

# Barnet Community Participation Strategy

## Year 1 Progress report

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## 0. Foreword

*We have pledged to put community and partnership at the heart of what we do as a council that cares about people, our places, and the planet. This includes going to where people are, learning through doing, and being transparent, about what we can and cannot change.*

*The Community Participation Strategy (CPS) was approved by Community Leadership and Libraries Committee in October 2022. It set out a vision for changing the way the Council relates to its residents and introduced new participatory methods through a number of pathfinder projects. It signalled an organisation-wide commitment to involving communities in the work of the council and listening to the voices of communities we have engaged with less often. The CPS has implemented new ways of working, fostered community connections and enabled the council to learn more about the lives of residents in our borough.*

*This report brings together learning from some of the projects where we have involved residents through engagement, co-design and co-production. We are excited to make an ongoing commitment to transforming the way Barnet works through inclusion, participation, and the celebration of local communities. We look forward to working with residents, growing and embedding community participation across Barnet Council as we continue to improve service development and delivery together.*

**Councillor Sara Conway, Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Participation**

## 1. Executive summary

The Community Participation Strategy (CPS) established a new way for the Council to relate to residents and introduced participatory methods through a number of pathfinder projects. It signalled an organisation-wide commitment to involving communities in the work of the council and listening to the voices of communities we have engaged with less often.

The first year of delivering the strategy has seen Barnet advance on a course of community participation, taking significant action on redesigning how we relate to communities. The outcomes described in this report are only a few of the many projects and initiatives delivered in this first year. The pace and scale of the work has been substantial and the council's relationship with our residents and stakeholders already feels different.

The CP strategy implementation introduced new mechanisms for people to participate in the Council's decision making. Whether through participating in our first ever Citizens Assembly, joining our Citizens Panel or sharing aspects of their daily lives through ethnographic research, residents have had many new opportunities to get involved in the council's agenda for change. A new programme of community events has provided opportunities to co-produce, participate and celebrate in cultural life. We have successfully implemented new ways of working, fostered community connections and tried to understand more about the lives of residents in our borough. A new Community Participation Toolkit provides accessible online guidance for all staff and partners to encourage all staff to consult and engage effectively.

Marginalised communities that have previously been excluded from direct engagement with the council have had the opportunity to talk directly to the Leader. Our grant funding and capacity building support

to local community groups and organisations has enabled 85 community events to take place across the year. A further series of events produced by the council helped showed residents that we recognise and value the diversity of our population and share in their moments of celebrations. Through the coproduction of Barnet's Culture Strategy, over 1500 residents have contributed their suggestions for developing the arts and cultural offer in the borough. A completely new conversation for Barnet.

This work has successfully initiated a shift in the way the Council relates to residents, increasing the base level of participation for many residents in civic life. The strategy has four approaches, of which 3 have been tested in year one effectively. These are: Communication, Consultation and (to an earlier degree) Partnership. The approach not fully tested in year one is Community Leadership – how we empower the community to be more involved in projects that affect them.

Now that the groundwork has been laid, we are able to move to what is next – a purposeful deepening of participatory work to transform people, place and planet. We can continue moving away from just fixing problems to working alongside the community, and start to increasingly enable their involvement. There are strategic drivers for taking this deeper next step in the NCL Integrated Care Strategy, with principles of trusting the strength of communities, demonstrating our collective accountability and building from insight. For this next stage, we will need to work in partnerships where possible and appropriate, work with our communities including enabling them to come up with the solutions to the challenges they face. The continuation of our participatory work will be informed by, and will itself inform, the developing Equalities strategy and the borough's emerging shift to a Community Wealth Building approach.

## 2. Introduction

The Community Participation Strategy (CPS) was approved by Community Leadership and Libraries Committee on 31 October 2022. It was the first strategy to be produced under the current administration and helped pave the way for *Our Plan for Barnet* – the council's new three-year corporate plan.

