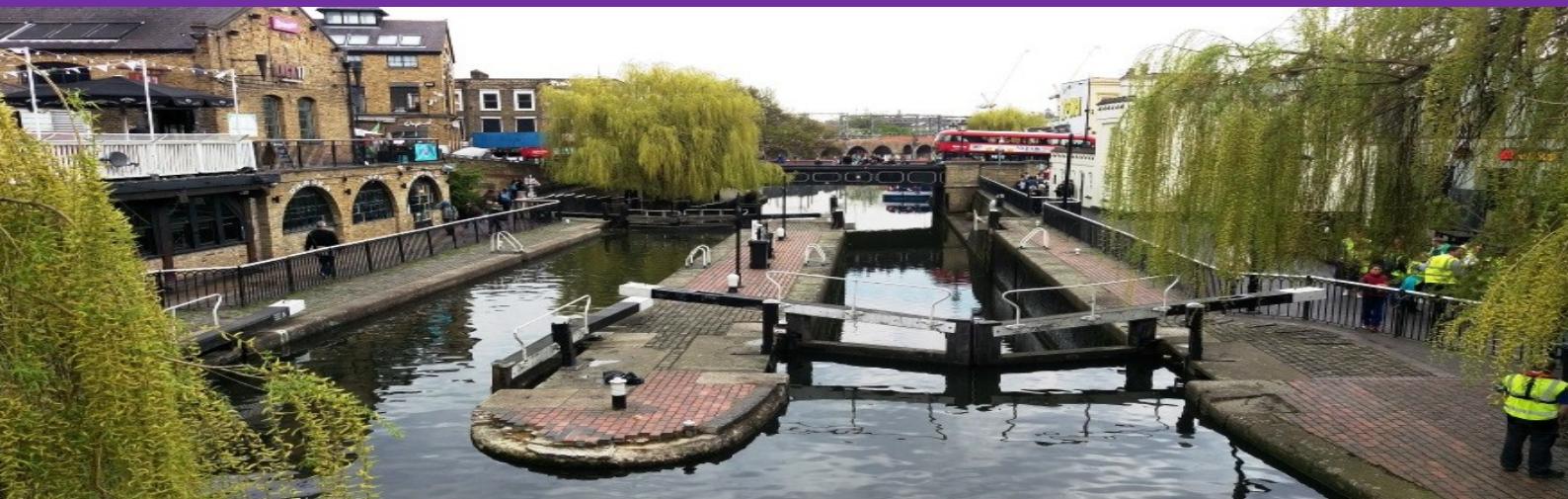


London Borough of Camden

Annual Governance Statement

2024/25



1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Like the rest of local government and the wider public sector, the Council is currently facing unprecedented financial, economic and social challenges following the lasting impact of the global coronavirus pandemic, high inflation and the Cost of Living crisis that have affected the lives of so many people.
- 1.2 The Covid pandemic, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and other national and international factors have all contributed to the highest inflation rates for over 30 years. Camden, along with other local authorities, is in the frontline of supporting households and businesses through what is now widely acknowledged as a cost-of-living emergency.
- 1.3 Before the challenges from Covid, high inflation and the Cost of Living Crisis, the Council was already addressing the challenge of cumulative annual real term cuts to Government funding, which alongside other spending pressures such as rises in demand for services, a need to address more complex needs across a range of services and an ageing population, have left the council with substantial budget pressures.
- 1.4 Since 2010, austerity has significantly reduced our funding levels while we have seen significant growth in demand for our services, particularly in health, social care and homelessness provision. As a result, we have had to make savings of c.£200m between 2010 and 2023. The cumulative impact of those savings should not be underestimated.
- 1.5 In January 2023, the Cabinet agreed a Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) that sought to provide the financial framework for the three years from 2023/24 to 2025/26. The programme, developed through an outcome-based budgeted approach, was developed to address a General Fund projected deficit of c.£40m by 2025/26, with an additional budget gap of £8m - £13m in the Housing Revenue Account.
- 1.6 Camden Council is committed to achieving the ambitions set out within the strategic visions of We Make Camden and The Way We Work.
- 1.7 To achieve these ambitions, the Council recognises that it must have a solid foundation of good governance in place to ensure that it is taking appropriate action in a timely, inclusive, open and accountable manner, to ultimately deliver improved outcomes for residents.
- 1.8 In line with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations (2015), the Council is required to conduct a review, at least once a year, on the effectiveness of its systems of internal control and include an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) within its Statement of Accounts. The AGS provides an opportunity for the Council to undertake a self-assessment and to examine its governance framework to assure itself and key stakeholders that these arrangements are both effective and robust.
- 1.9 The council's code of conduct requires employees to comply with the Nolan Principles of Public Life. Furthermore, in accordance with best practice guidance, the self-assessment and annual governance review process has been undertaken in an open and honest manner, with due regard to the Nolan Principles of Public Life.
- 1.10 Building on Lord Nolan's Committee on Standards of Public Life (1995), which sets out the seven principles of public life, the Standards Board for England

Part A – London Borough of Camden Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25

recommended the following ten principles, adopted on 27th June 2001 in Camden's constitution:

- 1) **Selflessness:** Members should act solely in the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.
- 2) **Integrity:** Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
- 3) **Objectivity:** Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
- 4) **Accountability:** Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
- 5) **Openness:** Information should be shared with the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons to withhold it.
- 6) **Honesty:** Holders of public office should be truthful.
- 7) **Leadership:** Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.
- 8) **Respect for Others:** Holders of public office should promote equality by not discriminating against any person and by treating people with respect regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. They should respect the impartiality and integrity of the authority's statutory officers and its other employees.
- 9) **Duty to uphold the law:** Holders of public office should uphold the law and on all occasions, act in accordance with trust that the public is entitled to place in them.
- 10) **Stewardship:** Holders of public office should do whatever they are able to ensure that their authorities use their resources prudently, and in accordance with the law.

- 1.11 The review considered the Council's performance across all its activities. In summary, the wider context of this Annual Governance Statement (AGS) indicates that the adequacy and effectiveness of the overall governance arrangements is adequate and continues to reflect a commitment to high standards of ethical conduct and public accountability.
- 1.12 A key element of the annual governance review process is to identify any significant internal control issues. The Council has adopted the approach recommended by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), which specifies criteria that would make an issue significant. (see paragraph 6.1 below).
- 1.13 The AGS concludes that the Council had effective governance arrangements in place for the 2024/25 year.
- 1.14 As part of the review, the following areas have been highlighted and, in line with good governance arrangements, will be monitored during the year ahead:
 - 1) Delivering Council services in line with the community priorities of We Make Camden;

- 2) Developing and implementing an Outcomes and Assurance Framework, aligned to We Make Camden;
- 3) Continuing to improve the Council's focus on residents and citizens through the better use of customer data;
- 4) Developing and delivering on the next iteration of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy;
- 5) Continuing to work with London Councils as part of any future Fair Funding Reviews;
- 6) Developing and delivering of the next iteration of the Council's General Fund Capital Strategy;
- 7) Developing a refreshed financial strategy for the Housing Revenue Account; and
- 8) Continuing to monitor the delivery of the Community Investment Programme and manage associated risks.

