

	<h2>Housing & Growth Committee</h2> <h3>24 November 2020</h3>
<p style="text-align: right;">Title</p>	<p>COVID-19: Recovery Plan – Thriving</p>
<p>Report of</p>	<p>Chairman of Housing and Growth Committee</p>
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<p>Officer Contact Details</p>	<p>Cath Shaw, Deputy Chief Executive, cath.shaw@barnet.gov.uk</p> <p>Susan Curran, Head of Housing and Regeneration, susan.curran@barnet.gov.uk</p> <p>Jamie Robinson, Head of Business, Employment & Skills, Jamie.robinson@barnet.gov.uk</p> <p>Elliot Sweetman, Group Director, Operations & Property, The Barnet Group, Elliott.sweetman@barnethomes.org</p>

Summary

Housing and Growth Committee is the lead committee for the Thriving workstream of the council's Recovery Plan. This report provides an update to Committee on progress across a

number of core themes under the workstream: Town Centres; Employment and Skills; Digital Connectivity and Homelessness.

Officers Recommendations

1. That the Committee note the report.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

Background context

- 1.1 The Covid-19 pandemic provides an extremely challenging situation for Barnet, its residents and the wider borough. The pandemic itself has been responsible for over 900,000 cases and 45,000 deaths nationally, and the restrictions put in place have led to challenges relating to economic growth, employment, education and mental health.
- 1.2 The report to Committee on 14 September 2020 set out the programme of recovery planning in response to challenges facing the council, the borough and its residents. The programme is split into five workstreams which are based around the cross-cutting themes of the council's emerging Corporate Plan. The themes are:
 1. Thriving
 2. Family Friendly
 3. Healthy
 4. Clean, Safe and Well Run
 5. Prevention

This report provides an update to Housing and Growth Committee on the Thriving workstream, including, town centres schemes, business engagement, skills and jobs and digital connectivity. It also provides an update on items requested by the committee, including the ban on evictions, support to businesses in town centres in light of the second lockdown, and rough sleeping.

Town Centres

- 1.3 As highlighted in the Growth Strategy that was approved by Housing and Growth Committee in January, Barnet's town centres already faced a number of challenges prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. These included changes in the retail sector and consumer habits, a lack of diversity in the local offer, increasing numbers of vacant units, fragmented ownership and traffic-dominated environments. Covid-19, and the associated lockdowns, have undoubtedly caused an acceleration of this decline but new patterns and opportunities have also emerged. These include people commuting less and living and working more locally. The fragmented ownerships within town centres also allow for a diverse range of retail unit sizes which offers some potential for start-up businesses and pop up / meanwhile uses.

1.4 In order to continue to respond effectively to the pandemic, officers continue to take a cross cutting approach to the recovery response, this includes reviewing data, such as footfall and vacancy rates to obtain an understanding of the impacts on town centres. The report to Committee in September report set out a number of key workstreams and activities, an update on these is provided below:

- **Town Centre Operations** –The council is continuing to support social distancing on the high street in accordance with the changes of government public health guidance to ensure our town centres remain safe to visit and to work in.
- **Cycling in Town Centres** – Following the update provided in the report to Committee in September 2020, works have started onsite at the end of September to deliver the temporary, light segregated cycle lane along the A1000 between the boundary with LB Haringey to just south of North Finchley Town Centre. The installation of this cycle lane is expected to be completed in early November. Following completion, the council will to monitor and evaluate the impact of the measure.
- **Low Traffic Neighbourhoods & School Streets** – This workstream is focused on supporting social distancing requirements outside Barnet schools to ensure that children can return safely. Following securing funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) nine school streets have been implemented across the borough to ensure children are able to return to school safely. Following the success of the scheme, the council has secured an additional £30,000 from the DFT to support the delivery of further school streets at 3 schools in Colindale – Blessed Dominic, St James and Saracens school. Work is underway to implement these now.
- **Communications** – This workstream ensures that there is a joined-up approach to communication with key stakeholders. The council is continuing to provide regular communication with high street businesses to inform them of relevant public health messaging, upcoming changes around government messaging and signposting them towards potential funding and grants available to support business. Recent initiatives include informing businesses of their obligation to use the test and trace app, leaflet drops around the Tier 2 restrictions and providing case studies of best practice for hairdressers and restaurants on social media.

The council is preparing a second phase of the high-profile ‘Discover Barnet: Shop Safely, Shop Local campaign’. The campaign encourages the public to support local town centres while observing Covid-secure measures.

