

# Liberal Democrat Group budget amendments

## Council, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2026

Moved by Councillor Simon

Seconded by Councillor Grauberg

Once again our budget amendment seeks to tackle the neglect and failures of the Labour administration in Camden.

Labour promised much about the difference a Labour government would make to local government funding. But for Camden Council the reality has become clear – that even with the maximum increase in council tax we are facing a real-term drop in core funding over the next three years. The simple fact is that over the next three years Camden residents will pay more in council tax, and will get less in services.

Labour has run this council since 2010, had London's Mayor since 2016 (and so control the Metropolitan Police and TfL), and are now in power nationally. The Labour administration has run out of excuses for failing to address the problems affecting the people of Camden.

This budget amendment focuses on five key areas where the Labour council is failing to meet the challenges Camden faces:

1. Making our communities feel safe
2. Tackling the housing crisis
3. Building a fair and inclusive place - including becoming Age & Disabled Friendly borough
4. Delivering thriving high streets
5. Tackling Climate Change

### **Making our communities feel safe**

Drug dealing across Camden, with related other crimes and anti-social behaviour, remains a serious problem, including in residential areas that are usually largely free from this blight. This impacts on all residents of our borough and is of particular concern to parents.

The reorganisation of the Community Safety Teams has been welcome but (as we warned last year) has shown itself to be inadequate for the scale of the challenges across these areas. Camden needs, at least for the time being, a more significant boost in numbers. The council must also ensure that high-quality mobile CCTV units are always available whenever they can be put to good use.

#### **We would fund:**

- **Ten additional Community Safety Enforcement Officers, taking the team to 40 officers, along with 18 additional Rapid Deployment CCTV units (£850,000 revenue, £219,000 capital)**
- **Five additional Community Safety Officers, increasing that team to 15 officers, plus two additional Anti-social Behaviour Officers (£575,000)**

### **Tackling the housing crisis**

Every year, our budget amendment includes additional funding for rough sleeping and homelessness prevention, because of the rising tide of these two problems and the very high human cost they involve. The response from the Labour administration is always to claim the funding they have put forward is adequate.

Over the last year the number of households in temporary accommodation has increased further, with a rising human cost and financial cost. Camden has the second highest number

of rough sleepers in England and the numbers continue to go up<sup>1</sup>. Homeless people continue to die on the streets of Camden.

It is a relief that the new temporary accommodation hostels at Chester Rd and Camden Rd are at last nearing completion. These were described in a report to Cabinet in July 2020<sup>2</sup> as an 'urgent' part of the council's homelessness strategy 2019-24, with a target date for completion of June 2022. This means that 89 homes are over four years behind schedule. Since 2021 the council's overspend in this area has gone from £1 million to £21.2m.

To help tackle the shortage in available accommodation, we are proposing a substantial boost to the council's Temporary Accommodation Purchasing Programme.

**We would fund:**

- **Five additional Routes Off the Streets outreach workers (£277,000)**
- **Eight additional Temporary Accommodation support officers (£484,000).**
- **The purchase of an additional 33 homes as part of the council's Temporary Accommodation Purchasing Programme (£16,500,000).**

**Building a fair and inclusive place - including becoming Age & Disabled Friendly borough**

Over a year ago the council passed a motion committing it to "*making Camden a friendly and accessible Borough, building on the World Health Organisation Age-Friendly Communities approach*". Progress on this by the Labour administration has been painfully slow.

The decision to scrap visitor parking scratch cards was a mistake, causing stress and confusion for residents and creating avoidable work for council officers.

The SEND reforms in the Schools White Paper have huge implications for the council and are likely to cause anxiety for families with children with special educational needs and disabilities. Those families will need additional support to navigate the new arrangements.

**We would fund:**

**An officer team to develop an action plan to make Camden an 'Age and Disabled Friendly Borough' (£133,000).**

**An officer review of the state of Camden's current provision of public toilets and to explore ways it can be expanded, going further and faster than the work already being done (£106,000). In the future we would look to use capital investment to follow up on this work.**

**We would restore visitor parking scratch cards, allowing those people who want to use them to do so. We expect the increase in take up to be small, as the online parking system works well for most people, but have allowed for a 10% total take up in this amendment. (£74,000)**

**An additional officer to provide support to families of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities to reassure & navigate the forthcoming SEN reforms (£55,000)**

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/chain-reports>

<sup>2</sup> <https://democracy.camden.gov.uk/documents/s89897/Building%20New%20Temporary%20Accommodation.pdf>

## **Delivering thriving high streets**

High streets across the borough are a vital part of our communities and more needs to be done to ensure they thrive.. Businesses and residents alike would benefit from high streets being more accessible and ensuring they have facilities we need.

Alongside this is the Labour administration's continuing failure to tackle rubbish and fly-tipping on our streets, leading to a general sense of neglect across the borough. Camden is consistently rated as the second worst borough in the country for fly tipping.

### **We would fund:**

- **1.5 additional officers to develop more inclusive High Streets, including working to safeguard community assets such as banks and post offices, and ensuring high streets are accessible by removing unnecessary street clutter (£120,000)**
- **Five 'Environmental Education Officers' to continue and expand the good work done by the existing Education and Enforcement officers funded by CIL (£330,000)**

## **Tackling Climate Change**

As with last year, while we recognise that the council is taking a range of steps to meet the challenge of climate change, we believe there is scope to go further.

Once more, we repeat our call to improve engagement with residents on the practical steps they can take to reduce their carbon footprints. Whether it is guidance on retrofitting homes, advice on reducing food waste or efforts to improve recycling, this council needs to do better.

The combination of road works by HS2, developers, utility companies and the council's own schemes often creates unacceptable levels of congestion on our streets, leading to poorer air quality, delays to buses and frustration for residents. The council needs to get better at coordinating the timing of works and mitigating their impacts.

### **We would fund:**

**Five officers to work across the borough, working with existing voluntary sector and other local organisations where appropriate, to engage with residents about steps they can take to tackle the climate emergency (£330,000)**

**The planting of 250 extra new trees (£278,000)**

**Reduce air pollution, bus delays, traffic congestion through a "Traffic Troubleshooter" officer (£60,000)**

## **Funding**

**We would rent out 2 floors of the main floors (not the lobby or floor 11 or 12) of the Council's offices at 5 Pancras Square, raising £2,277,000.**

**We would sell the Crowndale Centre to provide capital and to free up revenue costs, while retaining the library on site. This way would provide £17,000,000 in capital and free up £1,122,000 in revenue.**

*The Director of Finance (s151 officer) confirms that, should the amendments be agreed, the assurances required by Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 with regard the adequacy of the reserves and the robustness of the estimates have been met and, therefore, that this still constitutes a balanced budget for 2026/27. The Director of Finance or other officers have not been able to give these proposals the depth of consideration and due diligence to be able to recommend this as a course of action or to assess the financial impacts of the proposals beyond 2026/27.*

*It has not been possible to make a full and comprehensive assessment of the impact of these proposals (such as those linked to the future use of our buildings or the impact on the existing workforce) and the associated implementation issues and risks.*

*It should also be noted that the full economic and social impact of the Cost-of-Living Crisis into 2026/27 and beyond is not yet fully known.*