At the heart of the CPS is a set of five principles:

- We go where people are
- We learn through doing
- We listen
- We are transparent, accessible and open
- We value Community Power

It also identified four broad approaches that can be used to engage and involve communities.

- Communication
- Consultation
- Partnership
- Community Leadership

This update report reflects on the progress that has been made in embedding these principles and approaches across the organisation. As the CPS made clear in 2022, there were already many examples of good practice in community participation happening in the council. The CPS aimed to build on these and to share the techniques and learnings from them.

The CPS identified four 'pathfinder' projects. These were identified to test the approaches and principles of the CPS and assess their effectiveness as a methodological approach. Most of the projects are still ongoing, and no longer considered 'pathfinders', the learning having been derived from them over the first year of the CPS. These and the other projects discussed in this document are only a small part of the participation and engagement work that is being done across the council. The Strategy and Community Participation team continue to network with partners to build the learning and expertise that they hold and make available centrally.

### **3. Learning from the Pathfinder projects**

#### **3.1 The Barnet Citizens Assembly on Climate Change and Biodiversity**

The Citizen's Assembly on Climate Change and Biodiversity was the first citizens assembly that Barnet has held. Led by the council's Sustainability team, coordinated by commissioned provider TPX Impact with facilitation support from Strategy and engagement officers, the process ran from February to May 2023.

40 residents aged 18 and over participated in a citizens' assembly, and 20 residents aged 12-17 participated in a young people's assembly. The two groups came together at key points to share their experiences, ideas and recommendations and each participated in a series of deliberative discussion events where they heard from local experts. The adult assembly contributed 30 hours of work, and the young people's assembly 18 hours for which the participants were remunerated. Themes explored by the assembly were based on the council's draft sustainability action plan, and participants developed a series of 20 recommendations across these themes.

#### **Reflections**

A full 'lessons learned' report has been produced about the assembly and an independent evaluation report by Middlesex University is in development. Some key learning from the process were:

- It is important to be flexible in the design of the assembly and be ready to change the format or timing of sessions in response to participants' needs. The assembly fell during Ramadan which necessitated some adjustments and in general, there was a sense that more time would have been beneficial to the process.
- More people will be interested in participating than can be accommodated in the assembly, so it is important to consider how unsuccessful applicants can still be involved. In the case of the assembly some were invited to facilitate or observe sessions.
- Using an illustrator to create visual minutes was very successful and provided a creative and accessible output from each session that participants could be proud of.
- Barnet's assembly had a clearly defined governance structure with both an Independent Advisory Group of local experts and an Overview and Scrutiny Group of local interest organisations .
- One of the real successes of the Barnet assembly was the decision to run a parallel young people's assembly. This was coproduced with young people, and their testimony was some of the most powerful to emerge from the process.

#### **Key learnings**

- Citizen's assemblies work best for coproducing approaches that tackle high-profile single topics through a clearly defined, focused question, and for building consensus. The

success of this assembly suggest that the council should definitely consider this method to in future, and there are other strategic areas the council is working on that would lend themselves to assembly methodology – tackling inequalities for example. The biggest factors to bear in mind however are the level of cost and staff time required.

- Getting the right personnel is essential to the success of the assembly process. Speakers need to have a high level of expertise and be engaging presenters. Managing the speakers makes up a large proportion of the work involved in running an assembly.
- A key finding of the Middlesex University evaluation was that some assembly members reported an inconsistency in the quality of staff facilitation, and questioned whether Council staff facilitating compromised the independence of the process. There is clearly a need to ensure staff facilitators are properly trained, but the question of whether to use independent facilitators or council staff often depends on the nature of the exercise, and what residents are being asked to comment on. If the work of the council is being discussed, residents often feel more comfortable speaking to an independent facilitator.

### 3.2 The Leader Listens programme

The Leader of the council, Cllr Barry Rawlings, made a commitment to holding in-person meetings with communities to hear directly from residents about their views and concerns. This series of events was branded The Leader Listens. The sessions are specifically aimed at communities that the council has historically not engaged with in this way, and for whom council services may have disproportionate impact.