According to campaign data, the first phase reached at least half of Barnet’s population, who were exposed to the campaign message 1-5 times. There were more than 200,000 engagements – that is people ‘liking’, ‘sharing’ or commenting on the campaign’s digital case studies. This far exceeded expectations, having at least twice the level of audience impact as previous largescale LBB campaigns. Anecdotally, the effectiveness has been attributed to the hyper-local targeting and the quality of the case studies used to promote the message. The intention is to reach these people and more in the second phase of the campaign.

- **Funding and grants** – There have been no recent grants made available for the council to bid for. A decision on the £1.3million bid to Transport for London / Department for Transport COVID-19 Emergency Active Travel Fund – Tranche

Two is still awaited. As indicated in the report to Committee on 14 September 2020, it is important to note that current – and likely future – funding from government to support Covid-19 recovery is generally focused on ‘shovel ready’ projects, i.e. those that are fully scoped and can be delivered within a relatively short space of time.

1.5 Update on additional town centre projects to support recovery and long-term strategic objectives

- **Pilot New Markets** – Due to issues arising around the tightening of restrictions with COVID-19 there has been a delay to the programme for the pilot of the three new Markets as set out in the previous paper within Finchley Central, Golders Green and North Finchley to February 2021. A large reason for this delay was around trader confidence in investing in new equipment at this uncertain time. In response the council is working with the operator to host trader workshops with potential new and existing traders over the month of November. This opportunity will be advertised via the council’s social media channels, via our CTN bulletin, Middlesex University and the Arts Depot.
- **Temporary Streetspace Fund** – Since launching the initiative in late August the Council have received 25 successful applications from Barnet Businesses and have completed the installation of 25 temporary barriers and parklets to create a safe, attractive and enclosed space for these businesses to trade from. Officers continue to support businesses to activate their spaces and will monitor the impact this funding has for the businesses. The application for this fund has now closed, however the council has set up an expression of interest page to allow further businesses to inform us of their ongoing demand so the Council continue to support businesses and will be keeping a list to consider hosting a second round in the new year. In the meantime, if other businesses apply, they will be directed towards accessing a temporary license for a three-month period. Following the expiry of the licence, businesses will be able to apply for a renewal.

Update on what local businesses need to get them through a second lockdown

- 1.6 Since the beginning of the pandemic, the prospect of a second wave of COVID-19 has been understood. With the recent news of the second lockdown businesses across the country will again be significantly impacted over the coming months.
- 1.7 The council will continue to support businesses to make sure our town centres remain safe and accessible spaces to visit. Social distancing measures already implemented will continue to be reviewed and further actions to ensure people are able to maintain social distancing whilst visiting our town centres will be considered. Another barrier for many wanting to visit and dwell in the town centre, especially vulnerable, families and elderly residents, is the concern around access to public conveniences in our Town Centres. The council is currently developing a Community Toilet Scheme that aims to pilot an initiative to work with businesses through an incentivised model to encourage them to open their businesses as a publicly accessible convenience during hours of operation.

- 1.8 During the first lockdown the council offered three months relief to its commercial tenants. A total rent relief of £271,470.60 was requested by tenants. A further period of rent relief is being considered.
- 1.9 The relevant provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 apply to the vast majority of commercial leases, but not most leases for terms of less than six months. They prevent landlords from taking any action to forfeit for non-payment of rents or other sums, including service charges and insurance rent, from 26 March until 31 December 2020. This period may yet be extended further. The Act provides that in any existing proceedings begun before 26 March there can be no order for possession before 31 December.
- 1.10 Despite sections 82 and 83, of the Act forfeiture by peaceable re-entry would still be available to a landlord for breaches unrelated to non-payment of rent or other sums due.
- 1.11 The Government have stated that after the second lockdown has ended, the Tier system will be reintroduced. As local lockdowns can be announced with very little warning, it is important to be well-informed. The council will continue to deliver business communications in a timely manner, utilising the online platform, internal mailing lists, letters, leaflets and engage in person with the ground teams made up of enforcement officers and town centre volunteers.
- 1.12 The second lockdown will impact the hospitality sector within the town centre which was already expected to work at reduced capacities of up to 50% and at reduced hours (closing by 10pm) as part of the Tier 2 restrictions. Beyond second lockdown, there is an opportunity to look to grow initiatives such as the Temporary Street Licensing and Temporary Streetspace Fund to help these businesses to continue to be able to trade outdoors where possible.
- 1.13 During the first lockdown there was a new demand for local deliveries from local retailers on the high street, this unlocked new opportunities for businesses to not only continue trading but also to reinvent their offer. This new demand to make last mile deliveries has been challenging for SME businesses required to fit the delivery around daily operation. The council are exploring this opportunity and aim to pilot an initiative to zero-emissions last mile delivery service to support businesses to sell their products locally.
- 1.14 To help understand the impact of COVID 19 on Barnet's town centres and to help inform new priorities and initiatives, footfall data is being procured, and trends in vacancy rates are being reviewed.

