



## Housing and Growth Committee 16th November 2021

<b>Title</b>	<b>Business Planning 2022-26</b>
<b>Report of</b>	Chairman of the Housing and Growth Committee
<b>Wards</b>	All
<b>Status</b>	Public
<b>Urgent</b>	No
<b>Key</b>	Yes
<b>Enclosures</b>	Appendix A – Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Savings and Pressures Proposals for Committee Appendix B – Fees & Charges April 2021
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### Summary

A Business Planning Report was received by Policy and Resources Committee on 30 September 2021 outlining the council's updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2025/26 and the future financial challenges facing the council.

Theme Committees are requested to consider their response to this challenge, by considering savings proposals to secure a balanced council budget (the same process as used in previous years).

Work is ongoing to identify the impacts, both pandemic and non-pandemic related, across the planning period. Given the high level of uncertainty in the MTF period, particularly regarding 2022/23, 3 scenarios have been modelled. The central scenario estimates an overall budget gap of £16.2m, which may be reduced by £13.3m to £2.9m if all proposed savings are agreed.

This report asks the Committee to agree to the revenue savings and pressures proposals attached and to note the service pressures identified; and approve the Fees and Charges.

The outcomes of all Theme Committee discussions will go forward as recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee in December 2021.

## **Officers Recommendations**

**That the Housing and Growth Committee consider and approve the savings and pressures proposals that relate to the committee as set out in Appendix A after having considered the initial equalities impacts and refer these recommendations on to Policy and Resources Committee.**

**That the Committee approve the proposed fees and charges for 2022/23 set out in Appendix B that will be included in the budget proposals submitted to Policy and Resources Committee for consideration and recommendation to Full Council.**

### **1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED**

- 1.1 This report is required as part of the council's annual business planning process, to discuss and approve priorities for the Housing and Growth Committee for 2022/23 and 2023/24 to 2025/26.
- 1.2 The Committee's approval is requested for:
  - 1.2.1 Savings and pressures proposals within its authority so they can then be recommended to Policy and Resources (P&R) Committee to support the setting of a balanced budget for 2022/23.
  - 1.2.2 Proposed Fees and Charges which will be included in the budget proposals submitted to Policy and Resources Committee.

## **2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT**

### **2.1 Background to 2022/23 Business Planning**

2.1.1 The council has a statutory duty to set a balanced budget for the coming financial year and uses the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to estimate the budget position for the following three years. Savings proposals for future years are identified and proposed to Committee. Savings proposals for all years are proposed through Theme committees, recommended to P&R Committee, and then on to Full Council in March to be approved.

2.1.2 Between 2010/11 to 2020/21, the council successfully identified savings averaging £17m per year.

### **2.2 Approach to MTFS 2022-26**

2.2.1 In June 2021, P&R Committee were presented with an update on the impacts of Covid and an introduction to the 2022/23 to 2025/26 MTFS process. This set out that current resources were not expected to grow significantly from 2021/22 to 2022/23. Service areas were therefore asked to prepare budgets for 2022/23 within a nominal 'cash limit', set at the level of the budget in 2021/22.

2.2.2 A more detailed update on the MTFS was presented to September P&R committee which highlighted the level of uncertainty being faced in the short term. This uncertainty is being driven by 3 factors – the level of service pressures, and whether they are short term or of longer duration; the level of government grant funding to be received; and whether there will be scope for a social care precept (SCP) in 2022/23.

2.2.3 Considering these variables highlighted that each of them could have considerable impact (a 2% SCP would yield c£4m; service pressures were initially estimated at £15m; and changes to government grant, estimated at a loss of £2m per year, could be a loss or a gain of twice that). Accordingly, 3 scenarios were presented to September P&R committee, illustrating how these variables could lead to quite different outcomes, but also emphasising that the central scenario or base case was regarded as more likely and that it was preferred as a basis of planning. This central scenario is summarised below.

2.2.4 It is anticipated that a combination of government announcements, local political decisions, and the further development of service financial plans will reduce the overall level of uncertainty substantially by March 2022 when the budget is set.

