



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

Name

MAURICE HIRT on behalf of the Conservative candidates for the Holborn & Covent Garden, Bloomsbury and King's Cross wards

Ward

King's Cross, Bloomsbury and Holborn & Covent Garden

GENERAL

0	<p>Why do you choose to submit a joint document?</p> <p>As our detailed response to the questionnaire and 24-pages manifesto suggest, we went out to listen to your concerns and jointly formulated a plan for our southern wards. On 5th May, you will vote for individual candidates. However, we believe that together we devised a stronger plan that will make our southern wards cleaner, greener and safer together. This is what separates us from the other parties' candidates who will promise the world but won't be able to deliver on their plans against their party leadership from the northern wards of Camden.</p>
1	<p>Do you live in the ward you wish to represent? If not where?</p> <p>We are a diverse team of local candidates with decades of experience living in our southern wards.</p> <p>Holborn and Covent Garden Alison Frost – Ward resident Maurice Hirt – Ward resident Adam Lester – Southern wards resident</p>

	<p>Bloomsbury Paul Bhangal – Ward resident William Frost – Southern wards resident Richard Hayward – London Borough of Camden resident*</p> <p>King’s Cross Douglas de Morais – London Borough of Camden resident* Catherine Frost – Southern wards resident Clementine Manning – London Borough of Camden resident*</p> <p>*Due to changes to the electoral law to prevent intimidation in public life, candidates can withhold their home address. The designation ‘London Borough of Camden’ behind a candidate’s name indicates that the candidate has exercised this right.</p>
2	<p>Do you support involving many more Councillors in all Council decision-making than under the Cabinet / Executive arrangement?</p> <p>Yes, Camden has the least democratic form of local government in the UK. The Leader appoints the Cabinet, and the Cabinet decides everything — this means residents get left out.</p> <p>We will reintroduce collaborative decision-making that gives councillors from all wards and all parties, not just the appointed Cabinet, a direct vote on decisions. Moreover, we will establish Community Councils and a mechanism for direct democratic involvement that gives citizens a voice (more below).</p>
3	<p>How would you improve telephone access to Camden’s departments and officers?</p> <p>Anyone who has tried to contact departments and officers knows how difficult and lengthy it is to reach the right person.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) We will reduce waiting times for the Contact Camden phone line by making it clearer who residents can talk to and by offering call back options that other councils and private companies employ. 2) We will overhaul Camden’s website, which is difficult to navigate and does not provide sufficient information to

residents and businesses. We will fund this by ending the grant to the underused LoveCamden website.

HERITAGE

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How would you promote enforcement of Planning and Conservation policies?

Many grass-roots initiatives including Save Bloomsbury and BRAG have highlighted the overdevelopment of the wards located south of Euston Road. Supporting the concerns of the movement, we are determined to conserve the unique character of our neighbourhoods and prevent high-rises from obstructing views and dominating our historic streets. In most cases, developers can only get away with their projects because of Labour's generous planning policy.

We will immediately introduce a number of measures to enforce policies in our area, including

- 1) We will use powers given to London boroughs last year to ban high-rise buildings in low-rise areas. Under the London Plan, councils can block tall buildings in areas that it designates as unsuited to them. Besides, declaring our historical areas as unsuitable, we will push for more housing through terraces, mansion blocks, and mews housing, which can provide equally high housing density at much lower heights.
- 2) We will clamp down on rogue developers that breach construction management plans, and penalise them to the full extent of the law.
- 3) We support Neighbourhood Plans being adopted across Camden and protect Conservation Areas by updating out-of-date Conservation Area appraisals, as Conservatives have in Fitzjohns/ Netherhall and Redington/Frognaal.
- 4) We will reinstate notification letters to neighbours of planning applications to allow residents to voice their opposition before it is too late.