The format of the programme is based on the CPS principle of ‘we go where people are’. The groups were arranged by community organisations and either held at their premises, or in other neutral spaces. The sessions so far have been:

- **Asylum seekers.** Held at the newest contingency hotel in the borough with about 40 asylum seekers in attendance. The session was organised in partnership with New Citizens’ Gateway, which delivers outreach support in the hotel and was able to provide interpretation.
- **Adults and young people with learning disabilities.** This session was held at Barnet Mencap’s premises with eight participants.
- **Burnt Oak Women’s Group.** This is a small community group made up of women from a range of backgrounds who all live in Burnt Oak. The session was conducted at Barnfield Primary School with a group of six women.
- **Adults with mild to moderate mental health issues.** This session took place at a meeting the Friendly Place, a mental health support group provided by the Barnet Group that meets twice a month at Burnt Oak library. Around 10 people attended this session.
- **Deaf and hard of hearing adults.** Held at the Jewish Deaf Association premises with about 30 people in attendance.
- **Domestic abuse survivors.** To protect the safety of the participants, this was the only Leader Listens session not hosted in a community space. Instead, this group met at Hendon Town Hall. Around 40 people attended, mostly survivors with some practitioners.

#### Reflections

- The key successes of the programme have been in the relationship building and trust that it has engendered. Particularly, the partnership working with community organisations. This has helped to strengthen relationships with these groups. It shows that we value their skills and expertise and recognise the trusted role they have with the communities they serve.

- The personal impact of the Leader was a key success. His open and personable demeanour and wealth of knowledge about the borough creates an immediate connection that enables the conversations to flow comfortably. His seniority was also a significant factor, and residents have been visibly impressed that the Leader of the Council has taken time to hear them in person.
- Learning through doing. As the programme has rolled out, the design and delivery of the sessions has improved. The value of providing childcare, refreshments and a more structured format have all been learned along the way.
- A formal and robust process for both actioning suggestions and also feeding back on actions to participants.

#### **Key learnings**

- Communities value senior leaders visiting them to listen. The programme should also extend to other members and senior officers.
- Evaluation, reporting and follow up processes need to be built in from the start.
- Some of the issues that raised by participants will be outside of the council's powers to act on. It's important to be transparent about what we can and cannot do.
- The insight gathered through these sessions is valuable and should be made available (within data protection parameters).

### **3.3 The Barnet Culture Strategy 2024-2029**

Producing a new culture strategy was a manifesto commitment of the administration, as part of the ambition to boost the borough's appeal as a cultural destination and increase opportunities for arts, culture and recreation.

A key deliverable of the CPS was to show how participatory approaches can be used to shape council strategies. The culture strategy presented the perfect opportunity to model coproduction. For one thing, culture belongs to people. It is part of their identity, and people's preferences for the culture they consume are highly subjective. There is also a whole sector of arts and creative industries in Barnet with whom the council had previously had very little contact and who needed to have their say.

Working across the Strategy and Engagement and Regeneration teams, a timeline was plotted that would enable extensive community engagement to develop the strategy. To lead on this, an independent steering group was assembled. Middlesex University's Associate Professor of Visual Culture was selected to chair the steering group. The Chair assisted with the recruitment of the steering group members. An open call was put out via council communications channels to invite applications, and around 60 people applied. These were shortlisted down to the existing 16 members by a panel including the chair. The panel was mindful of ensuring diversity of demographics in the groups as well as areas of expertise.

The Culture Strategy Steering Group met for the first time in March 2023 and has met four times since. During these meetings a workshop approach has often been taken, with visual minutes produced by an illustrator. This has enabled some clear priorities to emerge that have then been complemented by the findings of wider community engagement undertaken over the summer.

An early outcome of the steering group process was their rejection of the initial timeline for developing the strategy. Originally scheduled to be approved by Cabinet in November 2023, the group felt that this

was insufficient time for genuine coproduction. Member approval was subsequently sought to extend the deadline to March 2024.

