](#)

Programme (CIP)³. We have also committed over twenty million pounds to repurchasing Council homes sold under right-to-buy to house homeless families⁴. In the year in which we marked 100 years since the passing of the Addison Act in 1919 which gave Councils the mandate and funding to build decent, affordable homes for people, I am proud that Camden is delivering on our legacy as a Council that builds homes to create a Camden that is affordable and accessible to everyone.

It must be said that all our work to invest in communities and balance our budgets exists in the shadow of continuing Government uncertainty around local government funding, following a decade of local government cuts as part of the austerity imposed on the wider public sector. London's public services have seen a 63% reduction in funding since 2010⁵. In Camden since 2010, our like-for-like funding has reduced by 54% and we have made an unprecedented £169m of savings since 2010. Financial stability is a priority for Camden, and our long-term financial resilience is premised on us focusing our resources on the areas where we can have the greatest impact. I am proud we are continuing to invest over £10m to lift the poorest 10,000 households out of paying any Council Tax as part of one of the most generous and wide-ranging Council Tax reduction schemes in London.

In Camden, the Council is increasingly stepping into the space of the wider retreating state to ensure that our communities are safe, healthy and have the opportunity to flourish. We are paying for community safety and security services, investing in preventative services to keep as many people in good health for as long as possible, supporting families who have been impacted by the roll-out of universal credit and helping people furthest from the job market into decent and fulfilling work.

Alongside its role as deliverer of services and employer, one of the most important roles the Council plays is as a civic and community leader. Over the past year, I have been proud of our various We Make Camden campaigns, highlighting both what makes our community special collectively, but also championing our LGBT+, European and BAME communities. This year was the first in over two decades that the Council marched in London Pride, and we accompanied this by holding an LGBT+ Full Council discussion⁶. Following this, the Council has written policy supporting our transgender employees and service users, as part of our wider formalized approach to conscious inclusion across the organization.⁷ Cllr Mason and Helene Reardon-Bond also led the Council's Women's Forum, focusing on the diverse lived experience of women in the Borough, and how the Council can tackle continuing gender-based discrimination and prejudice. The Council is committed to tackling domestic and intimate partner violence through its policy and practice and made a formal statement as to this in January 2020. The Women's Forum has been doing radical and important work around employment, housing and domestic violence and I look forward to the Forum reporting back to the Council in the coming months.

³ [Redevelopment of Wendling and West Kentish Town Estate Cabinet Reports, July 2019](#)

⁴ [Camden Right to Buy Repurchase Programme, July 2019](#)

⁵ [London Councils, 2017](#)

⁶ ["Championing our LGBT+ Community" Full Council Report, July 2019](#)

⁷ ["Camden's Approach to Conscious Inclusion", Cabinet October 2019](#)

I should also acknowledge that the last year has been a period of deep anxiety for our communities. Our over 30,000 European citizens have lived in the shadow of a UK exit from the European Union (EU), and continuing uncertainty about the date and model of that exit. I am proud that as a Council we have made a cross-party commitment to avoiding a no-deal exit from the EU at all costs⁸, recognising the significant detrimental impact that would have on our borough socially and economically. We have also put significant effort into working with partners and stakeholders to ensure that our EU citizens have the advice and information they need to protect their rights ahead of an EU exit⁹

Parents, children and young people continue to be anxious about their futures – whether they will be able to afford to live here when they grow up, whether they can access the opportunities in the high-tech sectors growing around them, and most concerningly whether they are safe on our streets. Since October 2018, eight young people have lost their lives to youth violence, leaving behind grieving families, friends and communities. Over the last year, I have met too many parents who have lost children, young people who have lost friends, communities mourning young people whose lives have been cut short. But I have also been awed by their strength and their commitment to ensuring that this should never happen again.

However, I am proud that in Camden we have worked hard to preserve and maintain our investment in services that support children and young people from conception into their twenties. In many places, these services have disappeared. But in Camden, we are continuing to fund Sure Start centres and community nurseries, our play providers, our three youth hubs, over twenty youth clubs, the Hive hub for 16-25s, our family of fifty-nine excellent schools working as part of Camden Learning, our detached youth outreach team, our Camden summer university and the Young Camden Foundation. We believe it is our responsibility to give every child the support and resources they need to be safe and succeed.

