

## Decisions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

4 September 2023

Members Present:

Councillor Danny Rich (Chair)  
Councillor Daniel Thomas (Vice-Chair)

|  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| Councillor Dean Cohen                            | Councillor Arjun Mittra    |
| Councillor Giulia Innocenti                      | Councillor Alex Prager     |
| Councillor Emma Whysall                          | Councillor Ernest Ambe     |
| Councillor Paul Lemon                            | Councillor David Longstaff |
| Councillor Humayune Khalick<br>(as a substitute) | (as a substitute)          |

Apologies for Absence

Councillor Edith David                      Councillor Richard Cornelius

### 1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Danny Rich the Chair of the Committee welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

**It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2023 be approved as a correct record.**

### 2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS (IF ANY)

Apologies were received from Councillor Edith David who was substituted for by Councillor Humayune Khalick.

Apologies were received from Councillor Richard Cornelius who was substituted for by Councillor David Longstaff.

### 3. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS (IF ANY)

Councillor Arjun Mittra declared an interest in relation to item 12. Barnet Homes Repairs Service as a tenant of Barnet Homes.

### 4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY)

None.

### 5. PUBLIC COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

None.

### 6. MEMBERS' ITEMS (IF ANY)

None.

## 7. PETITIONS (IF ANY)

None.

## 8. OUR PLAN FOR BARNET - DELIVERY AND OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK, Q1 2023-24

Councillor Barry Rawlings, Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources & Effective Council, presented a report providing an update on activity and performance for Q1 2023-24 that demonstrated the progress being made on delivering against the outcomes the council has committed to working towards in “Our Plan for Barnet”, using the activities and performance indicators captured in the Delivery and Outcomes Framework.

In response to a query, the Leader confirmed that the data relating to “keeping Barnet streets tidy” had improved partly due to increased funding and focused street cleaning programme, but going forward work would need to be done to support and tackle fly tipping.

Regarding the Finchley Lido, the Leader confirmed that the plan was to retain the swimming pool, cinema, and bowling alley, subject to planning applications by the private developer.

Regarding the “Borough of fun” programme, it was noted that number of events and programmes had been widespread and well received.

**Action for Head of Performance: Regarding the recent “dementia friendly accredited centres” which were commended, it was agreed that officers would provide information on how many accredited dementia friendly places there were and the geographical spread.**

**Action for Head of Performance: Regarding the number of residents in ‘job starts’ going down, it was agreed that officers would provide some information on the outside factors that contributed to the decrease in the numbers.**

Following consideration of the item, the Chair moved to vote on the recommendations in the report which were unanimously agreed.

**The Committee RESOLVED to note the contents of Our Plan for Barnet – Delivery and Outcomes Framework Q1 2023-24 report attached at Annex A and agreed to receive additional information.**

## 9. SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

Councillor Alan Schneiderman, Portfolio Holder for Environment & Climate Change, and the Assistant Director for Sustainability, Yogita Popat, presented a report on the progress against Barnet’s Net Zero commitments and the actions taken against the Sustainability Action Plan. The report also provided an update on the independent evaluation of the Citizen’s Assembly undertaken by Middlesex University.

In response to a query from the Committee on what advice and support has been provided to small businesses regarding retrofit, the Cabinet Member responded that while the Council had started work on retrofit of social housing and schools. However, work was also being done to improve the advice available to both businesses and private sector housing on how to be more sustainable. This included working with West London Alliance to support businesses, training in green skills and launched crowdfunding platform where community groups and business can bid up to £15,000 for any element retrofit.

**Action for Assistant Director for Sustainability: The Committee agreed that it should be requested that future reports should include additional information on what support was available to the private housing sector, including what help and support was available to residents from organisations such as banks on retrofitting their homes. The Committee welcomed the toolkit that would include this information and what actions residents can take to keep their bills down.**

The committee queried what steps were being taken to include the views of the wider community, not just those who were involved in the citizen's assembly. Officers confirmed that that engagement with the wider community was part of the next steps and the timescales for implementations of the recommendations from the citizen's assembly would be included in the next update to the Committee.

