



Cabinet

Title	Towards a Fair Barnet
Date of meeting	16 April 2024
Report of	Councillor Zahra Beg, Cabinet Member for Equalities, Voluntary and Community Sector
Wards	All
Status	Public
Key	Yes
Urgent	No
Appendices	<p>Appendix 1 – Towards a Fair Barnet Roadmap 2024-30</p> <p>Appendix 2 – State of the Borough Report 2023</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Adults Residents’ Perception Survey 2022: Summary</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Report on Resident Engagement Programme</p> <p>Appendix 5 – Building a Fairer City, The London Recovery Board</p> <p>Appendix 6 – Equalities Impact Assessment</p>
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Summary

This report asks Cabinet to recommend to the Council the approval of the Towards a Fair Barnet Roadmap 2024-2030, a new external, community focussed equalities, diversity and inclusion approach for the borough (attached as Appendix 1). The roadmap sets out how we will comply with the public sector equality duty in the Equality Act 2010 and our priorities for tackling inequalities in the borough.

Recommendations

- (1) That Cabinet recommends to Council that the following equalities objectives be approved:**
 - a. People: Understand the whole person**
 - b. Place: Understand and tackle local causes of inequality**
 - c. Planet: Support a just transition to net zero**
- (2) That the Towards a Fair Barnet Roadmap 2024-2030 (attached as Appendix 1) be approved, subject to the Council's approval of the equalities objectives.**
- (3) That the Executive Director for Children and Families, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Equalities, Voluntary and Community Sector, be authorised to make minor amendments to the Roadmap to facilitate publication.**

1. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 1.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies and others carrying out public functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunities and foster good relations. Public authorities also have specific duties under the Equality Act to help them comply with the public sector equality duty. Public authorities must:
 - publish equality information at least once a year to show how they have complied with the equality duty
 - prepare and publish equality objectives at least every four years
- 1.2 Our Plan for Barnet 2023-2026 sets out our vision for and tackling inequalities and fighting poverty. It also commits us to addressing these issues by actively listening to and considering different perspectives and needs in policy-making and service design. The new roadmap sets out our proposed approach.
- 1.3 As part of the development of the roadmap, we prepared a State of the Borough Report (attached as Appendix 2) to start to build an understanding of residents' experiences of inequalities in Barnet and the impact. Bringing together different themes, it provides an overview of what inequalities look like in important aspects of their lives. The report highlights that people are shaped by a combination of multiple factors, including their age, disability, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation and socio-economic background. The causes of inequality are often inter-connected and recognising this "intersectionality" provides an opportunity for us to better understand the lived experience of residents and the issues they face.
- 1.4 We also analysed the results of the Adults Residents' Perception Survey 2022 to assess the levels of satisfaction and views of different parts of our community. Appendix 3 highlights the findings where significant inequalities exist in relation to residents' responses. It also summarises the findings of the ethnographic research with residents with disabilities which was instigated following the Residents' Perception Survey. New perception surveys for both adults and young people are currently being undertaken.