However, every time a young person dies in our community we know what we have done to date has not been enough and we must redouble our efforts to make a difference. Based on the findings and recommendations of our Youth Safety Taskforce we have invested over £500,000 in community projects focused preventing and intervening in grooming of young people, trauma-informed support, additional youth outreach workers, and voluntary and community-based projects to engage young people¹⁰.

But I am also concerned that the story told about our young people is not just one about fear and violence. I want it to also be about their energy, their creativity, their activism and their fierce commitment to changing the world around them and making their future better. This year I have been inspired by the young people leading the climate protests – not asking or waiting for adults to take action, but acting themselves. Camden Council took inspiration from our young people in organising the country's first climate emergency citizens assembly which made seventeen recommendations for citizens, the Council and communities to reduce carbon

⁸ [Full Council Motion, July 2019](#)

⁹ [Camden EU Exit Preparations Cabinet Report, October 2019](#)

¹⁰ [Camden Youth Safety Taskforce Funding Announcement, September 2019](#)

emissions and play our part in tackling global heating¹¹. In September 2019 we opened the Think and Do in Kentish Town as part of the Council's work to create community and civic spaces that enable collaboration and participation in tackling our shared challenges, and I look forward to seeing how the space will continue with community leadership in 2020.

Being the Leader of any local authority over the last ten years has meant making difficult decisions. But in being the Leader of Camden over the last two years I have also had the privilege of leading the community I grew up in, and being with my community colleagues, neighbours and friends at times of sadness, reflection and joy. Over the last year, I have been to school and college graduations, listened to our young people speak passionately about their futures and their ambitions, met with families who have moved into a new Council home and have given their children their bedroom for the first time, marched with colleagues and staff at London Pride, and celebrated at community festivals. I want to thank my fellow Councillors and officers and citizens for their commitment to collectively creating a Borough that leaves no one behind, and where everyone has a voice.

Key Achievements

A place to call home

- Since 2015 Camden has prosecuted **135 private landlords** and issued **178 civil penalty notices** – in 2019 Camden is now prosecuting more rogue landlords than any other Borough in London and in November 2019 obtained the first rogue landlord banning order in London;
- Continuing to use our housing stock to support families and young people, with **four families per week** on average moving into a larger home to meet their bedroom needs;
- Increased the Council Tax charges for property owners who leave their homes empty for two or more years to **200%** - over the last five years we have worked with private owners to bring **449 homes back into use**, with over 80 being used to house families or individuals experiencing homelessness;
- **Transformed our landlord service** to focus tackling shared challenges (such as noise, nuisance and anti-social behaviour), complex issues (financial advice, debt, mental health) and giving housing officers more time to develop trusted relationships with tenants and leaseholders; and
- As part of proposals for Wendling and West Kentish Town, the Council has committed funding to deliver **801 genuinely affordable homes** of which over **580** will be Council homes. Camden is committed to building over 1100 Council homes through our Community Investment Programme (CIP); and
- Camden has the lowest levels of family homelessness in inner London, and we have committed over **£20m to buying back former right-to-buy homes** to be used for housing for families experiencing homelessness.

Growth to be strong and inclusive

- **All Camden schools are now “Good” or “Outstanding”** rated by OFSTED

¹¹ [Camden Climate Emergency Citizens Assembly, September 2019](#)

- Continuing our investment in improving our learning environments and giving all our children the best place to learn, opening new classrooms and learning spaces at **LaSWAP and William Ellis**.
- We committed **£5 million** to transform how we support people into **good work** in the Borough – investing early in people’s lives. We have employed a local lead in Gospel Oak to develop a neighbourhood hub that will focus on developing bespoke and holistic support for local residents, and we are looking to expand into Regents Park in 2020;
- Allocating **£500,000 in Youth Safety Taskforce Funding** to prevent youth violence, alongside a further **£70,000 in Communities Together Funding** for community and youth activities over the summer, and **£330,000** for youth activities and clubs over the next year; and
- Over **41 employers** in Camden have signed the **21st Century Talent Pledge** as part of the STEAM Commission including Argent, Arup, Bennetts Architects, the British Library, Eurostar, Exterion Media, Google, Lendlease, LabTech, the Roundhouse, Ted Baker, UCL and the Wellcome Trust. Alongside this, over **54 people** have been trained as **STEAM Ambassadors** from 23 organisations.

