



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

by 17:00 on Monday 18 April 2022

What is your name?

Alex Smith

Which Camden ward do you wish to represent? Kings Cross

GENERAL

1	<p>Do you live in the ward you wish to represent? If not where?</p> <p>I have worked in the Kings Cross ward for over 40 years and still work there and have lived in Camden for many years and now live in Islington</p>
2	<p>Do you support involving many more Councillors in all Council decision-making than under the Cabinet / Executive arrangement?</p> <p>Councillors should represent the views of their ward to the council. At the moment if a Labour Councillor does this he or she risks de-selection and this is wrong. The people who live and work in a ward know it best and not using this engagement and knowledge is a huge waste, is contrary to democratic governance and breeds secrecy and mistrust.</p>
3	<p>How would you improve telephone access to Camden's departments and officers?</p> <p>I would require departments and officers to have their phone numbers generally available rather than via a central switchboard and have a feedback mechanism where those making or trying to make contact can leave a very simple point score.</p>

HERITAGE

4	<p>How would you promote enforcement of Planning and Conservation policies?</p> <p>At the moment scrutiny committees can only comment on breaches of Planning and Conservation policies with no power to require changes. Scrutiny committees need the power to require changes that will enforce Planning and Conversation policies.</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>That the Cabinet Member for Investing in Communities, Culture & an Inclusive Economy also Includes Planning, Regeneration & Economic Development in the portfolio seems to be a huge conflict of interest It may be a big part of the reason why the councils own housing development under the CIP scheme has only delivered 17% of new homes at social rent level, much less than that required of private developers. This conflict of interest needs to be corrected. Also many of the planning decisions in the Kings Cross ward are made in secret with developers. I believe that only transparent and open agreements that engage Camden, Civil society and developers will produce decisions in the best interests of all parties. Camden says that these negotiations are confidential at the request of developers however local government has the power to require these negotiations to be open and transparent.</p>
6	<p>Should Planning Obligation funds (s106) for developments be allocated only after agreement with the local adjacent community?</p> <p>Provided there is a strong local adjacent community with for instance a Neighbourhood Plan either adopted or able to demonstrate broad community agreement through community consultation then 106 funds should be allocated to that community especially as it will potentially be most affected by the agreed development.</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>In my view there should be an independent review of LTNs in Camden. For many years I had a shop in first Cromer St and then Marchmont St. I now have a business in Camley St which delivers food into central London. To have the North entry to Judd St suddenly cut off with no meaningful consultation was extraordinary and needs to be reviewed. The whole of Camden transport policy does not even mention the development and introduction of autonomous electric vehicles which are highly efficient, clean and could bring amazing increases in resident and business mobility. Transport policy must improve mobility rather than restrict it.</p>
8	<p>Do you support increased pollution monitoring and regular publishing of results for areas of congestion?</p> <p>The Kings Cross ward has one of the highest levels of pollution in the country on the Euston Road at Kings Cross. This is made worse by the congestion in the area and I believe that there should be increased pollution and congestion monitoring especially to understand the correlation between the two.</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>This is a key issue and one that I believe should lead to an independent review of the LTNs in Camden. In the medium term the introduction of autonomous electric vehicles especially those modified to accommodate those with mobility issues should be encouraged.</p>

CRIME

10	<p>Do you support monitored CCTV and increased police presence in your ward?</p> <p>When I had my shop, Alara in Marchmont St we had a succession of thefts and now as Chair of the Camley St Neighbourhood Forum I have worked to get additional police presence on Camley St to counter the drug dealing and drug taking in the area, with some limited success. Understanding and as a victim of this criminal presence in the area I support increased and monitored CCTV and police presence.</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>Additional CCTV in fly-tipping hot spots is important. Additionally on Camley St we have had a lot of fly-tipping and have found that if the fly-tipped material is cleaned away quickly it will not attract additional fly-tipping.</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>Since 2010 Camden has spent almost £1 billion on its CIP program. In my view the whole program should be reviewed as it seems grandiose. Rather than seeking to improve residents living conditions it is aimed at building new homes that attract huge amounts of architectural awards. The whole focus of this scheme should change to Investing with Communities so money is spent in Communities improving Council homes and requiring the improvement in private rented accommodation.</p>
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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>Much more transparency in financial matter is required by Camden. Not only would I support the publishing of disbursements by the Council to third party service providers, which could reduce costs over time but also internal Camden generated costs. How much for instance does Camden spend on “ Public consultation “? I am part of the “ Camley St Steering Group “ a Camden financed consultation group that has huge numbers of officers, outside consultants and members involved. It is apparent that Camden already knows what it want to do and these consultations are just spending our money (how much?) to keep residents and other stakeholders passive and mollified.</p>
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14	<p>Do you support allocation of Council expenditure being decided by a vote of all elected Councillors?</p> <p>The current “ closed shop “ of Camden Cabinet which seems to act as a property developer and business doing secret deals needs to change. Ward Councillors who know their area best and should represent the Views of the residents should be involved in deciding and allocation expenditure in that area.</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>On Camley St where I chair the Community Forum the whole Community, residents and business have come together to develop and have adopted a Neighbourhood plan.</p> <p>Camden has sought to negate key policies in this plan and even went as far as deselecting six Labour ward councillors who supported the call in of a Supplementary Planning Document developed by Camden to overwrite our Neighbourhood plan.</p> <p>Not only has this area an opinion as to how the Camley St area should be developed we have a plan with finance, legal and professional advise agreed for a Community Land Trust called the Camley St Sustainability Zone. Camden has refused to engage with this plan. I know first hand how frustrating it is that Camden overlooks the opinions, plans and ideas of those who both know the area best and are most affected by developments in that area. Getting a true transparent partnership between government, Civil Society and the Financial Industry to develop Communities is vital.</p>
16	<p>How should the Council better support shops and small businesses in South Camden?</p> <p>Camden need to actually consult and listen to the needs of shops and small businesses in the Kings Cross ward. While I am proud that Google, Meta and others are in my ward these huge multinational businesses need to be integrated into the communities rather than set apart, championed and emulated.</p>

**Thank you for answering our questionnaire
Please return by 17:00 on Monday, 18 April 2022
to**

info@brag.org.uk

Bloomsbury Residents' Action Group

www.brag.org.uk