



Cabinet

Title	Reducing Poverty
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Report of	Councillor Anne Clarke, Cabinet Member for Community Wealth Building
Wards	All
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Urgent	No
Appendices	Appendix 1 – Sustainable Commercial strategy Appendix 2 – Reducing poverty action plan Appendix 3 – Internal workshops findings
Lead Officer	<p>Cath Shaw Deputy Chief Executive Cath.Shaw@barnet.gov.uk</p> <p>Anisa Darr Executive Director, Strategy and Resources Anisa.Darr@barnet.gov.uk</p> <p>Liz Cowie Assistant Director, Strategy, Engagement and Communications Liz.Cowie@barnet.gov.uk</p>
Officer Contact Details	<p>Renee Shingles Strategy Manager, Strategy, Engagement and Communications Renee.Shingles@barnet.gov.uk</p>

Summary

Following the launch of our Barnet Plan 2023-26, and ahead of what could be another tough winter for many, this paper outlines initial actions it will take to enable and encourage community wealth building opportunities with the aim of reducing poverty and tackling inequalities in Barnet.

Recommendations

- 1. That Cabinet approves the costs of approach and actions as outlined in 5.1 and 5.2**
- 2. The Cabinet approves the Sustainable Commercial Strategy (Appendix 1) which outlines how we can utilise our procurement to support local economy**
- 3. The Cabinet approves officers taking a phased approach to developing a community wealth programme, with work undertaken by Centre for Local Economic Strategies to inform how we can develop this programme as outlined in 1.4**
- 4. Officers will report back to Cabinet on work conducted alongside the Living Wage Foundation to become accredited, with an equalities impact assessment.**

1. Reasons for the Recommendations

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1** The last few years has seen a great deal of change in people's lives from several seismic shocks that have presented substantial challenges and some opportunities. Our role is to support people most impacted economically by these challenges, while capturing opportunities that bolster our local neighbourhoods and communities to create places where residents, their families and friends can thrive. This paper does not capture all the work we do to support our residents. It outlines our plan to leverage procurement and social value initiatives to encourage suppliers to buy local and create local jobs and investing in our people, organisations, and businesses through initiatives from digital upskilling to working with our local college and university to develop the workforce of the future and create opportunities for our residents.
- 1.1.2** A strong support network is crucial for everyone, but for some, these connections are not as readily available. The pandemic, war in Ukraine and cost-of-living crisis highlighted the role our voluntary, community, faith sector (VCFS) holds in providing this network. While council services are a crucial part of this network, specifically for some of our most vulnerable residents, we have learnt that investing in community-led initiatives provides more help to people in times of crises. Last winter our schools, care centres, libraries, foodbanks, faith, and community centres provided spaces for people to access support and meet new people. We have seen from our response to the cost-of-living crisis that residents have benefited from these organisations and spaces by reducing stigma around asking for help, accessing welfare and benefits advice, and for those who can and want work, providing training and skills.
- 1.1.3** As we work together to build a greener, healthier borough we want to make sure that we are capturing opportunity that comes from existing and growing industries, and make sure those who are most susceptible to the consequences of economic inequalities are supported and prioritised for access to these opportunities. It is not just new industries we want to capture, but ones that are at the heart of our local economy. Creative, sports and hospitality industries bring life to our high streets and green spaces, bring people together and give our borough a sense of identity. Along with bringing in jobs and

investment, we aim to create places where people can reach their full potential and feel like they belong.

1.1.4 We know we cannot do this alone, working in partnership is crucial to delivering outcomes for our communities. Therefore, taking a phased approach to developing a community wealth building programme, we will outline how we will maximise benefits for people economically excluded through our sustainable procurement strategy, social value policy, and economic development practices to encourage fair and sustainable employment opportunities, invest money back into the community and share learnings and best practice with local and neighbouring organisations on how we can work together to reduce poverty in Barnet.

1.2 Crisis support for our residents

1.3.1 This work started last year with our cost-of-living programme, by providing immediate financial support, increasing benefit uptake, streamlining our support mechanisms, and leveraging our partnerships to provide a network of support for our residents. Since the programme launched a year ago, outcomes include:

1.3.2 Led by our communications team, developed and executed an extensive communications campaign, starting last Autumn the team generated over 77,000 (October 2022 – January 2023) visits to top pages, distributed nearly 20,000 leaflets and reached target audiences of families with young children, pensioners, those with disabilities and mental health support through partnerships with AgeUK, 0-19 Early Help services, Barnet Activity Creative and Engaging (BACE) Holidays, Citizens Advice Barnet, BOOST, libraries, foodbanks and public health bodies;

- Between April - August 2023 we received 1,212 Significant Advice recorded in Barnet Children's Centres (increase of 6% between Q4 and Q1).
- Through the Household Support Fund school nominations have seen the largest increase with a total of 15,981 in July 2023. The data tells us that of those supported, 13,487 families were in receipt of Free School Meals with a further 2,494 who have been financially impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.
- 729 vulnerable children have been placed in an early year setting and accessed up to 15 hours free early years education per week.
- During Summer delivery of 2022 the BACE programme reached 2,871 unique children, statistics from Summer 2023 highlight we reached over 3,500 unique participants. Year, upon year we are seeing an increased demand upon our service. BACE also works with over 30 private businesses across the borough, working with them to upskill providers with regards to supporting children and families.
- BOOST have seen a considerable rise in residents coming to them for support, which continued through to spring and summer with 5,520 total contacts (numbers include footfall and calls) and an estimated 4,155 (75%) due to cost of living pressures through April to August 2023.

