

**LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

**WARDS:** All

**REPORT TITLE:** Annual Joint Report of the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees 2025-26

**REPORT OF:** Councillor Kemi Atolagbe, Councillor Linda Chung, Councillor Sylvia McNamara, Councillor Awale Olad, Councillor Lorraine Revah

**FOR SUBMISSION TO:** Council

**DATE:** 2nd March 2026

**SUMMARY OF REPORT**

Scrutiny plays an important role in improving outcomes for residents – making sure services meet residents’ needs, exploring issues which impact the wellbeing of the borough and providing improvement recommendations to the Council.

This is the seventh report of the Joint Chairs of Scrutiny to Council and presents the activities and achievements of Camden’s five scrutiny committees over the last municipal year.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - ACCESS TO INFORMATION:**

No documents which require listing were used in the preparation of this report.

**CONTACT:**

Hugh Smith, Head of Corporate Strategy

5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AG

[Hugh.smith@camden.gov.uk](mailto:Hugh.smith@camden.gov.uk)

0207 974 5209

**RECOMMENDATION**

Council is asked to note the report.

Signed:



**Osian Jones, Director of Strategy, Design and Insight**

## **Annual Joint Report of the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees 2025-26**

### **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. This is the seventh annual joint report of the Chairs of the scrutiny committees to Full Council. The first report was received by Full Council in February 2019. Until November 2017, the Chairs submitted individual reports on their respective committees. To support collaborative working, reflect the interdependent nature of the work, promote the role of scrutiny and ensure its visibility, it was agreed in July 2018 that Chairs would submit a joint written report to a meeting of the Council. A report of this kind has been submitted every year since 2019 except 2021, due to the disruption to the normal schedule of scrutiny committees associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. The cross-party Covid Oversight Panel, which provided scrutiny of the Council's emergency response, reported to Full Council on its activities in March 2021. The continued joint reporting of the Chairs of the scrutiny committees to Full Council underscores the value of the committees' scrutiny and oversight function.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1. Scrutiny plays an important role in improving outcomes for residents by making sure services meet residents' needs, exploring issues which impact the wellbeing of the borough and providing recommendations to the Council for improvement. The Local Government Association notes that "scrutiny is an essential part of ensuring that local government remains transparent, accountable and open, resulting in improved public policies and services." The scrutiny function has a democratic mandate to monitor decisions affecting local residents, contribute to the formation of policy and hold the executive to account.

#### *Supporting our community vision*

- 2.2. We Make Camden is our shared vision for our Borough that builds on commitment to working with our Councillors and communities to shape a future for Camden that responds to the ambitions of our place. Scrutiny committees have played a role in shaping the development and delivery of the strategy and look forward to continuing this role to help ensure its success.
- 2.3. We Make Camden advocates for opening up the Council so that all citizens have a voice. The Council has been delivering on this ambition through thematic Full Council meetings and continued use of participatory methods such as citizens assemblies. Scrutiny Chairs are committed to involving residents meaningfully in oversight, working with Councillors in their democratic role to scrutinise the Council's services, performance and ambitions.
- 2.4. We Make Camden is clear that the Council and partners will use data and evidence to provide insight into how well we are delivering on the ambitions of

our communities, and to ensure transparency and accountability about the Council's delivery and impact. A key element of this is the annual State of the Borough report, which is a shared evidence base for the Council, partners and communities, as well as the regular Insight, Learning and Impact report that all scrutiny committees receive that provides an overview of the performance and delivery of all Council services, as well as commentary on the challenges, learning and opportunities facing the organisation.

- 2.5. Chairs of Scrutiny have used the State of the Borough report, as well as the Insight, Learning and Impact reports, to inform future work planning and as a source of evidence for issues of concern and relevance to each committee to explore and scrutinise.
- 2.6. In planning for 2026/27 the Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees will also consider how best to examine progress and development of the missions and challenges identified in We Make Camden across their individual scrutiny committees in line with their terms of reference.

#### *Overview*

- 2.7. 2025/26 has been a busy and productive year for the scrutiny committees. The committees have collectively covered a large number and diverse range of issues that are important to Camden residents, communities, and local partners. The Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees also took part in the Council's Corporate Peer Challenge in November 2025, the report of which was considered by Cabinet in January 2026.

#### *Cabinet Portfolio Annual Reports*

- 2.8. Individual scrutiny committees continued to receive Cabinet Member annual portfolio reports and the Leader's Annual Report, helping them to build a closer working relationship with the Executive.

#### *Summary of the Scrutiny Committees' work*

- 2.9. The **Health and Adult Social Care (HASC) Scrutiny Committee**, chaired by Cllr Revah, scrutinises the Council, care providers and health partners to reduce health and wellbeing inequalities, to deliver the best services and the best use of the public's money and to deliver the ambitions related to health and adult social care within We Make Camden. In 2025/26, among many other areas, the committee scrutinised progress on the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, transformational pieces of work within Adult Social Care and progress of taking forward the screening and prevention panel's recommendations. Looking ahead, the committee will monitor the development of neighbourhood integrated working, implications of NHS reform and oversee the Health and Wellbeing Strategy's new short-term priorities to ensure services are working towards improving health outcomes and reducing health inequalities for our residents.
- 2.10. The role of the **Children, Schools and Families (CSF) Scrutiny Committee** is to scrutinise the performance of the Council in its efforts to improve outcomes for children, young people, and families in Camden. It plays a vital

role in delivering on our We Make Camden vision of ensuring the borough is safe and that children are given the best start in life and achieve the best outcomes. The committee is composed of elected members and co-opted school governors, Youth MPs, and diocesan representatives. These representatives ensure a breadth of perspectives in its deliberations.

