

Appendix E – Overview and Scrutiny Topic Suggestions for 2024-25

Items proposed for 2024-25

Review topic	Comments received	Submitted by	Brief scope	Suggested approach
Antisemitism	Local issue - antisemitism	Resident	<p>Since the recent unrest in the Middle East there has been a rise of antisemitism and islamophobia. Scrutiny may wish to look at work across the council to tackle hate crime and support community cohesion.</p> <p>Possibly cover as part of Crime and Disorder Scrutiny meeting.</p>	Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Youth Provision	Youth Provision	Resident	To look at the current youth services offer in Barnet to review the range of activities for young people. To ensure services are accessible to diverse groups in the borough and what work is being undertaken to address gaps in services in the light of current funding constraints.	Report to Children and Education Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Review of Barnet's Council Tax Support Scheme	Of the 296 Las (local authorities) in England in 2023/24, there are 14 LAs with non-banded schemes that have a higher minimum contribution than Barnet's 28%, but out of those LAs 6 offer higher support levels, including up to 100% in some cases, to those who are vulnerable,	Citizens' Advice Barnet	Citizens' Advice Barnet is concerned that Barnet Council's Council Tax Support scheme is not working well for both the vulnerable members of our community, many of whom	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

	<p>so actually only 8 have higher minimum contributions than Barnet with no protections in place. 7 are at 30% minimum contribution and 1 is at 35%.</p> <p>There are 8 income banded schemes that have a higher minimum contribution in their lowest band than Barnet. However, 3 of those have lower contribution %s or 100% support for vulnerable groups, so effectively only 5 banded schemes have a higher minimum contribution than Barnet in band 1, with no protections in place, ranging from 30% to 35%.</p> <p>The big thing about Barnet's scheme is that it actually has one of the highest contribution rates (48%) of all banded schemes for those in the second band, those with earnings between £0-£500 / month. The effect when compared with other schemes is particularly harsh on those earning under £100 / week, as the other banded schemes let you stay in band 1 up to much higher incomes. Barnet has the highest minimum contribution of all banded schemes for claimants earning £1 to £100 / week.</p> <p>One thing to note is that they only take earnings into account, not benefit income (so ignore tax credits and universal credit), but those at the lower income end are still worse off and vulnerable groups not protected. Also, they have a 'one size fits all' scheme which assumes a lone parent with 2 children has the ability to</p>		<p>should be able to rely on it to help cover the cost of their council tax obligations, and the council itself.</p> <p>Often, disabled people, carers, single households with children under 5 are protected from having to make the higher contributions. Barnet only has 1 protected group – veterans, e.g. “Where claimant or partner receives a war pension, or a war widow(ers) pension, or a war disablement pension or a regular payment under the armed forces compensation scheme.”</p> <p>The current banded scheme means that, if you have no earned income, you must pay 28% of your council tax. If you work up to 11 hrs a week at the living wage rate you fit in the £1- £500/month gross earnings band and you must pay 48% of your council tax.</p> <p>The Scheme is due to be reviewed. It was reported this will not take place in 2024/25.</p>	
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	<p>pay the same amount towards their council tax as a single person with the same earnings.</p> <p>We understand the council is under financial pressure but this does not mean some of the poorest and most vulnerable in our community should continue to be offered support by one council department (for example food banks) but have it removed by another (council tax collection).</p> <p>In a previous report we have provided the council with data about the scale of Council Tax debt in Barnet where we said “making the right changes will save the council the cost of attempting to enforce payment from those who simply do not have the money to pay, and preventing such people from falling into debt will save money on public services in the long term.” and this continues to be the case.</p>			
<p>The Anti-Poverty Strategy</p>	<p>Overview and Scrutiny Committee item.</p>	<p>Labour Group</p>	<p>To check: in practice, it is understood that Barnet Council has a Life Chances Strategy 2020-24 and a Child Poverty Strategy 2020-24 (which are due for review).</p> <p>Scrutiny could review the previous strategies and/ or examine the proposals for new strategies. This would also be considered in the context of the Council's wider actions e.g. cost of living support.</p>	<p>Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p>