Identification of opportunities for growth within town centres

- 1.15 The Growth Strategy, which was adopted in January 2020, sets out the ambitions for growth in town centres and acknowledges that changes in the retail sector and the wider economy mean town centres need to change in order to survive. COVID-19 has accelerated the need to diversify the mix of uses in town centres, encouraging footfall throughout the day and evening. Town centres will still remain retail centres, albeit on a reduced scale, but should have a far wider range of service provision, including recreation

and leisure, food and entertainment, as well as much improved office space, new housing covering all tenures, health and community facilities, arts and culture provision.

Skills and Jobs

- 1.16 Responding to the unprecedented skills and employment impacts of COVID-19 is a high priority in Barnet, as is the case with other boroughs. We know that many individuals and households have had their working lives disrupted by the pandemic and that this has the potential to have a lasting impact on communities.
- 1.17 The number of Universal Credit claimants in Barnet in September 2020 was 18,800. This is three times higher than in September 2019 (5,805 claimants)¹. In part, the forecast increases are due to the number of residents that have been placed on furlough, now standing at 61,000², a significant increase on the previously reported figure of 48,500.
- 1.18 The council has recruited a dedicated Welfare, Employment and Skills Manager to lead on employment initiatives for local residents and to coordinate and streamline activity across the borough. Key workstreams already underway include:
- Launch of a new Jobs Portal on the council website³, signposting to a range of employment and skills support and other useful advice for local residents. It also directs users to the council's jobs site.
 - Delivery of the JETS (Job Entry Targeted Support) programme, a £238 million UK government initiative dedicated to supporting those left jobless due to Covid-19. The programme provides a 'light touch' employment support offer to anyone of working age, over 18, who has been in receipt of benefits for at least 13 weeks. Support includes specialist advice on how people can move into growing sectors, as well as CV and interview coaching. In West London, JETS is being delivered by The Shaw Trust with the BOOST Project responsible for delivery in Barnet. The programme launched in October and the first 47 referrals are now being processed. Council Economic Development staff are in close contact with Shaw Trust and BOOST as the programme develops.
 - Supporting delivery of the government's Kickstart programme which offers young people under 25 to access six-month, paid work experience with local employers. The programme is now going live with opportunities available from mid-November. The council has committed to offering 30 placements itself, is referring local businesses to intermediary organisations that can help them to secure recruits and is exploring opportunities to support the voluntary sector specifically to participate in the scheme.

Supporting homelessness reduction

¹ https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157261/subreports/cc_time_series/report.aspx?

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-august-2020/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-statistics-august-2020>

³ <https://www.barnet.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-information-and-advice/employment-skills-and-financial-help-covid-19-0>

1.19 A commitment to homelessness reduction is a core part of both the Healthy and Thriving workstreams of the council's Recovery Plan. Officers are focused on ensuring that the needs of the borough's rough sleepers are assessed and that ongoing housing solutions can be found to meet these. There are a number of strands to this work, as follows.

- **Rough sleepers** – Barnet currently accommodates 130 rough sleepers. All have been individually assessed and their health and support needs captured. As would be expected, in some cases there are challenges with engagement which makes planning their next steps more difficult, however Barnet Homes have already successfully placed 22 rough sleepers into suitable private rented sector accommodation. All of those placed into accommodation are provided with appropriate floating support arrangements.

Barnet Homes' outreach teams are reporting on average 2-3 new rough sleepers per week which is much lower than during the lock down period and it is assessed that there are 14 rough sleepers currently still on the streets in Barnet. Those 14 are generally already known to services and are particularly difficult to engage with, however efforts to do so continue.

Barnet Homes submitted a bid to the governments £105m Next Steps Accommodation Programme to provide support to those rough sleepers already accommodated and has been awarded £1.04m from this fund. This will pay towards temporary accommodation costs, additional floating support resources and assisting with incentives to landlords. Barnet Homes has also been successful in their bid to the GLA Rough Sleeper Accommodation Pathway fund, securing £1.95m to support the purchase of 15 studio properties into their subsidiary Opendoor Homes. These studios will be used to house only rough sleepers. Barnet Homes are still awaiting the outcome of a third funding bid which was to Public Health England for £250k to provide drug and alcohol support to rough sleepers with complex needs.