- 2.11. At the start of the new municipal year, Councillor Lotis Bautista stepped down as Chair and Councillor Sylvia McNamara was appointed Chair of the Children, Schools and Families Committee during the 14 May 2025 Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- 2.12. The **Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee** is chaired by Councillor Awale Olad and contributes to the We Make Camden's corporate aims to create safe, strong and open communities. The Committee scrutinises the Council's cultural and environmental policies and the provision, planning, financing, management and performance of services relating to culture, environment, regeneration, community safety, parking strategy and operations, and the voluntary sector provided by the Investment, Place and Opportunity and Corporate Services Directorates, and other service providers. It focuses on sustainability and empowering people to tackle the climate emergency. Additionally, it serves as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee. During the last municipal year, the Committee has addressed a diverse range of areas, using its role to provide critical challenge to improve services for our communities.
- 2.13. In 2025-26, the **Housing Scrutiny Committee**, chaired by Councillor Kemi Atolagbe, continued to play a central role in advancing Camden's ambition that everyone should have a place to call home that is safe, warm, decent and family friendly. Across the year, the committee rigorously scrutinised performance and service delivery across all areas of Housing and Property Services, with a sustained focus on residents' lived experience. This work was strengthened by continued involvement of coopted members, who contributed external expertise and resident perspectives.
- 2.14. Throughout the year, the committee examined key aspects of Camden's housing offer: the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the performance of Repairs and Property Services, the Housing Transformation Programme, fire safety, damp and mould, rough sleeping interventions, voids and lettings performance, leaseholder services, private rented sector regulation, and Camden's wider Housing Investment Strategy.
- 2.15. The **Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee** has been chaired by Councillor Linda Chung since September 2022. The Committee has led on the scrutiny of some of the key strategic and corporate policies and performance of the Council throughout 2025/26. This included providing robust and regular scrutiny on the Council's financial position, including progress delivering the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, and the Council's approach to Council Tax, income and revenue. The committee has also focussed on Camden's corporate strategy and performance. The committee has also played a key role in scrutinising the ways in which the Council communicates and interacts with Camden

residents, the impact that it has in the community, and opportunities for learning and improvement.

### **3. HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE**

- 3.1. The Health and Adult Social Care (HASC) Scrutiny Committee scrutinises the Council, care providers and health partners to reduce health and wellbeing inequalities, to deliver the best services and the best use of the public's money, and to pursue the ambitions of We Make Camden and Camden's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- 3.2. The Committee understands that health and wellbeing influence all aspects of people's lives and has implications for all Council services, and that good health and wellbeing is heavily influenced by the social determinants of health. The Committee therefore looks beyond healthcare services, understanding that having a safe home, a good education and good employment play an equally influential role in improving health and wellbeing for Camden residents. By recognising the influence of the social determinants of health, the Committee aims to help the Council and partners tackle poverty and improve the lives of Camden's most disadvantaged residents, which in turn will lead to reduced inequalities and improved health and wellbeing outcomes
- 3.3. HASC Scrutiny Committee supports a population health approach in its considerations, in line with Camden's Health and Wellbeing Strategy. This means focussing on prevention and community based early interventions which are often more effective at helping people lead healthier, independent lives for longer. The committee also recognises the importance of all Camden residents being able to easily access high-quality clinical care when necessary.

#### **Key activities**

- 3.4. This year, the committee have continued to scrutinise progress of Camden's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-30. In December 2025, the committee were updated on progress of the community connectedness and friendships short-term priority. Scrutiny highlighted the importance of workforce development, with officers explaining that initiatives such as webinars were aimed at upskilling frontline staff to recognise loneliness and have informed conversations about building social connections. The Committee explored digital inclusion and the difficulty of identifying people not in contact with services, noting that loneliness affects all ages, including younger people who may be digitally connected but socially isolated. Members encouraged officers to learn from organically developing community initiatives and to explore models that enable residents to contribute as well as receive support.
- 3.5. In November, the Committee received an update on progress in responding to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel on Screening and Prevention, welcoming the positive momentum achieved across the system. The Committee contributed helpful suggestions to support further improvement, such as using NHS App messaging to encourage uptake and exploring digital

innovations to make booking and rescheduling appointments easier. The Committee also sought assurance on the implementation of the Women's Health Hub recommendation and welcomed clarification on how this NHS-led offer is being integrated with Camden's wider sexual and reproductive health strategy. Recognising the progress made while acknowledging ongoing challenges, the Committee agreed that continued monitoring was important and requested a further update after another year to track sustained delivery and impact.

- 3.6. As part of its focus on transformation within adult social care, the Committee considered progress on the development and implementation of Camden's new Mental Health Social Work model. Members welcomed this as a positive and significant piece of service transformation, noting the successful transition to a new in-house model that supports neighbourhood-based working and prepares the ground for wider rollout of integrated neighbourhood teams across the borough. The Committee was reassured about strong continuity for residents, with most staff retained, close working relationships maintained with NHS partners, and robust arrangements in place for managing complex onward referrals. The Committee also welcomed feedback from partners, including Camden Carers, highlighting the benefits of bringing mental health social workers back in-house to improve coordination and access to carers' assessments. Overall, the Committee recognised this work as an important step in strengthening integrated, resident-focused adult social care in Camden.
- 3.7. In February 2026, the Committee scrutinised a report on the Council's refreshed approach to supporting residents experiencing self-neglect and hoarding, with a strong emphasis on multi-disciplinary working. Members welcomed the creation of a cross-departmental steering group that brings together Adult Social Care, Housing and wider partners including mental health services, the Police and the Fire Brigade to enable earlier, preventative and more coordinated interventions. The Committee highlighted the importance of shared training, improved communication with residents, and data monitoring to strengthen joint working and improve engagement and outcomes.
- 3.8. The Committee also considered the outcome of the 2024 Adult Social Care inspection by the Care Quality Commission, welcoming the first Outstanding rating nationally under the new assurance framework. Members congratulated officers and partners on this achievement, recognising strengths in equity, partnership working, governance and innovation. The Committee also engaged constructively with the areas identified for further development, including assessing need, strengthening resident and carer voice, and addressing the impact of inequalities and loneliness. Members welcomed the service's commitment to using the inspection as a learning opportunity and maintaining a focus on continuous improvement, quality assurance and resident experience.
- 3.9. Alongside its work on council services, the Committee scrutinised a range of NHS partners and system-wide issues affecting Camden residents. This included consideration of access to NHS dentistry, where Members examined commissioning arrangements, workforce and contract constraints,

affordability, and progress on prevention, particularly for children, engaging constructively with NHS commissioners and clinical leads from NHS North Central London Integrated Care Board and NHS London. The Committee also reviewed the NHS approach to patient and stakeholder engagement on the St Pancras Hospital Transformation Programme, emphasising the importance of meaningful involvement. In December, Members scrutinised proposals for the merger of North London NHS Foundation Trust and Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust, seeking assurance on governance, clinical quality, financial sustainability and the protection of valued services.