The Transport Strategy and, in particular, the 20 mph zone policy	Briefing/ Overview and Scrutiny Committee item.	Resident/ Labour Group	Examine the existing Transport Strategy and 20 mph policy/ approach and identify if any updates are required. Residents were also interested in how and when 20 mph zones might be implemented in their areas; processes and external communications may be suitable areas for investigation.	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee
School Streets	The lack of School Streets in Barnet especially in relation to neighbouring and other London boroughs. 4% of schools in Barnet vs. 27% in Haringey and 32.7% in Brent (source: Healthy Streets Scorecard).	Resident	School Streets is a programme to transform roads outside schools, so that pedestrians and cyclists are prioritised at school start and finish times. The schemes aim to tackle congestion and improve air quality at the school gates, making it easier and safer to walk and cycle to school.	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Cyber Security in the Council	Overview and Scrutiny Committee item.	Conservative Group	To consider the Council's cyber security arrangements and preparedness.	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Barnet Homes Repairs Service	Overview and Scrutiny Committee item.	Conservative Group	To examine the repairs process for residents and to review the performance of the repairs service.	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Borough of Sanctuary	Request for briefing/ Overview and Scrutiny Committee item.	Labour Group	This would be to follow up the item considered by the Overview and	Report to Overview

			<p>Scrutiny Committee in March 2024 (Refugee Resettlement and Asylum Progress).</p> <p>To provide any updates on the Council's progress in achieving Borough of Sanctuary status and for the Committee to consider possible areas for improvements and joined up working in the Council and with the Voluntary and Community Sector.</p>	and Scrutiny Committee
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Reserve items that may be allocated throughout the year or in future years

Barnet Homes Resident Communications	Overview and Scrutiny Committee item.	Conservative Group	<p>Scrutiny could examine the touch/contact points between Barnet Homes and residents to ensure that sufficient communication is taking place.</p> <p>The content of communications could also be examined to ensure that it is suitable (plain English, appropriate tone, etc).</p>	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Children's Playgrounds	<p>1. Finding ways to decrease dog-fouling on the streets (place more specialised bins in the area? introduce fines? increase dog owners' awareness?)</p> <p>2. Shifting towards building playgrounds from natural/sustainable materials (like wood, not this</p>	Resident	Issue of dog fouling could be considered if scrutiny decide to review street scene or littering (this has also been raised as an item).	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