A safe, strong and open Camden

- Led the creation of the **Euston Citizens Assembly**, to ensure residents were at the heart of plans for the development of the station;
- Our Camden Alive programme launched in April, a programme of arts and cultural events showcasing the best of Camden’s vibrant and diverse culture, including the launch of the virtual **Camden People’s Museum**;
- One of the first organisations to be recognized as one of the **Mayor’s Good Work Standard** employers in London;
- The Council worked with our staff including the Camden Black Workers Group and our LGBT+ Rainbow staff group to launch our organisational statement on **conscious inclusion**. This reflected the actions the Council is taking to ensuring all staff have equal opportunity to progress, staff feel safe and able to be their whole selves at work, and our commitment to transgender equality for staff and citizens; and
- Councillors and staff marched at London Pride, with staff raising over **£1200 for the LGBT+ Outside** homelessness organisation as part of Pride Month and the sale of rainbow lanyards.

A clean, vibrant and sustainable Camden

- Engaged with over **600 residents face-to-face and online** (through our Commonplace platform) as part of our Climate Emergency Citizens Assembly. Citizens and communities submitted 225 proposals for the Assembly to consider. The Assembly made **17 recommendations** for action for individuals, communities and Government to take to tackle the climate emergency to our **Full Council in October 2019**;
- Opened with the community our **Think and Do space** in Kentish Town focusing on enabling community action around climate change. Community organisations gave away over **200 trees to citizens as part of planting a Camden forest**, and 289 citizens in the space signed up to be involved in an ongoing way;

- Working with Islington to receive **£667,000 from the Mayor of London** for a programme to ensure we are maximizing the impact of our parks and green spaces to improve the health of our residents; and
- **Our recycling rate continues to increase to 34% up from 31% in the previous year**, and the Council is working with communities in West Hampstead to create a “Camden Low Plastic Zone” to reduce the use of everyday plastic.

Healthy independent lives

- Opening the Camden Centre for Independent Living at **the Greenwood** designed, operated by and for disabled people, the **Netherwood Family and Youth Hub**, and the new **Routes off the Streets Hub** providing a range of services and multi-agency support and advice for rough sleepers;
- Launched our “**What Matters**” approach to adult social care focusing on building conversations and relationships and connecting people to their communities, including using innovative approaches like Family Group Conferencing; and
- Established the **Health and Wellbeing Neighbourhood Assembly** in Kilburn which has run six neighbourhood assemblies to discuss what is important to local people about their wellbeing, which has produced three key citizen-led ideas around a theme of community connectedness.

Championing our Children and Young People

Ensuring the safety of young people has remained my highest priority this year. It has been a year since the publication of the Youth Safety Taskforce Report¹², led by Cllr Abdul Hai as the Cabinet Member for Young People and Cohesion, and Keir Starmer MP for Holborn and St Pancras. The seventeen recommendations of the Youth Safety Taskforce focused on identifying, disrupting, supporting and enforcing to ensure that young people can grow up and learn in Camden without fear.

I am proud that with the £500,000 Youth Safety Taskforce fund we have funded a range of innovative and exciting projects including Engage who are working with young people in youth custody suites, expanding trauma-informed practice in our schools and youth services, Project 10/10 which uses peer-to-peer approaches in communities to support young people away from grooming and exploitation, and funding family workers at the Kings Cross Construction Skills Centre to help young people access apprenticeships, training and employment. There is more work to do to improve opportunities for our young people and the engagement we have with them. The Council is investing in new detached outreach youth workers focusing on at-risk young people aged between 18 and 25 based on the findings of the Youth Safety Taskforce work, and we expect these staff to be in the post shortly.

This summer we continued our successful Camden summer programme, including the Camden Summer University providing over 70 free courses for young people including the arts, science and sports. This year the Young Camden Foundation worked with Kitchen Social and Sidings Community Centre and ARC Youth Club to

¹² [Camden Youth Safety Taskforce Report, September 2018](#)

provide two free meals per day for four days per week through all four weeks of the summer holiday¹³.