- 3.10. Ensuring that residents' voices are heard and reflected in local health and care services is a core priority for the Committee. In February 2026, the Committee considered a report from the Chief Executive of Healthwatch Camden on the implications of national NHS reforms and the proposed disbanding of the organisation. Members highlighted the need to retain a trusted mechanism for representing patient views once Healthwatch is disbanded. The Committee requested a future joint report from North Central London Integrated Care Board and the Council's Executive Director of Adults and Health setting out proposals for how patient voice will be maintained once further national guidance has been published.
- 3.11. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Anna Wright as the Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care, for her helpful updates to each meeting. It has been particularly valuable receiving standing updates to each meeting on Adult Social Care waiting lists and safeguarding, this has ensured crucial oversight and deeper understanding of complex safeguarding issues among committee members. In September, HASC members held an in-depth discussion of the range of transformative initiatives across the health and care portfolio as the Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Social Care presented her annual report, focusing on how the Council are taking a population health approach to improve health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities

### **Future priorities**

- 3.12. The Committee will continue its focus on prevention, multi-disciplinary working and the integration of health and care services by receiving a further update on neighbourhood working in March. This will enable Members to build on previous discussions and review progress in Camden's partnership approach to neighbourhoods, a shared strategic priority led by the London Borough of Camden and NHS partners. The update will provide an opportunity for the Committee to understand how integrated neighbourhood working has developed across the borough, including learning from different local models and the extent to which health, housing and wider services are working together in practice. This will support the Committee in maintaining oversight of how neighbourhood-based approaches are improving joined-up care and delivering more coordinated, community-focused services for residents
- 3.13. In addition, the Committee will focus future scrutiny on the refreshed short-term priorities within Camden's Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which were updated in July 2025. These priorities are: reducing alcohol-related harm, reducing drug-related harm, and embedding prevention in neighbourhoods.

This focus will support constructive oversight of progress and help ensure that the refreshed priorities are embedded across the system and responsive to the needs of Camden's communities.

#### **4. CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES**

- 4.1. The role of the Children, Schools and Families (CSF) Scrutiny Committee is to scrutinise the performance of the Council in its efforts to improve outcomes for children, young people, and families in Camden. It plays a vital role in delivering on our We Make Camden vision of ensuring the borough is safe and that children are given the best start in life. The committee is composed of elected members and co-opted school governors, Youth MPs, and diocesan representatives. These representatives ensure a breadth of perspectives in its deliberations.
- 4.2. The Committee's agenda is shaped by the political and educational calendar, statutory reporting duties, and emerging challenges and opportunities affecting children and families across Camden. Throughout the 2025-2026 municipal year, the Work Programme has focussed on key issues:
  - Services supporting the achievement of the bottom third of children in schools, particularly at age 16;
  - Progress and attainment of children from underachieving groups;
  - The assessment, placement and progress of students with special educational needs;
  - Efforts to address persistent absence; and
  - Pupil Place Planning strategy.
- 4.3. The committee also receives reports from two Cabinet Members whose portfolios are most relevant to the work of the committee. They are Councillor Marcus Boyland, Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families, and Councillor Sabrina Francis, Cabinet Member for Jobs, Young People and Culture.
- 4.4. At the start of the new municipal year, Councillor Lotis Bautista stepped down as Chair and Councillor Sylvia McNamara was appointed Chair of the Children, Schools and Families Committee during the 14 May 2025 Annual General Meeting (AGM).

#### **Cabinet Member Reports and updates**

- 4.5. The Committee heard two Annual Reports from Cabinet Members, in December 2025 - "Best Start for Children and Families" from Councillor Boyland, and in February 2026 for "Jobs, Young People and Culture" from Councillor Francis. Each Cabinet Member answered questions from members of the committee and other elected members.
- 4.6. Both Cabinet Members also gave portfolio updates at two other meetings during the year – one update at the start of the municipal year in July, and one other split across December 2025 and February 2026 meetings. The frequency of these updates was reduced to twice a year which allows for more focused and in-depth updates.

## Key Achievements

- 4.7. At the start of the municipal year, the Committee commended the Council's Children's Services Outstanding Ofsted judgement following an Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS). A report summarising the key findings of the inspection and initial reflections about Camden's improvement plan in response to findings was presented in June 2025. Committee Members offered congratulations and questioned how high standards would be maintained. Officers emphasised that the national reform programme provided an opportunity to test new approaches and improve outcomes further with an emphasis on early intervention and contextual safeguarding. The Committee also dedicated attention to the Annual Health Report on Children, Young People and Families - 2024/25 and noted how the structure of the report was particularly helpful, appreciating how it outlined progress, supported with case studies, cross-referenced data, and identified areas for action along with what to expect in the coming year. They praised officers taking on last years' feedback from the Committee.
- 4.8. The SEND agenda continues as a central focus of this municipal year's work. In October 2025, the Committee heard a report on the 'response to the investigation into the effectiveness of children's SEND provision' in Camden by the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families. The report summarised the activity taken to improve outcomes and experiences for children and young people with SEND following the recommendations from the final report of the SEND Provision Scrutiny Panel. There had been significant activity to make improvements in the areas highlighted in the report with further work planned. The evidence and recommendations from the Scrutiny Panel were gratefully received and had informed forward plans. Detailed discussion covered the High Needs Block funding deficit and an implementation timeframe for the SEND strategy. Officers highlighted key elements in the High Needs Block action plan, and a detailed implementation plan would be presented as part of the SEND Annual Report to the Committee in February 2026. The plan is intended to cover primary, secondary and post-16 provision, with some elements expected to be implemented from September 2026 and others from September 2027.
- 4.9. Ensuring access to high quality education remains a priority. The Committee reviewed provisional examination results for the academic year 2024-25 in October 2025, focusing on identifying performance trends and disparities. In November, the Committee were presented with an annual update on school place planning. The report outlined the latest demographic trends, financial pressures and rising demand for Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision shaping Camden's education system. The report highlighted a continued decline in births and falling school rolls, resulting in surplus capacity across both primary and secondary sectors, alongside increasing pressures on schools and Council budgets. The Council has launched a School Sufficiency Programme to coordinate strategic actions across admissions, finance and SEND. The Committee look forward to receiving a place planning strategy emanating from the School Sufficiency Programme and a report back on progress towards creating the strategy at their meeting in February 2026.