In addition to developing a culture strategy, the council had also committed to bidding to be London Borough of Culture (LBOC) in 2027. The timing of this meant that the culture strategy would be able to set out a roadmap for developing culture in Barnet so that the borough would be ready to deliver a LBOC programme in three years' time. A bid could then be developed that would build on the strategy's aims. When the competition opened however, it was announced that the deadline to submit bids would be November 2023. This was earlier than anticipated and has meant that the bid and the strategy have had to be worked on in parallel.

A bid writing team was commissioned to develop the LBOC bid and lead on a programme of community engagement carried out over the summer. Over 1500 responses were received and the findings from this engagement will be equally useful for the strategy and the bid. It has provided a wealth of valuable insight into what residents want to see prioritised in our work to develop culture in the borough. The team has now synthesised the findings with the outcomes of the steering group discussions and developed a draft set of priorities for the strategy. These will be discussed with the portfolio lead and taken back to the steering group for finalisation.

### **Reflections**

- A key learning from this process is that coproduction can often take its own direction, and flexibility is needed in the project plan. For a newly assembled steering group to be effective, there needs to be a period where the group establishes itself and settles into its ways of working. It was only by the third meeting that the group was into its stride. Tellingly this was the meeting at which the strategy timeline was challenged. The resulting re-think of the timeline was of huge benefit to the process and the effectiveness of the strategy, and not something the council alone might have recognised on its own.
- The role of elected members in the coproduction had to be rethought midway through the process. Though some councillors had initially sat in on steering group meetings, it was decided that they should not be present. This decision was subsequently overturned as it was recognised to be counterproductive. The portfolio lead for Culture Leisure, Arts and Sport now plays an active role in the strategy development and is invited to attend steering group meetings. In future projects, the balance of community and statutory power should be agreed at the outset.
- The actual role of the steering group has also evolved in a different way to how we anticipated. The original idea was that the group would provide executive oversight and steer of the engagement process. In fact, the group have largely functioned as an engagement panel themselves. Steering group meetings now tend to be workshop-style ideation sessions where the strategy content is being formed. Now that the findings of the survey and engagement sessions held over the summer are available, these will be fed into that process.

### **Key learnings**

- Define the roles of all stakeholder groups at the outset of co-production
- Prepare to be flexible about the process and timeline
- Cultural events can provide an effective space to meet and engage communities in dialogue about areas of the Council's work

### 3.4 Empowering grassroots community action

The fourth pathfinder project in the CPS aimed to increase the opportunities for residents to participate in community action. Barnet's VCFSE is large and diverse. The council and its partners in Barnet Together do a great deal to support and empower the sector, but it is equally important to grow it and nurture its ecosystem from the ground up. There are many ways of doing this and the project sought to explore several of them.

One important strand of work was delivering on the actions in the [2022 Barnet Volunteering Strategy](#). A dedicated community development officer in the Strategy and Engagement team is now responsible for the council's actions and has worked with Volunteering Barnet to relaunch the Volunteering Steering Group. The group now has broader representation from around the council and is particularly focused on increasing local volunteering by council staff.

This pathfinder also included an objective for Barnet Together to extend its reach and membership to more organisations, and to support smaller, unconstituted groups to take the next step in developing their business. The alliance has continued to deliver consistently for the sector over the last year. In Quarter 1 of 2023/24 alone, the following has been achieved:

- Training provided to 63 organisations
- 149 one-to-one support visits to groups, 117 of these being capacity-building support and 36 fundraising
- 235 additional volunteers registered into Volunteering Barnet, and 133 deployed into roles
- 21 new organisations registered as Volunteering Involving Organisations (VIOs)

Grassroots participation within Barnet's environmental groups. saw over 100 environmental groups self-organise around the borough clearing green spaces. Some have diversified into growing projects and other green initiatives through support from Barnet Together Many of these groups were a key part of the Citizens Assembly process and many are involved in the independent Green Spaces Network.