The Camden Summer programme is part of our work to make Camden the best place in London to grow and learn as a young person. This year, continuing the work of Camden Learning to make our schools the best in the country, we have had another strong set of OFSTED, GCSE and A-Level results. All children and young people in Camden now learn in a school that is rated "Good" or "Outstanding" by OFSTED. The percentage of A level students achieving A*-E (98.1%) and three or more A* to E grades (92.9%) has continued to increase¹⁴. 72% of students earned above a grade C/4+ across all subjects, compared to a national average of 67%, and there have been significant increases in attainment of grades above C/4+ at Maria Fidelis, Hampstead and Regents High, confirming our approach to improvement through collaboration as part of Camden Learning is having an impact¹⁵.

This year Camden and our local CCG were granted an additional £3m in funding to deliver mental health services for young people across the Borough. Building on our existing good work, new mental health support teams will work across thirty primary and secondary schools in the Borough to enable young people to access general or specialist mental health support quickly¹⁶.

I am also proud how the Camden STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) Programme has continued to flourish this year. I am clear that whilst technology and digital industries have brought a lot of investment to the Borough, not enough of this has been accessible to our communities and our young people. The STEAM Commission is one way in which we are seeking to tackle this. In July I attended the amazing STEAM Exhibition at Central Saint Martins with over twenty schools that have been working with world-leading companies and organizations to create projects that fuse creative, scientific and digital skills. At this Exhibition, we also presented how our Camden STEAM hub goes from strength to strength with four Camden schools leading the design and delivery of an innovative two-year programme for senior teachers to become STEAM leaders in their school. Over half of Camden's schools have committed to the STEAM hub programme.

I have also been honoured this year to work alongside our Youth MP Athian Akec, and our two Deputy Youth MPs, Asma Maloumi and Jessie Wernick. They have been a true inspiration as to the power, creativity, honesty, tenacity and ambition of Camden's young people, and I look forward to the world they will shape for the better.

A Sustainable Camden

This year Camden has made clear that we regard continued global warming as evidence of a climate emergency, and that we are committed as a Council and a civic leader to doing all we can to reduce our carbon emissions. Camden has already

¹³ [Camden Summer Youth Programme, July 2019](#)

¹⁴ [Camden A-Levels 2019 Announcement, August 2019](#)

¹⁵ [Camden GCSE Announcement, August 2019](#)

¹⁶ [Camden Mental Health Funding Announcement, December 2018](#)

reduced our carbon emissions by 38% since 2010, but reducing it further will require some significant changes in the way we live, travel, work, eat and spend¹⁷.

Cllr Adam Harrison, the Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Camden has taken a lead locally and nationally on this work. Last year he worked to ensure the Council committed to the ambitious World Health Organisation standards for air quality, and this year he worked with over 1,000 residents and organisations in developing our 2019-2030 Clean Air Action Plan¹⁸ for how we will achieve these goals. Cllr Harrison has also led our Climate Change Alliance which now has over 370 business network members who are working together to reduce their carbon emissions with the advice and guidance of the Council – over 85% of the CCCA members report year-on-year carbon emission reductions. The CCCA has also increased commercial recycling tonnage in the Borough from 5,687 in 2017 to 29,097 in 2018¹⁹.

We recognise that as part of an industrialised nation, and a global city, it is our responsibility to lead the way and cut faster and deeper than other countries. I believe that the climate emergency is also a social justice issue and it is our democratic responsibility both to ensure that we are tackling the climate emergency, but also that hard decisions do not disproportionately impact the most vulnerable. To understand how we make change equitably, manage trade-offs, create real and lasting behaviour change, and be the most ambitious we can be, we established our Citizens Assembly. This Citizens Assembly brought together a demographically representative group of people to create concrete commitments about how we will meet our collective responsibility to our shared planet. Over 600 residents contributed ideas face-to-face or via our online Commonplace platform²⁰. This was the country's first Climate Emergency Citizens Assembly and the outcomes were presented to our Full Council in October where we adopted the seventeen recommendations of the Assembly relating to communities, the Council and the nation.

Our commitment to working jointly with our residents on this issue does not end with the Citizens Assembly and over the next year, I look forward to working collaboratively with residents, community groups, businesses and my political colleagues in shaping our Borough and our nation to address the urgent challenge of the climate emergency.