### **2.3 MTFS September Summary – 'Base case'**

2.3.1 As at September, the estimated budget gap between 2022/23 to 2025/26 is £73.386m. Taking this revised budget gap with proposed savings to date, the shortfall across the MTFs period is reduced to £54.897m. Considering 2022/23 in isolation, the estimated funding gap is £16.233m, which reduces to £2.895m if all proposed savings are retained and approved.

2021/22		2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
£m	<u>MTFS Summary - Base Scenario</u>	£m	£m	£m	£m
333.101	<b>Expenditure</b>	342.102	369.561	394.431	418.983
(333.101)	<b>Resources</b>	(325.869)	(329.121)	(337.888)	(345.597)
(0.000)	<b>Cumulative (Surplus)/Shortfall to Balanced Budget</b>	16.233	40.441	56.543	73.386
0.000	Funding from Earmarked Reserves (under review)	(0.519)	0.000	0.000	0.000
(0.000)	<b>Net Cumulative (Surplus)/Shortfall to Balanced Budget</b>	15.714	40.441	56.543	73.386
	Savings / Efficiencies Proposed to Date	(12.819)	(14.867)	(18.106)	(18.489)
0.000	<b>Gap to Balanced Budget excl undertain items</b>	2.895	25.574	38.437	54.897

## 2.4 Committee Context

2.4.1 In January 2020, Housing and Growth Committee approved the council's Growth Strategy which responds to expected economic, social and environmental trends to 2030, including a significantly growing and aging local population, changes in the employment market and how we work, how we use our high streets, as well as environmental concerns. It recognises that more people will be working flexibly, and many will live in town centres with easier access to transport, shops, services, and leisure facilities.

2.4.2 The Growth Strategy sets out to address three key principles:

- Shape changes to places to secure healthy, resilient and cohesive communities; including focusing resources on the people and places identified as most in need of support and investment.
- Ensure sustainable development increases housing supply, invests in our local economy, and delivers infrastructure to address the needs of a changing population; including homes people can afford.
- Capitalise on development to ensure the benefits of growth are maximised for our residents, while helping the council to meet its savings targets.

2.4.3 While aligning with the council's Corporate Plan, the Growth Strategy, the Housing Strategy and the Homelessness Strategy work together to define the priorities in relation to housing, growth, development and regeneration.

2.4.4 On 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021, Policy and Resources Committee approved the Barnet Plan, which identified the four key priorities for the council over the next four years:

- 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.

2.4.5 The Thriving workstream is the key focus for Housing and Growth Committee, which looks at:

- 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;
- Supporting homelessness reduction

## 2.5 In year (2021/22) Management

2.5.1 The financial position for the current year continues to be marked by uncertainty over the outlook for costs and revenues as the impact of Covid-19 continues to evolve. It remains challenging to separate the short-term financial impacts of the pandemic from the longer-term impacts.

2.5.2 It is anticipated that the coming months will provide greater clarity on the financial outlook for this year and future years, in terms of both expected spending patterns and available resources.

2.5.3 Of the savings taken from the 2021/22 (current year) base budgets, the below are unachievable. These will either be mitigated in future years by future growth or cause a one-off undeliverable saving.

Description of saving	Total Saving 2021/22 £'000	Unachievable 2021/22 £'000	Ongoing Pressure	Comment
An additional 300 affordable homes acquired in Greater London through a lease and sale back model funded privately and ownership shall revert back to the council at lease expiry. Properties would be let with rents set at Local Housing Allowance rates. Provision of this affordable supply would result in increased temporary accommodation cost avoidance.	331	331	Y	This proposal did not go ahead due to the risks attached with any sale and leaseback deal and will remain an ongoing budget pressure.
Additional income from the existing commercial portfolio, including new lettings and rent reviews	90	14	N	Savings fully deliverable in 22/23

Income received from renting floor space in Colindale Office	75	20	N	Part Year benefit, fully deliverable in 22/23
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## 2.6 Theme Committee Savings

2.6.1 Service areas were asked to prepare budgets for 2022/23 within a nominal 'cash limit', set at the level of the budget in 2021/22. Theme Committees have been asked to set out savings proposals to contribute to the council's overall savings requirement and offset suggested pressures. Appendix A shows proposed savings for Housing and Growth Committee for 22/23 to 25/26.