	plastic!), and also re-introducing sandpits to children's playgrounds.		Scrutiny could look at the commissioning of children's playgrounds and opportunities to use more sustainable materials.	
Traffic Light Timings	<p>As a physically disabled person who, by necessity, walks slowly with a stick, I would like the board to consider adding 5 seconds to the timing at pedestrian traffic lights.</p> <p>Especially when it's raining or very windy, at the moment I am having to cross most pedestrian lights half way and then wait for the lights to change again in order to complete crossing the road.</p>	Resident	Scrutiny can review the council approach to ensuring pedestrian crossings are safe for the physically disabled including crossing timings.	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee
LED (Light Emitting Diode) Light Pollution	Light pollution caused by LED lighting and the associated detriments to people, animals and plants.	Resident	<p>The London Assembly produced its first report on light pollution in May 2023. "Light pollution refers to excessive or misdirected artificial light. Direct sources of artificial light at night include street lighting; office and commercial buildings; advertising and billboards; signage; and outdoor facility lighting (such as sports facilities)." Light Pollution in London</p> <p>Scrutiny could review the findings of the review and consider what is appropriate to implement in Barnet.</p>	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Litter	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encouraging formation of local residents' action groups. 2. Employing more dedicated staff. 3. Upgrading to fox-proof litter receptacles especially in public spaces. 	Resident	<p>Scrutiny could look at:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Council performance in relation to litter and fly-tipping; and 2. How the council is supporting voluntary led environmental groups such as litter picking groups. 	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Litter	Maybe a liaison with the public organising a rubbish pick up in your local streets. Maybe a street organiser in place to dish out rubbish bag, brooms, picker uppers! Etc. Make us proud of Barnet.	Resident	See above.	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Fly Tipping	<p>We would like the Ctte to investigate how effective (or otherwise) the current locations of CCTV are at capturing fly tipping incidents. Specifically, we would like you to address the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Are cameras strategically placed in the main hotspots where the largest fly tipping incidents are eventually proven to be (e.g. is there disparity between incident capture vs locations confirmed during refuse/street scene collections)? b) What times of day (spit into hourly slices) is fly tipping most likely to take place? c) How many extra cameras (analysed on a ward-by-ward basis) would the borough ideally need to tackle the problem? d) What do the collection volumes, locations of collections and types of waste tell us about fly tippers' identities and motives (e.g. are they individuals on 	Burnt Oak Residents' Association	<p>Scrutiny to investigate the issue of fly tipping borough-wide and specifically in Burnt Oak to identify prevalence and effectiveness of current prevention strategies (e.g. use of CCTV (Closed Circuit Television) at hotspots to catch offenders).</p> <p>Also, explore what other methods could be used to tackle this issue, such as QR codes to report fly tipping directly, informing residents where the nearest recycling centre, community skip service, other services which provide free collection of furniture, clothes etc.</p>	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

	<p>foot, residents or businesses with cars/vans, unlicensed waste carriers)?</p> <p>NB: We think this is a good topic because LBB's Community Safety Mid Year Report (Sept 2023) suggests that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ASB-environmental incidents are not often captured by CCTV. For example, 45 out of 408 incidents were captured in the 6 months to Sept 2023 (yet we know that fly tipping is high on the list of residents' concerns across Barnet); and - Your CCTV cameras may not be best place to capture fly tipping although it is good at capturing other incidents. For example, your timestamp shows spikes at 22:00 and 23:00 - a likely time for fly tipping- yet 17:00 and 16:00 also appear to be very popular 'Crime Times' (though it is highly unlikely that the majority of fly tipping is taking place during the late afternoon). <p>In other words, we really need to drill down on the existing data, then test and confirm how to capture much better data.</p> <p>Also, what other methods could be used to tackle this issue, such as QR codes to report fly tipping directly. informing residents where the the nearest recycling centre, services which provide free collection of furniture, clothes etc.</p>		<p>Could there be another site which could be opened like the "Barnet Furniture Centre" in areas where there is a lot of fly tipping?</p>	
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Street Scene	Upkeep and maintenance of the locality i.e. roads, litter, trees, and open spaces.	Resident	Highways Maintenance Task and Finish Group work is ongoing and due to report soon. Scrutiny could look at residents' satisfaction and performance data on litter and greenspaces and explore solutions where there are areas of concern or underperformance.	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Street Clutter	Pavements for people not ever-increasing amounts of revenue raising street clutter.	Resident	Scrutiny could review the council policy on street furniture and Advertising boards to ensure there is sufficient space for pedestrians as well as other essential items.	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Loss of Front Gardens / Crossovers	Paving over of front gardens - increases flooding and loss of biodiversity.	Resident	There has a rise in car usage and applications for dropped kerbs or crossovers to enable front gardens to become a concreted parking space. This means excess water cannot be absorbed into the soil and creates a flooding risk and has an impact on plants and wildlife. Scrutiny can review the current policy to ensure it considers sustainability measures.	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Parking Enforcement / Speeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lack of monitoring where there are restrictions - parking on double yellow lines and speeding on roads where 20mph speed limit. 	Resident	Review of Parking Enforcement service/contract.	Report to Overview

