



Environment Committee

11 March 2021

Title **Update on Barnet Sustainability Strategy**

Report of Chairman of Environment Committee

Wards All

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Summary

As was requested at January Environment Committee, this report provides an update to the Environment Committee on the development of Barnet's first Sustainability Strategy. The report provides information on the work undertaken to date in relation to the production of the strategy as well as an overview of the chapters within the strategy.

Officers Recommendations

1. The Committee are requested to note this update on the progress of the Barnet Sustainability Strategy and that a draft strategy will be presented to Policy & Resources Committee for approval

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

Why is a Sustainability Strategy needed?

- 1.1 Work began last year on the development of Barnet's first Sustainability Strategy which looks to bring together the work being done on existing strategies, as well as proposing actions to support a green recovery from COVID-19. There is a clear case for the development of a strategy which looks to combine the sustainability aspects of existing strategies and plans, such as the Long Term Transport Strategy, the Growth Strategy and the Air Quality Action Plan. The development of a Sustainability Strategy is an opportunity for the Council to consider the merit of highlighting environmental outcomes by being more explicit about measures where there is an environmental focus or benefit.
- 1.2 The Sustainability Strategy will also serve to outline the Council's response to existing and emerging legislation, such as the Environment Bill, while creating a framework which will assist the Council in the development of future strategies, and when reviewing existing strategies. Such a framework is increasingly becoming a prerequisite for securing a range of GLA and Central Government grant funding initiatives. It also helps to clarify our plans and vision for the sustainability of the borough to support any applications for funding.
- 1.3 In order to recover sustainably from COVID-19, we must appropriately prioritise a green recovery and make the most of all available funding which will allow us to prepare for the future by reducing our carbon footprint and facilitating growth in a sustainable way. Barnet's commitment to remaining a green and pleasant borough goes hand-in-hand with the Council's commitment to fighting air pollution. As such the importance of the positive environmental considerations of such a strategy, and the role it and the borough can play in helping to deliver on national and local targets relating to climate change, must be recognised.
- 1.4 Furthermore, the Resident Perception Survey, carried out in Autumn 2020, highlighted that 87% of residents strongly agree / tend to agree that tackling environmental issues should be included in the Council's priorities and future plans. The Children and Young People's Residents Perceptions Survey 2020 also identified 'litter and dirty streets' and 'air quality' as top concerns.

Update on the development of the strategy

- 1.5 Initial discussions around the production of a Sustainability Strategy took place with relevant lead members and the Leader over Summer 2020. Following this, officers were instructed by the Leader to begin work on the production of a strategy.
- 1.6 Following this approval to begin the work in September 2020, officers have begun work on developing Barnet's Sustainability Strategy, including identifying themes for the Strategy and documenting the work already being done and achieved by the Council as well as identifying areas for further action.

- 1.7 This work involved organising officer working groups to develop objectives and actions. These working groups have allowed us to garner an overview of the work currently being done to address sustainability across the organisation, in order to identify gaps and areas on which the Sustainability Strategy can focus.
- 1.8 The structure of the Sustainability Strategy has been considered and is being developed along the thematic approach detailed below. The overall strategy will require objectives, actions and targets. It is too early to specify in detail what these will be as insufficient engagement has taken place with Barnet residents, key stakeholder groups, Barnet Councillors, and internal officer groups. However, the Sustainability Strategy will be cross cutting in nature, including actions and objectives relating to: transport, housing and buildings, waste and energy, the natural environment, business and the green economy, and the Council's own operations.
- 1.9 The Sustainability Strategy will respond to, and develop themes from, a number of Barnet strategies with specific cross cutting actions. The Environment Committee is taking a lead on the development of the draft strategy but this will require wider endorsement across the Council before consideration for adoption by Policy and Resources.
- 1.10 Once developed, the Sustainability Strategy will detail:
- 1) Why the strategy is needed to ensure cohesive action and protect and enhance the natural environment of the borough.
 - 2) Baseline contextual information on the borough, including our international, national and regional legislative obligations, and work the Council has already undertaken or is currently working on.
 - 3) Vision: our vision for the future sustainability of the borough.
 - 4) Themes: we have identified cross cutting themes for the strategy, all of which are part of the wider sustainability agenda. The strategy's themes will look to support the vision by addressing specific areas of action we need to pursue. They will include high level objectives and specific actions which will look to link the work of different departments and facilitate intra-organisational working.
 - Transport: we will look to continue to reduce vehicle emissions through encouraging active travel and supporting a modal shift. This will require input from Highways and Transport, Parking, Estates, Public Health and the Town Centres Team among others.
 - Housing & Buildings: this will look to ensure that both existing and new housing throughout Barnet is built to an efficient standard, whilst also looking at ways in which the Barnet corporate estate can be made greener. It will require input from Estates, Growth and Regen, Barnet Homes, Greenspaces and Planning among others.
 - Waste & Energy: we must continue to look for all avenues to improve energy efficiency and reduce emissions to the best available standards, while reducing waste and increase recycling across the borough. This will require input from Street Scene, Greenspaces, Town Centres, Estates, and Capital Works among others
 - The Natural Environment: through improving our understanding of the biodiversity and ecology, and water management systems of the borough we can continue to make Barnet a greener and more sustainable place to live, work and study. This will require input from Greenspaces, Planning, Public Health, and Highways among others.