2.6.2 Total Savings Proposed over the MTFs period are £2.878m (£0.720m 22/23, £0.530m 23/24, £1.345m 24/25 and £0.283m 25/26). Further income generation proposed totals £0.496m (£0.241m 22/23, £0.101m 23/24, £0.140m 24/25 and £0.014m 25/26). They can be broadly summarised as follows:

2.6.3 **Growth and income.** Additional income will be generated by renting out space in existing buildings on formal leases and on an ad-hoc room hire basis. This includes the letting of floor space in the Colindale officer and prospective ground-floor Café. Further additional income may be generated through rent reviews. The main risks to deliverability is around changing market conditions, especially considering commercial office space.

2.6.4 **New housing development.** The council's housing delivery targets will substantially grow the Council Tax base if delivery is realised in a timely manner. The delivery of new affordable homes by Barnet Homes and Opendoor Homes will result in increased temporary accommodation cost avoidance and other revenue income from dividend payments as properties reach completion. The main risks to the deliverability of the savings proposals for 2022/23, relate to delays on site due to Covid-19 health and safety requirements in lieu of another winter lockdown, and the potential on-going impact of Brexit on the supply chain.

2.6.5 Appendix A also lists all on-going pressures over the four financial years of the MTFs. The pressures are for noting at this committee. The total on-going pressure over the period totals £0.921m (£0.713m 22/23, £0.081m 23/24, £0.061m 24/25 and £0.066m 25/26).

2.6.6 The one-off pressures are funded by general reserve draw downs, and total £0.547m in 22/23 and £0.292m in 23/24.

## 2.7 Risks

2.7.1 This report should also highlight that the above savings and pressures are proposed against a back-drop of on-going risks. These include:

- The expectation that Temporary Accommodation and Homelessness demand will increase, now the evictions ban in England and Wales was

lifted on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2021. The adverse impact on Local Authority homelessness demand is not yet clear, and this will continue to be reviewed.

- The long-term impact on local businesses across the borough due to the pandemic, is not yet known. This is being monitored regularly across the council to ensure the stability of economic development, and the recovery of our high streets and Town centres.

## **2.8 Fees & Charges**

2.8.1 Fees and charges are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the costs of chargeable services are covered, and the council is achieving value for money. Any increases in the fees and charges must be in line with the rate of inflation (generally around 2% per annum).

2.8.2 Revised financial regulations approved in October 2021 require all changes to fees and charges to be included in the budget proposals submitted by theme Committees to the Policy & Resources Committee. The budget recommended by Policy and Resources Committee to Full Council will incorporate the latest projection of income from fees and charges. Full Council will approve all fees and charges as part of the budget report in March 2022.

2.8.3 All fees and charges that fall under the remit of this committee are listed in Appendix B.

### **HRA leaseholder services**

2.8.4 There are changes to fees and charges relating to HRA leaseholder services this year as set out in Appendix B.

### **Hendon Town Hall / Colindale office**

2.8.5 There are no changes to fees and charges in relation to Hendon Town Hall and Colindale office this year.

### **Land Charges**

2.8.6 The Land Charges fees and charges have been increased by 2%.

### **Strategic Planning and Regeneration**

2.8.7 The fees and charges in relation to Strategic Planning and Regeneration have been increased by 2%.

### **Private Sector Housing**

2.8.8 There are changes to fees and charges relating to Private Sector housing this year as set out in Appendix B.

## **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 Local Government continues to face significant reductions in funding and increased demand for services, as set out in the above context. These

challenges require longer term, robust financial and strategic planning and the recommendations in this report support this.

- 3.2 By law, the council is required to set a balanced budget. These proposals are the best way of doing that by meeting financial requirement and delivering outcomes and ambitions for Barnet.

