



Policy & Resources Committee 13 December 2022

Title	Progress on Development of the Council's Priorities
Report of	Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee
Wards	All
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Key	Non-key
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Summary

In September 2022, this Committee considered a report on our progress on implementing the council's key priorities and agreed the broad outline of a new corporate plan. This report provides a further update, in particular on the actions taken to establish a transformation programme to deliver the key priorities.

Officers Recommendations

1. That the Committee note the progress of the council implementing the key priorities and the actions taken to establish a transformation programme to deliver the key priorities to date

1. Why this report is needed

- 1.1 In September 2022, the Policy and Resources Committee agreed an approach for the new corporate plan, including the emerging vision for Barnet to be a council that ‘cares for people, our places and the planet’, based on a foundation of being an engaged and effective council. Central to this vision is the principle that we welcome residents, community groups, businesses, and other stakeholders, as active partners, rather than consumers that the council transacts with. This also commits us to becoming one of London’s most sustainable boroughs and a borough with thriving town centres that is a fun place to visit.
- 1.2 In developing the corporate plan, the council recognises that we will need to transform how we work – with residents and within the organisation. This report provides an update on the actions that the council is taking to begin that transformation and progress on the development of the corporate plan.
- 1.3 **Development of the Corporate Plan**
- 1.4 Committee agreed in September that the new corporate plan will be built around the emerging vision for Barnet to be a council that ‘cares for people, our places and the planet’ and a council that is engaged and effective, and that it should be developed along the following principles:



- 1.5 The Corporate Plan will bring together a vision for how the council operates along these principles and for how we will make a positive difference for people, our places and the planet. In setting this out, the Plan is about the transformation programme, as set out in this report, but it is also about building on existing service delivery. The council’s aspiration is for Barnet to be a borough where people have access to opportunities and quality services, at the right time and based on their needs. Key to this is delivery of efficient, high quality and best value universal, targeted and specialist services, especially for our most vulnerable children, young people and adults. It is about our Borough as a place to live well, work, visit and have fun; with well-maintained and clean streets, thriving town centres and high streets, and with estate regeneration and sustainable housing delivery in the right places to meet diverse needs. We know that most residents like living in Barnet, that it is family friendly place and a place where communities get on well together. Across everything that we do, as we develop our Corporate Plan, we are setting out how we will

continue to develop and improve our services across the council for the benefit of residents.

1.6 To support the development of the plan the council has appointed consultants to undertake a number of workshops with Members, residents, staff, members of the Barnet Partnership Board and representatives of the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector. The workshops have tested reactions to the themes above and considered matters like “what Barnet means to me” and “my hopes for Barnet’s future”. We will be feeding insights from the workshops into the development of both the corporate plan and the transformation programme.

1.7 We expect to bring a draft of the corporate plan and transformation strategy for approval to the February meeting of this committee. This will be followed by a final draft to Council on the 8th of March.

1.8 **Delivering Council Priorities**

1.9 Whilst this report focuses primarily on the council’s change programme, this is in the context of our on-going priorities of ensuring that effective, high-quality services are delivered for the people of Barnet, which are family friendly, and support disabled and older adults. Performance against these continuing priorities is reported to Theme Committees, but by way of example, over the last six months we have:

- Been awarded White Ribbon status for our work on engaging men and boys to end violence against women and girls
- Supported 74% of eligible two-year-olds in taking up free childcare – our best figure ever
- Been ranked fourth best in the country for schools graded “good” or better with only two schools graded “requires improvement” across Barnet
- Achieved a “good” rating from HM Inspectorate of Probation for the Youth Offending service in Barnet
- Rolled out the pan-Barnet multi-disciplinary health and care team for older people and those with dementia living in Barnet
- Secured funding of £180,670 from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities for four Changing Places Toilets
- Delivered a brand-new playground at Brook Farm Open Space and a new outdoor gym at Victoria Recreation Ground
- Been recognised as “Working to Become Dementia Friendly” by the Alzheimer’s Society and have over 10,000 residents and staff across the borough trained as Dementia Friends. We have also secured dementia friendly accreditation for Barnet Copthall Leisure Centre – the first accredited leisure centre in the Borough to join the growing list of locally accredited venues
- Secured GLA funding for two School Superzones to be implemented around Edgware Primary School and Saracens School
- Secured approval from the Environment Agency for the business case to deliver the £6m Silk Stream Flood Resilience programme in partnership with LB Harrow
- Reached a figure of almost 100 schools that have achieved School Stars accredited travel plans – one of the highest levels in London