1.3.3 Libraries, as well as being warm spaces, held a number of initiatives including;

- 283 events, attended by 5,913 residents;

- Drop-in sessions with BOOST welfare benefits advisors, money management sessions delivered in partnership with Barclays Bank and fraud prevention sessions with HSBC; and
 - In partnership with Wrap-up London, libraries acted as drop-off points for spare coats, collecting around 400 warm coats last winter which were distributed to approximately 30 charities and community groups who made them available to residents.
- 1.3.4 Led by Barnet Homes, we ran a targeted campaign identifying 7,900 eligible households with EPC rating of E, F or G; and organised a mailout to each property, alongside newsletters, social media, and magazine promotion. Figures from December 2022 indicated that the targeted autumn campaign resulted in an estimated 80% required referrals to achieve full utilisation of the grant funding;
- 1.3.5 In partnership with Barnet Together Alliance we provided a £300k fund, resulting in:
- Receiving applications for 71 projects at a total of £582,722;
 - 40 successful projects with 20% of organisations working in partnership to deliver projects; and
 - Over 137,500 estimated beneficiaries which include 7,509 scheduled sessions supporting our residents.
- 1.3.6 Worked with community groups to develop a network of warm spaces, with over 40 warm spaces (including our libraries) dispersed throughout the borough, the aim was to identify spaces which would be part of a long-term support network:
- We identified 2 warm spaces as well as 2 foodbanks which would benefit from outreach advisors to support residents in accessing financial support, we have worked with BOOST and Citizens Advice Barnet and internal benefits team to provide support;
 - One of these spaces, the ArtsDepot provided positive feedback of the scheme, explaining that an unexpected outcome was the lift in staff morale who felt proud to be giving something back to the community;
 - We worked with public health colleagues to provide support and first aid mental health training to front-line staff at our libraries; and
 - One of our spaces has now partnered with Boost to provide digital skills training, with specific focus on supporting our refugee and asylum seeker community.
- 1.3.7 An infrastructure rebuild of a service and systems, which included;
- 1.3.8 Insourcing of the welfare team;
- An all-in-one online application form with integrated SFS Income and Expenditure Form, Benefit calculator and Open Banking option, delivering £2.1m of support to residents;
 - The introduction of vulnerability and propensity to pay profiling to tailor engagement to our residents;
 - Introduction of geospatial data to enable analysis of velocity of change and resiliency across the borough at post code level, enabling targeted intervention, and in collaboration with Insight & Intelligence hub building Barnet's own vulnerability index to further improve how we engage with residents and feeding back into all LBB legacy systems; and
 - Developed dashboards to enable outcomes to be shared with key stakeholders and enable continuous evaluation and improvement.

1.3.9 As we go into the winter, we will continue to deliver these initiatives to support residents who are struggling. Providing immediate financial support through the Household Support Fund and Residents Support Fund, we will continue working with partners to provide benefits and welfare advice to ensure residents are accessing benefits available to them. As we look to more long-term solutions of financial support, we will undertake the following actions:

- Finalise and review Barnet's Council Tax Support Scheme, take it out for public consultation and present this to committee by the end of financial year 2023-24
- Review the Residents Support Fund policy, using data from current applications to better understand the needs of our residents by the end of financial year 2023-24
- Working with our Residents Experience team to improve our service offering and understand how we can join-up with other welfare and benefit advisors in the council to provide a 'no-wrong-door approach' to supporting our residents.

1.3 **Boosting the local economy**

1.3.10 Thriving businesses and local employment

1.3.11 Whilst Barnet is generally an affluent borough, there are pockets of stubborn deprivation, high housing costs and a higher than London average of households without work and those who suffer from long-term illness. Barnet has a higher job density compared to other outer-London boroughs; however, it is amongst the top 6 lowest paying boroughs, with stark inequality of earnings for residents who work in Barnet compared to outside of the borough. This disparity of earnings in and out of the borough is not unusual for outer London, but limits day time spend. linked to higher levels of parttime and contract based work. Insight from our partners, BOOST and foodbanks have highlighted that more residents who are in work are struggling to pay the bills, this insight reflects the applications we see coming through our Household Support Fund, Residents Support Fund and benefits calculator. In-work poverty is a prevailing challenge in our communities.

1.3.12 With a high proportion of micro-businesses and below London average of small to large businesses, Barnet has fewer opportunities to leverage hiring power and therefore the role of larger employers becomes more important. As a major employer whose long term sustainability is tied to the population it serves (an 'anchor institution'), the council can leverage its own hiring and financial resources to stimulate local economy while ensuring we are getting the best environmental, economic and social outcomes out of our procurement practices.

