

Budget consultation 2025-26

WE WANT YOUR VIEWS ON OUR BUDGET

On the 25 February 2025, Barnet Council will meet to agree its budget for 2025/26. In this consultation we are asking residents, businesses and others for their views on our budget including our proposed Council Tax increase.

The consultation will run from
**12 December 2024 to
22 January 2025.**



Caring for **people**, our **places** and the **planet**

engage.barnet.gov.uk/budget-consultation-2025-26

BARNET
LONDON BOROUGH

Introduction

Barnet Council plays a big part in people's lives. Every year, we spend over £400million providing public services that you, your family and friends use every day:

- These services range from ensuring the best start in life for children and young people, providing adult social care for our older or more vulnerable residents, ensuring a safe clean environment, maintaining many parks, and public spaces, collecting your waste and maintaining a safe road system.
- We are also at the forefront of investing in the future of Barnet: growing our economy and creating homes and jobs for local people; protecting and enhancing our environment, supporting the transition to a carbon neutral Barnet, strengthening vibrant communities, our heritage and culture.

As well as supporting communities, we are committed to the responsible management of the council's finances. To reach our goal of a balanced budget for 2025/26, we are planning ahead carefully to meet current and future financial challenges. These challenges include rising demand for complex and expensive services, such as children's and adults' services, as well as the huge cost of placing more people into temporary accommodation.

Against this backdrop we must ensure our budget for the future is balanced. All local authorities are legally required to set a balanced budget every year and ensure they have enough money to deliver services to their residents and businesses.

In Barnet, to balance our budget for next year (2025/26), we have developed a set of proposals to save money or generate income that we would like your views on.

How to have your say

The consultation is open to all Barnet residents, as well as people who study, work or have a business in the borough, and also community and interest groups.

There are two ways you can give your feedback:

- complete a questionnaire online at: **engage.barnet.gov.uk** 
- complete a paper questionnaire.

If you would like a paper questionnaire or a copy of the consultation in another format, please email: **budgetconsultation@barnet.gov.uk**  or call **020 8359 7016**.

The consultation is open from 12 December 2024 – 22 January 2025.

The general budget consultation is in addition to service-specific consultations which have already happened or will happen in the next few months, and will offer you the opportunity to comment in detail on specific proposals for 2025/26.

You can find more information about all our consultations at **engage.barnet.gov.uk** 



Caring for people, our places and the planet

Background:

Our financial challenge to 2030

We have always taken a long-term and proactive approach to financial planning in difficult circumstances. We have saved over £260million between 2010 and 2024 and protected frontline services as far as possible. However, with continued reduced funding and increases in the demand and cost of services, the next few years still present further challenges.

This year we've continued to see a rise in the cost of living, impacting on everyone in Barnet. As everything is becoming more expensive for our residents and businesses, we also as a council have higher costs.

At the same time, demand for our services continues to grow. Our population is growing, people are generally living longer and the type of services that people need is changing.

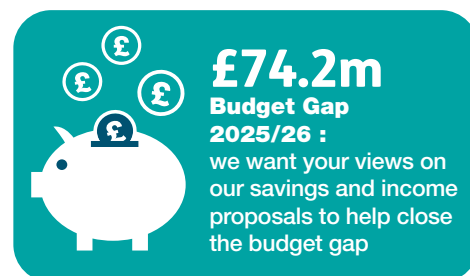
This situation has landed some local authorities in financial trouble and has led to warnings that some councils would not be able to offer the legal minimum of care next year. However, our robust financial management means we are in a good position to weather the storm.

As a council, we have continued to respond flexibly to these challenges, working with our local

partners to maintain support for those that need it most. We have taken a leading role working with our health, education and voluntary sector partners and communities to help support our most vulnerable residents during the cost of living crisis.

The current administration has set out a clear path forward and started making some very tough decisions on how we shape our council to deliver services in the future, how we prioritise our spending on the services we deliver and how we balance our budget.

Our five-year financial plan – known as the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) – shows that we still face an anticipated budget gap of just over £124m to 2029/30 (excluding money for schools and local housing). This includes a budget gap of £74.2m for 2025/26.



We are ambitious for our borough

Despite the challenges we face, we remain ambitious for the borough. **Our Plan for Barnet**  puts caring for people, our places and the planet at the heart of everything we do, based on a foundation of being an engaged and effective council.