1.15 In 2024-25, two major external inspections took place:

- 1) **CQC Inspection of Adult Social Care Services** (self-assessment in June 2024 and inspector visits in November 2024) – rated Outstanding with key findings being:
 - 'Extremely clear' governance management and accountability arrangements;
 - Strong shared corporate culture centred on creating equity and valuing diversity of service user population;
 - Staff were very supportive of the working culture and leadership style consistently employed by senior officers. 'Courageous Leadership' training helps to embed a relational approach to delivery and work to focus on 'psychological safety' and a 'speaking out' culture also noted by inspectors. Positive culture of continuous learning and improvement in place too.
- 2) **OFSTED Inspection of Children's Services** (3rd -7th March 2025) – rated Outstanding with key findings being:
 - 'Strategic leadership a 'standout strength' which transcends children's services and includes partnership working;
 - Strong political and corporate support with 'well established' governance arrangements. Senior officers and Members have an 'impressive, shared knowledge' about strengths and areas for development, with a culture of challenge;
 - Long standing investment in early help, reducing rates of statutory intervention, and an 'innovative, confident leadership exploring all options', including capital and revenue initiatives.

1.16 The Council proposes over the coming year to take steps to address and build on the above matters to further enhance its governance arrangements, and an action plan has been included in Section 6 - Significant Governance Issues below. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for further enhancements that were identified in our review of effectiveness, and we will monitor the implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

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Signed by:

Leader

Date

Signed by:

Chief Executive

Date

2. Introduction

2.1 The 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework', published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), in association with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE), sets the standard for local authority governance in the United Kingdom.

2.2 The framework is designed to help local authorities develop and implement high standards of governance, to ensure that:

- resources are directed in accordance with agreed policy and priorities;
- there is sound and inclusive decision-making; and
- there is accountability for the use of resources to achieve desired outcomes for residents and communities.

2.3 The Framework sets out seven core principles, as illustrated in Figure 1 below, that underpin good governance in the public sector.

Figure 1 – Delivering Good Governance Core Principles



2.4 This statement demonstrates how the Council's governance arrangements deliver to these seven principles in practice.

2.5 The AGS has been structured to provide an update against the following areas:

- **Section 3: Camden's Governance Framework** – provides an overview of how the Council's core governance framework is comprised and includes the Council's scope of responsibility;

- **Section 4: Key elements of the Council's governance arrangements for 2024/25** – provides a summary of the key elements and highlights of the Council's governance arrangements for the year ending 31 March 2025;
- **Section 5: Review of Effectiveness** – details the process followed in conducting a review of the effectiveness of the Council's governance framework, including the Head of Internal Audit's annual opinion; and
- **Section 6: Significant Governance Issues** – provides a summary of any significant and/or general governance issues that have been highlighted and will be monitored during the year ahead.

2.6 **Part B** summarises governance arrangements that are largely consistent from year to year. The appendix details standard elements of the Council's governance arrangements and how the Council has applied the principles of good governance as set out within the CIPFA/SOLACE '*Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*' framework.