1.3.13 Earlier this year, the council approved the Boost 3-year plan which provides a one-stop-shop to supporting residents with employment, financial and digital guidance. The approach targets residents who may not otherwise have access to support services or the networks available to them to build their knowledge, skills, experience and self-efficacy.

1.3.14 Our procurement and social value initiatives will create local investment and local living wage jobs, but capturing the opportunity of growth industries, encouraging fair work practices, supporting our residents most affected by economic, health and social

inequalities will require a place-based approach. When focusing on our people, this means working with our current network of partners to understand who and why people are struggling, and how we can support them to becoming financially independent and reach their full potential.

1.3.15 This approach does not just benefit our residents. Our businesses and highstreets will also benefit from a diverse talent pool who have the means to spend locally, encouraging further investment and stimulating our local economy. Our neighbouring boroughs will also benefit from this, not just through sharing best practices and learnings, but because we know our communities go beyond the Barnet boundaries. Our priorities include:

1. Implementing the Boost 3-year plan:
 - a. Investing in qualifying staff, standardised processes, formalised quality assurance;
 - b. Using data and information to take a more preventative approach, to supporting residents, specifically with relation to health and social inequalities;
 - c. Continuing the partnership model, it will build closer links with benefits teams within councils and VCFS to start specialising and building out its employment, skills and training arm; and
 - d. In line with our Tackling Inequalities theme, target support to those least from the job market.
2. Working with internal teams to learn best practices on how we can use Apprenticeships to help residents into work, including degree level apprenticeships.
 - a. Taking advantage of growth sectors:
 - b. Developing a construction and skills centre in Barnet, which focuses on industries that support the transition to Net Zero;
 - c. Accessible digital skills training; and
 - d. Training and brokerage in film, TV and care sector.
3. Encouraging businesses to become London Living Wage and Good Work Standards accreditation.
4. Supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs:
 - a. Investment in the borough is retained locally by boosting Barnet's construction supplier capacity;
 - b. Providing skills and knowledge to residents to start their own business; and
 - c. Improve skills and digital presence for up to 150 businesses across three town centres.

1.3.16 Our education institutions also play an important role in our local economy with Barnet having some of the best schools, NEET and EET scores in the country. ONS data suggests that our young people rarely settle in Barnet, with latest figures showing that residents

aged between 25-34 decreased by 5.5%. Currently there is a lot of work taking place with Middlesex University offering degree apprenticeships, with creative, environment, social and healthcare pathways, and Sheffield Hallam University announcing the opening of its first satellite campus in Brent Cross Town.

1.3.17 We know our young people are experiencing a tougher time breaking into the workforce, with more people gaining higher education, those who do have this are often competing with a larger talent pool for work, and those unable to attend higher education experiencing starker inequalities, stigma, and long-term career progression opportunities. However, as we see a change in the needs of employer's, diverse pools of talent, who come from difference backgrounds will be key to addressing the challenges we are faced with today. This means apprenticeships, vocational training, volunteering and more hands-on training and skills opportunities will help candidates stand out and develop networks they can utilise to access employment opportunities.

1.3.18 We acknowledge that more work could be done preparing our young people for the workforce, specifically our young people with disabilities and care leavers. Barnet Education & Learning Service provide a great deal of support to our most vulnerable young people, however, there is still a need for organisations to proactively carve out and provide employment opportunities for those with protected characteristics, specifically as our vulnerable young people lose a great deal of the support mechanisms available as they turn 25. There is still work to be done in this space, but some of the work currently being undertaken, includes:

1. Getting young people into volunteer opportunities early, to build skills that will help them succeed in the workplace, with a number of technical and vocational developments in schools and colleges across Barnet.
2. Education Business Partnerships with schools and post-16 providers.
3. Supported internship programme and the development of a new apprenticeship strategy, which will link into internal initiatives and identify and provide technical and degree level apprenticeships as well as carved out employment for people with disabilities.
4. Barnet Education & Learning Services (BELS) ensures our action is taken to support our young people most at risk of being not in education, employment or training (NEET).
5. Care leavers programmes which support work and life skills initiatives as well as support schemes to support independent living up to the age of 25.

1.4 **Working with Centre for Local Economic Strategies**

1.4.1 Community wealth building is a bespoke model, that takes a systems approach to economic development. When considering the multidimensional drivers of poverty and inequality, this approach leverages the strengths of a local area to develop opportunities for the wider community. This can result in more cohesive and inclusive communities while stimulating the local economy.

1.4.2 To support our ambitions for developing a Community Wealth Building approach, we have commissioned Centre for Local Economic Strategies to support us to:

1. Understand what residents want from a Community Wealth Building programme.
2. Examine the Council's spend profile and identify opportunities for local spend.
3. Analyse how wealth flows and grows within Barnet.
4. Work with procurement, planning and sustainability teams towards developing progressive practices.

1.4.3 While the aim of this work is targeting towards reducing poverty, considerations on how a programme can link in with other council priorities, specifically tackling inequalities and Net Zero are included in the programme of work. This work will be completed by early next year, at which time we will provide findings and outline the next phase of work to cabinet.