- 4.10. Reflecting concerns about rising challenges in school attendance, the Committee were also presented with a report on Persistent School Absence and Elective Home Education. The report noted that while overall attendance in primary schools had improved since 2022/23, Camden's rates remained below inner London and national comparators, and persistent absence had increased in secondary schools. Disadvantaged pupils and those with additional vulnerabilities continued to experience disproportionately higher rates of absence. The Committee commended the significant efforts of Camden Learning's campaign to increase attendance rates and scrutinised the data collected to understand the underlying causes of lower school attendance (particularly for disadvantaged groups) with the consistently lower rates in the Bangladeshi community. The Committee considered the role of intersectionality in explaining the multiple levels of disadvantage and the effect on lower rates of school attendance. The significant challenges were noted and the ensuing targeted interventions that the Council is putting in place to bring all Camden children back to school.
- 4.11. Safeguarding and care for vulnerable children was a key feature of reports scrutinised throughout the year. The Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP) Annual Report 2024-25, reviewed in December, outlined in detail the continued progress in Camden's multi-agency safeguarding and governance. The Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2024-25, which was reviewed in January 2026, highlighted achievements – such as the launch of the Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025-28 that sets out five clear priorities and an implementation plan co-produced with young people, relaunched Children In Care Council, and significant increases in foster carer capacity and the number of children placed in kinship care. The Committee valued the emphasis on outcomes and strengthening the voices of children and families.
- 4.12. The Committee reviewed transformative initiatives including strategies to address offending behaviour and promote rehabilitation among young people, covered in October as part of the report on Camden's Youth Justice Plan 2025-28 and which outlined future priorities for scrutiny prior to Cabinet approval. The Committee also heard feedback following the Youth Justice inspection by His Majesty Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) in which Camden maintained its Outstanding rating given the development of a new framework of inspection that increased emphasis on victims of crime. The Committee commended the Council's efforts and the strong practice and positive outcomes identified by the inspection.
- 4.13. A new addition to this municipal year's work has been the scrutiny of Camden's response to Children's Social Care National Reform. An initial report was presented in October updating the Committee on the detail of the reforms required and the programme of work underway to design and deliver the reforms in Camden. The Committee were interested to hear on the development of the programme in meeting government targets. Progress has been positive with the East locality 'prototype' going live in September, testing out a new single assessment model and the formation of multidisciplinary teams. The Committee welcomed further updates on the approach in January 2026 with details of the planned rollout to other localities.

- 4.14. A key priority has been amplifying the voices of children and families. In November, the Committee assessed the Council's approach to participation and co-production, underlining the importance of meaningful engagement in shaping services. The Children's Services Annual Complaints Report 2024/25, presented in November, highlighted themes from service users' feedback and informed improvements in service delivery. The Committee also heard the yearly Young Inspectors Presentation in January 2026, a key research report conducted by care-experienced young people. This year, the report explored how children and young people experience Education Health Care planning and reviews in Camden. The Committee were pleased to hear directly from an impressive Young Inspector who was able to share their experiences of carrying out the investigation and striving to amplify the voices of children and young people with SEND. However they were concerned to hear that young people were still experiencing delays with their SEND support as outlined in their EHCP and delays to EHCP annual reviews. The report also allowed the Committee to review the progress made on the recommendations from the prior year which provides accountability but also highlights the importance of embedding young people's voices in service improvement.
- 4.15. Coopted member changes 25/26 – The Committee approved the appointment of Jules Belton, Headteacher of St Mary and St Pancras Church of England Primary School in Camden as the Church of England representative on the Committee, following nomination by the London Diocesan Board for Schools. Other notable changes include: the previous primary phase co-optee, Sarah Jafri, has been unable to attend a meeting of the Committee for more than six months and has therefore ceased to be a member of the committee. The previous secondary phase co-optee, Dr Rachel Wrangham, is no longer a parent governor and therefore is no longer eligible to be a member of the committee. The Committee is eagerly awaiting governor services' appointments of three parent governor representatives: primary, secondary and special school to CSF scrutiny committee as they are most concerned that their views be represented.
- 4.16. The Committee has also received deputations this municipal year, namely on the accessibility of Free School Meals and the Council's approach to Functional Needs Assessments (FNA) and autism support. Those deputation submissions have allowed the Committee to have important issues brought to their attention and to hear from a breadth of voices and perspectives on matters relating to Camden's Children, Schools and Families.

### **Future Priorities**

- 4.17. The Committee remains committed to delivering the highest quality of Scrutiny in the area of Children, Schools and Families. The Committee will continue to scrutinise areas of priority, including SEND provision, school attendance and achievement, services for Camden's children and families, intersectionality and equity. The Committee will also remain responsive to the shifting landscape of Camden's response to the national reforms being rolled out in children's services in the next municipal year

- 4.18. Finally, the Committee will continue to work on ensuring that Camden's Children, Schools and Families' services remain innovative, relevant and supportive, and will look to best practice in other boroughs across the UK, whilst also championing Camden's unique efforts.