Safe, Independent Lives

Over the last year I have joined community meetings and safety meetings, listening to parents, young people, leaders and partners express deep anxiety about how we make our streets and neighbourhoods safe, welcoming and accessible. I have also heard a deep commitment from all these people to doing whatever is in their power individually and collectively to make a difference. I want us a Council to work with our communities, re-double our efforts and show them that we have that same commitment to make a difference and make communities safer. There is more work

¹⁷ [Camden Climate Emergency Citizens Assembly Full Council Report, October 2019](#)

¹⁸ [Camden Clean Air Action Plan 2019-2030](#)

¹⁹ [Camden Climate Emergency Citizens Assembly Full Council Report, October 2019](#)

²⁰ [Camden Climate Emergency Citizens Assembly Full Council Report, October 2019](#)

to be done and that is why this year I have worked with the Cabinet Member for Safer Communities Cllr Nadia Shah, the Cabinet Member for Young People and Cohesion Cllr Abdul Hai and the Cabinet Member for Best Start in Life Cllr Angela Mason to set up the Safer Camden Network. The Network brings together services across the Council that can support work to make homes, streets and communities safer. Starting with We Make Gospel Oak, the Safer Camden Network is going to be creating grass-roots networks and activities to address the real issues in communities that impact safety, and I look forward to participating in this important work in the coming year.

The approach of the Safer Camden Network stands on the shoulders of the radical and relational transformation that has been occurring across the Council, including the Landlord Review, the Camden Model of Social Work, our use of Family Group Conferencing (FGC) for both young people and adults and our Full Circle groups that make use of the rich lived experience of our residents to create peer-to-peer support groups. I have been excited this year to see the whole Council think about how to take the relational and person-centred approaches embodied in these programmes and apply them across our services.

In April this year, I was honoured to attend the opening of Camden's Centre for Independent Living (CIL) at the Greenwood in Kentish Town²¹. In an amazing, purpose-built building designed with and for people with disabilities and run by Camden voluntary sector disabled organisations, it represents a truly accessible and welcoming community space for everyone to learn, socialize, and get advice and support.

The person-centred and citizen-led Greenwood Centre is also entirely aligned with the Council's strength-based approach to adult social care which continues to put Camden at the forefront of Council's nationally creating a new standard of care for older and disabled adults. In September 2019 we rolled out "What Matters: the Camden approach to Adult Social Care" which brings together how we are putting residents at the heart of care and building individual and community resilience. The Council is continuing to reduce the number of people moving into residential care, whilst also supporting more people to regain and maintain independence to no longer need long-term care²².

I was equally proud to attend the opening of the Netherwood Youth and Family Hub in July. The Council retained the Netherwood Centre for community use and it is now a hub for our multi-disciplinary Kilburn Youth Hub team, supporting families, children and young people. The Netherwood Hub will provide peer-led support programmes, a family kitchen and family space, homework clubs and a range of classes including yoga, self-defence and gymnastics.

Our community organisations are critical to ensuring everyone in Camden can access advice, support, compassionate care and advocacy. I am proud that Camden has continued to maintain a high level of investment in the anchor community organisations we call our Strategic Partners, and that this year we also decided to

²¹ ["Camden officially opens its first Centre for Independent Living", February 2019](#)

²² Q1 2019/20 – 472 fewer people receive long term support compared to Q1 2018/19

continue to invest over £1m per year in advice services through the Camden Advice Partnership.

Creating an Inclusive Economy

As part of Camden's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), the Council committed £5m into delivering an employment and skills service that doesn't just get people ready for jobs but rather shapes the market to make job's people ready. We are also exploring how we can address the persistent issue of low-pay, low-progression jobs, including radical ideas such as a Camden citizen income aligned with our adult learning offer that would give people the support needed to accelerate their progression, transfer into a new career, or get back into decent work quickly.

Camden's Adult Community Learning offer in 2019 has become a fully insourced service, with courses and programmes directly delivered by the Council. Camden is committed to lifelong learning, and being able to direct our education offer through our high-quality service means that we can bring together all our resources to give people access to the right skills at the right time.

As the first phase of the delivery of this work, we are developing a neighbourhood employment hub in Gospel Oak, building on and learning from the successes of the Somers Town Job Hub. Working with community groups, the Council's adult community learning service and our youth teams we are going to pilot employment initiatives focused at young people aged between 18-25.

