

WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS 18TH NOVEMBER 2024

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(Note that this document now contains the responses from Cabinet Members to the written questions from Councillors)

Dated: 18th November 2024

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LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

COUNCIL MEETING – MONDAY 18TH NOVEMBER 2024

RESPONSES TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

QUESTION 1

**TO THE: CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND A SUSTAINABLE
CAMDEN**

BY: COUNCILLOR MATTHEW KIRK

Please set out the response times by department to issues reported to the Council's 'Fix My Street' service over the last 12 months.

REPLY

The 'FixMyStreet' platform was launched in Camden on 27 February 2023. We introduced this online platform to improve residents, businesses and visitors reporting of highways issues (road, pavement and other public realm problems) and creating more transparency on the process of the problems being fixed. During 2024 members of the public have reported 2,987 highways issues through 'FixMyStreet', which range from 'blocked drains', broken street furniture through to 'pot-holes' and road defects. The average response time for these highways issues is 14 days (time taken from report to report being fixed and closed).

QUESTION 2

TO THE: CABINET MEMBER FOR BETTER HOMES

BY: COUNCILLOR STEVE ADAMS

At the Full Council Meeting in July, it became clear that an injustice has been committed. Maitland Park TRA brought a passionate and articulate deputation to the chamber to plead for their being able to use their Community TRA Hall. Their estate has been recently re-developed as a CIP project and the old TRA Hall was demolished as a part of that scheme. It turns out that in the last year, the residents have only been allowed to enter their new hall three times. Once for Kier Starmer to declare it open and twice for DMC meetings.

The reason for this restriction is obscure and clarity was not delivered by the Cabinet Member for Better Homes in her summary response to their request. Indeed, the many words with friendly meaning comprising "open to discussion", "spirit of openness", "we consulted" and "happy to work with you" did little to drown out the message of "some constraints", "we need to find a tenant for the hall" and "we can't subsidise this use".

If, as we suspect, the financing of this project through the CIP arrangements has resulted in the so-called community hall becoming a private commercial facility which might be

open to the tenants on special occasions, then an error has been made. The original Camden consultation proudly boasted:

“The completed scheme will include a new and improved TRA hall and investment in local play areas and landscaping”

I promised not to make an issue of this if it was swiftly resolved. That was at the end of July and too much time has passed without any progress.

The TRA have recently approached Camden to ask if they can pay for access to the hall using DMC funds. This has been turned down.

There are many questions about this situation but the ones being asked here are:

Who in Camden signed-off on this?

With Christmas approaching, will Camden recognise the duty to return the use of the hall to the residents without further delay?

REPLY

The Council is proud of what has been delivered at Maitland Park, where 119 modern, high quality homes have been built for our residents along with landscaping and new play areas for local families to enjoy. The scheme has delivered 52 new council homes. The project has been recognised by the 2024 British Homes Awards where it has won the Development of the Year (Over 100 Homes) award.

As part of the scheme there is the new 300sqm Community Space which has been designed to cater for a variety of uses and includes spaces for:

- Café space with small kitchen area for simple food preparation
- One single large hall that can be divided
- A large meeting-room
- A garden for the sole use of the community hall
- Additional facilities including several toilets and small kitchenette in the meeting room

The Maitland Park TRA does have access to the space and this is managed directly between the TRA and the Tenant Participation Team. This was agreed, following the Full Council Meeting and at the request of the Cabinet Member for Better Homes, with the TRA in September 2024.

There is no charge to the TRA for using the space. The Council has also provided the furniture for the community space, secured from the build contractor Bouygues, which the Maitland Park TRA benefits from.

The new Community Space has a more complex maintenance regime and the strategy is to find an umbrella organisation to sign a lease for the space and to provide the TRA with the access they require at no cost. At the meeting between

officers and TRA it was agreed that the TRA would form an integral part of the selection process of that organisation.

QUESTION 3

TO THE: CABINET MEMBER FOR NEW HOMES AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

BY: COUNCILLOR LOTIS BAUTISTA

Could the Cabinet Member for New Homes and Community Investment please outline of the Governments Brownfield, Infrastructure and Land Grant, how much Camden was awarded and where the funding has been allocated to?