**Action for Assistant Director for Sustainability: In response to a query, officers agreed to provide a briefing note on how on District Heat Networks work and where we may have opportunities in Barnet following the local area energy plan/review.**

The committee welcomed the schools retrofit work and queried if there was funding available to ensure that all schools would have heat source pumps installed by 2023. The Cabinet member confirmed that work was ongoing to explore all available funding to achieve the net zero targets.

**Action for Assistant Director for Sustainability: Officers agreed to provide a report on the current progress, any lessons learnt, success, issues, level of success and what (if any) benefits had schools experienced from the retrofit programme including reducing co2 emissions and cost savings.**

In relation to lamp column charging points, the Committee was assured that there was a commitment that install EV charging bays. The Cabinet Member also confirmed that as the EV charging bays were being rolled out across the Borough, Ward Members and residents were consulted, and their views were taken into account when designating new EV bays on their local roads and wards.

**Action for Assistant Director for Sustainability: Officers agreed to confirm who had insurance liability in the event of an accident/trip from cables from an EV lamppost charging station.**

**Action for Assistant Director for Sustainability: In response to a query by the committee, officers agreed to provide details of the number of trees that have been planted as part of the trees for streets programme and ensure improved communication and highlighting of programme to councillors and residents.**

The committee commended the funding secured by Barnet and Southgate College to provide training on heat pump installation and other environmental and green courses.

**Action for Assistant Director for Sustainability: In response to a query, officers agreed to provide information the courses, how they are being advertised and the uptake.**

Following consideration of the item, the Chair moved to vote on the recommendations in the report which were unanimously agreed.

**The Committee RESOLVED to note:**

- 1. The progress on the Sustainability Action and receive the additional information from the Cabinet Member from Environment and Climate Change and Assistant Director Sustainability as agreed.**
- 2. The work being undertaken by Middlesex University to evaluate the impact of the Citizen's Assembly and Young People's Assembly on Climate Change and Biodiversity.**
- 3. The ongoing work to develop and implement initiatives to deliver reductions in carbon emissions.**

## **10. STATEMENT OF GAMBLING LICENSING POLICY**

Following legal advice, the Chair, Councillor Rich, and all committee members who also sat on the Licensing & General Purposes Committee left the room and did not take part in the discussion or the vote. The Vice-Chair, Councillor Thomas presided over the item.

Following consideration of the item, the presiding Chair moved to vote on the recommendations in the report which were unanimously agreed.

**The committee RESOLVED that the draft Gambling Statement of Principles (The Statement of Gambling Licensing Policy), which is currently in consultation from 3 August 2023 until 26 October 2023 be recommended to Licensing & General Purposes Committee on the 8 November 2023 prior to a final recommendation to Council on 30 January 2024.**

## **11. Q1 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE**

Councillor Barry Rawlings, Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources & Effective Council, and Anisa Darr, the Executive Director of Strategy & Resources (Section 151 Officer), presented a report that contained a summary of the council's revenue and capital forecast outturn for the financial year 2023/24 as at Month 3 (30 June 2023). The report also contained the proposed fees and charges due to be implemented from 1 January 2024 and information on the level of debt and the top 10 debtors as of 30 June 2023.

**Action for Executive Director of Strategy & Resources: Following comments by the committee, officers agreed that future financial performance reports to Cabinet and this committee would include the reserve position.**

In response to comments about the current position of the budget overspend which was mainly attributed to statutory spending and the rise in inflation, it was noted that each service was producing a savings plan which would be considered by a future meeting of the committee.

Regarding the variances for social care placement for adults and children, the Leader commented that not only were costs rising, but cases were also becoming more complex. This was even more acute for children receiving therapeutic care in children's homes. There was further discussion about the trend of high costs of private children homes, which were also sometimes unregistered and concerns regarding children placed in unregistered care homes by the courts.

Regarding the current position of Temporary Accommodation, the committee noted that changes to how asylum seekers are housed may lead to increased demand on the overstretched service.

**Action for Street Scene Director: In response to the CPZ programme, it was agreed that a briefing note would be produced detailing the CPZ programme/process including the delays, consultation process, ward Cllr involvement and how the process can be sped up.**

The committee commented at the various increase to fees and charges which were mainly attributed to rise in inflation and energy and associated costs for running the services.

