

	<h2>Housing &amp; Growth Committee</h2> <h3>14 June 21</h3>
<b>Title</b>	<b>COVID-19: Recovery Plan – Thriving</b>
<b>Report of</b>	Chairman of Housing and Growth Committee
<b>Wards</b>	All
<b>Status</b>	Public
<b>Urgent</b>	No
<b>Key</b>	Yes
<b>Enclosures</b>	Appendix 1 – Growth Strategy annual update Appendix 2 – Barnet Work, Skills and Productivity Action Plan
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## Summary

Housing and Growth Committee is the lead committee for the Thriving theme of the Barnet Plan, approved by Policy and Resources Committee in February 2021 and the council's COVID-19 Recovery Plan. Delivery of the council's Growth Strategy is a key objective of the Thriving theme.

This report provides an update to Committee on progress across a number of Recovery workstreams including skills, employment, homelessness, town centres, housing supply and digital access and inclusion.

Appendix 1 of the report also includes an annual progress report on delivery of the Growth Strategy since February 2020, alongside the delivery plan for the year ahead (2021/22). A detailed plan on the council's approach to skills and employment over the coming year is also set out in Appendix 2, following a period of development across a range of council service areas and external partner organisations.

## Recommendations

### That the Committee:

1. **note the report;**
2. **note the annual report on the Growth Strategy as set out in Appendix 1**
3. **approve the Barnet Work, Skills and Productivity Action Plan set out in Appendix 2**

## 1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

### Background context

- 1.1 The Barnet Plan was approved by Policy and Resources Committee on 8 February 2021 and sets out the council's vision and strategy for the next four years. The council and its partners will focus on four priorities to realise the vision:
  - Clean, safe and well run: a place where our streets are clean and antisocial behaviour is dealt with so residents feel safe. Providing good quality, customer friendly services in all that we do
  - Family Friendly: creating a Family Friendly Barnet, enabling opportunities for our children and young people to achieve their best
  - Healthy: a place with fantastic facilities for all ages, enabling people to live happy and healthy lives
  - Thriving: a place fit for the future, where all residents, businesses and visitors benefit from improved sustainable infrastructure & opportunity.
- 1.2 The Covid-19 pandemic provides an extremely challenging economic challenges for residents, businesses and town centres in Barnet.
- 1.3 The council's recovery programme is split into five workstreams, based on the cross-cutting themes of the Barnet Plan. This report provides an update to Housing and Growth Committee on the Thriving workstream, which has a focus on:
  - supporting residents to improve their skills and get good jobs in the post-COVID economy
  - enabling town centres and our regeneration areas to thrive, and create an environment in which businesses can succeed, by implementing our growth strategy
  - accelerating the borough-wide roll out of high-quality digital connectivity
- 1.4 The report also provides an update on homelessness reduction, a commitment to which is a core part of both the Healthy and Thriving workstreams of the Barnet Plan.

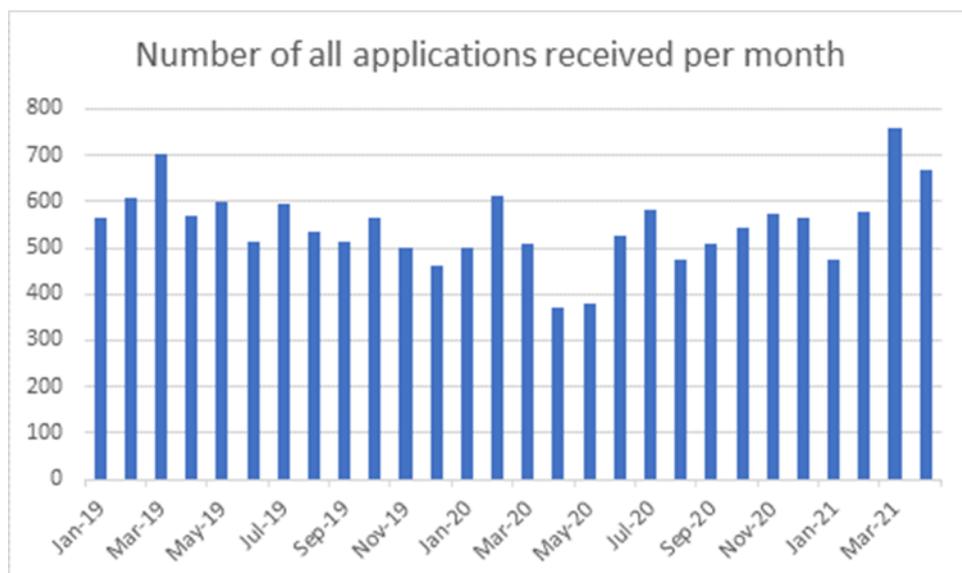
## Implementation of the Growth Strategy

- 1.5 Implementation of the Growth Strategy is a key objective of the Barnet Plan. Throughout the pandemic work on this has progressed, albeit activities that supported the COVID-19 response and recovery have been prioritised with an emphasis on delivering at a scale and pace consistent with the economic impacts of the pandemic.
- 1.6 The report in Appendix 1 summarises the work undertaken in 2020/21 to implement the Growth Strategy and also sets out the programme of activity for this year.