The North London Housing Partnership of which Barnet is a member was also successful in a bid to the Next Steps Accommodation Programme to set up a New to the Streets Service and European Economic Area (EEA) national hub. The accommodation will be located in student halls in the borough and will provide support to new rough sleepers across the sub region. Clients to the service will have their needs assessed before being referred on to their originating borough. The EEA national hub will help to get "work ready" rough sleepers into employment and therefore eligible for further assistance.

On 5th November, MHCLG launched the 'Protect Programme', with a further £15 million allocated to support the ongoing efforts to provide accommodation for rough sleepers during the pandemic, and in particular help areas that need additional support most during the restrictions and throughout winter. Barnet Homes await more detail on the programme, including the process for submitting funding bids.

- **Supporting those who do not qualify for public assistance** – Assistance continues to be provided via Citizens Advice and Homeless Action in Barnet (HAB) to help EEA nationals who do not qualify for public assistance to seek settled status. Barnet Homes also has employment support specifically for EEA nationals to

enable some rough sleepers to get into work and then become eligible for further support.

Non-EEA nationals who are eligible for Legal Aid are being referred to immigration solicitors for advice and support. There is also now the EEA national hub highlighted above which our rough sleeper team can refer into.

- **Preventing a return to homelessness** – Barnet has moved away from the use of commercial hotels and has been extending placements in the current units of accommodation into the next year. The Next Steps Accommodation Programme funding is providing further support roles to help sustain rough sleepers in accommodation and help to move them on into the private rented sector. In addition, HAB and Together in Barnet (TiB) continue to provide support and deliver food to help safeguard the wellbeing of rough sleepers.
- **Planning beyond current funding arrangements** – Barnet Homes, Clinical Commissioning Group, NHS, Public Health, Adult Social Care and Homeless Action in Barnet (HAB) are working together to complete a needs assessment to inform the accommodation and support needs of Barnet's rough sleeper cohort. A mixture of accommodation options will be required including private rented accommodation with both floating support and more intensive wrap around support together with a limited amount of high support accommodation for those with complex needs. The high need cases have been referred into mental health services and options for pathways for these vulnerable adults are being discussed across services. Barnet Homes also has government funding to develop a Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub and the current rough sleeper hostel in Friern Barnet Road is being refurbished to deliver this service. The service should be starting in the new year and will have dedicated support and a night-time concierge service for rough sleepers.
- **The role of night shelters during Covid-19 restrictions** – Barnet Homes, HAB and Together In Barnet (TiB) meet weekly to discuss operational issues around supporting rough sleepers, including how a night shelter may be provided during the colder months. Recently published government guidance for providers of night shelters is clear in that a location for shelters should be fixed rather than the revolving night shelters that TiB have previously offered. Night shelter provision is however critically important for those rough sleepers who have no recourse to assistance or those who can't access support because they are not deemed vulnerable under the homeless legislation. TiB is currently working on a proposal to place ten self-contained pods in the grounds of Trinity Church and is being supported by Public Health and Barnet Homes in their bid to the Homeless Winter Transformation Fund. The volunteers at HAB and TiB continue to provide invaluable support with delivering food parcels and other options for supporting rough sleepers are being discussed in weekly operational meetings.

Ban on evictions

- 1.20 Since the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown arrangements, Barnet Homes have employed an approach of providing additional support to tenants experiencing difficulties paying their rent. This involves working with tenants on a case by case basis to ensure that where arrears do exist sensible payment plans are in place, access to welfare benefits and

employment support are maximised and communication with residents remains frequent and through a range of channels. Importantly, no council tenants have been evicted for non-payment of rent since the national lock-down began.

- 1.21 In line with government directives, Barnet Homes ceased the serving of legal notices relating to rent arrears between March and June 2020. From the beginning of July 2020, legal notices have been served on a case by case basis with service manager approval. The purpose of sending these notices is to remind tenants who have not engaged with the income service to do so, in order that appropriate support and/or arrangements to pay can be put into place.