#### **4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED**

- 4.1 The alternative option is not to propose these MTFs savings and changes to fees and charges. This, however, is not considered to be good practice and may expose the council to the risk of not achieving savings targets or being able to set a balanced budget, and under recovery on costs of providing services. There is a statutory requirement to set a balanced budget and submit budget returns to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

#### **5. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION**

- 5.1 If the Housing & Growth Committee approves the recommendations made by this report, then the savings proposals and Fees and Charges will be referred to Policy and Resources Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021 as part of the council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Public consultation on the MTFS will commence in December.

#### **6. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION**

##### **6.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance**

- 6.1.1 This report supports the council's corporate priorities as expressed through the Corporate Plan for 2019-24 which sets out our vision and strategy for the next 5 years. This includes the **outcomes** we want to achieve for the borough, the **priorities** we will focus limited resources on, and our **approach** for how we will deliver this.

- 6.1.2 Our 3 outcomes for the borough focus on place, people and communities:
- 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

- 6.1.3 The approach for delivering on this is underpinned by four strands; ensuring residents get a fair deal, maximising on opportunities, sharing responsibilities with the community and partners, and working effectively and efficiently.

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



6.2.1 The Housing & Growth Committee savings programme will enable the council to meet its savings target as set out in the MTF5. These budgets will be formally agreed each year, and individual proposals will be subject to appropriate consultation and equality impact assessments where necessary. For this reason, the proposals are subject to change.

### 6.3 Social Value

6.3.1 None are applicable to this report; however 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. The Barnet living wage is an example of where the council has considered its social value powers.

### 6.4 Legal and Constitutional References

6.4.1 Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 states that: “without prejudice to section 111, every local authority shall make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and shall secure that one of their officers has responsibility for the administration of those affairs”. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, relates to the subsidiary powers of local authorities.

6.4.1.1 Local authorities owe a fiduciary duty to council taxpayers, which means it must consider the prudent use of resources, including control of expenditure, financial prudence in the short and long term, the need to strike a fair balance between the interests of council tax payers and ratepayers and the community’s interest in adequate and efficient services and the need to act in good faith in relation to compliance with statutory duties and exercising statutory powers.

6.4.1.2 Local authorities have a variety of powers to charge for specific statutory services set out in statute. The Local Government Act 2003 also provides a power to trade and a power to charge for discretionary services, the latter on a costs recovery basis. Discretionary services are those that a local authority is permitted to provide under statute but is not obliged to do so. The power to charge for discretionary services is not available to local authorities if there is a statutory duty to provide the service or if there is a specific power to charge for it or if there is a prohibition on charging for the service.

6.4.1.3 Additionally the Localism Act 2011 provides local authorities with a general power of competence that confers on them the power to charge for services but again subject to conditions/limitations similar to those noted above.

6.4.1.4 Where authorities have a duty to provide a statutory service free of charge to a certain standard, no charge can be made for delivery to that

standard, however delivery beyond that point may constitute a discretionary service for which a charge could be made.

6.4.1.5 There is a variety of legislation permitting charging for different services, some of which sets prescribed fees and charges (or the range of charges for a given service), and others which allow a discretion to determine the charge based on recovering the costs of providing the service.

6.4.1.6 The savings proposals are to be referred to Policy and Resources Committee. They will then be subject to consultation and a cumulative equality impact assessment before being referred on to Council so that Council may set the Council Tax, being mindful of any equality impacts and consultation responses.