REPLY

The outcome of the third round of the Brownfield Land Release Fund 2 (BLRF2 R3) was announced in October. £68m was made available through BLRF32 R3 for all local authorities in England to bid and 54 Councils have been successful in securing some funding. Camden Council has been awarded £3,261,639, the fourth largest allocation, for the following projects:

- 120-136 Camley Street £1,474,080
- Chester Road Hostel £832,500
- Camden Road Hostel £742,470
- Small sites programme £212,589

The funding will be used to deliver remediation works across the sites, including addressing site levels, demolitions, removal of hard landscape surface areas and asbestos amongst others.

The funding will allow the Council to deliver 350 new energy-efficient homes in Camley Street, 50% of which will be genuinely affordable and 89 homes across both Camden and Chester Road hostels to provide much needed temporary accommodation for homeless families. Camley Street will also deliver more than 200,000sq ft of Knowledge Quarter-led commercial space which will support the creation of around 1,000 jobs in the light industrial, life sciences, technology, and digital industries.

QUESTION 4

TO THE: CABINET MEMBER FOR SAFER COMMUNITIES

BY: COUNCILLOR LORNA GREENWOOD

Making the evening and night time economy safe for women is a major priority in Camden. How many licensed venues in the borough have received the Ask for Angela and Welfare and Vulnerability Engagement training? What are the ambitions to extend this training further?

REPLY

The Council remains committed to tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG) through a coordinated approach led by the VAWG Steering Group and a range of women's safety initiatives. Women's safety is also a top priority for the Community Safety Partnership Board and forms a key part of Camden's public safety and crime prevention strategy.

Tackling violence against women is also key priority within the Camden Licensing policy. The Council is working actively to ensure that licensed venues play a meaningful role in fostering safe, inclusive spaces. Camden's night-time economy should be a place where everyone, especially women, can enjoy themselves without fear, and our licensing approach reflects this principle.

The Council has reviewed its licensing policy and is considering a public consultation on proposed changes. These include additional measures aimed at protecting women's safety and enhancing overall public safety.

As a signatory of the London Night Safety Charter, Camden continues to encourage all licensed venues to adopt the "Ask for Angela" scheme to support women affected by gender-based violence or in vulnerable situations. In partnership with the Met Police, Camden also provides Welfare and Vulnerability Engagement (WAVE) training to help venue staff identify and respond to situations where women may feel unsafe.

To date, employees from approximately 140 venues have completed "Ask for Angela" and WAVE training. Camden has set an ambitious target of having 60% of licensed venues fully trained by 2028. However, I am more ambitious than this and will start lobbying to make the Angela scheme a mandatory condition.

QUESTION 5

TO THE: CABINET MEMBER FOR BETTER HOMES

BY: COUNCILLOR REBECCA FILER

Private renters make up a sizable portion of residents on our estates and in our ex-council homes. Yet, they often aren't aware of the support the Council can provide if they are having issues with their landlords and often feel they are not integrated into estate communities.

Can the Cabinet Member for Better Homes lay out the steps that the Housing Department takes to ensure that private renters on estates and in ex-council

properties receive information about how the council can support them as private renters and the ways in which they can be integrated into estate communities?

REPLY

The Private Sector Housing Service which comprises approximately fifty officers, is responsible for improving standards within the private rented sector, which accounts for almost 36% of households in Camden. In 2023/24, the Service responded to over 800 requests for support from residents in the private rented sector.

Whilst the majority of private sector landlords in Camden provide good accommodation, there remains a number of criminal landlords determined to exploit vulnerable tenants. Camden continues to lead London authorities when utilising its powers to tackle criminal landlords and poor standards.

Camden Council is actively working to address poor housing standards in the private rented sector. A primary challenge has been low tenant engagement, often due to tenants' reluctance to report issues or lack of awareness about available support from the Private Sector Housing Service.

While many private renters live across Camden, particularly in estates and ex-council properties, improving engagement with all renters remains a priority.

Since 2020, Camden Council has collaborated with private renters and stakeholders to develop the Camden Private Renters website, the website offers guidance and support for tenants and attracts over 400 visits every month. This site aims to engage, educate, and empower renters, helping them understand their rights and available support from the service.

In 2023, the Council successfully held two tenant forums, covering a wide range of topics such as the cost of living, damp and mould issues, the Renters' Reform Bill, and living in HMOs. These forums featured expert speakers in relevant fields, providing valuable insights for attendees.