1.5 Working with Neighbourly Lab

1.5.1 The council has started work which seeks to explore how it can better align its physical assets to community needs, as the just use of land is an element of community wealth building. To support developing approaches, the Council is conducting an audit of community spaces, both formal and informal, through the lens of its residents with work commissioned through Neighbourly Lab as part of a Neighbourhood Working pilot. A pilot focused on East Barnet will engage with residents in asset-based and constructive ways, allowing their needs and usage of their local area to inform future decision making around Barnet's places and spaces. Subject to the findings, we will look to use the learning in other areas in the Borough.

1.6 Leveraging our procurement and processes

1.6.1 Every year the council spends an estimated £600 million in procuring goods and services. Until last year procurement services were outsourced, and consequently, data and insight around where we spend and its environmental and social impact is unclear. The abovementioned research conducted by Centre for Local Economic Strategies will provide insight into how we can leverage procurement processes towards local economy, reducing poverty, tackling inequalities, and achieving Net Zero. In this sense, our Sustainable Commercial Strategy should aim to go beyond environmental goals, considering social and economic outcomes that will set the foundation of a wider community wealth building programme, with the aim of:

1. Encouraging suppliers to buy local and create local jobs,
2. Ensuring suppliers are paying a living wage and implementing fair working practices, and
3. Ensuring suppliers are working towards net zero outcomes in their own business models and supply chains.

1.6.2 It is important to look at these priorities not as competing, but complimentary, to achieving outcomes for our residents. While strides have been made in measuring decarbonisation and Net Zero ambitions, as well as social and wellbeing outcomes, can be difficult to quantify. It is therefore important that we invest in communicating their value to businesses and residents, this will require engagement activities and best

practice examples on how suppliers can succeed in meeting these commitments and practices they can implement to support them winning contracts.

1.6.3 We have started this journey by refreshing our Social Value policy and themes, outcomes and measures framework (TOMs). The refreshed policy and TOMs have been submitted in a separate paper to cabinet today. This paper outlines how we will improve compliance from suppliers, have clear expectations for social value offers and a simple but robust monitoring and reporting process that will ensure delivery of social value within contracts, we are proposing to implement the following:

1. A minimum expectation of 5% reinvested in social value initiatives by suppliers on contracts over £100,000. [new]
2. Minimum of one employment outcome expectation for each million pound a contract is valued at (reviewed on a tender-by-tender basis). [new]
3. Liquidated Damages Clauses in contracts for non-delivery of Social Value Commitments. [new]
4. Condense Barnet TOMs from 83 measures to circa 40 and assign a monetary value for each measure. [change]
5. Allow financial or in-kind material contributions. However, they should not exceed 10% of Total Proposed Commitment. [new]
6. Embed Social Value Matrix in the Invitation to Tender/Quote and replace social value question in the tender documents. [new]
7. Social Value Impact Fund to reinvest funds from liquidated damages and financial contributions back into the community. [change]

1.6.4 Contract managers will be responsible for managing their own contracts but will be expected to report the social value outcomes bi-annually to the Social Investment Officer, who will be responsible for producing the larger Social Value report at the end of the financial year encompassing all procured contracts.

1.6.5 Training will be developed to support existing contract managers and guidance will be made available for new contract managers. Monitoring tools have been developed to ensure social value outcomes are tracked in a consistent way across the organisation.

1.6.6 Members of the Social Value Task Group, a pan-Council group comprised of 26 representatives from various service areas, contributed to construct these mechanisms and every member of the group was given an opportunity to vote. Results are as follows:

Proposed change / addition	Approval %
1. 5% minimum expectation	100%
2. Minimum one job outcome	80%
3. Liquidated Damages Clauses	90%
4. Condensed list of TOMs & monetary values	100%
5. Financial or materials contributions	70%
6. Social Value Matrix	90%
7. Social Value Impact Fund	100%

1.6.7 The Barnet TOMs will be reviewed annually by the Social Value Task Group and the Social Value Panel to ensure they continue to reflect our priorities and address the needs

of our communities. The panel is a multiagency group comprising LBB staff, residents, VCFS partners and businesses.

1.7 Becoming a living wage borough

- 1.7.1 As we continue to see more employed residents needing extra support, we cannot reduce poverty without having a clear approach to becoming a living wage borough. As an employer Barnet council pays all our staff a living wage and has undertaken a review of our contracts, confirming most of our contracts pay a living wage.
- 1.7.2 For some of our contracts, implementing this has been more difficult and will take more time. This challenge is most prevalent within our adult social care contracts, which is an issue all local authorities and the wider care industry are grappling with. Officers are currently working with 3rd parties to ensure they all pay a living wage on contracts. We are therefore taking a long-term view on addressing this issue and will continue to work with the Living Wage Foundation and other local authorities on this matter.
- 1.7.3 Barnet is committed to being a living wage borough, but we cannot achieve this alone. Therefore, as well as focusing on our own workforce and contracts, we have started developing a plan to engage local businesses and anchor institutions, which is outlined in our attached action plan, Appendix 2.