PLANNING / DEVELOPMENT

5	<p>How would you improve scrutiny of Councillors’ potential conflicts of interest, especially with regard to planning decisions?</p> <p>Camden Labour have recently forced out seven of their own councillors for daring to question the leadership and replaced them with what a Labour councillor called “Yes men”. It has therefore become more important than ever to scrutinise and questions councillors and leadership. Thus, our plan for Camden aims to</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Introduce a Camden Democratic Charter that enshrines how Camden consults residents, particularly in planning decisions. 2) Introduce a citizens’ vote on council decisions including planning decisions using a web platform that is employed by Madrid and other major cities. This means that you get a vote on planning decisions and policies that are then debated in public council meetings – not just behind closed doors. 3) Give councillors representing all wards and all parties a direct vote on decisions – not just the appointed Cabinet. 4) Create Community Councils that hold councillors accountable, especially on planning decisions. This gives residents a direct voice to influence and scrutinize councillors’ decisions. Thus, we will stop Cabinet members sitting on the Planning Committee and devolve many decisions to local community councils <p>More policies to strengthen accountability can be found in our manifesto.</p>
6	<p>Should Planning Obligation funds (s106) for developments be allocated only after agreement with the local adjacent community?</p> <p>Yes, the agreement of the residents is necessary to build the Camden our community deserves. Camden’s Conservatives have a strong track record in fighting alongside residents to stop Labour’s unpopular projects including the O2 Centre and Murphy’s Yard high-rise developments, between Parliament Hill and Kentish Town. We believe that the Council and its leadership must listen to communities, especially in the allocation of Planning Obligation funds.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Our first step to give residents a greater say is through our Community Councils that represent the local adjacent community which gets a vote on the allocation of Planning Obligation funds.

	<p>2) Secondly, we will empower residents by sending letters to residents informing them when a development is proposed next door: a service ended by Labour in 2016.</p> <p>3) Thirdly, we will develop long-term Neighbourhood Plans and Conservation Areas in consultation with residents.</p>
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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>We support evidence-based policies that help our communities. Besides, encouraging independent reviews, we want to listen to those who are most affected by LTNs: local residents. We recognise that some traffic changes work and some don't – and the people that are best placed to say are the residents affected.</p> <p>Camden Conservatives will not implement major traffic schemes, such as LTNs or cycle lanes, that do not have the support of the majority of residents in the affected area. Each time one has been proposed, we have surveyed residents and done what you want.</p> <p>For instance, we listened to the 73% of residents who opposed the closure of King Henry's Road near Primrose Hill and diversion of traffic onto the adjacent Adelaide Road: and we stopped it.</p>
8	<p>Do you support increased pollution monitoring and regular publishing of results for areas of congestion?</p> <p>Yes, we support policies that help Camden Council make better decisions for people and the environment. Especially, our wards south of Euston Street are affected by daily congestion, especially during peak hours. The monitoring and regular publishing of results will help us to prioritise the locations of the additional 1,000 new electric car charging points that we plan to instal yearly in our borough. Moreover, we will work with TfL to replace diesel buses with electric buses starting with the bus lines that run through the most polluted areas.</p> <p>Thus, pollution monitoring and regular publishing of results for areas of congestion will help us make evidence-based decisions for the benefit of our community.</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>South Camden is not an ‘entertainment district’ but a residential area home to people that rely on public transport or other means of transportation to navigate our capital. Accordingly, we will reduce the negative impact of road and bus stop closures by not allowing the removal of critical infrastructure that matters most to residents, families, and people with mobility issues.</p> <p>On the contrary, through our measures to increase residents’ participation in local decisions such as road and bus stop closures, we will prevent that closures are pushed through against the will of locals – particularly people with special mobility needs. Instead, we want to hear where additional bus stops are needed. So far, we have listened to residents who demand more electric car charging stations.</p> <p>As listed above, our measures to make Camden listen include new community plans, community councils, residents’ votes on council decisions and a Camden Democratic Charter that enshrines how Camden consults residents on these decisions.</p>