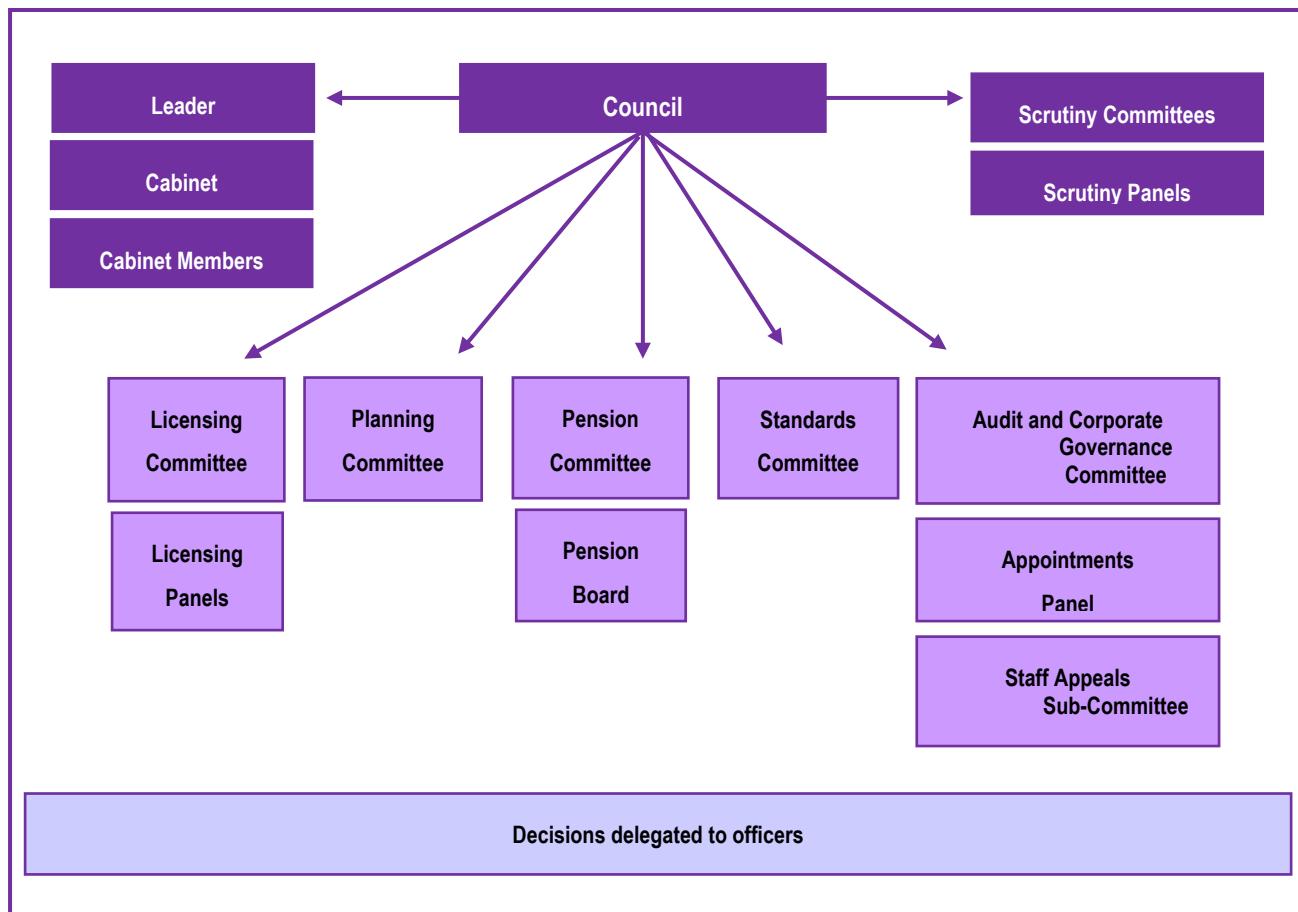
3. Camden's Governance Framework

3.1 The Council is responsible for ensuring that it acts in accordance with the law and is **accountable** to its residents and communities for how public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used in a way that represents value for money. Additionally, the Council has a duty under the Local Government Act 2003 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

3.2 In discharging these responsibilities, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which include arrangements for a robust system of internal control and the effective management of risk. To this end, the Council has established a corporate governance framework, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*.

3.3 The Council expects the highest conduct and behaviour from all of its members and officers. The Council's core governance framework is comprised of a wide range of systems, policies and procedures, and is underpinned by its corporate values, ethos and strategic objectives. Council policy and decision-making processes are managed and controlled within a well-established framework, as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 – Camden Decision-making Framework



3.4 A key feature of the Council's governance framework is the Council's written [Constitution](#), which sets out in detail the framework in which the Council operates. It defines and documents the roles and responsibilities of the executive, non-executive, scrutiny and chief officer functions, and sets out procedures for joint arrangements and responsibilities for partnership arrangements. It also sets out how decisions are made and the procedures to be followed to ensure efficiency, transparency and accountability.

3.5 Another significant and integral aspect of the Council's governance framework is its system of internal control, which is designed in accordance with the Council's key rules and procedures, including the Constitution, Code of Conduct, and Financial Scheme of Delegation. The system of internal control is intended to identify and prioritise the risks that threaten the achievement of the Council's strategic aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically. The system of internal control cannot eliminate all risk of failure, and is designed to provide reasonable, and not absolute, assurance on the effectiveness of the controls and processes in place to mitigate key risks.

3.6 The Council regularly reviews the effectiveness of its governance framework throughout the year, to streamline and improve its processes and ensure that these arrangements remain effective both now and into the future. This process is informed by senior leadership and management, corporate oversight functions (including statutory officers), Internal Audit, External Audit, and other review agencies.

3.7 Part B sets out in more detail the core and integral aspects of the Council's governance framework, which generally remain consistent from year to year and demonstrates how these align to the seven principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework in practice.

4. Key elements of the Council's Governance Framework for 2024/25

4.1 This section of the statement provides a summary of the highlights of the Council's governance for the year ending 31 March 2025 (and up to the date of approval of the Statement of Accounts). It also demonstrates how and where the Council's governance framework has been adapted to reflect changing circumstances and to ensure that the Council continues to deliver and achieve the desired outcomes for Camden residents and communities. Actions taken to address the issues identified within the 2024/25 Annual Governance Statement are also included in the text below.

Key Roles and Subsidiaries

4.2 In addition to the governance arrangements listed above and as outlined in **Part B**, the following key roles are also in place and are key elements of the Council's governance framework:

The Head of Paid Service

4.3 The Chief Executive is the Council's Head of Paid Service (HoPS). The HoPS is primarily governed by the Local Government Housing Act 1984 which legally requires every Council to designate an officer to this role. The Head of Paid Service ensures the council's staff, management structure, and organisational resources are arranged efficiently to deliver the authority's functions effectively. All reports presented to Committee for decision making require the legal, financial, and staffing implications to be explicitly detailed. The Council's Head of Paid Service, the Chief Financial Officer with statutory responsibility under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, and the Monitoring Officer (Borough Solicitor), or their representatives, consider these reports, along with their implications.

Role of the Chief Financial Officer

4.4 The Executive Director Corporate Services (Chief Financial Officer in accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972) was the Council's most senior executive role charged with leading and directing financial operations and strategy for 2024/25. In his role as Chief Financial Officer, he is responsible for:

- Ensuring lawfulness and financial prudence of decision-making;
- Reporting to full Council and the Council's external auditor if he considers that any proposal, decision or course of action will involve incurring unlawful expenditure, or is unlawful and is likely to cause a loss or deficiency, or if the Council is about to enter an item of account unlawfully; and
- Providing advice on the scope of powers and authority to take decisions, probity and budget policy framework issues, and preventing maladministration and financial impropriety.

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Role of the Monitoring Officer

4.5 There are effective arrangements for the discharge of the Monitoring Officer function, which is carried out by the Borough Solicitor. The Monitoring Officer safeguards the council's legal integrity by ensuring its decisions, actions, and conduct comply with the law and uphold high standards of governance. The Borough Solicitor attends the Camden Management Team (CMT) and has direct access to both the Chief Executive and the Section 151 Officer, with both of whom he has regular, programmed one-to-ones. In particular, he has access to all decision-making and all decision reports must contain comment from either himself or one of his legal team. He leads a substantial legal team and has the budget to take specialist external legal advice when necessary. He has appointed a deputy, being the Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer, who provides cover for this role when he is unavailable.

Role of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee

4.6 The Council's Audit and Corporate Governance Committee has responsibility for non-executive functions other than planning, licensing, pensions and standards. It meets approximately five times a year and receives reports on the regulatory framework as follows:

- Annual Governance Statement (annual);
- Statement of accounts and external auditor's opinion (annual);
- External audit plan (annual);
- Internal audit plan (annual);
- Internal audit update (bi-annual);
- Principal risks (bi-annual);
- Counter-fraud (annual); and
- Treasury management (bi-annual).

4.7 The Committee may also consider additional reports on any of those functions should it consider it necessary to provide the assurance sought. Additionally, it has responsibility for the Council's non-executive corporate governance functions, most notably management of the Constitution.

4.8 The Committee also undertakes self-assessment on its overall effectiveness by completing surveys designed around the nine good practice principles set out within the CIPFA Audit Committee Guidance (2018).

4.9 The Council has also continued to subscribe to the CIPFA Better Governance Forum. This has ensured that Members and officers have access to the latest information and guidance. In line with best practice the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee has two Independent Members who bring additional technical expertise and further strengthen governance arrangements.