Council officers from the Private Sector Housing service have also met with Caretakers and Neighbourhood Housing teams to increase awareness of Camden's support for private renters living in blocks and street properties. Camden is committed to further raising awareness through local media, partnerships with third-sector organisations, and awareness through local councillor surgeries.

Looking ahead, the Service aims to work with members to deliver a series of private renter's ward-based surgeries, enabling renters to better understand their rights and the support the Council offers.

Finally, we welcome the upcoming Private Rented Sector Database, expected under the Renters' Rights Bill, which will require landlord registration. This database will enable the Council to proactively identify and engage renters, enhancing tenant support across Camden.

QUESTION 6

TO THE: CABINET MEMBER FOR SAFER COMMUNITIES

BY: COUNCILLOR ROBERT THOMPSON

Many residents and business owners in Kilburn Ward are concerned about levels of crime and ASB behaviour. There is a general perception that this is exacerbated by that fact that the Kilburn High Road lies within the London Boroughs of Brent and Westminster, as well as Camden, and between three policing jurisdictions. Could the cabinet member therefore indicate:

- 1) the strategy of the council for a safer community in Kilburn
- 2) the levels of cross borough local authority and policing cooperation for Kilburn
- 3) the ways in which the borough is cooperating with and canvassing both the Metropolitan Police and the GLA to ensure that the Town Centre of Kilburn has the requisite level of policing?

REPLY

Across London and nationwide, incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB) have been increasing, reflecting broader challenges faced by communities. Camden Council is aware of these trends and is actively responding by enhancing local initiatives and working closely with police and community partners to manage and reduce ASB in our borough. Camden's approach combines both preventative measures and direct action to ensure Camden remains a safe and welcoming place for all residents.

One Kilburn is a cross-borough initiative involving Camden, Brent, and Westminster to address community safety concerns, particularly crime and ASB. By coordinating resources across boroughs and working with local organisations, the project aims to create safer public spaces and improve youth engagement.

Camden is committed to supporting the proposals recently outlined by the Member of Parliament for Queens Park and Maida Vale to further develop the partnership approach between Camden, Brent and Westminster Local Authorities.

Camden fully supports Kaya Comer-Schwartz's appointment as Deputy Mayor, recognising her understanding of London's challenges with crime and antisocial behaviour from her time as Islington Council leader.

As Cabinet Member for Safer Communities, I will continue working closely with the Deputy Mayor, GLA, and Metropolitan Police to address Kilburn residents' concerns and evaluate opportunities to strengthen police resources in the area.

QUESTION 7

**TO THE: CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND A SUSTAINABLE
CAMDEN**

BY: COUNCILLOR JAMES SLATER

What recent discussions has Camden Council had with organisations and developers regarding the proposed Murphy's Yard development in Kentish Town?

REPLY

The previous application for the Murphy's Yard development was withdrawn in May 2022. No formal pre-application advice has been requested or provided since then for the development of the site. It is understood that the applicant intends to start pre-application discussions in 2025. Four local organisations provided comments on the draft site allocation for the Murphy's site during the consultation on the draft Local Plan earlier in the year. These were Mansfield Conservation Area Committee, Kentish Town Neighbourhood Forum, Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Forum and Highgate Conservation Area Committee. The intention is to report the final draft version of the Local Plan to Cabinet in Spring 2025.

QUESTION 8

TO THE: CABINET MEMBER FOR BEST START FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

BY: COUNCILLOR SYLVIA MCNAMARA

Can the Cabinet member for Best Start for Children and Families and the Cabinet member for Health Well Being and Adult Social Care work together to provide flu vaccinations for free to all teachers and teaching assistants in Camden?

Whilst school children are offered the flu vaccination, through a Government initiative, their teachers are not. The benefits to schools as outlined by the Government pertain to teaching staff on the frontline equally if not more so:

- *reduces the likelihood of flu outbreaks in schools*
- *helps protect children against flu which in turn reduces pupil and staff absenteeism rates*
- *promotes a healthy environment in schools and the wider community, including amongst the children's immediate and extended family*

If a teacher has flu this affects the staffing budget, and the relationship and therefore the learning of the young people as the teacher has to be replaced by a cover person.

Teacher recruitment is challenging right now, for Camden to be leading the way in this simple but highly effective and morally correct way would be a beacon of excellence for other councils to follow.

REPLY

Free vaccination of children on the NHS is based on the recommendation of the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), the independent expert

advisory group that advises the Government on vaccination. The benefits of the children's programme include:

- protection against flu for children who receive the vaccine and
- reduced transmission of flu in the community.