Barnet Council – Caring for people and our places.

Here's a flavour of what we are doing:



Caring for people

- Over **4,000** people are registered as a carer with Barnet Carers Centre, which provides information, advice and support for carers across Barnet



- Between April 2022 and March 2023, **368** people received support from the Prevention & Wellbeing team
- 1,188** creative, educational and wellbeing events have taken place in our libraries since April 2024 via our creative communities programme, attracting **24,684** attendees



- Over **95%** of Barnet pupils attend schools which have been rated 'Good' or better by Ofsted
- Between July 2023-Sept 2024 **766** children across Barnet, Brent and Harrow were supported in police custody. **162** Families have been engaged and **447** children have received 1:1 interventions to reduce risk of future offending – exceeding the targets of the programme
- Through our Barnet Activity Creative Educational programme, we delivered **29,618** hot meals, **1,050** food hampers, **1,900** snack bags and **2,000** activity bags to children and young people



Caring for our places

- 85%** of **2,000** residents surveyed said they are satisfied with Barnet as a place to live, **86%** said they feel like they belong to the local area, and **83%** see the borough as a family-friendly place to live
- Work has started a **£97m** programme to improve the borough's network of pavements and roads. We maintain **723km** of roads throughout Barnet and have fixed more than **3,600** potholes this year
- Since the October 2023 opening of our **£2.3m** CCTV control room and expanded network of cameras, the system has helped the Barnet Safer Communities Partnership tackle a range of crimes. A mobile CCTV car now patrols the streets of the borough, alongside a second marked patrol car
- We have removed more than **8,000** fly-tips in the past year, with enough rubbish to fill **seven** Olympic-size swimming pools
- We have invested millions of pounds to improve many of our parks and play facilities, including Sturgess park, Watling park and Halliwick recreation ground and the first ever 'Fair Play' playground to let children with special needs and disabilities play alongside others

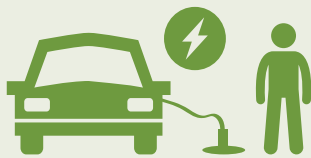


- Residents have now moved into all **249** newly acquired council homes in Colindale. The properties include **42** three-bedroom family homes and **40** wheelchair-adaptable residences. The development is a significant step towards Barnet's commitment to providing **1,000** new council homes by 2026.

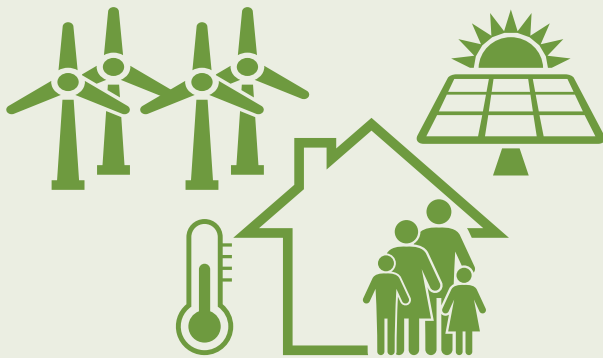
Barnet Council – *Caring for the planet and an engaged and effective council.* Here's a flavour of what we are doing:



Caring for our planet



- Barnet has over **1,500** EV charge points, with **500** more to be added by year-end, helping reduce vehicle emissions, which account for **65%** of local pollution



- The council and Barnet Homes have made home energy efficiency upgrades in over **600** council homes, helping residents to keep warm while saving money and energy



- Barnet is on track to plant **5,000** trees by 2028 to capture **690** tonnes of CO₂ annually, improve air quality, and bolster flood resilience
- Our **£1.3m** Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme reduces flooding, creates habitats, and enhances parks; **38** high-priority and **507** at-risk sites have been identified for future projects



Engaged and Effective

- 60%** of residents surveyed feel the council involves residents when making decisions and act on the concerns of residents – higher than the London average of **53%**



- More than **150** local businesses attended the Barnet Business Breakfast Briefing series, which provided them with the opportunity to have interactive discussions with the councillors and Barnet Small Business Champions
- Barnet's Business Toolkit has been circulated to **8,000** businesses providing information on business rates, licensing, commercial waste, planning, procurement, sustainability and business support



- The Money Worries? campaign and our Money Adviser Network partnership with the Money & Pensions Service is helping residents to receive free, confidential and personalised debt advice from debt management experts
- The Barnet Financial Calculator has helped around **16,000** people in Barnet identify almost **£10m** of benefits they are eligible for but were not claiming



Our budget proposals for 2025/26

To balance our budget for next year (2025/26) we have developed a set of proposals to save money or generate income that we would like your views on.