Role of Scrutiny

4.10 The Council has five scrutiny committees to scrutinise the various functions of the Council and decisions made by the Cabinet, Cabinet Members, and Chief Officers. Scrutiny Committees each meet up to seven times a year, and in addition, the chairs of the five scrutiny committees meet collectively, as the Joint Chairs of Scrutiny Committee, to coordinate scrutiny work collectively. The scrutiny committees can, and often do, operate scrutiny panels to look at specific matters in a task-and-finish style approach. Camden is also one of the

five boroughs participating in the North Central London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4.11 Each scrutiny committee regularly meets with relevant members of the Cabinet to discuss areas in their portfolios, and the Leader of the Council attends the Joint Chairs of the Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis. Scrutiny committee meetings are scheduled in such a way as to be able to comment on Cabinet reports prior to decision, allowing for relevant input through an early consideration of the draft proposals or when they have been finalised. In addition, there is a procedure for executive decisions to be called in for discussion at scrutiny committee meetings.

5. Review of Effectiveness

5.1 Camden's Corporate Management Team (CMT) is responsible for putting in place adequate governance arrangements and effective systems of internal control. The Council uses several ways to review and assess the effectiveness of governance arrangements, as set out below.

5.2 The Council undertakes a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework in accordance with best practice advice, as published by CIPFA/SOLACE¹, in meeting the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations (2015). This incorporates the independent findings from both the External Auditor and Internal Audit, as well as annual self-assessments conducted by each Executive Directorate.

5.3 The self-assessment takes account of the methods employed by the Council in providing assurance on the governance framework. Information used includes:

- Local Management Information Systems;
- Interim External Audit outcomes;
- Internal Audit outcomes;
- Scrutiny arrangements;
- Audit and Corporate Governance committee reports;
- Reports from inspectorates;
- Performance information;
- Risk management arrangements; and
- Information governance arrangements

External Audit

5.4 Camden, like many local authorities, has experienced significant delays with the audit of accounts over the past four years. In response to the national issue of outstanding audits, the government has acted – setting out as a three-stage process to address the backlog, with those stages being 1) Reset, 2) Recovery and 3) Reform. The immediate focus has been on incorporating backstop dates in regulation, by which point councils must report accounts, with disclaimed or modified audit opinions where audits are incomplete.

¹ The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) collaboration

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- 5.5 The government has laid before Parliament the amendments to the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 that implement the revised proposals for backstop dates in relation to outstanding audits via the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024, which came into force on 30th September 2024 ('the Amending Regulations').
- 5.6 For financial statements up to and including the financial year 2022-23 the statutory backstop deadline by which accounts have to be reported is 13th December 2024. The Financial Reporting Council (FRC) has clarified that local authorities should not be adversely judged for receiving such opinions, as they reflect a statutory limitation of scope rather than any fault of the authority.
- 5.7 The audits of Camden's 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22 financial statements have been signed off with unqualified opinions. Given the delays to previous years, there was insufficient time to conduct a full audit of the 2022/23 and 2023/24 Council accounts prior to the backstop dates. As such, the external auditor Forvis Mazars has issued a disclaimed opinion on the Council accounts for 2022/23 and 2023/24. However, the audit of the Pension Fund accounts being more straightforward, Forvis Mazars completed a full audit for 2023/24. Due to receiving a disclaimed audit in 2022/23, as expected, due to time limitations the auditor was unable to gain sufficient assurance on the prior year comparator data, and as such has issued a qualified opinion in 2023/24.
- 5.8 In such instances as outlined in section 5.7 the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) and Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHCLG) have stated it should be made clear that local authorities should not be adversely judged that such an opinion has been issued. In plain terms, a disclaimer means that they have been unable to form an opinion. In this instance, the reason for this will be the limitation of scope imposed by statute (not by the local authority).
- 5.9 Forvis Mazars have issued their Audit Strategy for the 2024-25 financial statements for the pension fund and the main council accounts. In their External Audit Strategy for 2024/25 Forvis Mazars have stated that they plan to conduct a full audit on both the Council and Pension Fund.
- 5.10 On 9 June, the NAO issued its guidance on rebuilding assurance - [LARRIG 06](#). The LARRIG² places emphasis on enhanced auditor risk assessments, and rebuilding assurance on carrying values of property, plant and equipment (PPE) and reserves. Additionally, it acknowledges the necessity for auditors to prioritise their resources, recognising that not all rebuilding assurance procedures can be completed within a single year.
- 5.11 The LARRIG guidance issued emphasises that auditors need to consider specific circumstances for each authority following the guidance and places. Forvis Mazars are assessing this recently issued guidance and will be reporting to the committee on their planned approach to rebuilding assurance for the London borough of Camden.
- 5.12 The Council has invested additional resources in its financial and technical reporting capacity. Given the significant progress made in clearing the accounts backlog, and the absence of outstanding audits - it no longer considers the accounts to be a serious governance issue as in previous annual governance statements. It now views the accounts as an area of improvement.

² Local Audit Reset and Recovery Implementation Guidance

Value for money

5.13 The Council has completed its value for money audit for 2023-24 and will perform its audit on value for money on 2024-25 after the publication of draft 2024-25 financial statements on the 30th June 2025 statutory deadline.

5.14 In 2023-24, Forvis Mazars did not find any significant weaknesses in the Council's ability to secure value for money - economy, efficiency and effectiveness. For more information, please see the [Auditor's Annual Report for 2023-24](#).

Internal Audit

5.15 Internal Audit delivers a planned programme of work based on an annual assessment of the key risks facing the Council. Internal Audit also provide advice and guidance on risk and control issues within individual systems. The 2024/25 plan was directed towards the key risk areas as identified within the Principal Risk Report.

5.16 The effectiveness of the Council's risk management framework is regularly reviewed through benchmarking against other authorities, industry standards and best practice. This has resulted in continuous improvement to the Council's risk management framework. In 2024/25, risk management oversight by the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee continued to be strengthened by the presentation of deep dives on individual principal risks.

5.17 The 2024/25 Internal Audit plan was drafted from a number of other sources including an Internal Audit risk assessment, audit plans of other local authorities, intelligence from previous audits, and CIPFA good governance guidelines. An annual assurance map is also produced to demonstrate how internal audit resources provide assurance on the actions to mitigate the Council's principal risks.