- Provided a brand new, purpose-built space for Barnet Homes' Housing Options service
- Secured circa. £1.5M grant funding from the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) to support the implementation of fast charge electric vehicle charging points in town centres
- Supported over 400 Barnet residents into jobs, through the BOOST Employment and Financial support service

1.10 Progress continues to be made on implementing the council's priorities that form part of the transformation agenda. We have:

Published a new Community Participation Strategy

1.11 Based around five principles of: we go where people are; we learn through doing; we listen; we are transparent, accessible, and open; and we value community power, the Community Participation Strategy (CPS) sets out a new vision for how we will achieve a step change in resident and community engagement.

1.12 In the CPS the council has identified a number of 'pathfinder projects', where the council will explicitly test the above principles. This includes the development of a culture strategy which will be coproduced with residents and will, we hope, form both the basis of a bid for Borough of Culture and be first steps on the journey to becoming a borough of fun. Further details can be found at [Culture Strategy 2023 – 2028 engagement | Engage Barnet](https://engage.barnet.gov.uk/culture-strategy)¹. In celebrating and valuing our communities, the council has also supported and enabled community groups to deliver a significant programme of events for Black History Month and are funding a winter festival programme. The council continues to build a community events programme, including a funding framework to support delivery. We expect to report this to Community Leadership and Libraries Committee in January.

Implemented a Cost-of-Living support framework

1.13 In September, this Committee agreed a package of measures to increase support for residents in response to the cost-of-living crisis. Following on the approvals, the council have launched the £2m Residents Support Fund (RSF). Streamlined application process encompassing the RSF, Discretionary Housing Payments and Council Tax Discretionary Relief funds to ensure correct allocation of awards and enable income maximisation for residents is also in place. The focus of the team remains on ensuring people coming forward are maximising pension credits and benefits they are eligible for. The council has also launched the Community Response Fund (applications closed 20 Nov with 68 applications being reviewed) and the Community Innovation Fund (applications close 30 Nov) and provided targeted support via the Household Support Fund, by supplying 1 week's food voucher support to 14,656 children in schools, and a further 546 in Early Years settings. The council continues to work in partnership with Citizens Advice Bureau and BOOST to support people out of debt and into work.

1.14 Taking a community-led approach, the council has launched our warm spaces scheme with phase 1 reaching out to local organisations who would like to participate. Across the Borough there are over 25 warm spaces including libraries, AgeUK centres and other community centres which can be accessed. For those attending

¹ <https://engage.barnet.gov.uk/culture-strategy>

these warm spaces regularly, the team is liaising with colleagues across the council to ensure any targeted interventions (e.g. mental health support) are put into place. Finally, to make residents aware of the support available the council has launched Phase 1 of our communications strategy, which focuses on energy support, and development of Phase 2 which includes targeted support to families and adults. The communications activities generated nearly double visits to our Cost of Living online hub to last month with a total of 16,061 site visits.

Introduced Community Safety Hubs

- 1.15 Barnet Council has opened the first two Community Safety Hubs as part of a range of new measures to further increase the feeling of safety and to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in the borough. First 'pathfinder' hubs launched on 27th October in Edgware, with the second hub launched on Tuesday 1st November in West Hendon. A further four hubs will be launched as part of the pathfinder with all six hubs up and running by April 2023. The hubs will allow residents to report anti-social behaviour and community safety issues in person to community safety officers and partners. Progress will be reported to Community Leadership and Libraries Committee 7th of February.

Established a programme of Ward Walks

- 1.16 Alongside the Community Safety Hubs, the council has also established a Ward Walk programme. The first ward walks have taken place and will be conducted twice a year in every ward in the borough. These walks will bring together Councillors, resident group representatives and council officers along with partners such as the police to view and hear about local issues that require remedial action. These issues could relate to specific areas where criminal activity is being reported or where residents have concerns about safety in relation to streetlighting or overgrown hedges and so on. Again, progress will be reported to Community Leadership and Libraries Committee 7th of February.