## **5. CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

- 5.1. The Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee is chaired by Councillor Awale Olad and contributes to the We Make Camden's corporate aims to create safe, strong and open communities. The Committee scrutinises the Council's cultural and environmental policies and the provision, planning, financing, management and performance of services relating to culture, environment, regeneration, community safety, parking strategy and operations, and the voluntary sector provided by the Investment, Place and Opportunity and Corporate Services Directorates, and other service providers. It focuses on sustainability and empowering people to tackle the climate emergency. Additionally, it serves as the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee.

### **Key Achievements**

- 5.2. During the last municipal year, the Committee has addressed a diverse range of areas, using its role to provide critical challenge to improve services for our communities. It has scrutinised annual Cabinet Member reports and Cabinet Adviser reports including from the Adviser on Low Carbon environments (14 July), Adviser on Resident Engagement, Anti-Social Behaviour and Community Safety (15 September), Cabinet Members for Voluntary Sector, Equalities and Cohesion (15 September), Safer Communities (11 November), Planning and a Sustainable Camden (8 Dec), New Homes and Community Investment (23 February), and the Adviser on Food Waste and Recycling (10 March).
- 5.3. The Committee considered a called-in decision of the Cabinet Member for Planning and a Sustainable Camden regarding the implementation of the trial Healthy School Street timed motor vehicle restriction for Kidderpore Avenue, Kidderpore Gardens, Ferncroft Avenue and Hollycroft Avenue in the vicinity of St Luke's and St Margaret's schools and the proposed permanent measures, along with the alternative courses of action. The Committee agreed with Cabinet Member's decision to implement the trial.
- 5.4. Four strategies have been considered including the Street Trading and Markets Strategy 2026-2031, the Cultural Strategy 2026-2031, the Library Strategy 2026-2030, the CCTV Strategy update. These have been supplemented by additional reviews of the Climate Change action plan, the Green Space Investment Plan, biodiversity and trees updates. The Committee has also been updated with 2 Insight, Learning and Impact (ILI) reports for Quarters 2 and end of year, at Quarter 4 providing performance and insight data.
- 5.5. The Committee heard from a number of external organisations throughout the year on a range of issues:

- The Metropolitan Police – provided an overview of crime trends and police activity throughout Camden, outlining performance to enhance community engagement and address crime under the ‘New Met for London’ reform phase 2 of delivery.
- Lime and Human Forest – reported on Bike Hire Scheme operations, parking compliance and the Council’s monitoring of contract compliance, with an invitation to the Committee to attend a Forest workshop (November 25).
- A progress update was received on Highways’ joint work with the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) to trial the creation of a safer street environment by removing physical obstacles on Goodge Street. This includes reducing clutter and obstructions on public footways and removing advertising boards outside businesses. Promoting educational initiatives is a key objective to improve accessibility for all users, trialling the use of QR codes designed for businesses, linking to the RNIB’s accessibility website pages. A launch event was being planned together with engagement with schools and young people (12 January).
- Thames Water provided an update on plans and delivery on flooding issues, impact, prevention and infrastructure upgrades (23 Feb).
- London Buses at Transport for London have been invited to provide a report on ventilation on Routemaster buses, following a number of passengers fainting through heat exhaustion and the impact on drivers’ health and safety (3 March).

5.6. The Committee also welcomed deputations from campaign groups and residents and considered a petition, including:

- Two deputations related to call in for St Margarets School and St Lukes Church of England St Healthy School Streets and a request to be consulted on amendments (July 25).
- Two deputations and a petition to ban barbecues in Waterlow Park, for and against. Camden had temporarily suspended use of barbecues in response to anti-social behaviour associated with large scale barbecues early in the year. The Committee felt that consideration of the policy should remain with the Cabinet Member, officers and those governance structures including the Trust Advisory Group (July 25).
- A deputation update on plant-based Council’s movement - request to move to only plant based internal catering, prioritise British produce, with appropriate labelling and choice, and switch from cow’s milk for internal meetings, events and catering (July 25).
- Two deputations on alternative bike hangar locations in Dartmouth Park Avenue (November 25).
- A deputation and petition to extend Hampstead Cemetery’s opening hours. (November 25).
- The Camden Cycling Campaign submitted written support for Camden’s proposed Transport Strategy.

5.7. In November, the Metropolitan Police provided an overview of crime trends and local activity in Camden under the ‘New Met for London’ reform phase 2 of delivery, taking a strong neighbourhoods approach, building trust and confidence in communities with patrol based policing, including priorities of

violence against women and girls, retail theft, drugs, gang violence, reducing numbers of wanted offenders, and safeguarding. Superintendent Matthew Cox (responsible for leading Community Policing in Camden) was congratulated by the Committee for his focus on neighbourhood policing and progress on reducing neighbourhood crime in 8 of 11 neighbourhood crime key metrics with a decrease in offending overall. The Metropolitan Police expect to lose 1,700 officers by April 2026 in funding cuts but pledged to continue focussing on neighbourhood policing with high visibility.