5.18 The outcomes of internal audit activity are included 2024-25 Internal Audit Annual Report. In addition to the outcomes of the 2024-25 audit plan, in reaching the Head of Internal Audit's opinion (HIA), the following governance arrangements were also considered:

1. The Council's risk awareness and risk culture had further matured in 2024-25. Risk deep dives have been presented to the Committee. There was also a continued awareness of principal risks and a good level of implementation of actions designed to mitigate principal risks;
2. There was a willingness on the part of management to proactively seek Internal Audit advice in relation to risk and control design outside of the delivery of the audit plan. This was evidenced by the large number of reviews the senior leadership and service management have requested outside of the 2024-25 audit plan;
3. The HIA opinion is also informed by the wider sources of assurance as listed within the governance self-assessment, which will support the annual governance statement.

5.19 The implementation of audit recommendations were tracked and monitored by Internal Audit using an open recommendation tracker. Audit recommendations made in 2024/25 were scheduled for follow-up to ensure that management action has been implemented within agreed timescales. This will provide senior management and the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee with a direction of travel in the internal control environment across the Council and will identify areas where further improvement is required.

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5.20 The wider context of this AGS indicates the adequacy and effectiveness of the overall governance arrangements in place. Per CIPFA's Public Sector application note which supports the Global Internal Audit Standards, the HIA must prepare such an overall conclusion. This overall conclusion must encompass governance, risk management and control

5.21 Regarding the annual opinion, the HIA is satisfied that the work undertaken by the audit function during 2024/25 has enabled the HIA to form a reasonable conclusion on the Council's control framework, risk management and governance arrangements. For the year ended 31st March 2025, the HIA has provided a '**Moderate assurance**' opinion; indicating that the adequacy and effectiveness of the overall arrangements for the Council's systems of internal control, risk management and governance are adequate, with some improvement required. Weaknesses identified during individual audits and investigations are not significant, in aggregate, to the system of internal control. Although some high risk rated recommendations were made in individual audit reviews, these were broadly isolated to specific systems or processes. None of the individual audit reviews had an overall classification of critical risk. A detailed HIA opinion was provided in the Council's 2024/25 Internal Audit Annual Report which will be presented to the ACGC in July 2025.

Management Self-Assessment

5.22 In accordance with section 5 of the CIPFA/SOLACE 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2016 (guidance notes)', a comprehensive self-assessment, largely detailing stable governance arrangements, was completed in previous years and is updated periodically. The self-assessment provides a useful indicator of the Council's effectiveness in applying principles of good governance in practice. The self-assessment also allows authorities to assess how their processes and documentation meet the criteria suggested in the CIPFA/SOLACE framework.

5.23 In addition to the self-assessment referred to above, as part of the AGS production process, each directorate is asked to complete an annual self-assessment. This directorate level self-assessment presents the Directorate's view of its governance arrangements. Directorate self-assessments serve a dual purpose, in that they provided assurance surrounding the governance arrangements in place for 2024/25, and also provided an opportunity for senior management to reflect on good governance requirements.

5.24 In 2024/25, the Council's directorates (Children and Learning, Adults and Health, Supporting Communities, and Corporate Services) completed self-assessments to evaluate governance arrangements and identify significant changes and areas for improvement. Key changes in each directorate are summarised below:

Children and Learning:

- a) Agreed to refresh governance arrangements in the current Autism Partnership board in preparation for the new all-age Autism Strategy, which is due to be published in 2025.
- b) In light of National Reform to Children's Social Care, a fortnightly Operational National Reform Board was established in February 2025 to bring together key stakeholders around Camden's response to National Reform. The Board reports into a Strategic Partner National Reform Board – Strategic Board – which met in early 2025/26 financial year.

- c) To further strengthen the delivery of the SEND Strategy, the SEND Operational Board was established to monitor progress of the strategy implementation. This board reports to the Inclusion Board chaired by the Cabinet Member responsible for Children, Schools & Families.

Adults and Health:

- a) Established The Oversight Board in October 2024 to provide a strategic and operational review of key areas within Adult Social Care, in-house provision and commissioned services, ensuring accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement. This Board is chaired by the Executive Director of Adults & Health, and replaces and combines two previous Boards (The ASC Quality Board and the Performance, Activity and Finance Board)
- b) The Supporting People, Connecting Communities (SPCC) Programme Steering Group provides programme oversight, programme management functions as well as responsibility for the operational delivery of the Adult Social Care Programme (contributing to the delivery of the SPCC ambitions). In March 2025, the Supporting People, Connecting Communities (SPCC) Transformation Board was terminated and the Programme Steering Group now feeds directly into the Oversight Board.
- c) The Carers Partnership Board was established to maintain accountability and momentum with the Carers Action Plan.
- d) Dr Adi Cooper was appointed as the new independent chair of the Safeguarding Adults Partnership Board in February 2025.
- e) Took a decision with Children and Learning to stop the Autism Partnership Board in its current form and refresh the governance to prepare for a new all-age Autism Strategy which is due to be published in autumn 2025.
- f) Established the Transitional Safeguarding Forum to further develop and embed work to support young people as they progress into adulthood and across different services.
- g) Anna Wright, Lead Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care took over as Chair of Health and Wellbeing Board
- h) Provider Oversight Board provides oversight and make recommendations regarding the quality of services based in Camden, and of those directly commissioned by Camden (both in and out of borough). It is an information-sharing arrangement between the Council, North Central London Integrated Care Board and Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Supporting Communities:

- a) Established the Temporary Accommodation Task Group to work on increasing supply of cost effective and quality temporary accommodation.
- b) A Housing Transformation board has been set up to oversee the Housing Transformation Programme.
- c) The council's cabinet agreed a Housing Investment Strategy which sets out the housing capital programme for the next five years, how it will be

funded and management of poorly performing housing assets, including disposal where appropriate, and the Cabinet decision delegates the decision to dispose to the Director of Property Management for individual disposals and the Executive Director Supporting Communities for block disposals.

- d) In March 2025, in response to its challenging financial position, the Council introduced controls on recruitment for all posts, new and existing. All hiring managers must obtain the approval of the Executive Director Supporting Communities and the Executive Director Corporate Services (the s151 officer) before recruiting. The EDs take into account the financial position of the service when making the decision.
- e) At a more strategic level, the Directorate has maintained its entries on the Council-wide strategic risk register, in particular for Landlord Duty of Care, taking into account the extensive operational changes made to ensure the Council is compliant with the Building Safety Act 2022.