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of issuance of fines for parking on double yellow lines, parking on pavements. • Review of locations of monitored CCTV. Some places where they are not needed, but need near schools. 		Review highways data on speeding in 20 mph zones (where data is available) and consideration of possible enforcement approaches.	and Scrutiny Committee
Highways Public Consultations	The way the Highways Department approaches public consultations on highways issues and the extent to which it takes (or fails to take) proper account of public responses.	Resident	Review a sample of consultations undertaken by Highways to review consultation responses and impact on schemes implemented.	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Crime Prevention	Crime Prevention (especially car theft).	Resident	Partners could be requested to address this topic specifically at the crime and disorder scrutiny meeting (18 July 2024).	Crime and Disorder Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Unpaid Carers	Is enough help (practical and financial) given to those who do not qualify for financial assistance but who may be using up all their savings to pay for minimal home care. Also the provision of minimal respite for those who may not be able to call on friends and family to help.	Resident	Review policy and support on family carers, identify numbers of carers and existing help and support available (e.g. via Communities and Adults, Barnet Carers, etc.)	Report to Adults and Health and/or Children and Education Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Waiting Times for Hospital Appointments and Elective Treatments	Poor NHS service including waiting time for hospital appointments and difficulties in actually getting face to face with your GP (General Practice).	Resident	Scrutiny could request a report from the NCL ICB (North Central London Integrated Care Board) on hospital waiting times.	Report to Adults and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee

				or Task and Finish Group
Sexual Health Services	Sexual Health Services.	Scrutiny Team	<p>“Local sexual health services are grappling with unprecedented increases in demand whilst levels of funding have declined. Investment in sexual health services helps to prevent longer-term illness and unwanted pregnancies, reducing pressure on our NHS and improving the health of people across our communities.”</p> <p>LGA</p> <p>Scrutiny could look at access to local sexual health services and their role in preventing sexually transmitted infections through provision of good quality advice and information.</p>	Report to Adults and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee or Task and Finish Group
Parks and Open Spaces Strategy	To review the developing Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and the results of the public consultation.	Scrutiny Chairs	Scrutiny could review the outcomes of the public consultation on Parks and Open Spaces which is due to complete in June-July 2024. There would also be an opportunity to make recommendations on the developing Parks and Open Spaces Strategy.	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Recommended for Task and Finish Groups

Mental Health	Building Up a Mental Health Community	Resident	<p>Mental health issues are on the increase.</p> <p>Scrutiny could consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Current mental health provision. 2. Look at the work of voluntary and community services in supporting good mental health. 3. The role of libraries, leisure services and green spaces in promoting wellbeing. 	Task and Finish Group
Food Banks in Barnet	<p>The true and exact number of people resorting to emergency food uptake through the borough's multiple food banks. There are significant suppliers to the borough's food banks, as well as, food banks not known to the borough's "official" system like the Barnet Food Hub (The Old East Barnet Library)". In addition, I know the DWP will stop officially referring clients on the 19th February and simply signpost those who ask for emergency food which means a significant loss of data.</p>	Resident	<p>Scrutiny could look at existing numbers and usage of local of food banks. A report could also consider the impact and alternative options when current funding for the Barnet Food Hub comes to end.</p>	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Task and Finish Group
NHS Dentists	<p>NHS dental services with a special emphasis on the community dental service and provision of services to housebound patients.</p>	Resident	<p>Scrutiny could examine the availability of NHS dentists in Barnet, waiting lists and community dental services.</p>	Report to Adults and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee

				or Task and Finish Group
Cycle Lanes/ Potholes	More cycle lanes Repair potholes	Barnet Society	Scrutiny could look at how the Council is promoting and active travel in Barnet and encouraging more walking, cycling, and using public transport.	Task and Finish Group
Foster Carers in Barnet	To review of the recruitment and retention of foster carers in Barnet.	Officer	A Task and Finish Group could consider the current processes for recruitment and retention and investigate possible barriers or difficulties.	Task and Finish Group
Tackling Dog Fouling	Finding ways to decrease dog-fouling on the streets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place more specialised bins in the area; • Introduce fines; and • Increase dog owners' awareness. 	Resident	Scrutiny could investigate the extent of the issue, hotspots, best practice and positive solutions in other areas. The current practice for raising awareness/ enforcement could be examined with a view to suggesting improvements.	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Task and Finish Group