- 5.8. In December, the Committee considered the Camden Green Space Investment Programme 2026–2030, with officers explaining how funding streams such as Local Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 were allocated, including their statutory limitations. They outlined how deficiencies in green space provision were mapped to guide investment, and confirmed that councillors had recently been invited to propose new project ideas. The programme aims to improve green spaces boroughwide while maximising ecological value, supported by work with landscape architects and the Biodiversity Officer on tree planting strategies and best practice for pesticide use.
- 5.9. In January, the Committee heard an update on the Dockless Bike Hire Scheme and Scooters. Committee members raised wider concerns about dockless bike misuse, including hacked bikes, under 18 years riders, crime links, repeat dumping, noise from late night servicing, poor reporting systems, and impacts on disabled people and bus users. Representatives from Lime and Human Forest responded by outlining improvements such as updated security features, increased staff presence, data sharing with police, fines for bad parking, and restrictions on night servicing in sensitive areas. Both operators recognised the challenges and committed to working more closely with councillors. The Committee welcomed enforcement efforts and the planned relocation of a bay, stressing the need for better partnership working, safer parking practices and improved communication with residents and councillors.
- 5.10. In February, The Committee reviewed the Street Trading and Markets Strategy. Camden’s markets have a long history and remain central to community life, offering economic, social and environmental benefits while supporting thousands of local traders and jobs across the Borough. Current pressures include changing consumer habits, rising costs, and ageing infrastructure, prompting the need for a renewed strategic direction. This five-year strategy sets out Camden’s commitment to revitalising its markets by modernising infrastructure, improving operations, strengthening sustainability, and enhancing their role as inclusive social and cultural spaces. The plan aims to support traders, increase access to healthy and affordable food, reduce environmental impacts, and create vibrant spaces where people can connect, trade, innovate and belong.
- 5.11. In February, the Committee considered the Camden Libraries Strategy 2026–31, which sets out a five-year plan to strengthen the Borough’s well used and high performing library service by placing residents at the centre of improvements, building on recent investment, and celebrating key achievements. The Strategy focuses on five themes—People and Place,

Elevating the Basics, Cohesion and Inclusivity, Partnerships and Outreach, and Telling Our Story—to enhance spaces, expand cultural and learning opportunities, and improve digital, staffing and community engagement foundations. It aims to create inclusive neighbourhood hubs, increase participation, and better measure social impact while supporting sustainability and maintaining financial neutrality.

### **Future Priorities**

- 5.12. The Council's role in tackling the climate emergency and an annual review of the climate change action plan will continue to be a priority for the Committee.
- 5.13. A key strength of the Committee is working in partnership with external local partners to improve scrutiny, understanding and accountability by bringing expert insight into council work and exposing services to independent challenge. The Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee will continue to invite external partners to provide updates to create clearer lines of accountability and ensure that services better reflect the needs and experiences of residents. For example, the Committee will scrutinise an annual report from the Metropolitan Police on Camden's local policing data, trends and delivery, with a commitment to include police misconduct and dismissal data into future reports.

## **6. HOUSING**

- 6.1 In 2025-26, the Housing Scrutiny Committee continued its core role of scrutinising housing performance with a strong emphasis on issues most affecting residents.

### **Key Achievements**

- 6.2 Repairs Service, Damp & Mould, and Building Safety. The committee received multiple reports on the performance of the Repairs Service, particularly in relation to damp and mould, emergency response times, and the requirements of Awaab's Law coming into effect from October 2025. Officers reported progress against regulatory expectations, including specialist staff training, rollout of hazard detection measures, strengthened triage and scheduling processes, and improved proactive communication with residents via SMS, webchat and the MadeTech platform. Members acknowledged the scale of challenge posed by Camden's ageing stock, inflationary pressures and the high number of statutory compliance actions—but welcomed evidence of improved systems, data quality, and resident experience.
- 6.3 Building safety remained a core focus with delivery through the Resident Safety Programme and objective of meeting the requirements of the Building Safety Act and Fire Safety Act and keeping residents safe in their council homes. Camden continued preparing building safety cases for all high-rise buildings, undertaking extensive risk assessments and compliance works. Members noted both the financial pressures associated with this work and the strong officer commitment to maintain resident safety.

- 6.4 Housing Ombudsman and Complaints Improvement. The Housing Scrutiny Committee received detailed updates on Camden's work following the Housing Ombudsman's special investigation. Officers described extensive improvements to complaints handling, communication, and responsiveness, including greater emphasis on early contact, personalised case management, clearer responsibility tracking, and lessons learned mechanisms embedded in operational teams. Members welcomed the stronger alignment with the Ombudsman's Code and the steps taken to improve how damp, mould, leaks and repairs related issues were handled.
- 6.5 Voids, Lettings and Tenancy Management. The committee received updates on void performance, where officers reported improved turnaround times and better coordination between neighbourhood and voids teams. Camden continued to reduce the number of long-term held voids, particularly those linked to decants, major works or options appraisals. Improved performance dashboards and operational oversight supported this progress. Members welcomed continued emphasis on ensuring homes were brought back into use more efficiently, thereby reducing rent loss and improving access to secure housing for residents in need.
- 6.6 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Budget Pressures. Members reviewed updates on the HRA, acknowledging the combination of sustained cost pressures—including inflation, compliance requirements, disrepair claims, and increased temporary accommodation demand—and long term lost rental income resulting from national policy decisions. The committee supported the aim of setting a balanced budget while continuing to ensure high quality landlord services, improvements in resident experience and delivery of Camden's Housing Investment Strategy. The committee emphasised the need for clear resident communication on any rent or service charge changes.
- 6.7 Housing Investment Strategy and Stock Improvement. The committee scrutinised progress on the Housing Investment Strategy, including major works programmes, Decent Homes compliance, retrofitting for energy efficiency, and the delivery of new homes through the Community Investment Programme (CIP). Officers reported progress on internal stock condition surveys, a reduction in high-risk hazards, and the development of approaches to ensure sustainability, affordability and long-term asset management. Members welcomed Camden's ambition to expand genuinely affordable housing, improve thermal performance, and embed resident input into regeneration projects.
- 6.8 Community Investment Programme (CIP). Across 2025, the committee continued to monitor progress within the Community Investment Programme (CIP), Camden's long-term strategy for delivering new, high quality, energy efficient and genuinely affordable homes. Members reviewed updates showing that CIP had completed new homes across several estates and progressed major schemes at Abbey Phase 3, Godwin and Crowndale, Agar Grove Phase 2a and the new temporary accommodation developments at Camden Road and Chester Road. The programme also advanced large redevelopment partnerships – including Bacton Phase 2 and Camley Street – which together are expected to deliver hundreds of new homes with significant proportions at social or other genuinely affordable rents. Alongside new

housing supply, the committee noted CIP's contribution to community facilities, employment opportunities and its growing programme of retrofit and sustainability initiatives. Officers emphasised that Camden's mixed delivery model continued to help the borough navigate inflationary pressures, changing regulatory requirements and market uncertainty while maintaining focus on social outcomes for residents