Following consideration of the item, the Chair moved to vote on the recommendations in the report which were unanimously agreed.

**The Committee RESOLVED to note the contents of Chief Finance Officer Report – 2023/24, Quarter 1 Financial Forecast and 2023/24 Budget Management report attached at Annex A and to receive the additional information as agreed.**

**Following the item there was an adjournment from 9:02pm to 9:05pm**

## **12. BARNET HOMES PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW**

Councillor Ross Houston, Portfolio Holder for Homes & Regeneration, and Tim Mulvenna, the Group Chief Executive of the Barnet Group, presented a report which provided an overview of Barnet Homes performance reporting and governance arrangements. The report also provided an update on the current performance of the repairs service and the impact on resident satisfaction.

In response to a query by the Committee on the current Administration's commitment to build 1,000 homes, the Cabinet Member confirmed that while there were challenges caused by the rising interest rates and the increased cost of labour, the council had so far delivered 447 new homes (ready or being built).

In response to a query about the increasing level of need for affordable homes and housing, the Cabinet Member confirmed that this was the biggest challenge across London with increased demand and reduced supply of housing, especially within the private sector. This had had an impact on the number of residents placed in temporary accommodation (TA) and in turn the costs of placing residents in TA.

In response to a query, the Cabinet Member confirmed that multi-agency working was being utilised to support rough sleeping and support their needs beyond housing.

The Committee queried what plans were in place to reduce the re-let time between occupancies for council housing. In response, officers confirmed that while the target was met in majority of the cases, a few void homes, homes that were difficult to let due to restriction (e.g., sheltered accommodation schemes), and delays relating to contracts, especially post Covid, did significantly skew the average data.

Regarding the repairs data, officers confirmed that contractor incentive and the recent the recruitment and retention plans would improve the overall repairs and satisfaction data.

Regarding the current position of Temporary Accommodation, the Committee queried if the overall number of residents in TA those in hotel rooms, B&B etc, those placed in accommodation outside of the borough and those who are hosted in Barnet by other boroughs.

**Action for Group Chief Executive of the Barnet Group: Officers agreed to update the committee on the current numbers of those in Temporary Accommodation.**

**Action for Group Chief Executive of the Barnet Group: Regarding the data provided, officers agreed that future reports to the Committee will indicate where the various targets are getting worse or staying the same or getting better.**

Following consideration of the item, the Chair moved to vote on the recommendations in the report which were unanimously agreed.

**The Committee RESOLVED to:**

1. **Consider the current performance monitoring and governance arrangements in place for Barnet Homes relating to the repairs and maintenance service.**
2. **Receive the additional information as agreed.**
3. **Agree that, having reviewed all the information provided, that no task and finish group on Barnet Homes performance was required at this time.**

### **13. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS UPDATE**

The Committee considered the report that provided an update on progress made to date by the ongoing Task and Finish Groups established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Sub-Committees.

Following consideration of the item, the Chair moved to vote on the recommendations in the report which were unanimously agreed.

**The Committee RESOLVED to note the updates on all Task and Finish Groups in progress and future Task and Finish Groups.**

### **14. CABINET FORWARD PLAN (KEY DECISION SCHEDULE)**

The Committee considered the report that sets out the Cabinet Forward Plan (Key Decision Schedule) for 2023/24. The Committee noted that the Plan included items that could be included in the committees work programme for pre-decision scrutiny during 2023/24.

Following consideration of the item, the Chair moved to vote on the recommendations in the report which were unanimously agreed.

**The Committee RESOLVED to note the Cabinet Forward Plan (Key Decision Schedule) and request that the Culture Strategy be subject to pre-decision scrutiny.**

**15. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered a report that sets out work programmes for the Committee and Sub-Committees for the municipal year, which is a standing item and will be amend as necessary.

Following consideration of the item, the Chair moved to vote on the recommendations in the report which were unanimously agreed.

**The Committee RESOLVED to note the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2023-2024 Work Programmes for Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Sub-Committees.**

**16. ANY ITEM(S) THE CHAIR DECIDES ARE URGENT**

None

The meeting finished at 9.15 pm