Items not recommended for 2024-25 or requiring further detail

Council Consultations	Please investigate the extent to which consultations on Engage Barnet follow the spirit of the Gunning and Nolan Principles, the Council's Corporate Governance Code and other Duties. This could include looking at whether: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is legitimate for the consultation time available to respondents using Engage Barnet to be shorter 	Resident	Engage Barnet has been asked to provide feedback on their consultation approach and underlying principles.	N/a
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	<p>than time notified to the relevant Council Committee and subsequently made available to targeted stakeholder groups (Gunning 3);</p> <p>2. Failing to indicate the potential consequences of respondents' choices (or the weight the council intends to give to certain choices) is inconsistent with Nolan 5 (Openness) and suggestive of a proposal no longer being at a formative stage (Gunning 1);</p> <p>3. The quality and/or timeliness of feedback reports undermines future consultations, particularly where comprehensive feedback may shift public awareness away from (Nolan 4: Accountability and Nolan 5: Openness);</p> <p>4. Respondents' protected characteristics should be collected for all or only specific consultation subjects and if so which characteristics in which circumstances (Public Sector Equality Duty);</p> <p>5. Supplier intermediaries conducting consultations on the Council's behalf are required to observe the Public Sector Equality Duty and if so, have their consultation processes/materials done so;</p> <p>6. All or only specific consultations should be run via Engage Barnet and if so, whether this was the case during the period of time under review or if not, whether the absence of consultations on Engage Barnet runs the risk of relevant Duties, Principles and/or Codes not being observed;</p> <p>7. The lack of data and information on the consultation webpages (including links to relevant</p>			
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	<p>Council Committee papers) makes it difficult for management/governance/monitoring professionals or the public to assess whether relevant Duties, Principles and/or Codes have been observed (Nolan 4: Accountability, Nolan 5: Openness, Nolan 7: Leadership);</p> <p>8. Additional controls or processes should be introduced to improve the consultation system currently in place (Nolan 4: Accountability, Nolan 7: leadership).</p> <p>A reasonable time-frame for the above would be one calendar year i.e. to cover all consultations which took place during 2023/24 (whether on line or in-person).</p>			
Various	Barnet Parks. Barnet roads and traffic.	Resident	<p>Issue too wide as currently drafted.</p> <p>A Highways Maintenance Task and Finish Group is ongoing and a Safer Parks Strategy is due to be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p>	N/a
Pot Holes	Suggested by three different residents, but with no additional information.	Resident	A Highways Maintenance Task and Finish Group is ongoing which will be considering some of the issues relating to potholes.	N/a
Planning and Council Developments	Planning and New Development – with the demise of the Audit Commission, Barnet Council a local authority where Barnet Council may also be the developer, also without scrutiny allows itself (Barnet Council) Planning Permission, that breaches Local	Resident	The issue being requested for scrutiny relates to potential conflicts of interest – the council acts as local planning authority, and can be the applicant and submit applications for approval.	N/a