Elsewhere we have seen environmental activities such as interfaith bulb and tree planting carried out by the Barnet Multi Faith Forum. A number of eco-fairs which bring together a growing number of grassroots organisations and social enterprises have also demonstrated how important green issues are to communities in the borough.

#### Reflections

- The challenge to this pathfinder was conceiving it as a distinct project. While the workstreams it covers all support participation, they are arguably business-as-usual functions for Barnet Together and the team. What we need are better ways of reporting the outcomes through data insight.
- Grassroots participation happens in hyper local places. Place projects can therefore be the way in.

#### Key learnings

- A more compelling way of demonstrating the benefits of grassroots community participation would be to focus on small, radical interventions rather than borough-wide services.
- Other opportunities to explore further are widening and deepening Council links with the environment and green spaces groups. And connecting participation with our corporate priorities such as Net Zero, Culture and Resident Experience.



## 4. Changing the culture – organisational transformation

A key aim of the CPS was to bring about a council-wide change in how we work, and to instil a community participation approach in all areas of the business. There is participatory work under way in many parts of the council, and the launch of the CPS itself has raised internal awareness of the need to work in this way. The agenda has consistently been championed by members and senior leaders too. Having the new Toolkit online will boost momentum and accelerate the adoption of community participation across the council. A greater focus on internal networking will also enable this to grow further as the common way we work.

The following sections report on what has been put in place over the last year to support internal culture change.

### Community Participation Toolkit

The CPS pledged to create a newly updated online resource to replace the current Consultation and Engagement Toolkit. The Strategy and Community Participation team commissioned New Local to author the content for the new toolkit, and to work with the council to design its functionality.

The toolkit is constructed so that staff and partners can easily find the right resources and guidance for their community participation project. It is structured in such a way that users can access support at different stages of a project and in different contexts. The content is brought to life with real life case studies and video testimonies from residents.

The Toolkit can be found at: [Community Participation Toolkit | Engage Barnet](#). It went live in November 2023, and will be promoted around the council through a series of online demo workshops. Access and use of the Toolkit will be monitored to ensure it is being used.

#### Reflections

- Creating the Toolkit has taken longer than anticipated. Its launch will however provide an opportunity to reboot the CPS principles and restart conversations.
- The previous toolkit included some comprehensive guidance on when and how to conduct consultation. This has not been replicated in the new Toolkit. Instead, updated guidance on consultation will form part of a forthcoming Consultation and Engagement Policy.

### Barnet Citizens Panel

The Barnet Citizens Panel is a representative panel of over 1,000 Barnet residents. It is managed by the Strategy and Community Participation team and is designed to be used by the council and its partners to gauge a representative borough-wide view on particular issues, proposals or pieces of work.

Work began on the panel in 2022, and the team have so far recruited an initial 1,138 residents. Of these, 86 (7.6%) have opted to engage non-digitally. The panel was recruited by randomised postal invitations with additional booster recruitment from under-represented demographics. These included social housing tenants and younger people (16-25). The plan is to recruit a further 600 panellists each year annually, to maintain the panel at just over 2,000 members. To keep the panel fresh, panellists will serve for a maximum of four years, after which they will not be eligible to join again for a further four years.

The first panel survey was conducted over the summer of 2023. It was commissioned by the corporate Communications team and covered topics including campaign awareness and engagement with council publications. It received 401 responses (35%), and the results are being used to inform future communications strategies and policies. The second panel survey was launched in November. This will seek views on the council's use of residents' data and is being developed in collaboration with the Insight and Intelligence Hub. Results from all panel surveys and face to face engagements will be published on the Engage Barnet website and circulated to the panel members in a biannual Barnet Citizens Panel newsletter.

#### **Reflections**

- The Citizens Panel has already begun to demonstrate its usefulness as a means of targeted measurement of resident perception.
- Further socialisation of the panel is required and promotion via the Toolkit to ensure partners are aware of it.
- The panel is a useful source of resident insight that can be gathered on an ongoing basis and complement other sources such as the Adults and Young People's perception surveys. There is potential to use the data gathered through these various sources more holistically to inform policy and help us design solutions to the challenges they identify.