Corporate Services

- a) Following the emergence of significant revenue overspends during 2024/25, the Executive Director Corporate Services (the Council's Section 151 Officer) instituted a number of Oversight Panels to review overspends and shape mitigations at a directorate level. He also held individual meetings with each of his three Executive Director colleagues to review the Quarter 3 forecast position. Managing any budget pressures and emerging overspends is a key part of protecting the Council's financial resilience, a crucial element in ensuring that the Council can meet its wider strategic objectives set out in We Make Camden.
- b) As part of the Full Council meeting each May, a report ([May 2024 Report to Full Council](#)) was taken containing proposed changes to the Constitution, discussed in Audit & Corporate Governance Committee and through the cross-party 'Democratic Review Group'. Several changes were proposed and agreed in the May 2024 Full Council meeting, particularly on the functioning of Full Council (including the language on deputations and petitions) to ensure that its time is focused on issues within the Borough.
- c) The Council identified impairments attributable to some of its operational properties in 2024/25 due to structural issues and water damage. Specialists are being engaged to assess defects, support the repair and claims process, and work is planned for the coming year.

6. Significant Governance Issues

6.1 A key element of the annual governance review process is to identify any significant internal control issues. The Council has adopted the approach recommended by the CIPFA, which has identified what may be considered generally as a significant issue. Indicators include:

- The issue has seriously prejudiced or prevented achievement of a principal objective;
- The issue has resulted in a need to seek additional funding to allow it to be resolved;

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- The issue has resulted in significant diversion of resources from another aspect of the business;
- The issue has led to a material impact on the accounts;
- The Audit Committee, or equivalent, has advised that it should be considered significant for this purpose, or
- The Head of Internal Audit has reported on it as significant in the annual opinion on the internal control environment.

6.2 A governance issue that does not meet the threshold of a significant governance issue as described above is noted as an area of improvement.

6.3 The significant governance issues raised through internal self-assessments carried out by each directorate are as follows:

Ref	Governance Area	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Implementation update
1.	Overspends in supporting communities Housing Revenue Account and General Fund Overspends have been driven by rising cases of homelessness in the borough. Temporary accommodation spending pressures have been a topical issue for local authorities across the country, mainly driven by the cost of living crisis. To a large extent this is a shock outside of the authority's control. Given the significance of this risk to the authority, it has been identified as a key governance issue. The most effective response to this unprecedented pressure involves strengthening governance measures as well as undertaking targeted lobbying efforts alongside London Councils and other regional networks to address historic funding disparities.	Executive Director – Supporting Communities	Ongoing	In response to this and other areas of overspend, the Chief Executive and the Executive Director – Corporate Services set up a Resources Oversight Panel. It met to scrutinise expenditure in the Housing Services, Property Management and Development divisions in October 2024. The TA Task Group was set up following the Panel meeting.
2	Recovery of Temporary Accommodation debtors	Executive Director –	Ongoing	A TA Income and Rent Arrears Steering Group has

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Ref	Governance Area	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Implementation update
	<p>Rising cases of homelessness have resulted in an increase in rent receivable, which has resulted in a £5.6m increase in bad debt provision for Temporary Accommodation rent arrears.</p> <p>Temporary accommodation spending pressures have been a topical issue for local authorities across the country, mainly driven by the cost of living crisis. To a large extent this is a shock outside of the authority's control.</p> <p>Given that this is a key risk to the authority it has been flagged as a significant governance issue, as the best way for the authority to respond to this unprecedented pressure is via stronger governance measures.</p>	Supporting Communities		been set up to address the issues, and the bad debt provision will be monitored throughout the year.

Areas of improvement

6.4 The Housing Ombudsman carried out a special investigation into Camden's handling of landlord complaints covering areas such as repairs and anti-social behaviour. The investigation started in November 2023 and its report was published in November 2024. The Council had already taken a number of steps to address the issues identified in the report before it was published, which was acknowledged by the Ombudsman, and has published an [action plan](#). Details can be found in the following report to the Housing Scrutiny Committee in February 2025 [Housing Ombudsman Special Investigation into London Borough of \(LB\) Camden](#). Given the Council's swift action to address the issues identified in this report this has been recognised as an area of improvement.

6.5 The 2024-25 Internal Audit update (Appendix 1) of the Internal Audit Annual report for 2024-25 identified that contract management in the building repairs team provided limited assurance, and design and operation of key controls in the concessionary travel service provided no assurance. As part of future audit planning, follow-up audits will be conducted to assess the level of implementation of recommendations. It is important to note that the HIA has provided a 'Moderate assurance' opinion; indicating that the adequacy and effectiveness of the overall arrangements for the Council's systems of internal control, risk management and governance are adequate, with some

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improvement required. Weaknesses identified during individual audits and investigations are not significant, in aggregate, to the system of internal control.

6.6 During 2024/25, external audits of both the Council and the Pension Fund concluded for 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24, ahead of a series of statutory backstop dates implemented by the government. Due to insufficient time to fully complete the 2022/23 and 2023/24 audits ahead of the backstop date, Forvis Mazars (the Council's external auditors) issued a 'disclaimed opinion' for the Council's 2022/23 and 2023/24 accounts and for the Pension Fund's 2022/23 accounts. A 'qualified opinion' was issued for the 2023/24 Pension Fund accounts. This was because a full Pension Fund audit was completed, but the 'disclaimed audit' for 2022/23 meant that auditors were unable to gain sufficient assurance on prior year comparator data.

6.7 The Financial Reporting Council (FRC) and Ministry of Housing and Local Government (MHCLG) have stated that local authorities should not be adversely judged over the issuing of a disclaimed opinion. However, the Council acknowledges the importance of rebuilding full assurance over subsequent audit cycles, particularly through finance and other officers working with our external auditors as they test prior year data and seek to gain confirmation over prior year comparator movements and balances.

Processes to foster continuous improvement at Camden

6.8 The table below highlights key areas that in accordance with good governance practices, must be closely monitored in the coming year. A number of these issues are a continuation of work from previous years. Where this is the case, the council regularly updates and adapts its approach to factors that influence the nature of these issues. For example, the wider economic climate, Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis have impacted the Council's medium-term financial strategy (see item 5 in the table below).

