

Camden Climate Citizen Panel: Buildings and Organisations Meeting Notes

Date: Wednesday 26 May 2021, 18.00 – 20.00, MS Teams

Attendees: Anna P, Anna W, Chandrima, Mike, Niall, Sarah, Shana, Will, Penny, Victor

From Camden: Abigail Roberts, Gemma George, Harold Garner, Jackson Bylett, Michela Borzoni

Guest Speaker: Stephen Mckinnell, Bloomsbury Heat and Power Consortium

Apologies: Beverly, Dwayne, Jo, Rumi

The panel received a short presentation from Stephen Mckinnell on the decarbonisation approach adopted by the Bloomsbury Heat and Power Consortium to introduce the interrelated nature of buildings and organisations.

The focus of the session then came from discussions that panel members had in their breakout rooms. Group 1 addressed '**Buildings**' and the question: how can Camden incentivise residents to retrofit their homes? Group 2 tackled '**Organisations**' and the question: how can the panel help to increase sign-ups to the Camden Climate Pledge and support community engagement?

Comments and ideas from the panel were captured on Jamboard during the breakout room sessions and can be found on pages 2-5 of this document. A short summary of the key discussion points is detailed below:

1. Buildings – how can Camden incentivise residents to retrofit their homes?

The most significant point noted during the groups' discussion was around the role of Building Control, and how their level of influence could be used to Camden's advantage. Panel members suggested that Building Control and the Council should write to residents together to stress the need for residents to act within the home, as this type of communication tool would be more likely to be engaged with and not ignored. The panel felt strongly about the need for more rules for significant change to happen.

Accessibility to clear information with key takeaway messages was another barrier the panel identified to residents not engaging with retrofit. Understanding the principles of low carbon technologies in the home, the different components of home retrofit and how to go about it are complex and often overwhelming, leading many to disengage. Several panel members shared their experiences with the group, that they had considered switching their gas boilers out for heat pumps, yet they hadn't because there were still barriers that hadn't made it an easy enough option yet. One panel member spoke from experience and suggested that a mechanism like [Solar Together](#) could work well if applied to retrofit, in making the process smooth, easy to navigate and well supported.

The panel argued that the sharing of stark facts and figures is required to communicate the scale of change required from residents, to engage with neighbours and generate a momentum e.g. the need for 54,000 heat pumps to be installed borough-wide by 2030.

Panel members shared accounts of their own conversations around retrofit and one member detailed a conversation whereby a built environment professional had encouraged a more cost-effective route as opposed to one that unlocked the most carbon savings, which they suggested was damaging and contradictory to climate messaging. The panel agreed the narrative needs to be clear, concise, and aligned.

Incentivising retrofit in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) is more challenging. Tenants have less influence as the responsibility for retrofit sits with the landlord, and to what cost is it worth causing a fuss over if this impacts the living arrangement for the tenant. Panel members suggested that more pressure needs to be placed on landlords, this led to a discussion about the requirement of landlords under the [Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards](#) (MEES). One panel member, also a private renter, shared with the group that they actively looked at rental properties based on the EPC rating. The panel suggested a webpage on tips and guidelines for students and private renters would be useful for starting the conversation early. Camden could engage with universities to build momentum in this area.

2. Organisations – how can the panel help to increase sign-ups to the Camden Climate Pledge?

Panel members initially spoke about incentivising businesses and how offering reduced business rates, especially for businesses smaller in size where resource and capacity to deliver sustainability efforts may be reduced, could act as a good 'carrot'. A key point raised was the linking of the pledge to [COP26](#), a significant moment for the UK, as Glasgow hosts the next annual UN climate change conference in November. The upswell of activity around the climate agenda would provide an opportunity to capitalise on renewed interest in the borough and drive pledge uptake. The panel suggested that raising the profile of high performing signatories of the pledge could be delivered through social media to increase awareness to catalyse wider behaviour change. This approach would work two-fold, as organisations would raise the profile of the pledge and this would help to deliver key messages from identifiable businesses that other organisations could relate to. One panel member said that Camden identifies as a leader, and with some of the largest, influential, and innovative companies located in the borough e.g. Google and Facebook, there should be no exception for businesses not to be leading in the climate arena.

Panel members also mentioned that it could be worthwhile revisiting the brand of the pledge to ensure that it doesn't sound like an empty framework without key deliverable outcomes. The benefits of pledging should be clearly set out in the appropriate language that speaks to businesses. Key achievements made by signatories should be publicised, as well any issues incurred, and barriers overcome, to ensure total transparency. Dedicated pledge events and short interviews with signatories to be shared widely would help maintain momentum.

Schools were another key area discussed by the group. The panel agreed that schools need to recognise the sustainability agenda and could use biodiversity as a key theme/tool to engage children with. The panel also questioned to what extent should or could schools be an advocate within the wider community for climate action, how would this work in terms of accessing resources as well as organising for speakers to come into schools. It was suggested that the panel could be well positioned to advance the pledge comms approach and engage with businesses and schools. This idea was well supported by many panel members and is something that Camden and the panel will look to facilitate in coming months.

Group 1: Buildings – how can Camden incentivise residents to retrofit their homes?

Niall - few beneficiaries of the Solar Together fund.

Solar scheme - made it easy through the process, can we do the same for retrofit.

Understanding of technology is quite difficult and seems like it could have quite a big impact on home. District heating is of interest and could we develop grids.

Struggle with messaging because it doesn't have metrics - need to stress that 54,000 heat pumps need to be installed to lead to significant carbon reduction.

How much funding is available from carbon offset? There is £1.9m.

What are we doing for landlords - need to do more to influence things.

What are we doing for low-income households?

Building control is an important gateway, need to bring in rules that people need to make these changes.

Building control communication channel that could be used. New gas boiler that would have been implemented and pack of information.

The government has told us all to turn our thermostat down from 21 to 19 - basic things messaging from Camden needs to improve.

In Council messaging we need to communicate the scale of the challenge so that people can get involved.

Funding for energy efficiency is something that people are looking for now.

Doing a lot of estate transformation across WKT - can DHNs be applied throughout Camden.

PRS - don't know how many people own their own homes.

Put some comms in building control letters is a good place to communicate with people.

Camden Council may be able to raise the bar in terms of building control.

Understanding the different components of a retrofit and what would need to be completed and how could you go about doing it.

What is getting in your way: accessibility and education

Architect said it was not economically viable to retrofit their home in a low-carbon manner. Need for good advice in the area.

Would be good to have a webpage for students and reach out to universities for students.

Is it worth it to make the fuss on landlords to make the changes as it would impact on own lives.

Opportunity to story telling as Camden residents.

Group 2: Organisations – how can the panel help to increase sign-ups to the Camden Climate Pledge and support community engagement?



Group 2: Organisations – Further comments from the panel on how the communications strategy could be developed for the Camden Climate Pledge.

Linking pledge to COP, using COP to advance pledge signatories

Resources surrounding the pledge to advance the comms.

Should panel members call upon businesses to sign the pledge?

Panel is happy to go public, panel could be vital tool in advancing the pledge comms

Think about the language that speaks to businesses

key audience? key messages from identifiable businesses

Share resident stories, e.g. mini interviews to redistribute online for engagement