#### **Communities of Practice**

The CPS proposed developing a 'community of practice' comprising officers from around the organisation who had particular expertise in community participation. This was envisaged as distinct from the existing Participation and Engagement Network (PEN). This meets six-weekly and has around 60 members, anyone can join who has community participation or engagement responsibilities or simply an interest in this kind of work.

Communities of practice on the other hand, should have a specific purpose. The proposed approach therefore was to convene temporary communities around particular projects or challenges. In this way the community would function as a task and finish group made up of peers with the skills and expertise to help resolve an issue or design a project. Members of the PEN were invited to suggest pieces of work that they would like a community of practice to support with. While some suggestions have been raised, none have so far resulted in a community of practice being convened.

#### **Reflections**

- While there is still potential for communities of practice to be established, the apparent lack of interest from colleagues needs to be considered. A more active approach will be taken in future, to investigate whether it is a lack of confidence, information or organisational maturity that is holding the idea back.
- Another approach could be for the Strategy and Engagement team to scope a COP pilot project.

### **5. Learning from other projects**

Over the last year, there have been several new projects, programmes and initiatives that have sought to engage and involve the community. While not designated as 'pathfinders' in the CPS, they still provide insight that is valuable to the ongoing development of participatory practice in the council.

Again, it is important to note that there are many more examples of community participation and coproduction happening in the council. Notably, in Family Services, Adults and Health and Communities and Town Centres. Capturing and sharing good practice from around the organisation is a function of the Participation and Engagement network.

### **The Community Events Programme**

#### Community events funded through grants:

The events grant fund became a strong element of the council's community investment offer, strengthening relationships with diverse community groups and supporting their capacity development. The Council has run funding schemes for communities to deliver their own community events. This included funding for 11 Black History Month events, including in schools and libraries, and the Winter Festivals funding, promoting inclusive community and faith events during the winter months which support cohesion. 21 winter festival events took place, including some marking cultural festivals not previously supported such as Tamil Heritage Month and the Lunar New Year.

#### Events delivered by the Council

The Council delivered, or was heavily involved in delivering, seven of the eight major cultural and social dates in the events calendar. These events have been very successful showcases for the council, well attended and well run and introduced the Council to new members of Barnet's communities. The Council has amassed a wealth of tools, contacts and resources that can be used to support the staging of future community events. The events the council delivered brought communities together, celebrating the culture of our communities and creating opportunities for people to have fun and get involved. The events have helped contribute to a changed public perception of the council, as one that cares about our community and the things that matter to them.

#### **Reflections**

Investment for communities to lead their own events can help strengthen smaller, and less-heard communities, support the development of VCFSE organisations and foster connections and cohesion.

The Council's directly delivered community events have been a tangible demonstration of the change the council is bringing to the borough. Events have created new opportunities for the Council to meet with a range of residents, enabling consultation and dialogue to take place. They have been a huge success and brought happiness, celebration and fellowship in what have been difficult times for many of our residents.

Although some elements of direct delivery were resource intensive, we have developed less intensive partnership models working with key stakeholders, particularly Middlesex University. There is a need to continue widening reach to those not in attendance.

### **Ethnographic research study to understand the lived experiences of disabled residents**

The council's biannual Adult Residents Perception Survey gathers insight from a representative sample of 2000 residents through telephone and face-to-face surveys. In the most recent wave of the RPS conducting over the winter of 2021/2022, demographic analysis of the findings showed that residents identifying as disabled tended to report the lowest levels of satisfaction. In order to investigate this

further a research project was commissioned to better understand the lived experience of disabled people in Barnet.

Undertaken by the research company Habitus, the project involved deep ethnographic engagement with 19 residents, 14 of whom were disabled and 5 were carers. A number of key findings emerged that the council is now considering how to address through its Tackling the Gaps agenda. The research provided a rich understanding of the various ways disabled residents engage with the council and the barriers they sometimes face in doing this. It also highlighted the disproportionate impact many disabled people experience of the cost of living crisis.