- Business and the Green Economy: in order to continue to facilitate a green recovery from COVID-19, we must engage with businesses to ensure they are as sustainable as possible, while upskilling the Barnet population to ensure they are qualified for more sustainable and better paying jobs. This will require input from Town Centres Team, Public Health, Finance, and Growth and Regen among others.
 - Council Operations: it is important that we lead by example by making staff actions and Council operations more sustainable; this may also prove to be financially beneficial in the medium to long term as we develop more efficient and sustainable ways of operating. This will require input from HR, Procurement, Finance, and Estates among others.
- 5) Action Plan: a subsequent action plan will provide more specific detail on how we will meet our obligations laid out in the Sustainability Strategy, including specific timeframes and delivery plans

1.11 Further work will continue throughout 2021, in order to expand upon the objectives and actions proposed by the Sustainability Strategy. A draft strategy will be presented to Policy & Resources Committee for approval.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 This report provides an update on the progress of Barnet's first Sustainability Strategy. A draft version of the strategy will be taken to a future Policy and Resources Committee. As noted, the Sustainability Strategy will look to draw together existing Council strategies and plans, and propose a route forward in supporting a green recovery. All measures outlined in this report and the Sustainability Strategy, will align with Council strategy and priorities, for example, as set out in the Corporate Plan, Growth Strategy 2020-30 and the Long Term Transport Strategy 2020-41.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

3.1 That Barnet does not prepare a Sustainability Strategy. This would not be recommended due to our duty to respond to the legislation and guidance put forward by the government, and its responsibility to the stewardship of the environment. The government recognises that there is a clear and scientific case, and growing public demand, for increased environmental protection, and greater action to combat the negative effects of climate change. It would also represent a significant lost opportunity for the borough, to be more ambitious and deliver better outcomes for our residents.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 Work will continue on the development of the Sustainability Strategy. The draft strategy will be presented to Policy & Resources Committee for approval.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 **Corporate Priorities and Performance**

5.1.1 The Council's Corporate Plan, Barnet 2024, is focused on three main outcomes:

- A pleasant, well maintained borough that we protect and invest in.
- Our residents live happy, healthy, independent lives with the most vulnerable protected.
- Safe and strong communities where people get along well.

5.1.2 The Council's key areas of focus include:

- Delivering quality services – improving the overall approach to planning and enforcement, including taking action against environmental crime such as littering and fly tipping.
- Delivering services that our residents value most to a high standard, including keeping our neighbourhoods and town centres clean, safe and healthy, maintaining our parks and open spaces, ensuring that our roads and pavements are well looked after.

5.1.3 The Sustainability Strategy will support the Council's Long Term Transport Strategy (2020-2041), Growth Strategy (2019-2030), and draft Local Plan (2021-2036) to ensure planning for future housing and transport need is delivered in a sustainable way. In addition, the Strategy will also support the delivery of outcomes from other adopted Council strategies and policies, including the Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy and the Air Quality Action Plan by improving air quality, and helping residents to keep well and independent.

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

5.2.1 Finance & Value for Money: it is envisaged that the Sustainability Strategy will provide value for money in both the long and short term. In the short term, the creation of clear guidance and policy will enable officers to apply for grants and other means of additional funding to support sustainability measures. In the long term, through upgrading the sustainability of Council property and capital it will provide better value for money for our residents. Additionally, by creating a more joined-up and focused approach to the Council's strategies, it will allow the organisation to streamline its approach to sustainability.

5.2.2 Procurement: the design of the Sustainability Strategy will need to consider the impact on any existing procurements and contracts the Council holds. Additionally, any projects or programmes proposed will need to be procured in line with national, regional, and local procurement policy.

5.2.3 Staffing: at this time there are no implications. This will be monitored as the strategy progresses

5.2.4 Property: the Sustainability Strategy could influence our approach to estates management, and the function and purpose of our assets. This will be considered as the strategy is developed.

5.2.5 IT: at this time there are no IT implications in developing the Sustainability Strategy.

5.2.6 Sustainability: the purpose of the Sustainability Strategy is to facilitate a review of the actions of the Council with regard to sustainability, and maximise all available opportunities to act in a sustainable and forward looking way.