Camden's apprenticeships programme also continues to set the standard locally and across London. I was proud as part of my role as London Council's Lead for Employment and Skills to hand out three London awards to Camden, for the Best Manager, Best Progression by an Apprentice and our Camden Apprenticeships team was awarded for their work in securing apprenticeships through our planning agreements²³. This year King's Cross Construction celebrated getting 1,000 people into work, and we are committed to widening access to well-paid apprenticeships that give people a start in a first or new career.

Investing to Create an Affordable and Accessible Camden

Inequality in Camden is a complex issue, but we know that one of the key causes is the lack of affordable housing, and the cost of housing for low-and-middle-income households, particularly those in the private rented sector. We are particularly concerned about the impact that increasing housing costs are having on the ability of new and growing families to remain in Camden in the long term.

In July this year, the Cabinet decided to commit to continuing our ground-breaking and ambitious Community Investment Programme, agreeing on investment that will deliver 581 new Council homes, replacing poor-quality existing homes with larger, safer, warmer homes as well as additional Council homes. As well as this the Council will deliver 230 new Camden Living Rent homes²⁴. We have worked closely

²³ [London Apprenticeship Awards September 2019](#)

²⁴ [Camden Community Investment Programme](#)

with communities and residents who have led these plans, including tenants employed as community liaison officers and project leads. Both Wendling and West Kentish Town will have a resident's ballot, giving tenants and resident leaseholders the final say on whether plans for their community go ahead.

This year the Council has piloted letting homes at market rent as part of our strategy to raise funds for investment in council housing, which enables residents to rent from an accountable landlord, under our renters charter and with tenancies for up to three years. Camden is delivering new Council homes at a time when Government subsidy for Councils to build homes remains at 2% of the overall cost, and when we continue to be forced to sell our stock at below-market levels as part of right-to-buy. As the Cabinet Member for Investing in Communities, Cllr Danny Beales has lobbied Government to increase grant funding for Councils who want to tackle the housing crisis by building, and ending right-to-buy which removes much needed Council housing from the stock. In the absence of Government action, the Council is taking action, investing £20m in buying back homes we were forced to sell through right-to-buy and using them to house vulnerable families in need of a home in Camden.

We know that as many people live in our Council homes also live in the private rented sector in Camden. It is a growing sector, with challenges around affordability, security and quality. Over the last year, the Council has continued its work to robustly investigate and enforce poor landlord practice in Camden, with our current focus being on homes in multiple occupations (HMOs). Camden continues to be the lead Borough in London for sanctioning and prosecuting rogue landlords, and over the next year we want to work with our communities to ensure that we are doing all we can to protect the vulnerable in rented homes in Camden. The Council is currently consulting on our borough-wide licensing scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and potentially introducing a selective licensing scheme for all private rented accommodation in Camden²⁵.

As well as housing, we also understand the importance of social and community buildings to creating strong and accessible communities. Recognising this we have committed to investing to create the next generation of public sector buildings – not just focused on delivering single services, or single groups of people, but open places that bring people together, support independence and encourage connection. We have committed £1.5m to put new digital infrastructure in our libraries and make the most of the skills and knowledge of our library staff to help and advise visitors. This July Cllr Jonathan Simpson hosted roadshows around Camden of new digital technologies for our libraries including 3D printers, tablets, robots, e-newspapers, new computers and virtual reality headsets. As part of the neighbourhoods' programme, we are also launching new shared spaces – places held in common with our communities to create opportunities for collaboration, knowledge sharing, connection and socializing and activism. Our pop-up Think & Do space in Kentish Town focusing on the climate crisis was widely used by members of the community – helping them to connect and share learning and ideas about how we can take action to combat climate change in our borough. This idea came from our Citizens' Assembly on the climate crisis and I'm encouraged to hear that the space will be taken on by residents to continue to develop as a community space for collaboration

²⁵ ["Have your say on our landlord licensing scheme", December 2019](#)

and action. I also look forward to a larger space opening later this year at the previous Highgate Centre as part of piloting this new and radical approach to the role and use of public sector buildings in our communities.