Ref	Governance Area	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Implementation update
1.	Delivery of We Make Camden Priorities To monitor the delivery of priorities and outcomes of We Make Camden.	Director of Strategy and Design	Ongoing	Priorities agreed by Cabinet in May 2025 with ongoing development of delivery infrastructure, including leadership, governance, resourcing mechanisms, and measurement and evaluation.
2.	Performance Management To develop and implement an approach to performance management aligned with the mission-oriented approach articulated in We Make Camden priorities.	Director of Strategy and Design	Ongoing	The Council is implementing several mechanisms to review outcomes and impact, including creating the Good Life Camden Wellbeing Index for the Borough to track progress on the delivery of We Make Camden. Quarterly Insight, Learning, and Impact reports are taken to CMT and to scrutiny committees on a bi-annual

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Ref	Governance Area	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Implementation update
				basis, which set out the key challenges that Council services are experiencing, where there are opportunities to improve and develop, and what learning has been achieved in the last quarter.
3.	Implementation of Peer Review Recommendations <p>Building on the report to Cabinet of December 2021 responding to the report of the LGA Peer Review, the Council is continuing to respond and deliver against the recommendations outlined in this report.</p>	Director of Strategy and Design	Ongoing	The Council through We Make Camden, has implemented a number of the Peer Review recommendations and will update on wider implementation through appropriate scrutiny and audit channels.
4.	Better use of customer data <p>To continue to improve the Council's focus on residents and citizens through better use of customer data.</p>	Chief Data Officer	Ongoing	The Council continues to develop its approach to using data under the leadership of the Chief Data Officer. The Council has created teams of Data Analysts within the Supporting People Strategy Team and Supporting Communities Strategy Team that work with the Council's frontline services to make better use of data and support the generation of data-enabled insights and improvements
5.	New Medium-term Financial Strategy <p>To develop and deliver the next iteration of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.</p>	Director of Finance Director of Corporate Strategy and Policy Design.	Under Review	Work to develop the strategy has continued. The timetable for delivery is under review given the pending reforms to Local Government.
6.	Funding <p>Continue working with London Councils on the Fair Funding Review, which is crucial for</p>	Director of Finance Head of Finance	Ongoing	The government is expected to commence formal consultation on the approach to determining new funding allocations

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Ref	Governance Area	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Implementation update
	determining future local authority funding. The Council will seek to influence government decisions on funding allocation and policies, including social care funding and the Business Rates system.	(Corporate Services)		for local authorities in the spring/summer of 2025. Officers have contributed to a number of London Council's lobbying efforts by providing details of the financial pressures the Council is facing.
7.	General Fund Capital Strategy To develop and deliver the next iteration of the General Fund Capital Strategy.	Head of Finance (Corporate Services)	July 2025	The latest iteration of the General Fund Capital Strategy will be agreed upon via the July 2025 medium-term financial strategy report. Officers will continue to develop the pipeline of capital projects to be included in future iterations of the General Fund Capital Strategy
8.	Housing Revenue Account Financial Strategy To develop a refreshed HRA financial strategy, in light of the financial challenges it is facing, and to monitor the implementation of this strategy.	Director of Finance Head of Finance (Supporting Communities)	July 2025	The latest iteration of the Housing Revenue Account Financial Strategy will be agreed upon via the July 2025 medium-term financial strategy report.
9.	Community Investment Programme To continue to monitor the delivery of the Community Investment Programme and manage associated risks.	Director of Development Head of CIP Programme Office	Ongoing	The programme is now overseen by the Executive Director Board. Every January there is a CIP scrutiny panel to scrutinise CIP's delivery against objectives. There is an externally published CIP annual report which details performance against key delivery targets such as the number of new homes delivered.

Part B - Summary of the Council's Governance Framework - CIPFA/SOLACE Principles

This section details the stable elements of the Council's governance framework, which remain largely consistent from year to year. The section demonstrates how the core principles of good governance, as set out within the CIPFA/SOLACE '*Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*' framework, are applied in practice. This is not an exhaustive list and is therefore not indicative of all of the Council's governance arrangements; however, key governance arrangements in relation to core principles of the CIPFA framework are listed.

Core Principles of the Framework:	Examples of the governance arrangements the Council has in place.
<p>Principal A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law.</p>	<p>The Council maintains a robust framework for policy and decision-making, guided by its written Constitution and the Principles of Public Life. Key documents include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Constitution: Defines Council operations, updated regularly.• Financial & Contract Standing Orders: Part of the Constitution, detailing financial and contractual procedures.• Councillor & Officers' Code of Conduct: Outlines expected behaviours, updated in 2021/22 to align with the Local Government Association Model Code.• Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy: last updated June 2023.• Whistleblowing Policy: last updated June 2023.• Complaints Policy: Updated July 2024.• Handbooks: Managers' and Members' Handbook, Camden's Data Charter. <p>Additional policies cover HR, information management, and service-specific areas, all accessible via the Council's Intranet. New employees are introduced to these during induction.</p> <p>The Camden Management Team ensures compliance with and sets behaviours and standards. The whistleblowing policy, part of the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, complies with the 1998 Public Interest Disclosure Act and is reviewed bi-annually by the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee. It encourages officers, Members and the public to report inappropriate action by employees, Members and external contractors without fear of retribution.</p>

Part B - Summary of the Council's Governance Framework - CIPFA/SOLACE Principles

Core Principles of the Framework:	Examples of the governance arrangements the Council has in place.
<p>Principal B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.</p>	<p>Ensuring Openness The Council is committed to openness and transparency, ensuring public access to its operations and decision-making processes. This is done via ensuring openness and transparency and community engagement.</p> <p>Ensuring Openness and Transparency Transparency Initiatives: The Council ensures transparency, publishing its Open Data Portal and Open Data Charter online, which meet the requirements of the government's Transparency Code. The data charter provides ethical guidelines and principles regarding data use at Camden.</p> <p>Public Access to Meetings: Council meetings are open to the public, with exceptions for confidential matters, and schedules are posted online. The Constitution further promotes openness bringing residents closer to democratic and strategic leaders through for example themed debates.</p> <p>Legal Compliance and Reporting: Part III of the Local Government Act 1974 sets out the role of the Ombudsman in terms of investigating and reporting maladministration. Section 5A of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 also sets out requirements for the Monitoring Officer of a local authority – Camden's Borough Solicitor. The Council presents an annual report covering cases where there have been routine mistakes or failings incurred and the actions agreed by Council to resolve which is in line with the Ombudsman's recommendation.</p> <p>Data Protection and Governance: The Borough Solicitor, serving as the Data Protection Officer and Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO), oversees information governance and cybersecurity, ensuring compliance with data protection laws. The Council sets also out its commitment to Freedom of Information (FOI), Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) and Data Subject Rights (DSR) in a dedicated section on its website.</p> <p>Engaging with Stakeholders and Residents Community Engagement: The Council actively involves residents through initiatives like the Citizens' Assembly, contributing to the "We Make Camden" and "The Way We Work" vision, which guides ongoing community-focused work.</p> <p>Resident Feedback: Insights are gathered via Citizen's Assemblies, the STAR survey, and other regular feedback methods to evaluate and benchmark Council performance.</p> <p>Housing Consultation: Housing issues are discussed quarterly through District Management Committees (DMCs), which include tenant representatives and councillors, with an annual joint meeting to address rent and service charges.</p>