6.4.1.7 The Council's Constitution (Article 7, Article 7 – Committees, Forums, Working Groups and Partnerships) sets out the responsibilities of all council Committees. The responsibilities of the Housing and Growth Committee include:

(1) *Responsibility for:*

- *housing matters including housing 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.*

(2) *To submit to the Policy and Resources Committee proposals relating to the Committee's budget (including fees and charges) for the following year in accordance with the budget timetable.*

(3) *To make recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee on issues relating to the budget for the Committee, including virements or underspends and overspends on the budget. No decisions which result in amendments to the agreed budget may be made by the Committee unless and until the amendment has been agreed by Policy and Resources Committee*

(4) *To receive reports on relevant performance information (excluding The Barnet Group Ltd (Barnet Homes) performance) and risk on the services under the remit of the Committee.*

6.4.2 A link to the council's Financial Regulations can be found at (see section 2.3.6): [4 \(moderngov.co.uk\)](http://moderngov.co.uk), in which the following is stated:

6.4.3 - *Changes to fees and charges should be included in the budget proposals submitted by theme Committees or the relevant committee as part of the budget setting process. Theme Committees and other committees refer all fees and charges to the Policy and Resources Committee. The Policy and Resources Committee reviews all fees and charges which then form part of the budget that*

*is subject to public consultation. Subject to public consultation outcomes, the Policy and Resources Committee recommends all fees and charges to Full Council for approval as part of the council's overall budget.*

- 6.4.4 Some of the proposals, relate to savings resulting from operational decisions being made in a different way and are therefore estimated savings. The saving is therefore an indicative saving and its deliverability will be dependent on a number of factors. As part of the budget setting process, Policy and Resources Committee will consider the need for an appropriate contingency to cover any savings that are indicative and may not be met due to operational decisions. Some of the proposals in the MTFs relate to proposals that are at a very early stage. These proposals will be subject to further business planning and decision making to test whether they can be delivered and what the impact of such a proposal will be. These proposals will be considered in further detail during future business planning reports.
- 6.4.5 All proposals emerging from the business planning process will need to be considered in terms of the council's legal powers and obligations (including, specifically, the public-sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010).

## **6.5 Risk Management**

- 6.5.1 The Council has taken steps to improve its risk management processes by integrating the management of financial and other risks facing the organisation. The allocation of an amount to contingency is a step to mitigate the pressures that had yet to be quantified during the budget setting process.
- 6.5.2 The allocation of budgets from contingency seeks to mitigate financial risks which have materialised.

## **6.6 Equalities and Diversity**

- 6.6.1 Equality and diversity issues are a mandatory consideration in the decision making of the council.
- 6.6.2 Decision makers should have due regard to the public sector equality duty in making their decisions. The Equality Act 2010 and the Public-Sector Equality Duty require elected Members to satisfy themselves that equality considerations are integrated into day-to-day business and that all proposals emerging from the business planning process have taken into consideration the impact, if any, on any protected group and what mitigating factors can be put in place. The equalities duties are continuing duties they are not duties to secure a particular outcome. The statutory grounds of the public sector equality duty are found at section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and are as follows:
- 6.6.3 A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

6.6.4 Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

6.6.5 The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

6.6.6 Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

- Tackle prejudice, and
- Promote understanding.

6.6.7 Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others; but that is not to be taken as permitting conduct that would otherwise be prohibited by or under this Act. The relevant protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race,
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and Civil partnership

6.6.8 This is set out in the council's Equalities Policy together with our strategic Equalities Objective - as set out in the Corporate Plan - that citizens will be treated equally with understanding and respect; have equal opportunities and receive quality services provided to best value principles.

6.6.9 Progress against the performance measures we use is published on our website at:

- 6.6.10 Where there are changes to service delivery or changes to staff, these will impact on individuals in different ways. However, at each stage of the process, the council will conduct an equalities impact assessment (EIA) where appropriate to ensure that where persons are impacted, proper measures are considered to mitigate the effect as far as possible. The savings proposed are not anticipated to have an impact on service delivery or customer satisfaction. Where necessary, proposals will not be implemented or agreed until members have fully considered the equality impacts and responses to any consultation.
- 6.6.11 The revenue savings sheet shown in Appendix A shows where an equalities impact assessment has been carried out/considered for the savings proposals.
- 6.6.12 All human resources implications will be managed in accordance with the Council's Managing Organisational Change policy, which supports the Council's Human Resources Strategy and meets statutory equalities duties and current employment legislation.
- 6.6.13 The proposed fees and charges have been reviewed against the protected characteristics and it is considered that there will not be any specific adverse impact on any of the groups.
- 6.6.14 It is considered that HMO licensing and housing enforcement action requiring the improvement of accommodation has an overall positive impact for landlords, tenants, residents and businesses by virtue of the potential improvement to the quality and management of accommodation in the borough.
- 6.6.15 In addition, there are potential benefits arising from the increased choice of high quality, well-managed affordable housing.

