

# **B&D Working Together**

## **A summary of our plans for Jobs in Barking & Dagenham**







**The Corporate Plan 2020-22 identifies Inclusive Growth as a key strategic priority for the Council and its partners. This document summarises our plans for Jobs over the next two years and beyond. It also provides a high-level summary of our plans in relation to a wider range of issues associated with Money, Debt, and Poverty.**

## Jobs: A thriving and inclusive local economy

The Borough Manifesto sets out a vision that by 2037 Barking and Dagenham will be **a place where every resident has access to lifelong learning, employment, and opportunities and where businesses and communities grow and thrive.** It also sets targets that by 2037 **unemployment will be lower than the East London average, growth in businesses will outstrip the East London average, and income will be improving faster than the London median.**

Building on the Borough Manifesto, our goal in relation to **JOBS** is:

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At least 20,000 new jobs in the Borough over the next two decades, as part of shaping a thriving post-industrial local economy based around facilitating new strengths in key growth sectors (such as data, science, and the creative industries) as well as intervening to improve the quality of work in the everyday economy (like construction, care, logistics, food etc). Crucially, our focus is on doing everything we can to ensure that local business benefits from this economic development and that local residents benefit from the new job opportunities in the Borough and the surrounding area this will create; particularly those facing labour market disadvantages and needing extra help.

Like in the rest of the country, the economic impact of Covid-19 has been dramatic in our Borough. From March through to June, claims for Universal Credit doubled, and whilst this figure has stabilised since, it remains at least twice its pre-lockdown peak. During the same period, 40 per cent of the local workforce were furloughed or placed on the self-employment support scheme. Our immediate response to the economic crisis brought about by Covid-19 was to provide emergency financial support to households and businesses, though help with Council tax and business rate bills, plus a new local hardship fund and getting over £25m of government grants paid out to support local firms.

Now, our task is to prepare for the wave of job losses likely to follow the end of the furlough scheme, as well as the potential impact of a wider recession.

We must also remember that Barking & Dagenham faced significant enterprise and employment related challenges long before Covid-19. For many years, our economy has had too many low wage jobs, and higher levels of long-term unemployment and inactivity than most other London Boroughs. Traditionally, local, and national government have sought to address these challenges by investing in the skills of individuals, to enable them to compete and progress in the UK's flexible labour market. Our approach – both in responding to Covid-19 and to addressing these longer-term trends – recognises the limitations of this model, especially in the absence of action to improve the quantity and quality of the jobs available.

In contrast, we are dedicated to expanding the availability of good quality, well-paid employment, in growing 21st century industries, while also intervening to improve pay, job quality and performance in the 'everyday' economy where most people work - recognising that the make-up of these 'everyday' jobs will necessarily shift in the aftermath of Covid-19. We are committed to using our planning, procurement and convening powers to create more clear pathways into good jobs for residents, and as well as new opportunities for existing businesses to grow and improve (as well as for new ones to start and succeed). And finally, we are committed to targeting our employment support to those who need it most, linked directly to the new opportunities that are being created.

We believe that the fundamentals of this approach – aimed at creating a thriving and inclusive local economy - will not change as a consequence of Covid-19, even if there are a set of specific measures that we need to take now in order to mitigate its impacts. Below we highlight both the steps we are taking in the short-term to support Covid-19 recovery, as well as the wider action we will be taking in the next couple of years across two key areas:

1. **Improving the quantity and quality of jobs in Barking & Dagenham.**
2. **Supporting residents to access new employment opportunities in the Borough and the wider London economy.**

### Supporting Covid-19 recovery

In the short to medium-term we will mitigate the economic impacts of Covid-19 on our population by:

- Securing additional funding and partnerships to strengthen and increase the capacity of our core work and skills offer. This will focus on helping residents who are newly unemployed by improving their skills and getting them back to work as quickly as possible. It will also focus on supporting those that were already struggling to find work so that they aren't pushed even further from the labour market.
- Launching a high-profile local jobs campaign to promote this offer, share information about what we're doing to generate new jobs in Barking and Dagenham, and encourage everyone to pull together by buying local, trading local and hiring local wherever possible.