This is because children play a key role in the transmission of flu, including to those who may be at higher risk from flu such as the elderly. There is evidence that vaccinating large numbers of children reduces the circulation of flu in the community and the number of GP consultations and hospital admissions for flu-like illness. Anyone who is at higher risk of getting seriously ill from flu are also offered free flu vaccine by the NHS.

Most community pharmacies charge between £19-£22 for a flu vaccine for anyone who is not eligible for a free vaccine under the NHS. Every year the Council purchases flu vaccine vouchers for council staff, and from this supply schools receive an offer to purchase vouchers for their staff at a discounted rate of £13.50/ voucher. So far this year 80 flu vaccine vouchers have been issued to school staff in Camden. We will continue to promote this offer until nearer the expiry date of the vouchers. The vouchers that we are currently offering are from a High Street chemists and they expire at the end of November. We will explore the options available for next winter season.

QUESTION 9

**TO THE: CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND A SUSTAINABLE
CAMDEN**

BY: COUNCILLOR TOMMY GALE

Please can the cabinet member outline what work the Council has taken to address the blight of phone boxes on street and what more might be possible to address this issue since the change in Government?

REPLY

Camden's Planning Enforcement team have been leading the work on seeking the removal of redundant phone kiosks using planning powers.

Many kiosks were installed under permitted development rights. Those rights have now been removed, meaning planning permission is required in recognition of the fact that there is simply less need for this type of infrastructure today. Whilst local authorities now have more control over new phone boxes, they still have limited powers to seek the removal of kiosks already in place. Notwithstanding this, the planning enforcement team has piloted an approach to remove redundant kiosks which has been proved successful.

The approach is to take formal action on the basis that there is a breach of condition A.2 (2) of Part 24 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General

Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended). Condition A.2 (2) requires that phone kiosks are removed when they are no longer required for electronic communications purposes. When it can be demonstrated that kiosks are unmaintained, unusable (not able or fit to be used) or unused, Breach of Condition Notices have been served alleging they are no longer required for electronic communication purposes. In 2023, this approach secured the removal of 19 phone kiosks in Tottenham Court Road.

The planning enforcement team have continued this work, engaging with operators to secure the removal of redundant kiosks using informal and formal action. The team secured the removal of two kiosks in Princes Circus and seven kiosks in Kilburn High Road. A phone kiosk was also removed outside Holborn Station in compliance with a breach of condition notice served in July 2024. The team continues to investigate complaints about kiosks which appear to be unmaintained, unusable or unused.

The work done by the team has gained a lot of interest with other authorities who face similar issues and have been keen to learn from our experience.

Whilst the work done to date is very positive, the challenge is that it is resource intensive and the extent of the problem vast. In our response to the recent NPPF consultation, Camden requested more powers to enforce the removal of redundant telephone kiosks.

We have seen a rise in planning applications for modern “communication hubs”, which are large digital advertisement screens with a phone. These structures add unnecessary and harmful clutter to our streets and generally are not policy compliant. Whilst we have refused planning permission for these some have been allowed by the Planning Inspectorate on appeal. In our NPPF consultation response we have also highlighted the harm these new generation of phone kiosks have on our high streets and sought support for our efforts to declutter our pavements to give back space to pedestrians and create a nicer environment.

QUESTION 10

TO THE: CABINET MEMBER FOR BETTER HOMES

BY: COUNCILLOR LORNA JANE RUSSELL

Could the Cabinet Member for Better Homes please reveal the number of empty or void Council, housing association, and private properties both across Camden and in each ward. Please present this data with a breakdown of properties, by type, of those that have been empty for 0-3 months, 3-6 months, 6-12 months, more than 12 months

REPLY

As of 11th November 2024, the following is a breakdown of void properties which the Council is preparing to relet. Please be aware that this information is subject to

change on a daily basis. Unfortunately, we do not hold similar data on void properties in the private rented sector or with other registered providers.

These properties make up 1.8% of our total tenanted stock.