## Barnet's Housing Market

- 1.7 The housing market has continued to show resilience across a number of indicators since the last meeting of the Committee.
- 1.8 Between March and April house prices nationally grew by 1.4%, meaning that the annual rate of growth in April was 8.2% according to the Halifax House Price Index. This was the fastest rate of growth since 2016. The extension of the Stamp Duty break from March 2021 to June 2021 has also played a role in driving sustained market demand and growth is expected to slow once the scheme concludes. March also saw a record level of net mortgage borrowing nationally, at £11.8bn. the number of mortgage approvals is also high, suggesting high volumes of households are planning to move home over the Spring and Summer.
- 1.9 Sales have continued across the council's regeneration estate. At Millbrook Park 44% of all private units are sold and occupied, including all units on phases 1, 1a, 2, 3, 3a & 4b.
- 1.10 In terms of Barnet's planning system, this picture of market resilience is reinforced by figure 1 below, which shows the volume of applications received by the council up to April 2021. March saw the highest number of applications received for over two years, with the figure for April 2021 also higher than the equivalent month in 2019.

Figure 1



## Skills and Jobs

- 1.11 The past year has been a challenging one for residents and employers in Barnet, with the pandemic and multiple lockdowns having far reaching impacts on the working lives of people from every background, age group and skills level. The unemployment rate has risen in the borough as elsewhere, with 7.5% of working age adults claiming some sort of unemployment benefit. This is more than twice the pre-pandemic level.
- 1.12 The pandemic has accelerated a number of existing trends, particularly in relation to technological change and the role of the internet. Sectors that were declining before March 2020, such as retail and hospitality, are expected to continue to do so, whilst others, such as health and care, construction, and the creative industries, continue to grow at unprecedented rates.
- 1.13 The scale of the employment and skills challenge creates a pressing need for us to respond in a joined up and practical way across the borough, including with our partners in the further and high education sectors, with major employers such as the NHS and Brent Cross, as well as the voluntary and community sector.
- 1.14 As we start to emerge from the pandemic, officers are working to ensure that all Barnet residents are able to succeed in sustainable, good work that benefits them, their families, and the wider economy. The Barnet Work, Skills and Productivity Action Plan (see Appendix 2) has been developed with input from a range of council service areas and external partners. It outlines how we will deliver the following:
- Minimise the long-term impacts of the pandemic on workers and businesses.
  - Create the jobs of the future by supporting learning and work opportunities in our highest growing sectors.
  - Ensure that young people have the best possible foundation through targeted learning and employment opportunities.
  - Boost economic productivity and closing the skills gap by ensuring everyone has an opportunity to work, including those furthest from the labour market.
- 1.15 Going forward through 2021/22 a monthly reporting process has been established to enable the continuous monitoring of KPIs for employment and skills throughout the year. The Shaw Trust have also committed to providing statistics each month from the Barnet Work and Health Programme (WHP). Targets have been agreed and the first set of statistics for April have been received.
- 1.16 Ingeus have been confirmed as the successful prime contractor who will deliver the government's new Restart programme in Barnet. The scheme will give Universal Credit claimants who have been out of work for at least 12 months enhanced support to find jobs in their local area. The programme is expected to launch in August and Ingeus are fully engaged with the council to develop plans for delivery in Barnet.
- 1.17 On 12th April BOOST resumed face-to-face services from Burnt Oak Library and expect to be busy over the coming weeks and months. Options for increasing their funding, including through external sources, to meet growing demand are being actively developed.
- 1.18 The old library building at Grahame Park is now fully fitted out and has received all the IT kit necessary to reopen to provide a range of support, advice, and guidance to local people. Notting Hill Genesis will confirm the date for opening shortly and it will provide Covid compliant, safe space for group training and one-to-one support.