Not all of our proposed savings will directly impact residents. Wherever possible we will limit the impact on frontline services, for example in identifying further efficiencies, and opportunities to generate income and grow the local economy. Separate service-specific consultations on changes that will impact on residents have either already taken place, or will take place over the next few months, giving you an opportunity to comment on the detailed savings proposals.

The council's estimated 2025/26 budget requirement is £455.6million

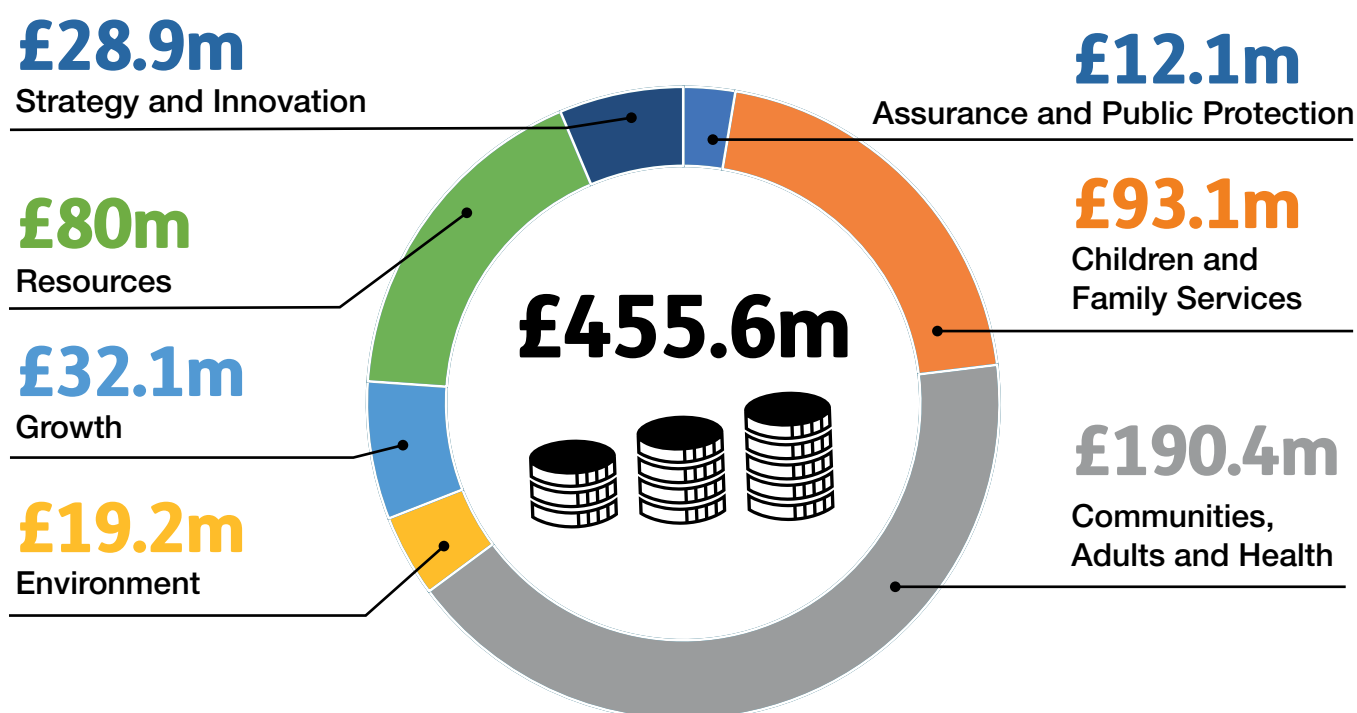
Our budget is divided across our **seven Directorates** which are structured around the types of services they deliver to our residents, businesses, and communities. The chart below shows how much we are planning to spend next year in 2025/26 by each Directorate.



deliver better value for money. A large proportion of our budget is spent on looking after children and vulnerable adults, housing, providing education, and housing benefit payments.

The remaining budget gap will not be confirmed until after the financial settlement is received in late December from central government, and at this stage we are assuming a budget gap of £52million if the £22million of our proposed savings are delivered. However, the budget gap will be reduced if the council achieves the maximum uplift from the government's financial settlement in late December.

