

Frequently Asked Questions

26/06/19 Version 2

What is a Citizens' Assembly?

A Citizens' Assembly brings together people from all walks of life, then helps them to bridge divides, find common ground - and ultimately to develop recommendations that can command public support. Better still, they do this while presenting participants with balanced evidence on the issue and allowing them to hear first-hand from key stakeholders with very different views and perspectives. At the previous series of Camden Citizens' Assembly meetings we asked residents about their ambitions and priorities for the borough, and how we can achieve these in a difficult financial climate. For this next series of meetings we want to talk with residents around how the council can make the biggest difference to the climate crisis.

What will happen as a result of the Assembly?

The Citizens' Assembly on the climate crisis will lead to a new set of citizen-designed policy proposals and recommendations that will be presented to and considered by your local politicians in October. These proposals will shape a new Environment plan for Camden.

How many Assembly Members are there?

Around 60 residents of Camden have been randomly selected to take part in the Assembly.

Are they paid for their participation?

Assembly Members are not formally paid for taking part and are volunteering their time to attend the three sessions of the Assembly on the climate crisis. However, to thank them for their participation, if a resident successfully attends all three events, a shopping voucher for the amount of £150 will be provided at the end of the last event.

How have they been recruited?

The recruitment process has been designed to ensure that Assembly Members are representative of Camden's general population. This means that we first worked out a representative profile of Camden's population by ward, age, gender and ethnicity and asked Camden's Community Researchers to recruit at random all across the borough. In our approach to engagement we have found that sending random letters has an impact on representatives of participation. The Community Researchers were given target numbers per ward to ensure representative borough coverage and recruited by stopping passers-by and knocking on doors. Potential participants were not able to put themselves forward for inclusion. The Community Researchers recruited more than 150 residents. Residents invited to participate in the Assembly were then selected at random but to be representative of Camden's demographic profile.

Why do you need a representative group of Assembly Members?

We want the decisions of the Assembly to be reflective of what the population think and want around the issue at stake, something we might not achieve by randomly selecting residents from our electoral register for example.

Can I come along to the sessions?

As discussed above the Assembly Members have been carefully recruited to be representative of the Borough. In order to maintain this representation, we are unfortunately not able to allow non-recruited participants to attend.

All of the content will be publically available, and we will be sharing regular progress on the Assemblies via our website and other communication channels.

Who are Camden's Community Researchers?

Camden's Community Researchers are a group of researchers who live in Camden and are familiar with the borough. We have trained them and we employ them to carry out various tasks, such as surveying or recruiting, that need inside knowledge of Camden's communities.

Is the Assembly process impartial and independent?

Camden is taking the lead on organising the Assembly. This is a commitment we made at the point of our climate emergency declaration in April.

However, we are working with an external partner, [Involve](#), one of the UK's leading public participation charities, to advise us on the content and the structure of the Assembly and facilitate the work of the Assembly in July. Additionally, we also have an independent advisory board. Its role is to review the content and structure of the assembly to ensure participants are provided with information and evidence which adequately addresses all the issues and lets them deliberate in an informed manner.

Members of the board are:

- Richard Jackson, Director of Environmental Sustainability, University College London (UCL)
- Duncan Price, Director of Sustainability, BuroHappold Engineering
- Dr Joanna MacRae, Climate Emergency Camden

We also intend to have UCL independently evaluate the Assembly process (see page 5).

No politicians sit on the advisory board and Camden's leader and Cabinet Member for a Sustainable Camden are only sponsoring the process. Camden's politicians and a few senior officers will only be invited to welcome participants at the start of the first session of the Assembly and tell them more about the next stages of the process at the end of the third session.

Presentations and evidence provided during the three sessions will be made available to the general public on the council's website.

How have speakers been selected to ensure independence from the council?

The Council has selected speakers considered to be experts on the subject matter they are presenting about, who have worked on the Climate Crisis projects at all levels. They are a range of academics, industry leaders and local stakeholders. The Advisory Board has considered and commented on the choices, which in some cases has led to changes.

Do Assembly Members need to be experts to take part?

Camden's Citizens' Assembly is all about giving residents the opportunity to have their voice heard and shape the future of Camden borough. Assembly Members are not experts in the climate crisis however and they are given sufficient time to meet with experts and learn from them.

The first and second sessions will have guests and experts from the sector who will share their experience and knowledge with the Members over two three-hour sessions. There will then be a further full day of deliberation and discussions. Experts will be present at each of the three sessions to ensure that participants have consistent and continuous access to accurate and independent information.

Before the Assembly meets for the first time in July, Members will also be given an information pack with background information on climate science and routes to decarbonisation at borough scale. We are also considering supplying a reading list to Assembly members.