1.8 A joined-up approach to Reducing Poverty

- 1.8.1 Reducing poverty is not an ambition that can be achieved alone, it touches all parts of the council and intertwines closely with our Tackling Inequalities theme, while we have not touched on all the work going on in the council in this paper, learnings from our cost-of-living programme have been used to understand where we can make the biggest impact and extensive research and internal engagement activities have been undertaken to understand the local landscape and ensure we are targeting our resources effectively.
- 1.8.2 Throughout this paper there we have touched on work currently being delivered in the council and added further priorities around procurement, social value, and local economy. Below we outline how these priorities will align and support initiatives identified in the Barnet Plan to support our residents:

State of the Borough Report: Inequalities and poverty

- 1.8.3 With people of many cultural backgrounds, faiths and life experiences living side by side, one of Barnet's biggest strengths is its diversity. We are proud of these diverse communities and of being a place where people feel welcomed and celebrated.
- 1.8.4 But not everyone's experience of Barnet is the same, with some finding it easier to access services and take advantage of opportunities. Some people with protected characteristics face structural discrimination when institutional and other common practices within society disadvantage them across many aspects of their lives. Others face inequalities and social exclusion as a result of low income and poverty.
- 1.8.5 The emerging State of the Borough Report starts to build an understanding of residents' experiences of inequalities in Barnet and the impact. Bringing together different themes, it provides an overview of what inequalities look like in important aspects of their lives.

Taking this report as an evidence base, we will be refreshing our Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy to demonstrate how we can work together with partners and residents to address inequalities and poverty.

- 1.8.6 Those who experience the greatest income inequality are more likely to have poorer outcomes in education, housing, health and life expectancy. Low-income households also have a disproportionate over-representation of people with one or more protected characteristics. In London, those at highest risk of living in deprived areas include young people, disabled people and people in black, Asian and other ethnic minority groups.
- 1.8.7 Working and earning a reasonable wage are a crucial part of many of our lives helping us to support our families and have a decent quality of life. Some residents face inequalities that limit their ability to find a job and make a decent living.
- 1.8.8 24.3% of Barnet's working age population is economically inactive. The rate for women (30.9%) is significantly higher than for men (19.2%). Both are higher than the respective rates for London at 24.6% for women and 15.9% for men. The rate of economic inactivity for residents with disabilities is 37.5%. The most common reasons given for economic inactivity are long-term sickness (32.5%) and looking after a family or home (19.3%). 79.7% do not want a job.
- 1.8.9 Working age economic inactivity varies significantly between ethnic groups in Barnet ranging from 11.6% for those identifying as Indian to 35.3% in the Black and Black British community.
- 1.8.10 Unemployment rates in Barnet are lowest for white residents not born in the UK (4.0%), followed by white UK born residents (4.7%) and residents from ethnic minorities born outside the UK (6.8%). The highest rate is for residents from ethnic minorities born in the UK (8.9%).
- 1.8.11 Across London, there is a difference in the earnings of white employees compared to those of other ethnicities. In 2019, the median hourly wage of black workers was 19% lower, followed by workers from other ethnic backgrounds (11%) and Asian workers (10%). The disability pay gap was 16.6%.
- 1.8.12 Children's health and education have a critical impact on their future life chances. Factors such as deprivation, living conditions and family lifestyles in the early years have a profound impact and can entrench inequalities later in life. There are significant disparities between the childhood experiences of different demographic groups.
- 1.8.13 Children who grow up in poverty are likely to suffer poorer education and health outcomes throughout their lives compared to children who do not. In Barnet, 11.9% of children live in relative poverty, significantly lower than the comparable rates for London (16.4%) and England (20.1%). 9.5% of children live in absolute poverty. Again, this is lower than comparable rates for London (13.1%) and England (15.3%). Whilst this is generally positive, there are pockets of higher deprivation in parts of the borough. Deprivation affecting children is highest in Burnt Oak (22.4%), Colindale (19.2%) and Golders Green (15.1%).
- 1.8.14 People's health is associated with their economic and social circumstances, the quality of housing and nearby outdoor environments. Differences in life expectancy between population groups is a marker of health inequalities and this is seen within Barnet. For example, the difference between people living in the most and least deprived areas of

the borough is 5.7 years for females and 6.7 years for males. This is why our neighbourhood approach to tackle health inequalities is crucial.

1.8.15 The circumstances in which people live influence the formation of healthy or unhealthy behaviours and therefore health inequalities. The prevalence of obesity, alcohol misuse or dependence and smoking differs across Barnet, with the highest prevalence of these behavioural risk factors observed in more deprived parts of the borough. In addition to people's circumstances and behaviours, access to healthcare also affects health and health inequalities in the borough.

1.8.16 The new Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy will seek to improve outcomes for our residents by tackling the gaps between different communities. This will include developing a better understanding of the structural, place-based drivers of inequalities. We will also improve our understanding of our communities and residents' experiences to ensure services are fair, equitable and accessible to all. This includes developing a focus on intersectionality to understand how combinations of equality characteristics influence their experiences of the borough.

Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sector

1.8.17 As a council we will enable people to help each other. Working in partnership with our voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector we are taking a community-led approach to setting out our next steps. Together, we want to continue to develop better ways of supporting our local economies.

