



CAMDEN COUNCIL ELECTIONS, 5 MAY 2022

## QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

PLEASE FILL IN QUESTIONNAIRE (space expands as necessary)  
and EMAIL RESPONSE to: [info@brag.org.uk](mailto:info@brag.org.uk)  
by 17:00 on Monday 18 April 2022

Response on behalf of the Liberal Democrat candidates

### GENERAL

1	<p>Do you live in the ward you wish to represent? If not where?</p> <p>Many of the Liberal Democrat candidates live in the ward, or in neighbouring wards.</p>
2	<p>Do you support involving many more Councillors in all Council decision-making than under the Cabinet / Executive arrangement?</p> <p>Yes. The current format of Council meetings, dominated by presentations, does not allow meaningful participation by Councillors. The Cabinet meetings rubber-stamp meetings made in private, and scrutiny committees are largely toothless.</p> <p>Other Councils have operated “cross party early policy groups” which allow a wider group of councillors to make a contribution.</p>
3	<p>How would you improve telephone access to Camden’s departments and officers?</p> <p>We agree that improvements are needed. Even if you know your way around the system it takes a long time to listen to all the introductory messages and options – all of which costs residents’ money.</p> <p>We would prioritise improvements in those areas where residents are less likely to have access to the internet. The Housing Repairs system is particularly hard to access online.</p>

## HERITAGE

4	<p>How would you promote enforcement of Planning and Conservation policies?</p> <p>There is real scope for improvement in the Council's planning system – as evidenced by the Council's Backlog Action Plan launched in October 2021. Residents' experience is that response to enforcement complaints is slow and often requires repeated chasing for action to be taken. The 3-tier category of importance system means that small but serious complaints often get overlooked. Individual enforcement officers do a good job but the team is under-resourced.</p> <p>There is much good practice in neighbouring boroughs, such as the use of enforcement bonds from developers which fund additional officers who can be proactive in visiting major sites regularly, rather than the current system where enforcement officers only act in reaction to complaints from residents.</p>
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## PLANNING / DEVELOPMENT

5	<p>How would you improve scrutiny of Councillors' potential conflicts of interest, especially with regard to planning decisions?</p> <p>We do not believe that Cabinet members should have a vote on the Planning Committee. Planning is a quasi-judicial function and any Cabinet members should have an advisory/observer status only.</p>
6	<p>Should Planning Obligation funds (s106) for developments be allocated only after agreement with the local adjacent community?</p> <p>There is definitely a case for greater consultation with the community on the use of S106 (and CIL) funds. In areas where there are Neighbourhood Development Forums there is an existing requirement for consultation but this often does not happen.</p>

## TRAFFIC / TRANSPORT

7	<p>Do you think there should be an independent review of the outcomes of Low traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) in Camden?</p> <p>It is always useful to review innovations after a while. It would be helpful to have a clear statement of the desired outcomes of each LTN before introduced to enable any review to take place against a clear set of criteria. Independent reviews could be helpful if the outcomes are contested.</p> <p>A Liberal Democrat Camden would engage all Camden schools in reducing school-run traffic, encouraging “walking buses”, safe cycle and bus routes and “school streets” to tackle air pollution near schools</p>
8	<p>Do you support increased pollution monitoring and regular publishing of results for areas of congestion?</p> <p>Yes. This should be available in all areas where congestion is a problem.</p>
9	<p>How will you reduce the negative impact of road closures and reduced numbers of bus stops on people with mobility issues?</p> <p>Bus stops should not be affected by road closures. We are as frustrated as everyone else about short-notice roadworks which cause disruption to bus users, drivers, cyclists and pedestrians alike.</p> <p>We strongly advocate consultation with local residents, taking particular care to include those with mobility issues or other disabilities, when changes to road layouts are being considered.</p> <p>Liberal Democrats continue to support the Freedom Pass and travel discounts for older people which contribute so much to ensuring their independence and inclusion in our society</p> <p>We would look to work with Transport for London to improve the accessibility of public transport across the Borough.</p>

## CRIME

10	<p>Do you support monitored CCTV and increased police presence in your ward?</p> <p>Liberal Democrats are supportive of visible, and accessible neighbourhood policing. Many areas would value increased reassurance policing, but other important police work is done without being on the streets. Policing is not a council responsibility.</p> <p>A Liberal Democrat Camden would work with the police to engage communities in identifying and addressing places where people, especially women and girls, don't feel safe, including taking stronger action against BT and other phone providers where their phone boxes are contributing to anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>There is a case for monitored CCTV at known hotspots but we are wary of too much routine surveillance.</p>
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## ENVIRONMENT

11	<p>What enforcement measures will you take to reduce littering and fly-tipping in your ward?</p> <p>The Council's contract with Veolia needs to be overhauled. The policy of putting bin bags on the streets for collection from businesses and flats above shops does not work for every high street – it legitimises flytipping and littering.</p> <p>In the meantime, there needs to be investment in information, education and enforcement – it is hard to find out how to dispose of rubbish correctly on the Council's website – and work with estate agents and letting agents to ensure new tenants are aware of their responsibilities.</p>
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## HOUSING

12	<p>How do you propose to tackle bad housing conditions in Council and private rented accommodation?</p> <p>Camden's housing tenants struggle with a failed repairs system - in 2021 the Housing Ombudsman found Camden to be the third worst social landlord in the country for tackling damp and mould, while leaseholders continue to be hit by high charges.</p>
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	<p>A Liberal Democrat Camden would</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• overhaul the Council’s failing housing repairs system, especially providing additional support for those unable to use the Council’s online system</li> <li>• Set up a dedicated fund to support victims of the Building Safety Crisis in Camden’s private rented sector</li> <li>• Take proactive action against negligent and exploitative landlords, especially in the poorest parts of our borough, and work with the voluntary and community sector to ensure advice is readily available to private renters and council leaseholders.</li> </ul>
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**COUNCIL SPENDING**

13	<p>Would you support quarterly publishing of disbursements by the Council to third party service providers?</p> <p>There is a case for greater transparency and we would support a review of what information is being made available. This particular proposal could cause difficulty for some small voluntary sector providers if, for example, it identified they were paid at a certain rate, and larger private providers were able to undercut them.</p>
14	<p>Do you support allocation of Council expenditure being decided by a vote of all elected Councillors?</p> <p>This is the current Council Budget process.</p>
15	<p>Would you support giving the opinions of local residents and businesses a greater weighting in changes affecting their local area?</p> <p>Yes. Liberal Democrats propose to restore Area Forums – regular community meetings led by local councillors – to engage more people in local issues and empower them to drive council decision-making.</p> <p>We would also establish a fund to enable communities and voluntary organisations to plan and deliver local actions to tackle climate change; open up the Camden Climate Citizen Panel and ask councillors to be leaders in engaging their communities to make local change.</p>

16	<p>How should the Council better support shops and small businesses in South Camden?</p> <p>The Covid pandemic has changed a lot about the way we shop and use our high streets, and there is a need for creative thinking to encourage footfall. There is a need for new co-working spaces, affordable childcare, and partnership working with other boroughs where retail areas span more than one borough.</p> <p>Liberal Democrat controlled Sutton Council have taken ownership of buildings, created new leisure spaces and introduced hybrid units where council services are combined in the same building as a cafe.</p>
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**Thank you for answering our questionnaire  
Please return by 17:00 on Monday, 18 April 2022**

**to**

**[info@brag.org.uk](mailto:info@brag.org.uk)**

**Bloomsbury Residents' Action Group**

**[www.brag.org.uk](http://www.brag.org.uk)**