How can non-Members share their ideas and solutions to tackle the climate crisis?

We have also launched an online [platform](#) where anyone can share their idea, solution or experience with the Assembly. All ideas from the platform will be shared with Assembly Members before they start putting together their own asks and recommendations.

How is the Assembly process being publicised and promoted?

Camden has been actively publicising the Assembly through our Commonplace platform. Over 700 residents have visited the site since its launch on 1 June and the site contains information about the Assembly process and summary evidence about how decarbonisation can be achieved at various scales.

We have also publicised the Assembly through social media and the Camden magazine, with calls for community ideas to the Commonplace platform noted above.

We have also created a dedicated [webpage](#) about the Assembly. It will be updated with further information about the Assembly as it is produced. Any additional help would of course be appreciated.

A [press release](#) was published on 31 May 2019 with information on the Assembly and its objectives.

Have stakeholders been identified, informed and invited to take part in the process?

Wider stakeholders are being encouraged to participate through Commonplace.

A roundtable will be held with businesses from the Camden Climate Change Alliance network in June. They will discuss the opportunities and threats presented by the climate crisis and their views will be presented as secondary evidence to the Assembly.

Additionally, as part of the Sustainers programme, schools are being asked to host School Assemblies in order to get wider views from students about the Climate Crisis and how we should address it. A series of conversations are also planned with businesses in Camden, to gain further views about the issue.

What provisions have been made for non-digital submissions for those not able to access the Commonplace platform?

Members of the community who want to share their views and ideas on how to tackle the current climate crisis are invited to use the online Commonplace platform. However, they can also do so by post or by telephone:

The Sustainability, Air Quality and Energy team
Camden Council
5th floor – 5 Pancras Square
5 Pancras Square
London N1C 4AG

Contact: Carlos Queremel 0207 974 4359

What question will the Assembly consider and why?

We have worked with our Advisory Board to develop the framing question for the Assembly:

We are now facing a climate and ecological crisis. How can the Council and the people of Camden help limit the impact of climate change while protecting and enhancing our natural environment? –What do we need to do in our homes, neighbourhoods, council and country?

The question seeks to acknowledge the ecological aspect of the climate crisis while also focussing attention at four scales of action: home, neighbourhood, Council and country. The scales are important because they will help focus deliberation toward delivery. The outcome of the assembly will be a series of defined actions at each of these scales which can be progressed by the necessary stakeholders.

What is the Assembly trying to achieve?

The focus of the Assembly is on informing changes that can be made to address the climate crisis. We hope that people will come together and show the things that can make the biggest difference to the crisis. This will include things we can all do, but also change the council should make.

We are also a civic leader and we are vocal nationally and internationally around issues that we know are important. In the absence of actions taken at national level, we are well placed to tell Government what to do and we will share the Assembly recommendations with Government, lobbying politically but also through the media. We also have partners abroad and in different cities across the world. We will work with them to share experience and find common solutions to a problem that affects us all.

What status do the Assembly recommendations have? How will the council take them forward?

We are committed to consider the Assembly's asks and recommendations and implement them within the limits of our power and remit. As stated in our press release – see above - Members will be invited to present their proposals to councillors at Full Council in October.

We have also committed to use the Assembly proposals to shape the new Environmental Plan for the borough in 2020.

We believe this process is the best way to begin to tackle the Climate and Ecological crisis but we know sustained efforts over the coming years will be required. We will do our utmost to support delivery of the actions emerging from the Assembly through the Council's own efforts as well as collaborating with local stakeholders, and supporting and enabling community-led action.

How will concerns about the ecological crisis be addressed?

The framing question for the Assembly acknowledges the ecological issue and the pre-Assembly engagement via Commonplace also gives the community the chance to highlight the importance of this issue.

Camden will soon be developing a new Biodiversity Action Plan for the borough and the intention is to use this process to respond in more detail to ecology.

Will anyone be evaluating the process?

UCL (University College London) is undertaking an evaluation of and research into Camden Council's Citizen's Assembly.

Researchers from the Department of Science and Technology Studies are interested in the Citizen's Assembly as an innovative example of citizen's involvement in policy making. They see Camden's Citizen's Assembly as one example in a broader context and trend in Europe of participatory governance and will be studying the process throughout.

At the same time evaluators from the Engagement Team at UCL Culture are undertaking an evaluation of the Citizen's Assembly. This will review the processes and impacts of the Citizen's Assembly to create an evidence base to support learning and strategic planning for Camden Council and other organizations holding their own assemblies in the future. The findings of this evaluation will be shared on the Climate Crisis webpage.