#### **Reflections**

- This is one of two ethnographic projects undertaken in the last year (East Barnet being the other). This methodology is resource intensive but is particularly effective in providing a deeper understanding of lived experience. The important thing is how that insight is then used to inform our work – such as the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- It is costly to use external agencies to conduct this kind of research, so ideally it is something the team should be able to do themselves and we will look at this as a training and development objective.
- With all engagement projects it is important let the participants know what happened next, and what we did with their insight. The level of personal investment participants give to ethnographic research makes this even more important.

#### **Research to understand community spaces and places in East Barnet**

In order to better understand the role that community assets play in a neighbourhood, the council commissioned a research study from the organisation Neighbourly Lab. The objectives of the research were to:

- Map in depth the community assets in a ward and study how they are being used and by whom
- To understand resident perceptions and experiences of the physical buildings in their neighbourhood; their usage and occupation, and opportunities for the future
- To establish which local places are used for people to mix and meet, and whether there are further opportunities in current underused spaces
- To ascertain where people receive advice and information and the role of physical assets in supporting this
- To establish whether there are current gaps in LB Barnet's asset provision and if/how these needs are being met in other spaces.

The ward of East Barnet was chosen to be the location for the study with the idea being that the method and learnings could be applied in other places. As well as the community mapping, 17 local stakeholders were interviewed, including ward members, VCFSE leads and residents association chairs. 11 ethnographic interviews were then conducted with a diverse sample of residents.

The final report has only just been received, and the team will discuss the recommendations with senior leaders in order to plan how take the learnings forward.

### Key learnings

- Residents access a diverse range of space and places, not all of which are in council ownership. We can use our levers and connections to better facilitate this use, not just through funding.
- The community mapping of East Barnet undertaken for this project could be replicated in other wards where we lack this level of understanding

## 6. Conclusions: progress against our principles

This first year of delivering the community participation strategy has moved the council to a new position. The next phase will be to build from this foundation and use the new ways of working that we have learned in this first year to go deeper in our participatory work and in our relationships with communities. Our aim should be to involve communities and take a partnership approach wherever possible and appropriate. As we plan for this next chapter in the development of Barnet's participatory practice it is useful to reflect on the progress we have made in instilling the strategy's five principles.

Principle	Successes	Potential to do more
<b>We go where people are</b>	Our Leaders Listens programme has engaged communities in their own spaces and neighbourhoods, while our ethnographic researchers have walked alongside residents and observed their lived experiences. Our planning meetings for the Culture Strategy and the Grahame Park neighbourhood project have been held on-site in community premises.	Consider holding more council events in community spaces.
<b>We learn through doing</b>	This has been a year of learning. As we have delivered projects, we have evaluated outcomes, shared learning and made improvements where necessary.	Further develop our systems and processes for evaluation and storytelling.
<b>We listen</b>	We have created more opportunities for residents and other stakeholders to have their say. We have held more direct engagement sessions to help shape our strategies while increasing the number of partnership boards and other participatory forums.	Further demonstrate that we have not just listened but <i>heard</i> . Showing the changes that we have made in response to feedback. Develop more mechanisms for 'open' listening where residents can tell the council their ideas and concerns. Strengthen our processes for using insight to inform policy and service design.
<b>We are transparent, accessible and open</b>	Greater involvement from residents as well as more events and activities in the community have all helped to make the council feel more present and available. We have designed grant funding processes that are transparent and fair, and are working to implement these consistently	As budgets tighten there will be a growing need for honest conversations with the community about how we spend money. The trusted partnerships we have built through community participation will be vital to this dialogue.

	across our community investment portfolio.	
<b>We value Community Power</b>	The increase in coproduction across the council and our partnerships with the VCFSE have begun to show that the council is increasingly collaborating with the community and empowering them to participate.	This is an area for further growth in year 2, when we should pilot projects that give further empowerment to the community and more opportunities to coproduce.