Introduced Community Skips

- 1.17 As [reported](#) to Environment & Climate Change Committee on 6th of September, to tackle fly tipping, the council has made it easier for residents to dispose of 'bulky' items, e.g. a sofa or fridge freezer, by introducing a community skip service. Linked to this is increased investment in our street cleansing service, which will see more frequent cleansing of residential roads. Both services were launched on 14 November 2022.

Developed plans for a Citizen's Assembly on Climate Change and Bio-diversity

- 1.18 An update was [reported](#) to the Environment & Climate Change Committee on 21 November 2022. The Citizen's Assembly on Climate Change and Biodiversity will provide a platform for a representative group of residents to contribute to actions in our Climate Action Plan. TPXimpact Ltd has been appointed to establish and deliver the Citizen's Assembly alongside council officers. Their involvement will ensure impartiality as well as facilitating the deliberative process to produce actionable outcomes. Design sessions for the process will be held in November and December. Delivery of the assembly sessions will begin in February 2023 and conclude in May 2023, with reporting and further participant engagement to follow during the summer.

Made progress on improving Resident Experience

- 1.19 The council is continuing to transform residents' experience of interacting with the council through a series of reforms, including re-instating the Colindale face-to-face customer service team, to provide support to digitally excluded residents, and introducing new software that recognises British Sign Language and 'ReciteMe' functionality to ensure residents' needs in accessing online content are better met. A series of resident and staff focus groups have taken place, to ensure improvements support the needs of our residents. This will help inform our next phase of website improvements, for example.
- 1.20 A new contact centre platform was launched in October, making it easier for residents to speak to someone when they need to. Improved functionality provides interactive menu systems, call-back facilities during busy periods, and automated text alerts. The system provides better data to help resolve queries the first time of calling and support residents in a more proactive way.
- 1.21 A design phase has commenced, which will establish better data and technology solutions to ensure residents have a single view of council services and their interactions with them and services can identify needs of residents in a more proactive and personalised manner, in a secure way.

Initiated a Governance Review

- 1.22 A project is underway to enable a change to the Council's governance system from a Committee System to a Executive (Cabinet) model arrangements. The proposal is that it is effective from May 2023. The project has workstreams that cover the following: Constitution – adoption of a new Constitution to support the new model; Staffing – review of staff arrangements; Culture – review of organisational culture; and Engagement – communicating key elements of the changes to residents, Members and officers, plus identifying additional ways that the public can engage in the democratic process.
- 1.23 As part our drive to increase transparency, the council has installed a new audio-visual system at Hendon Town Hall to enable Council and committee meetings to be webcast, with meetings being streamed live and available to watch for a 12-month period. The system is expected to go live in December 2022. Hybrid meeting functionality will be introduced at a later date.

1.24 Developing a longer-term transformation programme

- 1.25 In addition to the above, work is also well underway to define the longer-term transformation strategy and the programme of work required to deliver it. Whilst the programme as a whole will include all of the projects and activities that will be needed to deliver the council's priorities, as articulated in the Corporate Plan, the main focus will be on developing the themes set out within the engaged and effective council foundation, in order to achieve the fundamental shift in culture that is necessary to really transform how the council delivers its services, and how we engage with residents and communities in doing so.
- 1.26 The Engaged workstream will focus on the council's aspirations in respect of engaging with our communities, changing our relationship with residents, building trust with our communities and creating an on-going conversation, as well as how we

organise our services to deliver a more co-ordinated, place-based approach and provide a more effective front-door to joined-up, resident-focussed customer journeys.

- 1.27 The Effective workstream will focus more on how we operate as a council. It will encompass getting the basics right in how the council delivers services and deploys resources, from effective budgeting and governance to embedding sustainability, organisational values (Caring, Learning, Inclusive, Collaborative) and equality, diversity and inclusion in all it does.

2. Reasons for recommendations

- 2.1 The Corporate Plan and transformation programme represent a clear statement of intent. The corporate plan will set out the vision and key priorities, with the transformation programme articulating the detail on how this vision will become a reality and the delivery framework through which the council will deliver the priorities and services that residents and communities need.