	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	
Camden (all)	424 as of 11/11/24	0	42	0-3 months	134
		1	184	3-6 months	105
		2	118	6-9 months	69
		3	60	9-12 months	38
		4	19	12+ months	78
		5	1		
	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	
Belsize	5	0	3	0-3 months	2
		1	0	3-6 months	1
		2	1	6-9 months	0
		3	0	9-12 months	2
		4	1	12+ months	0
		5	0		
	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	
Bloomsbury	22	0	6	0-3 months	8
		1	8	3-6 months	5
		2	8	6-9 months	3
		3	0	9-12 months	2
		4	0	12+ months	4
		5	0		
	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	
Camden Square	10	0	0	0-3 months	1
		1	7	3-6 months	3
		2	0	6-9 months	0
		3	0	9-12 months	1
		4	3	12+ months	5
		5	0		
	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	

Camden Town	10	0	0	0-3 months	5
		1	5	3-6 months	3
		2	2	6-9 months	0
		3	1	9-12 months	0
		4	2	12+ months	2
		5			

	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	
Fortune Green	18	0	3	0-3 months	3
		1	8	3-6 months	4
		2	5	6-9 months	3
		3	1	9-12 months	3
		4	1	12+ months	5
		5	0		

	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	
Frognal	3	0	0	0-3 months	1
		1	0	3-6 months	0
		2	2	6-9 months	1
		3	1	9-12 months	1
		4	0	12+ months	0
		5	0		

	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	
Gospel Oak	40	0	4	0-3 months	14
		1	19	3-6 months	15
		2	8	6-9 months	2
		3	8	9-12 months	3
		4	0	12+ months	6
		5	1		

	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	
Hampstead Town	8	0	0	0-3 months	3
		1	3	3-6 months	1
		2	2	6-9 months	1
		3	1	9-12 months	3
		4	2	12+ months	0
		5	0		

	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	
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Haverstock	36	0	4	0-3 months	16
		1	10	3-6 months	9
		2	14	6-9 months	3
		3	7	9-12 months	3
		4	1	12+ months	5
		5	0		

	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	
Highgate	23	0	1	0-3 months	10
		1	12	3-6 months	7
		2	6	6-9 months	3
		3	3	9-12 months	0
		4	1	12+ months	3
		5	0		

	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	
Holborn and Covent Garden	33	0	2	0-3 months	14
		1	17	3-6 months	12
		2	11	6-9 months	5
		3	3	9-12 months	0
		4	0	12+ months	2
		5	0		

	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	
Kentish Town North	13	0	0	0-3 months	3
		1	6	3-6 months	4
		2	2	6-9 months	4
		3	4	9-12 months	0
		4	1	12+ months	2
		5	0		

	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	
Kentish Town South	17	0	0	0-3 months	6
		1	2	3-6 months	2
		2	5	6-9 months	3
		3	7	9-12 months	0
		4	3	12+ months	6
		5	0		

	Total number of	Bedrooms		Age of void	
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	voids				
Kilburn	48	0	2	0-3 months	14
		1	22	3-6 months	5
		2	15	6-9 months	8
		3	7	9-12 months	7
		4	2	12+ months	14
		5	0		

	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	
Kings Cross	14	0	2	0-3 months	6
		1	7	3-6 months	4
		2	2	6-9 months	3
		3	3	9-12 months	0
		4	0	12+ months	1
		5	0		

	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	
Out of Borough	8	0	2	0-3 months	2
		1	2	3-6 months	4
		2	4	6-9 months	1
		3	0	9-12 months	1
		4	0	12+ months	0
		5	0		

	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	
Primrose Hill	16	0	3	0-3 months	4
		1	5	3-6 months	3
		2	6	6-9 months	3
		3	2	9-12 months	2
		4	0	12+ months	4
		5	0		

	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	
Regents Park	23	0	5	0-3 months	5
		1	9	3-6 months	5
		2	8	6-9 months	2
		3	1	9-12 months	3
		4	0	12+ months	8
		5	0		

	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	
South Hampstead	11	0	1	0-3 months	4
		1	5	3-6 months	3
		2	3	6-9 months	3
		3	2	9-12 months	1
		4	0	12+ months	0
		5	0		

	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	
St Pancras and Somers Town	54	0	4	0-3 months	10
		1	26	3-6 months	12
		2	14	6-9 months	18
		3	9	9-12 months	5
		4	1	12+ months	9
		5	0		

	Total number of voids	Bedrooms		Age of void	
West Hampstead	12	0	0	0-3 months	3
		1	11	3-6 months	3
		2	0	6-9 months	3
		3	0	9-12 months	1
		4	1	12+ months	2
		5	0		

ENDS