## **Business Support**

- 1.19 As previously reported to Housing and Growth Committee, since the beginning of the pandemic, the council has undertaken a wide range of actions to support businesses, including:
- Disbursing grants of £99.6 million to local businesses across a range of schemes targeted at specific sectors and micro-businesses.
  - Offering rent relief to council tenants of commercial properties
  - Supporting business start-ups through initiatives such as Pop-Up Business School and the Entrepreneurial Barnet Competition
  - Regularly promoting and updating sources of advice and guidance for businesses through Barnet Business Buzz and other communications
  - Partnering with organisations such as the Federation of Small Businesses and West London Business to enable businesses to directly access further advice and support
  - Brokering relationships between workspace operators and developers/landlords to bring forward new flexible workspace
- 1.20 This is in addition to the support being provided to town centres aimed at activating the public realm, promoting local business and otherwise helping to drive footfall back to town centres. Consultants are also being procured to deliver a package of support for businesses in West Hendon Broadway and Burnt Oak, including marketing, digital skills, improving shop fronts.
- 1.21 Since the previous update to Committee, further activities have included:
- Continued promotion of the government's Kickstart programme to Barnet businesses to enable them to benefit from additional employees.
  - Commencement of a series of webinars to enable businesses to access professional and technical support as they start to recover from the pandemic; the first of these was held in May 2021 and focused on the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Sector.
  - Progressing support for the delivery of new flexible workspace in the borough, through a feasibility study focused on the old Cricklewood Station Building.
  - On-going partnership working with key organisations such as the Federation of Small Businesses, North London Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise, Barnet and Southgate College and Middlesex University.
- 1.22 In addition, officers have continued to develop a package of targeted support for retailers in town centres including a 'Welcome Back' pack providing a variety of resources.

## **Town Centres**

- 1.23 The Growth Directorate is working closely with colleagues across a range of services – notably Communications, Highways, Licensing and Enforcement – to progress town centre recovery plans, as well as engaging directly with businesses, Town Teams and other stakeholders. Key recovery updates in Town Centres include:
- *West Hendon Broadway*: planning is underway to deliver light touch improvements to local shopfronts and areas of the public realm, alongside a wider package of Business Support to help the high street. A local Business Audit has been conducted with Enforcement and Community Safety colleagues to identify long-standing issues with businesses not complying with regulations. Planning permission has been granted to

erect a new mural on a derelict building on the Broadway to reduce the blight this causes.

- *Burnt Oak*: planning underway for shopfront and urban design improvement project, as identified in the Town Centre Strategy. As above, local Business Audit conducted with Enforcement and Community Safety colleagues to identify issues with businesses not complying with regulations. Additional activities commenced to install murals and artworks and to improve graphic identity across the town centre. A council-wide stakeholder partnership group has been developed to integrate activities across the town centre.
- *Edgware*: Planning is on-going with the new Edgware Partnership Board established with Ballymore, Transport for London and local business stakeholders to drive town centre revitalisation. A draft programme of activities has been developed and will be shared with ward members, local businesses and others.
- *Chipping Barnet*: Community Plan being recommended for adoption – see separate Committee report.
- *North Finchley*: Final stages of legal agreements underway to agree terms with Regal London/Joseph Partners. Engagement Strategy in development including proposals for launch of North Finchley Partnership Board.
- *Finchley Central*: Design work is progressing on Finchley Square with ward member and community engagement on-going. Remains on target for start on site early 2022. Team has appointed a Cultural Coordinator to support the activation of the existing space and new square.
- *Golders Green*: Scoping commenced on project to bring forward town centre public realm improvements. This will be accompanied by short-term initiatives to improve wayfinding and graphic identity, as identified within the Golders Green Town Centre Strategy.

1.24 In addition to the above, for all town centres planning is well underway for the safe re-opening of town centres in line with the timetable set out by the government. Activities include a programme of festivals and events across town centres and parks, an expanded Discover Barnet campaign, a new shop front competition and further activities to support al fresco dining where appropriate.

### **Digital access and inclusion**

1.25 The partnership with Community Fibre continues and to date has seen build completed and service switched on for several estates within Colindale, Burnt Oak and Hendon wards. Approximately 2,000 Barnet homes properties have been connected since the Committee approved the borough wayleave programme in September 2020. Approvals for further estates in these areas and within West Hendon, Childs Hill and Golders Green are ongoing to unlock delivery plans for May-Jul 2021. Opportunities to speed up rollout plans and kickstart the programme of delivery to single dwelling units are also underway.

1.26 Partnership proposals with other network operators are also being progressed, and these are expected to enhance the scale of investment across the wider rollout programme as well as unlocking greater potential for investment in non-council housing stock. Alongside

this, work with the West London Alliance continues to extend engagement across various aspects of the telecoms sector to include mobile networks, small cells providers, and projects related to 5G ‘use cases’; collectively this programme covers digital access and inclusion matters.

- 1.27 On the back of the Gigabit Broadband Programme, the council is developing tools and resources to provide a coordinating function for Digital Inclusion. Mapping of services and projects has been undertaken to build upon the ways support is already being delivered to communities, including programmes such as ‘Make It Click’ run by BOOST. A project from January-March 2021 saw over 400 former council devices assessed for reuse, providing 240 refurbished devices to support pupils without access to devices and adults facing social isolation.
- 1.28 In terms of understanding needs, Barnet’s successful joint bid to the London Office for Technology and Innovation (LOTI) will deliver a research project to help identify households most at risk of digital exclusion. Work is also underway to reach out to schools and colleges, the Voluntary and Community Sector, and via employment and skills networks to ensure that people are aware of the resources available to support those in need.

