

# Conservative Group budget amendments

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

Moved by Councillor Adams

Seconded by Councillor Parkinson

# Notes on the Conservative Budget Amendment, 2026/2027

The amendments only affect the service areas and budgets explicitly detailed in the proposals. The amendments do not affect any other parts of the budget.

## **A Cleaner Camden:**

Restore weekly bin collections to certain streets.

Camden's bi-weekly waste collection throws up detrimental issues where the area of available front space is filled up with large numbers of wheelie bins. This may well get worse in the near future due to changes to recycling management and the separation of materials.

Restoring weekly collections for those with less ability to store all the accumulated rubbish would improve the appearance of both private and public realm.

Introduce combined waste and recycling street bins.

These should be installed throughout the borough on the high streets, in order to raise recycling rates.

Make garden waste collection free of charge.

Camden's charge for garden waste is too high. Charging to collect garden waste reduces recycling rates and discourages good environmental stewardship.

We would scrap the charge for garden waste collection immediately and make it free once more.

Open Regis Road refuse and recycling centre for one evening a week.

Regis Road recycling centre is open only until 4:15pm every day. This can make it difficult for non-professionals to use it. We would open the recycling centre one evening a week to make it easier to use it. Savings from reduced fly-tipping are not factored in.

## **A More Attractive Camden:**

Reduction of routine precautionary pollarding.

Too often residents complain of the continual routine pollarding which strips our trees of their leaves, sometimes on an annual basis. We would reduce this sub-contracted work wherever suitable, delivering significant environmental benefits. Any savings would be recycled into providing more mature new trees.

Proper Control of Builders

Too many builders ignore the formal route to CPZ suspension and licencing for their skips and materials deliveries. This often results in unsafe and messy encroachment onto the pathways and highways. Our amendment provides for more planning control officers with the specific remit to prevent this type of practice and enforce Construction Management Plans.

## **A Safer Camden:**

Fund greater policing levels.

Camden should dedicate extra funds to increase the level of police officers on our streets. This matter has unfortunately become, if not the highest then one of the highest, priority for residents in Camden. Funding for these officers is included in our amendment as is the creation of a new dedicated officer post to monitor the performance through the Community Safety Partnership.

This expense would deliver 7 times what the Camden Late Night Levy currently does and would make a real difference.

Install CCTV in crime hotspots.

We would install more CCTV cameras in crucial hotspots across the borough in order to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and aid the Police.

## **A Happier Camden:**

Make annual grants of £60,000 to Camden's community libraries.

We would make this grant available to the three community libraries within Camden Belsize Community Library, Primrose Hill Library, and Keats Library in Hampstead. This would support valuable community institutions.

Extend library opening times.

In order to provide greater services for residents we would increase the opening hours of the 8 Camden libraries. These would extend to 8pm on Friday and Saturday.

Send information packs to residents when they move in.

When people move (as detected by new registration for Council Tax), residents would be sent an information pack that would be automatically tailored to their circumstances and incorporating key information. This would include local amenities to their home, key contacts in the council, their local police contact, when and how to leave out waste, how private tenants can enforce housing rights, and how to download relevant apps and sign up to relevant email mailing lists. The importance of this has been reiterated by the low registration rate with GPs for private tenants – which will likely mean a lower vaccination rate. Crucially, information on the relevant local planning restrictions would be included to prevent costly misunderstandings over development. If a property sits within a Conservation Area or that area has an Article 4 Direction applied, it is important to new residents.

Resume postal notifications of planning applications

The ending of postal notifications left many residents unaware of planning application that are submitted by their direct neighbours and might affect them seriously. Too often people find out too late to make a considered response

### **A Fairer Camden:**

Reduce cost of CPZ charging.

This cash cow has become so bloated that funding is being lavished on totally unwanted and unnecessary schemes. Cut these out and reduce the parking charges to reflect the cost of the scheme management, not what it has become, a super-tax on motorists.

Reverse increase in charge for parking motorcycles

This petty burden imposed on those taking up less road space and being more efficient should never have been implemented.

Reduce parking charges for Doctors

This iniquity has been maintained for too long. Doctors serve the community and should not be considered in connection with business use in any way.

## **A More Efficient Camden:**

### Renting out top two floors of 5 Pancras Square

A considerable part of the office space within 5 Pancras Square remains underutilised and space within it could be let to suitable firms in order to raise revenue. With a good deal of Camden officers working from home, this is ever more the case.

### Shared digital services with Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea.

Camden aimed to share digital services with Haringey and Islington until 2019, before this collapsed due to Camden and their inability to share services. However, Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea have had shared digital services for several years and thus would be able to incorporate Camden. Their digital costs are considerably lower than Camden's and sharing digital services would save Camden £1.5m a year. Shared HR, legal, strategy and change, and procurement services with Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea – In addition to digital costs, Camden should look to share back-office services with boroughs that have done similar. Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea already share HR, legal, strategy and change, and procurement services, and Camden should look to join that arrangement.

### Reduce Camden dependency on Agency Staff

The Council staff levels remain stubbornly high with between 8% and 9% employed through agencies. This is a high cost to the borough and it cannot be good practice for this to continue unchecked.

The use of temporary staff introduces a burden on Camden through the need for continual, repetitive induction training and can also result in a lower level of corporate commitment. A happy workplace is one where everyone feels both an intrinsic part of the organisation and permanently embedded in its ethos.

The council should make greater efforts to drive down the non-productive costs of staffing by reducing the reliance on agency hiring towards a level of 5%. This reduction would deliver over £1M in savings while not reducing overall numbers. By more use of existing technology, the council should also commit to a future 5% reduction in total staff numbers through other efficiencies.

*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.*

## Summary of figures

### Extra costs:

Restore weekly bin collections to 30% of the borough where the average front area is less than 8M2 per household	655,200
Introduce combined waste and recycling street bins.	436,000
Make garden waste collection free of charge.	306,360
Reduction in routine Pollarding of Trees	0
Open Regis Road refuse and recycling centre for one evening a week	30,000
Proper Control of Builders through employing extra enforcement officers	125,078
Fund greater policing levels. 18 additional offices	2,200,000
Install more CCTV in crime hotspots	110,000
Make annual grants to Camden's community libraries.	60,000
Extend library opening times	513,143
Send information packs to residents when they move in.	105,000

Resume postal notifications of planning applications	61,649
Reduce cost of CPZ charging	553,570
Reverse increase charge for parking motorcycles	150,000
Reduction in parking charges for Doctors	17,000
Total extra costs	<u>5,323,000</u>

**Savings:**

Renting out top two floors of 5 Pancras Square	2,277,000
Shared digital services and HR with Westminster and RBKC	2,025,000
Reduce Camden dependency on Agency Staff employment.	1,021,000
Total savings	<u>5,323,000</u>