- Working closely with Tackling Inequalities to ensure alignment of activities.
- Continuing work with our VCF community to encourage more residents to take up volunteer opportunities and build community resilience.
- Encourage and enable VCFSE to bid for council contracts and utilise our social impact fund to support community projects.
- Undertake a mapping exercise of VCFSE in Barnet to understand the current landscape.
- Undertake ongoing external engagement with our VCFSE community to capacity build and understand challenges in the community.

Family Friendly

1.8.18 To take a preventative approach to reducing poverty, we must start early. Families with children are still amongst the highest impacted by poverty, specifically lone parent families. Through the delivery of their Early Help Strategy 2023-27, our Early Help 0-19 services provide a great deal of support, as do our schools, children and care centres and libraries. Our Life Chances Strategy 2020/24 has outlined actions taken over the last 3 years, to ensure we continue work we will:

- Work closely with the Tackling Inequalities and Family Friendly themes to ensure alignment of activities.
- Ensure work introduced through the cost-of-living programme continues to reach our families.

- Barnet Education & Learning Services (BELS) ensures our action is taken to support our young people most at risk of being not in education, employment or training (NEET). Our Social Value and economic development actions will work towards ensuring local opportunities are available, specifically apprenticeships, however, funding for this programme is uncertain. We will work closely with this theme to continue this important work.

1.8.19 To maximise the benefits of the opportunities created through harnessing local spending power, we will prioritise supporting young people leaving care within our overall focus on supporting residents economically excluded. In Barnet we currently have 319 care leavers, most of our care leavers are aged between 18 - 20 years old (64%) with 16% aged 21 years old and 20% age 22 years or older. Our care leavers care about the cost of living crises, and have expressed concerns about their mental health, their finances and their housing.

1.8.20 To counter the challenges faced by care experienced young people Barnet has developed the life-long offer of support for care experienced young people embedded within our revised and updated Local Offer; young adults are contacted at 6-monthly intervals and reminded of this offer available to them.

1.8.21 We have developed the independent living project 'We Built This Home'; a series of workshops that will support independent living skills through both practical skills training alongside health, personal care, nutrition, cooking, budgeting and finance. O&U has become an accredited ASDAN provider, and will be launching the first ASDAN module for independent living in April 2023.

Aging Well

1.8.22 Barnet has a high proportion of pension age residents. Pensioners are among the group more likely to be digitally excluded so providing support to access information and services will be crucial. We will work with this theme by:

- Work closely with Aging Well themes to ensure alignment of activities.
- Continued partnership with AgeUK, specifically with relation to increasing uptake of benefits such as pension credits.
- Working with adult's teams benefits and welfare advisors to ensure we are supporting our residents who are digitally excluded providing awareness of financial abuse and online scams.
- As part of the work CLES is doing we will be recruiting a community researcher in Brunswick Park where 2021 Census data highlighted there is the highest percentage of residents providing unpaid care to understand how barriers to employment could be broken down using Community Wealth Building approaches.
- Access to important health and wellbeing services, including preventative measures that protect physical and mental wellbeing.

Living Well

Addressing food poverty

1.8.23 The number of people accessing food banks in Barnet is on an upward trajectory. The number of food bank users in January, March and April 2023 was higher than the busiest

month of 2022 (no data available yet beyond April at the time of drafting this paper). Food bank staff and volunteers report seeing more residents in work relying on foodbanks.

- 1.8.24 As part of a community wealth building programme, we will work with the Barnet Food Steering Group, composed of a broad range of stakeholders in the local food system, to implement the Barnet Food Plan 2022-27. The vision of the food plan is that everyone in Barnet should have access to affordable, healthy food.

Supporting our disabled, deaf and hard of hearing residents

- 1.8.25 We are working across the council and with partners to understand more about the experience of disabled residents. We want to provide the right support and services, including creating more opportunities for disabled people to gain employment.
- 1.8.26 Boost have hired a Disability Employment Coordinator who is tasked with creating a network of employment services, direct assistance and raising awareness and brokering vacancies for our disabled, deaf and hard of hearing residents looking for employment opportunities.
- 1.8.27 Supporting our disabled, deaf and hard of hearing residents on accessing the benefits they are entitled to.

Borough of Fun

- 1.8.28 We will use our creative, sports and hospitality industries to bring life to our high streets and green spaces, bring people together. We will do this by:
- Working closely with Borough of Fun theme to ensure alignment of activities.
 - Promoting BACE holiday programme for children and young people provides engaging and healthy activities such as sports and games, arts and crafts and the performing arts.

Net Zero

- 1.8.29 Barnet will collaborate, create, and leverage opportunities to make the borough an attractive place for sustainable businesses and investments; upskilling our communities to take advantage of new green job opportunities and green technology.

Affordable Housing and Homelessness

- 1.8.30 Delivering the right homes to meet diverse needs now and for future generations, that people can afford and are in the right places, is a key priority and challenge for the council.
- 1.8.31 Barnet Homes is currently working with our Insight & Intelligence team to learn more and map homelessness in Barnet so we can understand demographics and who is most vulnerable to homelessness.
- 1.8.32 We are building more homes that people can afford, including 1,000 homes for rent at half market rates.
- 1.8.33 Recently cabinet have approved a Housing Strategy, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Tenancy Strategy which outlines actions taken to address this challenge.