- 1.5 We have undertaken extensive resident engagement to inform the new roadmap. Over 200 residents participated in phase one of the programme through workshops and other activity from February to August 2023. A second phase of engagement using a mix of approaches to reach people with different protected characteristics took place from October to December 2023 to seek views on priorities for the roadmap. A report on the outcome of the resident engagement programme is attached as Appendix 4.
- 1.6 A further driver of the strategic roadmap is to respond to the London Recovery Board's Building a Fairer City plan (attached as Appendix 5) which outlines actions under four priority areas.
 1. Labour market inequality
 2. Financial hardship and living standards
 3. Equity in public services (tackling structural discrimination)
 4. Civic Society strength
- 1.7 The roadmap explains how our community wealth building approach will address some of these priorities, whilst this roadmap focusses on tackling structural discrimination for equity in public services in depth.
- 1.8 Taking the State of the Borough Report and Residents' Perception Survey as an evidence base and using the outcomes of our engagement with residents and partners, our new roadmap proposes the following three strategic equalities objectives:
 1. People: Understand the whole person
 2. Place: Understand and tackle local causes of inequality
 3. Planet: Support a just transition to net zero
- 1.9 Our objectives aim to ensure that we continue to work towards equal opportunities for all and equal access to quality services based on need. In the longer-term, they will help us to reduce the structural drivers of inequalities and improve outcomes for our residents, with a focus on tackling the gaps between different communities.
- 1.10 Our roadmap does not attempt to capture everything we are doing to address inequalities. All services will be tackling inequalities and addressing disadvantage through their own strategies and policies. These often focus on taking a preventative and early intervention approach to provide effective support to those at risk of poor outcomes. However, we have highlighted some of the key activities being undertaken by services to tackle inequalities and disproportionality to increase the visibility of this work and to enable us to monitor its effectiveness.
- 1.11 In addition to this core work, we want to significantly move the dial on some of our borough's inequalities. To do this, we will need to target resources towards a number of specific inequalities in addition to embedding approaches across the Council through our strategic equalities objectives. The roadmap sets out the following priority areas:
 - Disability rights, voice and outcomes (including removing barriers to inclusion)
 - People with care experience
 - Accessibility of housing and preventing homelessness
 - Action on the social determinants of health in neighbourhoods
- 1.12 We will develop an action plan to support the delivery of our work on our objectives and priorities. Progress against the actions in the plan will be tracked and scrutinised by our Tackling the Gaps Group and reported to our senior Council Management Team. We will also report

publicly on progress through our annual equalities report and future State of the Borough reports.

1.13 To ensure transparency, we will develop an on-line hub capturing the totality of what we are doing to address inequalities bringing this together in one place.

1.14 Subject to approval by Cabinet and Council (for the equalities objectives), we are intending to produce a fully designed version of the roadmap in a similar style to Our Plan for Barnet. We are requesting that authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Children and Families, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Equalities, Voluntary and Community Sector, to make minor amendments to the approved roadmap to facilitate this process and also to include case studies of good practice and update any statistical information if more recent data becomes available.

2. Alternative Options Considered and Not Recommended

2.1 We considered having a strategy that covers all of the work the Council does to address disproportionate outcomes, but residents have told us they want us to have a simple visual document, with a focus on actions.

3. Post Decision Implementation

3.1 The intention is to submit the equality objectives for approval by the Council on 21 May 2024. We will develop a detailed action plan to support the delivery of our work on our equalities objectives. Progress against the actions in the plan will be tracked and scrutinised by our Tackling the Gaps Group and reported to our senior Council Management Team. We will also report publicly on progress through our annual equalities report.

4. Corporate Priorities, Performance and Other Considerations

Corporate Plan

4.1 Our Plan for Barnet 2023-2026 sets out our vision for fighting poverty and tackling inequalities and commits us to:

- Fight inequalities and work to improve life chances for a good, healthy, happy and long life. Working in partnership, we will ensure no one is held back, that Barnet is the healthiest borough in London and our communities and residents can take advantage of every opportunity.
- Reduce poverty in our communities, boosting incomes and reducing costs. We will create an inclusive Barnet by promoting long-term economic growth that benefits everyone and where families and communities support each other.
- Be a family friendly borough where children and young people have the best start in life with the best education, the right support and safeguarding when they need it, and the right tools to live their lives successfully into adulthood. This especially applies to our children in care and care leavers, who we are 'corporate parents' for.
- Focus on all residents having the best opportunities to live well and feel part of the community. This will mean increasing the inclusion of older and disabled residents and celebrating their contributions. We will recognise people's goals and support them to build on their existing abilities and strengths. We will work with residents, communities and our partners to support residents to stay well and free from abuse.

- Tackle inequalities by actively listening to and considering different perspectives and needs in policy-making and service design.