### **Supporting Homeless Reduction**

- 1.29 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.
- 1.30 As of 12 May, Barnet accommodates 102 rough sleepers in temporary accommodation and has already successfully placed 78 rough sleepers into suitable long-term properties. A key challenge is the lack of housing options for those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). In response to the Brighton and Hove City Council court ruling Barnet is continuing to fund the accommodation costs of 46 NRPF rough sleepers whilst every attempt is being made to help them with becoming eligible for support. This includes referrals to immigration legal advice, employment support and substance misuse services.
- 1.31 Rough sleepers are eligible for vaccinations with jabs being delivered by mobile units visiting the larger blocks of temporary accommodation and at pop up clinics located at Homeless Action in Barnet. Homeless Action in Barnet have agreed to provide support to a 43-unit block of accommodation in Golders Green which will act as second stage accommodation for rough sleepers moving on from the Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub, winter night shelter and temporary accommodation. The property should be available from 21st June and will greatly assist with moving on rough sleepers housed during “Everyone In”.

## **2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 As noted, the council is taking a comprehensive, cross-service approach to Covid-19 recovery, aligned to the Barnet Plan. 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.

- 2.3 On approval of the Growth Strategy in January 2020, Housing and Growth Committee agreed to receive an annual update on progress on delivery, as well as an annual update to the delivery plan.

### **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 Officers will continue to deliver the programme of activity set out in the Growth Strategy annual report in Appendix 1. Implementation of the Work, Skills and Productivity Action plan will also commence.
- 4.3 Officers will assess the impact of projects throughout project delivery.
- 4.4 Following Committee, officers will continue to maintain regular communication with relevant stakeholder groups – notably businesses, Members and residents – in accordance with the various programmes of work.

### **5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION**

#### **5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance**

- 5.1.1 The council's response to Covid-19 and its impacts on businesses directly support objectives in the Barnet Plan, particularly the 'Thriving' workstream, as well as objectives set out in the Growth Strategy 2020-30 and the Long-Term Transport Strategy.

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

- 5.2.1 Where there are financial implications or decisions associated with recovery activities, these will be addressed on a case-by-case basis, as will any funding decisions associated with projects outlined in the Growth Strategy annual report and future employment and skills activities.

5.2.2 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.

5.2.3 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.

### 5.3 **Social Value**

5.3.1 The council must take into account the requirements of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 to consider how what is to be procured might improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area and how it might act to secure such improvement in conducting procurement. Social value is a core part of the Recovery Framework and will be maximised throughout.

### 5.4 **Legal and Constitutional References**

5.4.1 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.

5.4.2 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.

### 5.5 **Risk Management**

5.5.1 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.

5.5.2 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.

## **5.6 Equalities and Diversity**

- 5.6.1 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.
- 5.6.2 Relevant protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.
- 5.6.3 The Barnet Plan, the council's Recovery Framework and the Growth Strategy are intended to benefit all communities and groups who live, work and visit the borough, including those with protected characteristics.
- 5.6.4 An Equalities Impact Assessment and Health Impact Assessment was undertaken on the Growth Strategy, and the outcomes of these were summarised in the report to Housing and Growth Committee seeking approval of the Strategy.
- 5.6.5 Where individual decisions are required in relation to the recovery programme or Growth Strategy Delivery Plan, 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.

## **5.7 Corporate Parenting**

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

## **5.8 Consultation and Engagement**

- 5.8.1 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 other levels of government, partners, service users and the wider community is critical to ensuring that our recovery activities are focused on the end user.
- 5.8.2 Meaningful stakeholder engagement remains a key part of project development. Consultation and engagement plans will be prepared for all new housing, regeneration and development projects where required. Any new schemes brought forward in 2021/22 will be subject to consultation where legally required or where the council considers it appropriate.

## 5.9 Insight

- 5.9.1 In recent months, the council has significantly improved the way in which it uses data, insight and analysis to drive decision making and service delivery. A new cross-cutting data insight team has been established which is now working closely with Growth colleagues as well as others across the organisation.
- 5.10 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 Growth Strategy (Housing and Growth Committee, 27 January 2020):  
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s52934/Growth%20Strategy.pdf>
- 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>
- 6.9 Housing and Growth Committee, 25 November 2020, Item 17, COVID-19: Recovery Plan  
– Thriving  
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=696&MId=10227&Ver=4>
- 6.10 Housing and Growth Committee, 25 January 2021, item 9, Recovery Plan,  
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=696&MId=10228&Ver=4>