- 6.9 Engagement with Housing Associations. The committee also held its annual session with the four largest Housing Associations operating in the borough, receiving performance reports covering repairs, complaints handling, safety, voids and support for vulnerable tenants. Representatives from Riverside, Origin, Notting Hill Genesis and Clarion updated members on progress made over the past year, including strengthened approaches to damp and mould, improvements to turnaround times for voids, and more consistent monitoring of contractor performance. Members scrutinised areas where performance had dipped – particularly Clarion's increased damp and mould caseload – and welcomed commitments to improve data quality, resident communication and response times. Housing Associations also outlined the pressures affecting their services, including recruitment challenges in repairs trades and limits on capital funding, while reaffirming their responsibility to meet regulatory standards and ensure safe, decent homes for Camden residents. The committee emphasised the importance of accountability, transparency and partnership working, and looked forward to further improvements ahead of next year's review.
- 6.10 Private Rented Sector Standards and Enforcement. Updates were received on improving standards within the private rented sector (PRS), including preparation for new duties under the Renters' Rights Act, the operation of HMO licensing, and targeted compliance checks. Officers described ongoing work to improve tenant engagement and raise awareness of new protections under the Act, and enforce against unsafe or unlicensed properties. An update was provided on the Council's role in addressing defective cladding on private medium and high-rise residential buildings. Members recognised the challenges of a rapidly changing regulatory environment and supported the need for continued strengthening of PRS enforcement and tenant support.
- 6.11 Transformation of Housing Services. The Housing Transformation Programme remained a standing area of scrutiny. Members considered updates on organisational culture change, digital improvements (including ROCC and MadeTech), new operating models in neighbourhood services, and investment in staff support and training. Emphasis was placed on improving communication, strengthening accountability, embedding trauma informed and relational practice, and ensuring services worked more effectively for vulnerable residents. The committee highlighted the positive steps taken and the value of continuing transparent engagement with tenants and residents.
- 6.12 Leaseholder Services and Housing Income. Early in the year, the committee received an update on progress in Leaseholder Services following the service restructure introduced in early 2025. Officers highlighted improvements in case management, more responsive communication, and strengthened governance around major works, service charges and rights under leaseholder legislation. The committee welcomed the clearer processes,

improved transparency, and early signs of stronger resident engagement. Significant progress was also noted in tenancy fraud prevention and income collection, with rent arrears continuing to reduce and improved early intervention support for tenants.

- 6.13 Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Services. The committee reviewed detailed updates on Camden's homelessness and rough sleeping work, including the recommissioning of the borough's outreach service and the development of the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for 2025–30. Officers outlined the continued shift toward trauma-informed, person-centred support, with an emphasis on improving access to services, strengthening multi-agency collaboration, and reducing barriers for people with complex needs. The updated outreach model focuses on assertive engagement, harm reduction, coordinated case management and delivering sustainable accommodation outcomes, alongside dedicated provision for women and those at heightened risk. Members also noted Camden's progress in expanding temporary accommodation capacity, the integration of health and social care partners into frontline work, and enhanced prevention activity aimed at intervening earlier to reduce homelessness. Overall, the committee welcomed the borough's commitment to a more flexible, preventative and partnership-driven approach to addressing homelessness and rough sleeping.

### **Future Priorities**

- 6.13 Looking ahead to 2026–27, the Housing Scrutiny Committee will continue to centre its work around Camden's housing challenge and the ambitions of *We Make Camden*. Core to this will be ongoing scrutiny of the Housing Transformation Programme, ensuring that the changes underway continue to drive improvements in resident experience, service quality and regulatory compliance. The committee expects to monitor progress closely in areas such as repairs performance, damp and mould—particularly under the strengthened duties introduced by Awaab's Law—alongside continued oversight of fire and building safety requirements. The committee will also maintain its focus on allocations, voids and tenancy sustainment, recognising the pressures both on residents seeking secure housing and on the services responsible for delivering it.
- 6.14 The scrutiny of homelessness and temporary accommodation will remain a key priority, as will monitoring the delivery of new, genuinely affordable homes through the Community Investment Programme and other development or acquisition routes. The committee will continue examining progress on Camden's energy efficiency, decarbonisation and retrofit programmes, ensuring these contribute to safer, warmer and more sustainable homes.
- 6.15 As part of its forward work programme, the committee will also continue to monitor how effectively housing services embody Camden's mission and values in both strategic decisions and day-to-day operational practice. This will include ensuring that policy development, service improvements and resource choices remain aligned with the commitments set out through *We Make Camden*. The committee will seek assurance that organisational culture, engagement approaches and decision-making processes consistently reflect these principles, particularly in how services respond to residents' needs and

experiences. Across all areas of work, including the Housing Associations and Co-ops that operate in the borough, the committee will uphold its commitment to transparency, accountability and meaningful resident engagement, maintaining a strong challenge-and-support role as Camden navigates a complex and changing housing landscape.