Corporate Performance / Outcome Measures

- 4.2 We have prepared a State of the Borough Report to provide a baseline of known inequalities in Barnet to help inform the development of our new roadmap. We intend to build and expand on this in future years to monitor and track progress against a range of inequalities outcomes and metrics.

Sustainability

- 4.3 One of the priorities in the new roadmap focusses on the need to consider environmental and sustainability issues from an equalities perspective to ensure that our journey to net zero takes place in a fair and inclusive way.

Corporate Parenting

- 4.4 People with care experience face disadvantage, discrimination and barriers in life. We have a particularly strong responsibility for this group. In January 2024, the Council adopted the Care Leavers Covenant and agreed to lobby government for a change in the law to allow care experience to become a protected characteristic under the Equality Act and other legislation. This commitment to people with care experience has been recognised in the new roadmap
- 4.5 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 also places a duty on the Council to consider corporate parenting principles in decision-making. This includes ensuring that children in care and care leavers are not disproportionality impacted by any decisions the Council may make.

Risk Management

- 4.6 We monitor and report against our strategic equalities objectives and action plans to ensure that we meet our statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.

Insight

- 4.7 An overview of the characteristics of our residents can be found in the Barnet Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. We have also prepared a State of the Borough Report which provides a profile of Barnet's population and gives a summary of known inequalities in the borough. The report is based on extensive research and draws on a wide range of resources and data.

Social Value

- 4.8 The updated social value policy outlines how we can extract benefits from our procured contracts and reinvest them into the community. The policy provides opportunities to further the equalities, diversity and inclusion agenda as well as reducing poverty.

5. Resource Implications (Finance and Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT and Property)

- 5.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report. There is no expectation that delivery of the priorities within the roadmap will place the General Fund or other ring-fenced funds under pressure. This will be monitored closely and, if any adverse impacts arise, we will seek to address these within existing resources. Appropriate authority will be sought for additional funding for specific projects if required.

6. Legal Implications and Constitution References

- 6.1 The Council has statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and regulations made under it. Under Regulation 5 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, a local authority must publish one or more objectives it thinks it should achieve to do any of the following:
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 6.2 An objective must be specific and measurable.
- 6.3 Government guidance published in December 2023 (Public Sector Equality Duty: guidance for public authorities) states that equality objectives can be published on their own or as part of a strategic or planning document.
- 6.4 The draft roadmap includes new equalities objectives to replace those in the previous EDI Policy 2021-25 to ensure alignment with Our Plan for Barnet 2023-2026 and to provide a greater focus on external inequalities faced by residents.
- 6.5 Under the Council's Constitution, Article 3 reserves responsibility for approval of our corporate equalities objectives to the Council.
- 6.6 Under the Council's Constitution, Part 2D, the terms of reference of the Cabinet includes responsibility for the functions:
- Recommending major new policies (and amendments to existing policies) to the Council for approval as part of the Council's Policy Framework and implementing those approved by Council;
 - Approving policies that are not part of the policy framework;
 - all key decisions.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 We have undertaken extensive resident engagement to inform the new roadmap. Over 200 residents participated in phase one of the programme through workshops and other activity from February to August 2023. A second phase of engagement using a mix of approaches to reach people with different protected characteristics took place from October to December 2023 to seek views on priorities for the roadmap. A report on the outcome of the resident engagement programme is attached as Appendix 4.

8. Equalities and Diversity

- 8.1 The new roadmap will strengthen the Council's ability to meet the Equality Act 2010 and the public sector equality duty. A new action plan will be developed to set out a new programme of activities to deliver the priorities. The roadmap will have a positive impact on residents with protected characteristics.

8.2 The equalities impact assessment on the new strategy is attached as Appendix 6. Further assessments will be undertaken as required on projects and activities taken forward as part of the action plan.

9. Background Papers

9.1 This paper references the following programmes and strategies:

Our Plan for Barnet 2023-2026: [Barnet Plan 2023/26](#)