The Barnet Homes collection procedure considers two main factors:

- 1: A tenant's ability to pay
- 2: A tenant's commitment to doing so

Ability to pay

- 1.22 Customers falling into arrears fall into one of three groups, according to their ability to pay. First there are those who have the money to pay when they fall into arrears and are still in a position to pay if attempts to negotiate a reasonable payment plan are exhausted. At the other extreme are tenants who simply do not have the money to pay. In between is a third group, those who are able to pay when they fall into arrears but, as a result of a change in circumstances, they can no longer afford to do so when we are at the later stages of the collection process.
- 1.23 Those customers who are unable to pay due to a change in their circumstances will receive the required support from Barnet Homes and referrals to the appropriate internal and external agencies for additional support. Sustainable payment plans are agreed on a case by case basis. All customers who have been severely impacted by Covid-19 and are currently at court or legal stage will receive the required support with a view of sustaining the tenancy. We will then review the cases on a case by case basis before considering any legal action.

Commitment to pay

- 1.24 The situation with regard to the commitment to pay is more diverse. The majority of people who fall into rent arrears generally have every intention to pay on time, but simply lack the money to do so. These include people on low incomes who face unexpected expenditure; people who have had a sudden substantial fall in income leaving them unable to meet all their commitments; and people with personal considerations such as mental health issues which impair their ability to manage their finances.
- 1.25 Those customers who are not willing to pay but are able to pay can be categorised as "won't pay". These customers will receive the same support as described above but if the rent arrears increase, appropriate action will be taken in line with the rent recovery process and the Pre-action protocol. Barnet Homes will still continue to contact customers and provide the required support and attempt different mediums of contact in order to do so.
- 1.26 An income analytics tool is used to prioritise cases which may require more support or casework including case monitoring meetings.

- 1.27 The primary objective for Barnet Homes will continue to be to maximise income, reduce debt and sustain tenancies by adopting a supportive and holistic approach to income management.

New guidance and Direction

- 1.28 The court service has now set a new Practice Direction PD-55C, which came into force from 20 September 2020 until March 2021 inclusive. This direction sets guidance on issuing possession claims exploring the impact of COVID-19. For any claims brought before 3 August 2020 for which re-listing is sought, a reactivation notice is required to be filed and served.
- 1.29 Although Barnet Homes are preparing for relisting cases for possession, it will be a long process before court hearing dates are granted. As a national lockdown commenced on 5 November no evictions will take place for the foreseeable future.
- 1.30 The Government has also asked for no evictions to take place during the Christmas period which has been defined as 11 December 2020 until 11 January 2021 inclusive. There will be a limited list of exemptions to the pause in evictions during this period.
- 1.31 The Annual Performance Review of Registered Providers (RPs) which sets out further detail on how other Registered Providers have been responding to the ban on evictions.

Anticipating future increases in homelessness

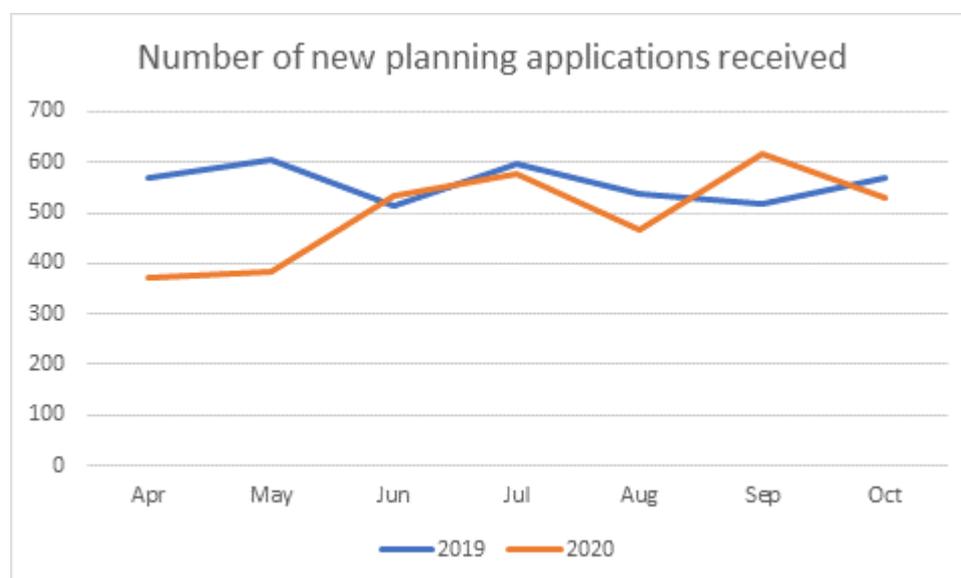
- 1.32 It is difficult to gauge the future impact of the pandemic on homelessness and whether landlords will take immediate steps to commence eviction proceedings, once they are able to. Landlords deciding to evict tenants not only face long delays due to the back log of cases already in the court system, but also the costs of eviction proceedings and the associated reletting process. There is likely to be an impact from new administration and regulation for both courts and landlords and the likely errors and delays these will cause, as well as the added complications of remote hearings all add to the uncertainty. In these circumstances and with no indication of the courts increasing capacity to hold more hearings, there is unlikely to be a significant increase in evictions from the courts in the near future.
- 1.33 Barnet Homes provides a tenancy sustainment service as well as the BOOST project, which delivers employment and benefit support services to help households facing difficulties. These interventions will help to reduce homelessness demand. Barnet Homes has specialised officers working with tenants in the PRS and landlords to support them with any concerns or issues they may face. Early intervention is key to preventing homelessness and Barnet Homes will be working with partners to ensure that information is available and accessible and that there are clear pathways for residents that need support.
- 1.34 Barnet Homes is working closely with the council's Business, Employment and Skills Team to ensure that the BOOST offer is tailored to meet the cohorts with greatest need. BOOST offers engagement and advice including triage and referrals to partners, youth employment and careers, mental health support, welfare benefits advice and access to Discretionary Housing Payments. The wide range of partners linked to BOOST allows for expanded services and increased capacity, for example, clients can be referred to Twining if they