5.3 Legal and Constitutional References

5.3.1 The Mayor of London's statutory powers and responsibilities vary across the different environmental issues covered in the London Environment Strategy.

5.3.2 The statutory framework for local air quality management is via national Air Quality Regulations and Part IV of the Environment Act 1995.

5.3.3 The Mayor of London is required to produce a municipal waste strategy under the Greater London Authority Act 1999, however, the Mayor is not a waste authority.

5.3.4 The Climate Change Act 2008 sets out the statutory framework for addressing climate change risks in the UK. The Greater London Authority Act 1999 requires the mayor to consider the impact of climate change and potential mitigation for Greater London.

5.3.5 The Environment Bill was introduced into parliament on 15 October 2019. It was re-introduced to parliament following a general election on 30 January 2020. The Environment Bill 2020 sets out how the government plans to protect and improve the natural environment.

5.3.6 Due to the breadth of the issues impacted, the preparation of the Sustainability Strategy should be developed in consultation with the relevant theme committees across the Council.

5.4 Insight

5.4.1 Some data and insight gathering has taken place, for example the Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document outlines the capacity of Green Infrastructure to deliver a wide range of benefits and how these might be promoted and delivered through existing policies and processes.

5.4.2 The Air Quality Action Plan (2017-2022) outlines the action the Council will take to improve air quality in the borough. It identifies actions under six broad topics: emissions from developments and buildings, public health and raising awareness of causes of pollution, delivery servicing and freight, borough fleet actions, localised solutions, and cleaner transport.

5.4.3 Facilitated by London Councils, the Local Authority Performance Solution (LAPS) is a project to share, compare and analyse local performance data collected by London boroughs. With data provided quarterly, the LAPS delivers timely and relevant information to enable participating authorities to identify potential areas for improvement and to highlight where there may be examples of innovation or best practice. Barnet will remain engaged with the development of LAPS, to continue to evaluate how it can best facilitate our own benchmarking and data gathering.

5.4.4 In conjunction with the above policies and proposals, work will be performed to ascertain where data already exists to inform the strategy and what additional data gathering will need to be commissioned in order to adequately identify trends and cater for the borough's needs.

5.5 **Social Value**

5.5.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic, and environmental benefits. This will be done as part of any contract procurement.

5.5.2 The strategy will have to consider where social value outcomes could impact environmental outcomes.

5.6 **Risk Management**

5.6.1 While there are some risks associated with the production of the Sustainability Strategy, the main risks come from inaction. Risks will be considered throughout the production of the strategy and managed in accordance with the Council's Risk Management Framework.

5.6.2 The Council's Strategic Risk Register highlights the impact of climate change, stating 'An inability to adequately manage the environmental impact of resident and business activities (such as air quality, insulation, renewable energy, packaging resource management and climate change) could lead to negative long-term consequences to the local environment resulting in statutory environmental duties and targets not being met; financial consequences; and not protecting the environment for future generations.'

5.7 **Equalities and Diversity**

5.7.1 The Equality Act 2010 sets out the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires public bodies to have due regard to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and person who do not.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and person who do not.

5.7.2 The relevant protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

5.7.3 The proposed Sustainability Strategy will consider equalities by producing an Equalities Impact Assessment as the Strategy is developed, and prior to implementation of the Strategy.

5.8 **Corporate Parenting**

5.8.1 Concerted action on sustainability will demonstrate to the young people in our care that

we are taking the issues that matter to them seriously. The Children and Young People's Residents Perceptions Survey 2020 identified 'litter and dirty streets' and 'air quality' as top concerns. This also provides an opportunity for them to have a role in the development of Council policy, and the future of the borough.

5.9 Consultation and Engagement

- 5.9.1 The consultation requirements will be considered and outlined in the report to Policy & Resources Committee. Consultation feedback from all residents, including those from protected characteristics, will be utilised to produce the best strategy possible to benefit the diverse communities of Barnet.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 London Borough of Barnet – Council – 30 July 2019 – Climate Emergency Motion, amended by Cllr Dean Cohen:
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=28972>
- 6.2 Draft Long Term Transport Strategy 2020-2041:
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s57231/Appendix%20A%20Draft%20Long%20Term%20Transport%20Strategy.pdf>
- 6.3 London Borough of Barnet Air Quality Action Plan 2017-2022:
<https://www.barnet.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/citizenportal/documents/Environment%20Health/ScientificServices/AirQualityActionPlan2017consultationdocument.pdf>
- 6.4 The Growth Strategy - Housing and Growth Committee – 27 January 2020 – Item 16: Growth Strategy:
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s57407/Growth%20Strategy.pdf>
- 6.5 The Environment Bill (2020):
<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-21/environment/documents.html>
- 6.6 London Borough of Barnet Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document:
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s42496/Appendix%20B%20-%20Green%20Infrastructure%20SPD.pdf>