Part B - Summary of the Council's Governance Framework - CIPFA/SOLACE Principles

Core Principles of the Framework:	Examples of the governance arrangements the Council has in place.
<p>Principal C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable, economic, social and environmental benefits.</p>	<p>We Make Camden Plan: The "We Make Camden" plan outlines how the Council will achieve its vision for the borough, Tackling Inequalities: Financial inequality is not new to Camden and is a core priority central to our We Make Camden goals. The Council Tax Support Scheme plays a crucial role in Camden's response to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, providing essential financial relief to low-income households. The scheme ensures that council tax remains affordable for vulnerable residents, directly contributing to reduced arrears and supporting household budgets during challenging economic times. Currently, over 22,000 residents benefit from the Council Tax Support Scheme, with around 16,100 of them, including c5,300 pension-age claimants, receiving 100% discounts. These residents are entirely exempt from paying council tax, enabling them to allocate their limited financial resources towards other essential needs. This significant level of support ensures that the scheme remains a vital lifeline for many within Camden's diverse community. Our £2m cost of living crisis fund continues to support residents and families with essential everyday costs such as energy, food or rent. During 2024/25, the cost of living fund was used to back more than 4,400 crisis fund payments of up to £500 to over 3,000 different households in the borough. Climate Emergency: Tackling the climate emergency remains a key priority for Camden. This year, we published our second "Climate Budget" describing the Council's investment in improving the energy efficiency of our estate as well as the scale of the financial challenge to fully decarbonise our buildings. Notable projects include full energy efficiency retrofits to Swiss Cottage, Highgate and West Hampstead libraries, funded by secured grants and the Council. We have also trialled new forms of social financing in collaboration with the community energy group Power Up North London, which has seen solar energy systems installed on Regent High and Parliament Hill schools, cutting the schools' energy bills and providing a return on investment to community investors. Across our corporate and schools estate, carbon dioxide emissions are now 64.5% below 2010 levels.</p>

Part B - Summary of the Council's Governance Framework - CIPFA/SOLACE Principles

Core Principles of the Framework:	Examples of the governance arrangements the Council has in place.
<p>Principal D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.</p>	<p>Determining Interventions and Optimising Outcomes</p> <p>Active Stakeholder Participation: Camden Council continues to emphasise stakeholder participation, building on its "Camden 2025" vision. The Council invites residents, partners, and officers to contribute ideas and tackle challenges collaboratively. A dedicated Participation Team was established to promote a participatory culture and test innovative engagement models, ensuring residents' voices shape decision-making.</p> <p>Partnerships and Collaborations: The Council collaborates with various organisations across sectors to deliver services and address key challenges. This includes partnerships with Voluntary Sector Organisations (VSOs), with a £5.1 million annual investment in strategic partners focused on neighbourhoods and equalities. The Council also works closely with agencies to safeguard vulnerable children and adults, supported by statutory boards and multi-agency audits.</p> <p>Health and Social Care Integration: The Council and the North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group (NCL CCG) are developing integrated health and social care arrangements, navigating NHS structural changes. The Health and Wellbeing Board plays a key role in promoting integration and aligning services for better outcomes.</p> <p>Business Intelligence and Performance Management: The Council leverages business intelligence to provide data-driven insights for better decision-making. A framework is in place to improve data quality and use it to enhance service performance. Performance is regularly reviewed through inspections, annual reports, and performance indicators reported to key decision-makers.</p>

Part B - Summary of the Council's Governance Framework - CIPFA/SOLACE Principles

Core Principles of the Framework:	Examples of the governance arrangements the Council has in place.
<p>Principal E: Developing the council's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.</p>	<p>The Constitution outlines how Camden Council operates, detailing the roles and responsibilities of the executive, non-executive, scrutiny, and chief officer functions, as well as procedures for decision-making, joint arrangements, and partnerships to ensure efficiency, transparency, and accountability.</p> <p>Management control is exercised through the (CMT), which establishes processes, standards of behaviour, and codes of conduct for officers. A Managers' Guide and Members' Handbook provide further guidance, with regular updates available on the Intranet and Learning and Development Hub.</p> <p>The Council supports the professional development of its Members and officers through a comprehensive learning program, including mandatory e-learning modules linked to performance reviews. Members also receive role-specific training and have access to additional learning opportunities to enhance their skills and effectiveness.</p>
<p>Principal F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.</p>	<p>Managing Risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Internal Audit and Risk Management: These functions are crucial in assessing governance and risk management, providing objective opinions to ensure the Council meets its strategic objectives.Principal Risk Report: This report updated annually and reviewed bi-annually, outlines key risks and controls, informing Internal Audit's focus areas.Operational Risk Management: Embedded at service levels through workshops, training, and project support. <p>Financial Management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Strong Financial Controls: The Council has robust processes for budget planning, monitoring, and financial management, supported by Financial Standing Orders and Regulations.Oracle System: The Council has integrated HR, Finance, and Procurement through Oracle, enhancing data and process integration. <p>Managing Performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Performance Monitoring: Performance is reviewed via external inspections, annual reports, and detailed performance indicators reported to senior management and scrutiny committees.Pandemic Impact Reporting: New work programs, including pandemic responses, are integrated into regular performance reporting.

Part B - Summary of the Council's Governance Framework - CIPFA/SOLACE Principles

Core Principles of the Framework:	Examples of the governance arrangements the Council has in place.
	<p>Scrutiny:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scrutiny Committees: Five committees review Council functions and decisions, with meetings scheduled to provide input on Cabinet reports before decisions are made.• Joint Scrutiny: Chairs of the committees meet to coordinate efforts, and there is a statutory scrutiny officer to support these activities. <p>Anti-Fraud and Corruption:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Robust Anti-Fraud Approach: The Council follows best practices for managing fraud risks, with a zero-tolerance policy outlined in the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy.• Whistleblowing: A policy is in place for confidential reporting of suspected fraud.• Mandatory Fraud Awareness Training: All officers must complete online fraud awareness training as part of their mandatory learning.
<p>Principal G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.</p>	<p>The Council prioritises transparency and accountability, ensuring residents can access information and hold the Council accountable. Key initiatives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open Data: The Council publishes the Open Data Portal and Open Data Charter online, fulfilling government transparency requirements. In 2022, a Citizen Data Charter was introduced to guide data use for community benefit.• Public Meetings: Council meetings are generally open to the public, with details available online, except when confidentiality is required.• Scrutiny Committees: There are five scrutiny committees within the Council, which support and hold the work of the Cabinet and the Council to account. Scrutiny committees play an important role in accountability, openness and transparency• Annual Reporting: The Council reports annually on performance, finances, audits, and governance, with updates available online.• Complaints Policy: The Council follows a two-stage process to resolve complaints, with escalation options to external ombudsmen if needed.