## **7. RESOURCES AND CORPORATE PERFORMANCE**

- 7.1. It has been a productive year for the Resources and Corporate Performance Committee as it scrutinised the Council's financial management, the performance of its corporate functions, the ways in which it engages with Camden residents, and the progress that has been made towards the Council's strategic objectives.
- 7.2. Helping to ensure strong financial management, financial resilience and sustainability has been a key focus for the committee in this municipal year. The committee scrutinised an Update on the Council's Medium-Term Financial Position 2025/26 at the July 2025 and December 2025 meetings. At the July 2025 meeting, members discussed the anticipated impacts of upcoming government policy changes, the spending review and the position of the council. Members also discussed the wider factors shaping the financial challenges facing the council. This included discussions concerning the financial pressures associated with temporary accommodation and measures that are being taken to mitigate these pressures. At the December 2025 meeting members had a more in-depth outlook at the Council's funding and spending, following the 2025 Spending Review and Fair Funding Review ahead of the Autumn Budget and Local Government Finance Settlement.
- 7.3. The committee scrutinised the Council's approach to the Fair Funding Review in November 2025. The report provided the committee with an insight into the role of the Fair Funding Review, including the context, how it links with wider government policy frameworks and how the Fair Funding Review will work in practice. The report gave the committee the opportunity to understand how the Council intends to respond to the government's consultation on the Fair Funding Review, its anticipated impact and how it will shape 2026/27 budget setting and the Council's medium term financial planning.
- 7.4. The committee has scrutinised the Council's approach to Council Tax at the December 2025 and February 2026 meetings, both in terms of Revenue Estimates, how Council Tax is set and how low-income households are supported through the Council Tax Support Scheme. In December 2025, the committee received a report about Camden's proposals for the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme to remain in place in 2026/27 and the Councils continued commitment to supporting low-income households. Members were informed of the Section 13a Discretionary scheme policy update to include discounts to terminally ill residents experiencing difficulty where they are not entitled to 100% Council Tax Support.
- 7.5. The ways in which the Council supports Camden residents on low incomes has been a theme of the committee's business through this municipal year. In July 2025 and February 2026, the Committee received the Leader of the Councils Annual Report. In December 2025, the committee received the

Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Cost of Living that provided an update on how the Council has continued to provide substantial cash support to residents impacted by the Cost-of-Living Crisis. Members raised questions about the specific groups of residents who were being supported by Camden. The council has increased focus on proactive financial support, using Council data and insight to identify groups who could benefit from grant support and providing this without the need for an application. An example of this is the Council's family hubs pregnancy grant which is supporting families in the greatest financial need with a £500 cash transfer before their child is born.

- 7.6. The committee also received the Cost of Living, Debt and Financial Resilience Report at the February 2026 meeting. This report delivers an update from the Debt and Financial Resilience team, who provide direct financial support to residents through grants and cash awards, together with specialist welfare rights and debt advice.
- 7.7. This year the Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee took a strong interest in the Council's customer service delivery and interaction with residents. The committee scrutinised the Improving Citizen Experience report at the September 2025 meeting. The report set out the council's ambitions to become a more relational organisation and how this will be achieved through a citizen experience lens. Members discussed the Council's ongoing work to improve citizens' experiences when interacting with the Council, which was the subject of a report brought to the committee in January 2025. Responding to this report, Members discussed ongoing concerns of the functionality and accessibility of the website redesign, auto attendant telephone systems and its impacts on residents. Members highlighted risks of calls and reports of ASB being misdirected. Accessibility was also raised and the need to consider those who are digitally excluded and unable to use digital methods to contact the Council. Members stressed the importance of holistic, preventative approaches and to ensure resident reassurance going forward.
- 7.8. The committee has paid substantial attention to how the Council has responded to housing complaints raised by residents, and how insights from complaints can be used to improve service delivery. In September 2025, members scrutinised the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment 2024/25 update. This was further to the completion of the Housing Ombudsman investigation into the Council's handling of leaks, damp and mould complaints which concluded in July 2025. Members scrutinised the Council's self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Annual Handling and Service Improvement report in December 2025.
- 7.9. The committee also received the London Borough of Camden Annual Complaints Report 2025/2026 at the December 2025 meeting. This report includes information on complaints across all directorates and provides a corporate overview while signposting to detailed results for individual services. The report also provides information on decisions issued by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HO) in the same period.

- 7.10. The committee has also scrutinised the Council's core corporate functions. In February 2026, the Committee received the Annual People and Inclusion Update which provides an overview of critical activities related to the Council's workforce such as workforce diversity and inclusivity, talent acquisition, pay, flexibility and well-being.
- 7.11. In November 2025 the committee received a report on Procurement Strategy and Award of Temporary Agency Staffing Services. The report set out the recommended procurement strategy and planned contract award for renewing the Temporary Agency Worker Contract, which supplies temporary staff through a Neutral Vendor model. This contract is essential for enabling the Council to draw on a capable and diverse pool of contingent workers, helping maintain high-quality, cost-effective services. It also contributes to the Council's broader goal of fostering a more inclusive local economy. Members queried the reliance of agency workers and when they had been retained in long term placements, that should be covered by permanent or fixed term roles challenging the council's ambition to reduce agency use. Members were able to challenge the need for agency staff and the importance of consistent, quality employees especially within social care. The Committee discussed the need for the Council to ensure that they transition suitable agency staff into permanent employment acknowledging their valued contributions.
- 7.12. The Council's performance has remained a central focus for the committee, and Members have received reports through the year that highlight the Council's approach to performance management, learning, and improvement as well as the performance of services within the Corporate Services directorate that the committee has responsibility for scrutinising. In July 2025, Members scrutinised the Insight, Learning, and Impact report for Q4 2024/25, and in January 2026 Members scrutinised the Insight, Learning and Impact Report for Quarter 2 2025-26.
- 7.13. The committee would like to thank the officers who brought items to committee meetings this year for their work.

### **Future Priorities**

- 7.17 Looking ahead to 2026/27, the Council's performance, its financial management, and its engagement with Camden's communities will continue to be priorities for the Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee. The committee will also continue to scrutinise key aspects of the Council's corporate strategy, including its approach to strategic change and the ways in which the Council engages with the wider policy context within which it operates.
- 7.18 The committee will continue to prioritise scrutiny of the Council's financial management and the performance in service delivery with a view to ensuring that the Council is securing best value for residents.

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

- 8.1. The Executive Director Corporate Services has been consulted and has no comments to add to the report.

**9. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor**

9.1. The Borough Solicitor has been consulted and has no comments to add to the report.

**10. Environmental Implications**

10.1. This report contains no proposals that may have negative environment impacts.

**11. Appendices**

11.1. No appendices

**REPORT ENDS**