These figures include savings and income generation proposals of £22.037 million put forward by Directorates for 2025/26 to help close the budget gap of £74.179 million. They also include additional funding to support service pressures including demographic growth and investment in services to



How much we are saving within each Directorate

The table below shows our proposed 2025/26 budget compared to 2024/25 by each Directorate in terms of:

- how much we spent in the previous financial year, 2024/25
- budget pressures due to increased demand for services for 2025/26
- the savings and income generation we are proposing for 2025/26
- how much we are estimating to spend in 2025/26, after including the savings and income generation proposals put forward by each Directorate

	The Current Years Approved Budget for 2024/25	Growth for Operational Pressures for 2025/26	Other Pressures	Our Savings and Income Generation Proposals for 2025/26	How much we are estimating to spend in 2025/26 after growth and savings and income generations have been included
Cabinet Brief	(£million)	(£million)	(£million)	(£million)	(£million)
Assurance and Public Protection	11.9	0.2	0.3	(0.3)	12.1
Children and Family Services	87.5	10.3	2.9	(7.7)	93.1
Communities, Adults and Health	171.3	23.7	2.8	(7.5)	190.4
Environment	17.9	2.5	1.5	(2.8)	19.2
Growth	16.4	17.2	0.5	(2.0)	32.1
Resources	58.7	7.0	15.2	(0.9)	80.0
Strategy & Innovation	26.0	3.2	0.6	(0.9)	28.9
Total	389.6	64.3	23.8	(22.0)	455.6

Directorate savings and income generation proposals in detail



Further details of the Directorate 2025/26 savings and income generation proposals can be found in here.

Council Tax proposals for 2025/26

Our proposal to increase general Council Tax by 2.98%

“One of our key pledges was to keep council tax low. We are committed to honouring this promise and the proposed increase is lower than the legal maximum of 3.00%.

Every 1% increase in Council Tax generates approximately £2.3 million of income to the council. This additional money has helped protect vital services. Whilst increasing Council Tax supports front line services, it does not fully meet the increasing costs of services.”

The Government confirmed in their November 2022 Spending Round announcement that local authorities would be able to increase general Council Tax by 3.00% for 2025/26. However, we are only proposing to increase Council Tax by 2.98% for 2025/26.

Increasing Council Tax by an additional 2.98% would generate an additional £6.9 million in 2025/26 for services that support our residents, including vulnerable adults, and children's social care. This would equate to an additional £43.86 a year in total for a Band D property, which is equivalent to £3.66 a month, or £4.39 if you pay over 10 monthly instalments.

Not increasing Council Tax would mean that we would need to identify further savings from services.



Our proposal to apply an Adult Social Care Precept on Council Tax of 2%

The November 2022 Spending Round also extended the ability to apply a 2% Social Care Precept in 2025/26, to help fund the increasing cost pressures that councils are experiencing in relation to the provision of Social Care. We are therefore proposing to apply a Social Care Precept of 2% to Council Tax.



Applying the social care precept would generate an additional £4.6 million in 2025/26 which would only be spent on Social Care. This would equate to an additional £29.44 a year in total for a Band D property, which is equivalent to £2.45 a month, or £2.94 if you pay over 10 monthly instalments.

This makes a total increase in Council Tax to 4.98% increase for 2025/26. This would equate to an additional £73.30 a year in total for a Band D property, which is equivalent to £6.11 a month, or £7.33 if you pay over 10 monthly instalments.

Again, not increasing Council Tax would mean that we would need to identify further savings from services.

We are seeking your views on:

- to what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed budget for 2025/26?
- to what extent do you agree or disagree with the savings and income generation proposals that we have identified for 2025/26?
- do you support our proposal to increase general Council Tax by 2.98% in 2025/26?
- do you support our proposal to apply an Adult Social Care Precept on Council Tax of 2% in 2025/26?
- do you have any further comments to make about our proposed budget for 2025/26?

If you require the consultation document and questionnaire in an alternative format, or further information:
email: [**budgetconsultation@barnet.gov.uk**](mailto:budgetconsultation@barnet.gov.uk)
Tel: **020 8359 7016**

Alternatively, you can write to us at:

Barnet's Budget Consultation 2025/25
Consultation Team, London Borough of Barnet,
2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale, London, NW9 4EL



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