

Cabinet, 16 April 2024

Addendum to Item 13 – Towards a Fair Barnet

Summary

On 5 March 2024, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed item on 'Towards a Fair Barnet' before the decision was considered by Cabinet on 16 April 2024. An extract of the draft minutes from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting is provided below.

Minutes Extract

Towards a Fair Barnet

The Cabinet Member for Equalities and the Voluntary and Community Sector, Councillor Zahara Beg; the Executive Director for Children and Families, Chris Munday; the Assistant Director of Strategy and Communications, Liz Cowie; and the Head of Service - Strategy and Community Participation, Hal Khanom, were in attendance to present the report.

Our Plan for Barnet 2023-2026 set out our vision for tackling inequalities and fighting poverty. The Council had been developing a new external, community focussed equalities strategic roadmap, Towards a Fair Barnet, to reflect and align with the ambitions in the plan. The report provided an update on the development of the roadmap and sought the views of the Committee on the proposed approach and potential priorities prior to the submission of the strategic roadmap to Cabinet on 16 April 2024 and Council on 21 May 2024.

A Member considered that there were some inequalities in the borough and sought assurance that young black males were not being disproportionately excluded in education. The Executive Director for Children and Families reported that recent data showed that exclusion levels were low in Barnet but noted that there had been increases post-Covid. Data showed less disproportionality in this area because there were higher numbers of young white males were being excluded. The Committee were given assurance that exclusions were being managed in accordance with best practice and several programmes were in place to address this locally. **Action: Overview and Scrutiny Team to circulate school exclusions information reported to the Children and Education Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee on 7 March 2024.**

The Committee questioned how the Residents' Perception Survey had been conducted as the findings did not align with the experience of some Members within the community. The Assistant Director of Strategy and Communications reported that the sample size was 2,000 and it was representative of the borough population. Officers undertook to explore ways in which underrepresented groups could be included in future surveys. It was reported that, in addition to the survey, further engagement work had taken place to get the in-depth views of specific groups.

Members commented that there was a lack of comparable data relating to previous years to assist in identifying trends over time. The Committee requested that future reports include trend and benchmarking data. It was also requested that data on specific minority groups was included as each had their own specific characteristics.

A Member referred to concerns from community groups regarding the allocation of Council grant funding, such as Area Committee funding, and suggested that the arrangements may disadvantage minority groups. Officers undertook to include a review of grant investments in the roadmap for any disproportionality. The Assistant Director of Strategy and Communications reported that Barnet provided funding for Barnet Together which was an umbrella body for the voluntary sector and this was considered to be a good arrangement for supporting many different kinds of organisations in the borough; she added that several community groups had received funding via the community events programme.

The Committee welcomed the number of events which had taken place over the last two years which celebrated the borough's diversity. It was questioned whether the programme would be continually reviewed to ensure that it was improved and expanded on. Officers reported that there had been learning from every event which would be used to enhance arrangements for future years. In addition, the Communications team would promote events locally.

A Member commented that the Council should share which groups had been supported by the various Council funding streams to raise awareness of the types of projects and events that could be eligible for funding.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- 1. Note the progress of the development of the equalities strategic roadmap, Towards a Fair Barnet, as set out in the report.**
- 2. Agree that the Cabinet Member for Equalities and the Voluntary and Community Sector and officers be requested to consider the comments made by the Committee as detailed in the preamble above in relation to:**
 - **Trend, benchmarking, and equalities data in respect of the Residents' Perception Survey;**
 - **Distribution of Council grants and funding to a diverse range of community groups; and**
 - **Review of the community events programme.**

Comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

There are no formal recommendations to Cabinet arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee consideration of Item 13 (Towards a Fair Barnet).

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are provided to Cabinet for consideration and comment as part of the ongoing work relating to the subject matter of the decision. The relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolution is set out above under recommendation 2.