My priorities over the coming year

Climate Emergency

In 2019 it was the power of our young citizens who broke through and put the climate crisis on our news agenda. Camden has made a long-term commitment to climate action which has seen carbon emissions reduce by 38% across the Borough and by 44% across our own estate, and a comprehensive Air Quality Action Plan adopted to improve the air we breathe. But the next steps require radical action not just from the Council but from our communities. Our residents told us this year that their biggest concern is the climate and air quality. They worked with us as part of the Citizens Assembly to propose 17 actions Camden can take including fitting new solar panels to homes, planting more trees, promoting car-free zones and days and looking for innovative ways to fund sustainable retrofits of existing buildings.

Over the next year I want to ensure that the Council is matching the energy, commitment and radicalism of our communities. We will put the climate emergency at the heart of our budgeting and service delivery. We will work with our citizens and partners to deliver more Think and Do spaces in and around Camden as places for knowledge sharing, collaboration and action. I am committed to Camden Council continuing to show leadership locally and nationally in tackling climate justice.

Widening Participation

As the Leader of the Council, I have made it one of my core commitments to broaden involvement in decision-making, make the Council a more open place for our citizens, and seek to give those who are affected most by our services the most influence over how they are delivered. Last year, the Council opened up its policy-making in developing Camden 2025 and using the priorities and outcomes residents told us were important to them to shape our financial planning as part of the medium-term financial strategy this year.

This year I have been committed to ensuring that residents have a range of ways to get meaningfully involved in the work of the Council, including our citizens and neighbourhood assemblies. Over the next year, I want to continue to expand the depth and breadth of citizen-led decision-making and power-sharing, building on our existing community relationships to create a vibrant, engaging, creative and participatory local democratic system. Over the coming year, I will ensure that our citizens are at the heart of how we tackle our big challenges, from youth safety to improving health and wellbeing, to giving people a voice in how their data is used.

Creating a Family Friendly Borough

I am concerned about the impact of families leaving Camden because of the affordability of housing, and the impact this will have on our communities and our family of schools. Over the next year, I want the Council to explore how it can use all its services, resources and relationships to become a truly family-friendly Borough. I believe that in our children's services we have gone beyond seeking to avoid harm to focusing on how to give all our children and young people a good childhood, and as

an organisation over the next year, I want us to aim to make Camden the best place to grow up in London.

Creating an Inclusive Economy

Councils deliver an unparalleled set of services – we are landlord, librarian, carer, teacher, parks manager, community presence officer, caseworker, and repair person. We will never lose sight of the incredible privilege and responsibility is to serve citizens in these various ways, and the unique opportunity we have to connect, engage and empower our communities as a result.

We have started as part of Good Work Camden, to roll out relational neighbourhood-based employment support, starting in Gospel Oak. This is the first test of our wider work to transform our local economy to address insecurity, precarity and exploitation through universal basic services type approach, and ensure that the wealth that is generated in Camden is captured for the benefit of our citizens and communities through looking at a community wealth fund.

We have a proud record of using our spending power to create public value and protect workers' rights. I know over the next year we can go further. We will publish the Council's Insourcing and Community Value Strategy, and implement this across all our services and commissioning.

Advocating for an Alternative Funding System

Camden is part of a movement of Councils framing their work as "new municipalism"²⁶. We in Camden see Councils as civic leaders of place, providing through local services a comprehensive and compassionate safety net for the most vulnerable and the foundation for the ambition and creativity of our communities to create a fairer, more equal and more sustainable society.

Alongside arguing at a national level for more funding and powers for local government, over the last year we have continued to invest in our staff and our services. Last year we brought our school's facilities management back in-house, and we have insourced two of our housing repairs services, and we are preparing to directly deliver our estate cleaning and grounds maintenance services. Our role as an employer and a service deliverer allows us to create and retain value in our communities. By directly delivering these services we can work with our residents, tenants, leaseholders, and schools to ensure that we are not just delivering services but creating good jobs, good homes and good places.

Over the next year, I want Camden at a London and national level to argue and lobby for an alternative not just to austerity, but to a narrative about local government of demand management and harm-reduction. We want to work with a Government that understands our role in delivering universal services that engage, empower and enable all our citizens, but in the absence of national change, I and my Cabinet will continue to work in our communities for a kinder, more just, more cooperative, more sustainable future.

²⁶ [CLEs, New Municipalism, March 2019](#)