3. Alternative options considered and not recommended

- 3.1 None. The Council needs to have an up-to-date plan and set of priorities to ensure that the council's aims are clear to staff and residents.

4. Post decision implementation

- 4.1 Work will continue to develop the content of both the corporate plan and transformation programme. Both of which will report to this committee in February 2023.

5. Implications of decision

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 The new corporate plan will set out the council's corporate priorities, this will include a new outcomes framework that will be developed to monitor performance.

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

- 5.2.1 There are no resource implications for this paper but in developing the corporate plan and delivery programmes resource implications will have to be considered and set out in future committee papers. The council is legally bound to set a balanced revenue budget every year. The future impact of any changes that result from the developed work programmes will need to be delivered within the envelope of the available financial resources at that point in time.

5.3 Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.3.1 The council's Constitution, Article 7 Committees, Forums, Working Groups and Partnerships, sets out the functions of the Policy and Resources Committee:

5.3.2 To be responsible for Strategic policy, finance and corporate risk management including recommending: Capital and Revenue Budget; Medium Term Financial Strategy; and Corporate Plan to Full Council.

5.3.3 The Policy and Resources Committee also has within its terms of reference 'To be responsible for those matters not specifically allocated to any other committee affecting the affairs of the Council.'

5.4 **Insight**

5.4.1 The Corporate Plan will be informed 'what works' and be driven by resident's needs. Insight and intelligence data will be used to support decision making.

5.5 **Social Value**

5.5.1 None are applicable to this report, however our duties will be considered in the development of Corporate Plan activity; 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.

5.6 **Risk Management**

5.6.1 Risk management considerations will be an integrated part of the development of the Corporate Plan, and related delivery plans. The council has existing plans in place.

5.7 **Equalities and Diversity**

5.7.1 Equality and diversity issues are a mandatory consideration in the decision-making of the council.

5.7.2 Decision makers should have due regard to the public-sector equality duty in making their decisions. The equalities duties are continuing duties they are not duties to secure a particular outcome. The equalities impact will be revisited on each of the proposals as they are developed. Consideration of the duties should precede the decision. It is important that Council has regard to the statutory grounds in the light of all available material such as consultation responses. The statutory grounds of the public-sector equality duty are found at Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and are as follows below.

5.7.3 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.

5.7.4 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.

5.7.5 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.

5.7.6 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

5.7.7 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

5.7.8 The public sector equality duty considerations are key for the development of our programme of activity as well as our Corporate Plan.

5.7.9 In our development of the priorities, we will be carrying out Equality Impact Assessments as applicable for each individual project area.

5.7.10 As outlined in this report, in development of the Corporate Plan, the focus will be on

Tackling the Gaps, our resident focused equality activity, and, in doing so, aim to embed equalities considerations into everything that the council does. We will also take protected characteristics, including seldom heard voices, into consideration in any engagement activity.

5.7.11 As a part of our Corporate Plan, the council will also note our values as a council ('caring, learning, inclusive, collaborative'), out of which 'inclusive' is focused on EDI.

5.7.12 Forthcoming reporting to P&R Committee in February 2023 will outline this further, as part of the draft Corporate Plan.

5.7.13 Related to this, our Statutory Equalities Report is reported to this committee as part of this agenda, outlining our next steps.

5.8 Corporate Parenting

5.8.1 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. This duty will be considered in the development of all priorities. This is especially relevant for children and young people activity - striving for outstanding outcomes for our children and young people will benefit care leavers.

5.9 Consultation and Engagement

5.9.1 Engagement activity on the Corporate Plan has been taking place as outlined in paragraph 1.6.

5.9.2 The council will continue to build a conversation with residents, ensuring that they are engaged with the process and outlining how residents can engage with actions within the plan (such as references to 'My Say Matters', and Adults Service User strategy, Citizens Assembly on Climate Change and so on).

5.10 Environmental Impact

5.10.1 The Corporate Plan will include the vision for 'the planet', e.g. key considerations for environment, climate and sustainability. Subsequent reporting will outline this further.

6. Background papers

6.1 None.