have more serious mental health needs and support to sustain work. These partners include, Citizens Advice Bureau, Work and Health Programme, Twining Enterprise, Change Grow Live Barnet, Volunteer Barnet, Debt Free London and National Careers Service.

Barnet's Housing Market

- 1.35 In terms of the housing market more broadly, there is evidence from Rightmove that, despite uncertainty associated with COVID-19, house prices have risen slightly on average across the borough over the twelve months to October 2020. This is supported by official government data that shows a 0.3% increase in property prices over the twelve months to June 2020[1]. It should be noted that this rise is against a national context of lower overall activity in the housing market in terms of both new properties coming on to market and the volume of sales.
- 1.36 In October 2020, Property Industry Eye reported that there has been a surge in demand for properties in outer London. Research from Rightmove shows a trend in recent months for people selling up in the inner London zones and moving further out.
- 1.37 This picture is consistent with planning data from Barnet, with strong demand for pre-application discussions from developers over the summer and autumn, suggesting a longer-term confidence in the local housing market. This is reinforced by figure one below, which shows the volume of planning applications received by the council between June and October 2020 was comparable with the same months a year earlier:

Figure 1: New planning applications received 2019 and 2020



- 1.38 Analysis of commuter lines in London shows that further out you go by zone the greater the increase in year-on-year demand, according to Rightmove. Northern locations of the Northern line are performing more strongly than the southern locations, and there is a clear dip in demand for home buying along the zone 1 stations.

- 1.39 Property market statistics will be monitored as part of the recovery programme, forming part of a suite of economic indicators being gathered on a regular basis from December 2020.

Digital connectivity programme

- 1.40 The digital connectivity programme has continued at pace through Q2 with the preparation of the Wayleave Framework documentation noted in the Enabling Digital Infrastructure report to Housing and Growth Committee in September 2020. The delivery of pilot phases for fibre broadband rollout programmes is expected to begin from January/February 2021. A clearer position of the number of homes that could be connected across the borough should be available early in 2021 following further discussions with providers.
- 1.41 Focused work around Digital Inclusion has also begun to be further explored since the September Committee and this has identified that, in addition to the social value commitments (free or low-cost connections and digital skills training programmes) secured through the wayleave agreements, there are several potential further means of unlocking affordable connectivity and digital skills support services for digitally excluded residents. We are seeking useful data from suppliers relating to the extent of take-up of the currently available low-cost broadband services (such as BT Basic and Virgin Essentials); in order to understand the extent to which these directly accessible benefits are meeting local need, and the remaining gap/s linked to affordability of access to digital connectivity. Opportunities for providing advertising-driven free Wi-Fi services to residents in some higher-density areas of the borough are also being explored.
- 1.42 In addition to the wayleave and Wi-Fi partnership opportunities, the council has been directly engaging with development partners and their subcontractors around their interest and potential to provide direct support for affordable connectivity to their local communities. This could involve free or low-cost household connections (via 4G dongles), together with potentially the Department of Work and Pensions match-funding support for IT equipment where households do not have the devices to enable them to effectively access support services and work.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 As noted, the council is taking a comprehensive, cross-service approach to Covid-19 recovery. All measures and interventions set out above directly support the borough's Recovery Plan, as approved by Policy and Resources Committee on 17 June 2020.
- 2.2 Additionally, all measures outlined in this report align with council strategy and priorities, for example, as set out in the Corporate Plan, Growth Strategy 2020-30, the Long-Term Transport Strategy, the Housing Strategy 2019-24 and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-24.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 The council could opt not to support economic recovery throughout the Covid-19 emergency. This would, however, see the failure of many more Barnet companies, leading to deeper and longer-lasting social and economic impacts within the borough than would

otherwise be the case. It would also likely have a negative impact on council revenue streams through Business Rates.