	and National legislation (and human rights acts) to date without any accountability, And the Barnet Council `marking own homework' policing itself.		This topic may not be suitable for scrutiny as planning is a regulatory committee which complies with the legal and constitutional framework of the council.	
PCN Charges	Unethical scams by councils for PCN charges.	Resident	More information required.	N/a
Council Contractors Fly Tipping	Fly Tipping in NW2, contractor and subcontractors for Barnet Homes.	Resident	More information required.	N/a
Planning and Permitted Development	Planning and permitted development.	Resident	More information required.	N/a
Brent Cross Station Area	The state of the area around Brent Cross station and adjacent streets for excessive rubbish and fly tipping. Why has the hedge been cut down and the area been left to erode?	Resident	This is a highly specific issue; it is recommended that this is progressed directly with the relevant service area.	N/a
HealthWatch Data Collection	Health Watch – data collection by orgs that should not be collecting personal data - very specifically voluntary work.	Resident	More information required.	N/a
Council Tax Brackets	Council Tax brackets to be brought up to date to 2024 valuations as the current charges for small single occupant retirement flats are unreasonably high compared to those living in 3- and 4-bedroom houses.	Resident	There are national rules that apply to the calculation of Council Tax; these are based on property valuations from April 1991 and any new properties are assessed by the Valuation Office Agency for England and Wales (VOA). Valuation levels can be challenged with the VOA but this could lead to the value increasing, decreasing, or staying the same: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/challenge-	N/a

			<p>the-valuation.</p> <p>Barnet Council offers some Council Tax exemptions, including a single occupant discount, and eligibility can be checked through the following link: https://www.barnet.gov.uk/council-tax/get-money-your-council-tax-bill/council-tax-discounts. Further information on cost of living support is available through the following link: https://www.barnet.gov.uk/benefits-grants-and-financial-advice/cost-living-support.</p> <p>The Overview and Scrutiny work programme for 2024-25 is proposing to consider the Council Tax Support Scheme, an area which the Council has more influence on.</p>	
Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy	Briefing/ OSC item	Labour Group	This was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2024 (Towards a Fair Barnet).	N/a
Culture Strategy	Briefing/ OSC item	Labour Group	This was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2024 (Culture Strategy Progress Briefing).	N/a
General	Outstanding works to be completed ie Pothole, fencing belonging to the council that needs replacing.	Resident	A Highways Maintenance Task and Finish Group is ongoing which will be	N/a

			considering some of the issues relating to potholes.	
General reviews of safety hubs and ward walks	Overview and Scrutiny Committee item.	Labour Group	Not recommended as a priority area for 2024-25.	N/a
Middlesex University Climate Change and Biodiversity Citizens Assembly.	Overview and Scrutiny Committee item.	Labour Group	Not recommended as a priority area for 2024-25.	N/a
Compliance with Housing Regulations in the Borough	Overview and Scrutiny Committee item - suggestions for 2025-26 and beyond.	Labour Group	To be explored for 2025-26.	N/a
A review of Housing Allocations Policy that was recently set	Overview and Scrutiny Committee item - suggestions for 2025-26 and beyond.	Labour Group	To be explored for 2025-26.	N/a
Town Centre Strategy	Overview and Scrutiny Committee item - suggestions for 2025-26 and beyond.	Labour Group	To be explored for 2025-26.	N/a
Sensitivities and cultural competence in customer interface	Overview and Scrutiny Committee item - suggestions for 2025-26 and beyond.	Labour Group	To be explored for 2025-26.	N/a

Council's celebration/ commemoration calendar	Overview and Scrutiny Committee item - suggestions for 2025-26 and beyond.	Labour Group	To be explored for 2025-26.	N/a
Unadopted areas	Overview and Scrutiny Committee item - suggestions for 2025-26 and beyond.	Labour Group	To be explored for 2025-26.	N/a
Retrofitting /green sustainable design areas	Overview and Scrutiny Committee item - suggestions for 2025-26 and beyond.	Labour Group	To be explored for 2025-26.	N/a
Connecting children to the environment	Overview and Scrutiny Committee item - suggestions for 2025-26 and beyond.	Labour Group	To be explored for 2025-26.	N/a
Identifying unused spaces for rewilding	Overview and Scrutiny Committee item - suggestions for 2025-26 and beyond.	Labour Group	To be explored for 2025-26.	N/a
Fly tipping	Overview and Scrutiny Committee item - suggestions for 2025-26 and beyond.	Labour Group	To be explored for 2025-26.	N/a