CRIME

10	<p>Do you support monitored CCTV and increased police presence in your ward?</p> <p>Yes, making our wards safer is one of our key objectives for the next five years. We support a more visible and evenly distributed police presence in our wards as well as better employment of CCTV.</p> <p>1) We will ensure that police resources are spread across the borough more evenly taking the needs of local residents into account. Despite having Holborn Police station (Met headquarters in Camden) located in the Holborn & Covent Garden ward, we have some of the highest crime rates in London:</p> <p>Bloomsbury - 30 crimes per 1000 residents Holborn & Covent Garden – 28 crimes per 1000 residents</p>
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	<p>(compared to a borough average of 11 and a London average of 8 per 1000 residents)</p> <p>We need to make the police station and its opening hours more accessible as well as improve police visibility in the area. Camden has to make use of the additional 100 police officers that our national government has recruited for the borough.</p> <p>2) To deter crime and anti-social behaviour, we will create an integrated Camden CCTV library and allow private operators to have their systems monitored by Camden’s qualified staff at the council’s under-utilised CCTV control room. Further, we will work with Tenants & Residents’ Associations to install CCTV cameras in anti-social behaviour hotspots on Camden’s housing estates to keep residents safe.</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 poor decisions of Labour and Lib Dems have caused a fully-fledged rubbish crisis in our borough. Camden has more fly-tipping than any other council in England, with over 37,000 fly-tips last year. That’s a five-fold increase since Labour and Lib Dem councillors cut bin collections for half the borough in 2017. Hence our approach to the waste crisis is three-fold:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) We will tackle the root cause of fly-tipping: insufficient waste management by restoring weekly bin collections for all residents. Labour cut waste collections for half the borough to once a fortnight saving just £3 per resident a year which makes up one-thousandth of Camden’s budget. This decision has led to dirty streets, more vermin, fly-tipping, and inconvenience. Moreover, we will end the £75-a-year Garden Tax and restore the free green waste collection. 2) If elected, we will take a zero-tolerance approach to fly-tipping and littering and will use all available powers to keep streets clean. We will increase fines for littering to the legal maximum of £150 and use powers to fine vehicle owners for littering from their vehicles. 3) We will clean up our streets by reintroducing more regular street sweeping, the installation of smart bins, more public
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	waste and recycling bins as well as micro-recycling centres (as used in Conservative-run Westminster Council).
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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 has the largest backlog of council flat repairs of any council in the country. Camden's repairs service is slow, inefficient, and costly. We will improve repairs and save tenants and leaseholders money by</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) paying contractors only when work is signed off 2) introduce online maintenance logs for every council home to track works across their lifetime <p>Moreover, to help renters move, we will offer bridging loans to tenants moving within Camden to cover deposits. This will make it easier for them to move when they want and creates incentives for private landlords to adopt better housing conditions.</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>Yes, we support more transparency, including publishing requirements, to hold Camden's leadership accountable. Camden is London's high-tax borough with taxes increasing every year for the last eight years.</p> <p>As residents and businesses, we deserve to know what our money is spent on, especially when third parties, including trade union officials, are the recipients.</p> <p>Under Labour's watch, Camden has become the primary example of a high-tax and high-waste council. As voters, it is our job to hold their leadership accountable. This is only possible if we know who receives our tax money.</p>
14	<p>Do you support allocation of Council expenditure being decided by a vote of all elected Councillors?</p>

	<p>Yes! The Camden’s leadership is not spending their own money but yours. You and your elected representatives should get a say in how your money is spent. By introducing collaborative decision-making, local community councils and channels that strengthen direct democracy, we will ensure that Camden spends your money the way you intend it to.</p>
<p>15</p>	<p>Would you support giving the opinions of local residents and businesses a greater weighting in changes affecting their local area?</p> <p>Yes, as listed above our web platform that gives residents a vote on every policy and our five community councils within the borough (following the example of Southwark) will allow residents to decide on the issues that affect their neighbourhood and your voice a greater weight in borough-wide decisions.</p>
<p>16</p>	<p>How should the Council better support shops and small businesses in South Camden?</p> <p>We have a comprehensive plan to support shops and small businesses.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) First of all, with our approach to tackle the waste crisis, we will make our wards more attractive places to shop and do business. 2) Secondly, we will cut red tape by improving accessibility to Camden’s department and officials and improve the digitalisation of key Council services for businesses. Moreover, we will extend the eligibility for Assets of Community Value (ACVs) – especially all pubs – making it harder to change their use and grant discretionary Business Rates relief. 3) Thirdly, we work with local businesses and associations like BRAG to introduce promotional initiatives including ‘streateries.’ Conservative councillors sponsored the successful Belsize Village Stretery, which has greatly strengthened the local community, and brought four previously empty shop units in Belsize Village back into use. However, most importantly, we want to give residents and businesses a greater say in how their local area is run – unlike Labour’s one size-fits-all approach to governing Camden.

**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**