- 3.2 The council could opt not to support those facing or experiencing unemployment or homelessness. However, as noted, this would lead to long-term consequences and impacts on households, mental health and demand for public sector services.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 Following Committee, officers will continue to support economic recovery as part of the council-wide Recovery Framework. Any individual decisions and actions will be taken by Housing and Growth Committee, the Chairman and Senior Officer in line with the relevant scheme of delegation.
- 4.2 In town centres, officers will continue to develop and deliver initiatives set out in the report, drawing on approved resources within the Town Centres Capital Fund and other funds such as Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy where possible. As part of this, officers will continue to scope the future pipeline of projects to ensure that we are in a more favourable position to access external grant funding.
- 4.3 Officers will assess the impact of projects throughout project delivery. Evaluation of proposed interventions will be used to inform the future vision for town centres which addresses the long-term issues and trends in line with the Growth Strategy.
- 4.4 Following Committee, officers will continue to maintain regular communication with relevant stakeholder groups – notably businesses, Members and residents – in accordance with the programme of work.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1 The council's response to Covid-19 and its impacts on businesses directly support objectives in the Corporate Plan 2024, particularly "Supporting local businesses to thrive", as well as objectives set out in the Growth Strategy 2020-30 and the Long-Term Transport Strategy.
- 5.2 Proposals outlined in this report also support adopted council policy and strategies for individual town centres. Finchley Central, Golders Green and North Finchley Town Centres are among Barnet's seven main town centres, as set out in the Entrepreneurial Barnet Strategy. All three have Town Centre Spatial Planning Guidance and/or adopted Town Centre Strategies that identify the locations proposed as key opportunities for market trading. These strategies and plans have been developed in consultation with residents, traders, and other key stakeholder and community groups in town centres.

Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 5.3 The report to Housing and Growth Committee in September 2020 set some of the committed expenditure for town centre projects. Plans are being developed for expenditure of the remaining Town Centre Capital Funds.
- 5.4 The council will procure service contractor(s) in accordance with Barnet's Procurement Procedures, its Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 to support the delivery of all associated capital works identified in this report.
- 5.5 In order to regain the momentum in being a high performing organisation, financial stability must be achieved through the recovery planning process. This includes minimising the call on reserves and setting a balanced budget from 2021/22 onwards. This budget must deliver the required strategy in relation to reserves required to withstand future economic shocks.
- 5.6 Where there are financial implications or decisions associated with recovery activities, these will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. The delivery of recovery actions in support of business will be undertaken within the existing capacity and resources of the council.

Social Value

- 5.7 The council must take into account the requirements of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 to try to maximise the social and local economic value it derives from its procurement spend. Social value is a core part of the Recovery Framework and will be maximised throughout.

Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.8 The council's Constitution, Article 7.5 Committees, Forums, Working Groups and Partnerships, sets out the functions of the Housing and Growth Committee:
- Responsibility for housing matters including strategy, homelessness, social housing and housing grants, commissioning of environmental health functions for private sector housing, regeneration strategy and oversee major regeneration schemes, asset management, employment strategy, business support and engagement.
 - To receive reports on relevant performance information and risk on the services, under the remit of the Committee.
- 5.9 Any procurement activity will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 as applicable; any procurement exercise will also be subject to the EU Treaty principles of equal treatment, fairness and non-discrimination. If the council chooses to use an existing Framework Agreement to appoint a contractor to deliver the services, it must comply with the requirements of the Framework Agreement. In accordance with Rule 5.4 of the Contract Procedure Rules, before entering into a call-off contract under a Framework Agreement due diligence checks must be carried out to demonstrate that the Council can lawfully

access the Framework Agreement and that it is fit for purpose and provides value for money.