## **6.7 Corporate Parenting**

- 6.7.1 In line with Children and Social Work Act 2017, the council has a duty to consider Corporate Parenting Principles in decision-making across the council. The outcomes and priorities in the refreshed Corporate Plan, Barnet 2024, reflect the council's commitment to the Corporate Parenting duty to ensure the most vulnerable are protected and the needs of children are considered in everything that the council does. To this end, great attention has been paid to the needs of children in care and care leavers when approaching business planning, to ensure decisions are made through the lens of what a reasonable parent would do for their own child.
- 6.7.2 The Council, in setting its budget, has considered the Corporate Parenting Principles both in terms of savings and investment proposals. The Council proposals have sought to protect front-line social work and services to children in care and care leavers and in some cases, has invested in them.

## 6.8 Consultation and Engagement

6.8.1 As a matter of public law, the duty to consult with regards to proposals to vary, reduce or withdraw services will arise in four circumstances:

- where there is a statutory requirement in the relevant legislative framework
- where the practice has been to consult, or, where a policy document states the council will consult, then the council must comply with its own practice or policy
- exceptionally, where the matter is so important that there is a legitimate expectation of consultation

Where consultation is required to complete an equalities impact assessment.

6.8.2 Regardless of whether the council has a duty to consult, if it chooses to consult, such consultation must be carried out fairly. In general, a consultation can only be considered as proper consultation if:

- comments are genuinely invited at the formative stage
- the consultation documents include sufficient reasons for the proposal to allow those being consulted to be properly informed and to give an informed response
- there is adequate time given to the consultees to consider the proposals
- there is a mechanism for feeding back the comments and those comments are considered by the decision-maker / decision-making body when making a final decision
- the degree of specificity with which, in fairness, the public authority should conduct its consultation exercise may be influenced by the identity of those whom it is consulting
- where relevant and appropriate, the consultation is clear on the reasons why and extent to which alternatives and discarded options have been discarded. The more intrusive the decision, the more likely it is to attract a higher level of procedural fairness.

6.8.3 The council will perform a budget consultation during December 2021 through to January 2022. This consultation will cover any proposals to increase council tax together with seeking views on the council's budget overall.

6.8.4 In terms of service specific consultations, the council has a duty to consult with residents and service users in a number of different situations including proposals to significantly vary, reduce or withdraw services. Consultation is also needed in other circumstances, for example to identify the impact of proposals or to assist with complying with the council's equality duties. Service specific consultations will take place where necessary in line with timescales for any changes to be implemented.

6.8.5 If when council sets the budget envelope some service specific consultations have not been completed, then Council will allow a contingency so that decision makers may make alternative decisions should there be undesirable equalities impacts.

6.8.6 Where appropriate, separate service specific consultations have already taken place for the 2022/23 savings and a link to the report presenting findings of the consultation is provided within the MTFS spreadsheet (Appendix A). For savings in relation to specific development schemes, consultation will be brought forward as an integral part of the development programme. Fees and Charges will be referred to Policy and Resources Committee. Policy and Resources Committee reviews all fees and charges which then form part of the budget that is subject to public consultation between December 2021 and January 2022. Subject to public consultation outcomes, the Policy and Resources Committee recommends all fees and charges to Full Council for approval as part of the council's overall budget.

## 6.9 **Insight**

6.9.1 None in the context of this report

## 7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1 Updates to the Growth Strategy Annual Update - [Appendix 1 Growth Strategy annual update.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

7.2 Barnet Plan Policy and Resources Committee 8<sup>th</sup> February [Appendix A - Barnet Plan.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

7.3 COVID-19: Recovery Plan – Thriving Update Housing and Growth Committee, September 2021 [A4 Letterhead \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

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