Community Safety & Participation

1.8.34 Poverty and crime are closely interlinked and can leave people vulnerable to exploitation or result in turning to informal work.

- We will develop a modern slavery policy and strategy to be presented to cabinet in March 2024.

2. Alternative Options Considered and Not Recommended

2.1 Do nothing. Our communities and residents are still feeling the impact from the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis. Looking at this from a wider systems approach allows us to take a preventative approach to reducing poverty. If we do nothing, it is likely we will experience more demand on our support services.

3. Post Decision Implementation

3.1 A detailed action plan which includes details on activities and responsible officers can be accessed in Appendix 2.

4. Corporate Priorities, Performance and Other Considerations

Corporate Plan

4.1 This paper sets out initial steps to be taken by the council in line with its Reducing Poverty theme and Barnet Corporate Plan 2023-2026.

Corporate Performance / Outcome Measures

4.2 Key performance indicators have been set out in the action plan which can be accessed in Appendix 2.

Sustainability

4.3 The sustainable commercial strategy and updated social value policy reference initiatives that will work towards sustainability goals.

Corporate Parenting

4.4 As a corporate parent to all children in care and care leavers, the council must have regard to the need to act in the best interests and promote the physical and mental health and wellbeing of those children and young people, help them gain access to and make the best use of services provided, promote high aspirations and seek to secure the best outcomes for them, help ensure they are safe and have stability in their lives, and prepare them for adulthood and independent living.

Risk Management

4.5 This is a wide ranging and cross-cutting piece of work with different directorates and responsible officers leading on the actions. Each responsible officer will be expected to undertake their own risk management processes which will differ according to their area of focus. Responsible officers are highlighted in the action plan in Appendix 2.

Insight

4.6 Since the launch of our Barnet Plan, we have undertaken desktop research and internal engagement activities to understand what best practices are currently being done, can be amplified further, and where there might be gaps.

- 4.7 We conducted extensive research to understand the local landscape, and where possible, cross reference this data with internal data. While these findings have identified some clear actions that can be taken, as outlined in this paper, there is still some uncertainty on what the data is telling us. To address this, we will aim to utilise initiatives in the action plan to provide further insight on the local landscape.
- 4.8 We have used a wide range of resources and data to ensure we are getting a clear picture, references can be found in our background papers section, if you would like to view the scoping and findings report please contact the officer on details provided.
- 4.9 London has always experienced higher costs of living in comparison to other parts of the country, however following the pandemic, war in Ukraine and inflation 2022 saw a rise in people experiencing food and fuel poverty. The knock-on effect is still being felt throughout the economy. Food prices have remained high and issues like cost of housing is adding further burden across board. While the recession predicted has not yet come, the future remains uncertain as higher mortgage rates and rental prices are causing concerns for those beyond low income and workless households.
- 4.10 Since the pandemic we have been tracking numbers of residents using foodbanks and throughout 2022 we saw an average 20% compared to the year before with the last half seeing 42%. This trend has continued into 2023 with months from January to April 2023 experiencing a 52% rise in beneficiaries.
- 4.11 While Government interventions around energy support provided some relief to households, gas and electricity prices rose 36.2% and 17.3% in the year to June 2023 leaving many households still struggling to keep up with inflated energy bills. In their cost-of-living dashboard Citizens Advice has highlighted concerning trends including record number of people who have been unable to top-up their pre-payments and energy bill debt overtaking council arrears as the top debt concern people need help with.
- 4.12 ONS reinforces these findings with recent insight from its public opinion and social trends research highlighting that 51% of respondents are using less fuel, such as gas or electricity. While it is still unclear if there will be further support provided this winter long-term and sustainable solutions need to be identified and given those most impacted are already burdened by income and structural inequalities an intervention that targets these first would be an equitable approach to addressing this challenge.
- 4.13 We conducted three workshops, included 39 participants across: Finance, Strategy, Community Engagement, Public Health, Customer & Place, Children & Families, Barnet Group and Adults. This included a breakdown of 9 at Senior Management level, 22 at Manager / Lead level and 8 at officer level. These workshops identified a lot of good practices already taking place, highlighted areas of focus and identified the need for an agreed definition of poverty. Further insight from these workshops can be viewed in Appendix 3.
- 4.14 The research conducted by Centre for Local Economic Strategies, includes piloting a new community research programme, which will:
- Co-design a series of (maximum 5) questions to gain first hand insights about the challenges Barnet residents are facing.
 - Train 6 community researchers to undertake 20 interviews in a light touch consultation exercise each within selected wards to gain insights from a cross-section of Barnet's communities.