Risk Management

- 5.10 The council has an established approach to risk management, which is set out in the Risk Management Framework. Strategic and operational risks are being reviewed in light of our response to Covid-19 and priorities for recovery and the new Corporate Plan. Managing risk will be an essential part of programme management and will be used to inform key decisions relating to economic recovery.
- 5.11 There is a risk that there will be resistance from the community with regards to some proposals in town centres. All work identified in this report builds directly on priorities already identified through strategies that have been consulted on and the Council has allowed for ongoing community and stakeholder engagement throughout the delivery of these projects.

Equalities and Diversity

- 5.12 The Equality Act, 2010 outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act, 2010;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people of different groups; and
 - Foster good relations between people from different groups.
- 5.13 Relevant protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.
- 5.14 The council's Recovery Framework is intended to benefit all communities and groups who live, work and visit the borough, including those with protected characteristics. Where individual decisions are required in relation to the recovery programme, these will be considered on a case-by-case basis to ensure no group is disadvantaged or left behind. As required, officers will undertake Equalities Impact Assessments (EQIA) on a case-by-case basis to fully appraise the impacts associated with any proposed course of action.

Corporate Parenting

- 5.15 In line with the Children and Social Work Act 2017, the council has a duty to consider Corporate Parenting Principles in all decision-making. These will be considered as specific plans for recovery are further developed.

Consultation and Engagement

- 5.16 Officers are clear that the Recovery Framework cannot be developed in isolation if it is going to be fully responsive and effective in enabling the borough to emerge stronger from the Covid-19 pandemic. Consultation with partners, service users and the wider community is critical to ensuring that our recovery activities are focused on the end user.

- 5.17 In addition to the consultation set out in the report to Committee on 14 September 2020 a series of engagement activities have been undertaken to support the Finchley Central Square project. This has included:
- the establishment of a new community working group
 - online surveys which have generated over 150 responses
 - consultation with over 130 people at pop-up market stall on Saturday 10 October
 - a project mailing list of over 245 local groups, businesses and individuals
- 5.18 To support the community's ability to engage during the pandemic, the project has also launched a new project website to provide project updates and a platform to host ongoing online consultation activities. A Town Centre Business Directory has been integrated into the website that currently hosts thirty-one businesses located within Finchley Central. The council continues to promote these platforms utilising the boroughs social media platforms and project specific platforms and so far, have reached an audience to date of over 7500 people.

Insight

- 5.18 There is an opportunity in the recovery phase to significantly improve the way in which we use data, insight and analysis to drive decision making and service delivery.
- 5.19 Officers are currently in the process of establishing a cross-service insight approach that will enable this to happen. At present council-wide insight requirements are being mapped and questions of each service in order to structure further insight and data analysis.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 Urgency Committee, 27 April 2020: Approval of Emergency Decisions and Delegation to Chief Officers
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s58641/Urgency%20Committee%20-%20Emergency%20Decisions%20Final.pdf>
- 6.2 Policy & Resources Committee, 17 June 2020: Covid-19 Recovery Planning
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s58985/Covid-19%20Recovery%20Planning.pdf>
- 6.2 Council Budget 2018/19 Financial Forward Plan and Capital Programme, Appendix E2 Capital Programme by Delivery Unit:
<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s45350/Appendix%20E2%20-%20Capital%20Programme%20by%20Delivery%20Unit.pdf>
- 6.3 Town Centres in Barnet (approved at Assets, Regeneration and Growth Committee, March 2015):
<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s21967/Town%20Centres%20in%20Barnet.pdf>
- 6.4 Town Centre Capital projects and update on Finchley Central Housing Infrastructure Fund project (approved at Assets, Regeneration and Growth Committee September 2018):

<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=696&MId=9764&Ver=4>

- 6.5 Growth Strategy (Housing and Growth Committee, 27 January 2020):
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s52934/Growth%20Strategy.pdf>
- 6.6 Golders Green Town Centre Strategy (Housing and Growth Committee, 27 January 2020):
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s57507/Golders%20Green%20Town%20Centre%20Strategy%20and%20update%20on%20Finchley%20Central%20Housing%20Infrastructure%20Fund.pdf>
- 6.7 Finchley Central Town Centre Strategy (Housing and Growth Committee):
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s43517/Appendix%202%20%20Finchley%20Central%20Town%20Centre%20Strategy.pdf>
- 6.8 Temporary Strategy for Street Trade Licensing and Town Centre Streetspace Fund, Delegated Powers Report:
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=7503>
- 6.9 Housing and Growth Committee, 14 September 2020, Item 12, COVID-19: Recovery Plan
– Thriving,
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=696&MId=10226&Ver=4>

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