- Work with Art Against Knives to recruit two community researchers who are young people, providing easier access to young people to gain their views as part of this research.
- Insights will be used to complement the wealth flows research and generate a picture of the challenges Barnet's residents are facing to use in the Procurement Team workshops.
- The first-hand experience and insights generated by the community research will help to bring the Procurement Team on board by identifying challenges which could be addressed using community wealth building approaches.
- Researchers will be involved for a short period of time to co-design the research questions, gather the interviews and reconvene to discuss the findings of the research. If the council would like to continue this engagement beyond the duration of the project, we will work with Centre for Local Economic Strategies on how we can continue this programme.

Social Value

- 4.15 The updated social value policy outlines how we can extract benefits from our procured contracts and reinvest them into the community. The officers worked very closely throughout the development of this paper and the social value paper to ensure we are aligned on reducing poverty and tackling inequalities.

5. Resource Implications (Finance and Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT and Property)

- 5.1 We have engaged Centre for Local Economic Strategies to help inform the work we do and conduct research in this area. The cost of this contract is £33,350 and has received approval for Single Tender Action so the work can be undertaken alongside our Sustainable Commercial strategy.
- 5.2 Our economic development team will be crucial to ensuring local businesses and residents can benefit from a thriving local economy and living wage jobs. A great deal of this work will be funded through the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund, however a few of the programmes which fall outside of the fund requirements, such as our living wage and good work standards engagement projects will require further funding. We will also be looking to hire a Grade I officer who can work with our local businesses on these initiatives. Subject to the identification of an appropriate funding source, costs come to £82,014.

6. Legal Implications and Constitution References

- 6.1 Under the Council's Constitution, Part 2D the terms of reference states that Cabinet is responsible for the following functions:
- Development of proposals for the budget (including the capital and revenue budgets, the fixing of the Council Tax Base, and the level of Council Tax) and the financial strategy for the Council;
 - Monitoring the implementation of the budget and financial strategy;
 - Recommending major new policies (and amendments to existing policies) to the Council for approval as part of the Council's Policy Framework and implementing those approved by Council;
 - Approving policies that are not part of the policy framework;

- Management of the Council's Capital Programme.

7. Consultation

7.1 No consultation is required at this stage. We will continue to work with Barnet Together Alliance, our Strategic Partnerships Board, Public Health Network, and other anchor institutions and community organisation on an ongoing basis.

8. Equalities and Diversity

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

8.2 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 Cabinet 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:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

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:

- a) Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- b) 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;
- c) 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.

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.

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:

- a) Tackle prejudice, and
- b) Promote understanding.

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:

- a) Age
- b) Disability
- c) Gender reassignment
- d) Pregnancy and maternity
- e) Race
- f) Religion or belief
- g) Sex
- h) Sexual orientation
- i) Marriage and civil partnership

The council will conduct equalities impact assessments (EqIA) of the various projects in the action plan as appropriate. We will also use a coproduction principle to ensure the community is fully engaged on the deliverable actions we intend to take.

9. Background Papers

9.1 This paper references the following programmes and strategies:

[Barnet Plan 2023/26](#)

[Cost of living programme – September 2022](#)

[Boost 3-year plan](#)

[Early Help Strategy 2023-27](#)

[Life Chances Strategy 2020/24](#)

[Barnet Post 16 Options Prospectus Feb22.pdf](#)

[Housing Strategy Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Tenancy Strategy and Housing Allocation Sc.pdf \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

9.2 There was an extensive research and scoping phase undertaken to inform this approach, materials used include:

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN07096/SN07096.pdf>

[The English Indices of Deprivation](#)

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/minimum-income-standard-uk-2022>

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/our-work/what-is-poverty>

<https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/ending-poverty>

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/measuringpoverty>

<https://journals.lwbooks.co.uk/renewal/vol-24-issue-2/article-8864/>

<https://www.pwc.co.uk/who-we-are/purpose/green-jobs-barometer-2022.pdf>

[London Learner Survey 2021/22 \(airdrive-secure.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com\)](#)

[Social Mobility Commission](#)

<https://www.cbi.org.uk/articles/skills-for-an-inclusive-economy-cbibrkbeck-education-and-skills-survey-2021/>

[The Sutton Trust](#)

[Business Case for Increasing Young and Diverse Apprenticeships FINAL.pdf \(londoncouncils.gov.uk\)](#)

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships>

[PSC-Framework-Report-230831-Web-FINAL-revised.pdf \(povertystrategycommission.org.uk\)](#)

[Degree apprenticeships | Middlesex University London \(mdx.ac.uk\)](#)

9.3 We drew from a range of different data sources which include:

[Nomis – Official Census and Labour Market Statistics](#)

<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/workers-on-zero-hours-contracts>

<https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/earning-below-llw>

[ONS Subnational indicators explorer](#)

<https://data.london.gov.uk/economic-fairness/>

[Source: Barnet council food security dashboard](#)

[Cost of living insights - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

[Our new cost-of-living dashboard: the crisis we're seeing unfold | by Morgan Wild | We are Citizens Advice](#)

[Employment rates by disability \(2021\)](#)

[Economic inactivity by gender \(2022\)](#)

[Economic inactivity rate by broad ethnic group](#)

[Unemployment rate by ethnic group and nationality](#)

[Ethnicity pay gaps in London \(2020\)](#)

[Disability pay gaps in London \(2020\)](#)

[Children in low income families \(2022\)](#)