- Working with local employers to ensure any jobs created through central government job creation schemes are of good quality, linked into good training and support offers, and accessible to local residents.
- Leading by example through coordinating a Council-led, green skills focussed, youth jobs programme, drawing together a number of different new strands of central government funding (including Kickstart, other training and skills funding, energy and retrofit funding schemes) with existing programmes (including apprenticeships funding).
- Working closely with neighbouring Boroughs, and at regional level where appropriate, to generate opportunities for residents within cross-Borough skills, training, and employment programmes.

At the same time, our economic recovery plan must take as its starting point the existing condition of our Borough and its economy. The underlying challenge is the same. Whilst the specific impacts of Covid-19 may force us to adjust or to change tack in some areas, it will not change the fact that improving the quality and quantity of jobs in the Borough whilst supporting all residents to access these jobs, as well as good jobs in the wider London area, is the only way to build a thriving and inclusive local economy. Throughout the remainder of this section, we highlight where this approach will need to evolve as part of our response to Covid-19.







## Improving the quantity and quality of jobs in Barking & Dagenham.

**Jobs of tomorrow.** Attracting new high skill sectors and jobs to the Borough.

We believe local authorities are well-placed to provide economic leadership in local areas and to drive growth and improvements in sectors that have the potential to create meaningful work for residents. For us, this means actively bringing more high skill jobs and industries to the Borough, developing new clusters of economic activity, and supporting a shift away from the dirty industries of the 20th century towards the 'clean' industries of the 21st. And, at the same time, it means using our leverage to ensure that local people and businesses are able to benefit from this local economic development. These shifts will also be an essential part of our Borough's recovery from Covid-19. Key interventions include the development of:

- **New film studios at Dagenham East:** As part of our commitment to supporting the growth of the creative sector in the Borough, the Council bought and allocated land to host new film studios on the former Sanofi pharmaceutical site at Dagenham East (and we have now secured planning permission for the development). We are committed to seeing the studios built out and becoming operational over the next two years, working with industry and development partners who share our values. An essential component of any development and operating model is that local benefits are locked in and delivered, through an on-going stake and role for the Council in the studios. This will include ensuring young people and workers with transferable skills can access the new jobs and opportunities created and that local businesses can access the supply chain to provide goods and services to support the studios themselves and the associated activity they will foster and attract.

- **A science, technology, and data cluster:** Our vision for Dagenham East extends beyond the film studios themselves to transforming that wider area into a nationally significant economic cluster focused on growth sectors. The site will provide space for relevant suppliers to the film studios within a broader science and technology park that will host Europe's largest data centre and UCL's Person-Environment-Activity Research Laboratory (PEARL), a unique testing facility designed to explore how people interact with their environment. Nearby, CU London and Barking & Dagenham College provide strong educational partners for these industries. We are exploring opportunities to attract other relevant institutions to form an education and research cluster in this area.

- **Green jobs:** Carbon intensive jobs and industries are expected to decline as the move away from high-emissions infrastructure and transport continues. Our efforts (set out in the latter sections on 'Environment: the green capital of the capital') to improve energy infrastructure and green technologies, generate more renewable energy, and to retrofit Council and other properties in the Borough will bring new jobs and supply chain opportunities. As part of these plans, we will explore how to ensure local people and businesses can benefit from this new clean growth economy. As an example, we have secured the development of an ecology centre at Barking Riverside that will house an incubation space for green businesses, including those developing new sustainable construction materials. We will also, where possible, use our partnership with Eon through the Cosy Homes programme of heating and energy efficiency measures to generate new training and employment opportunities for the Borough residents. In response to Covid-19, we intend to accelerate our efforts in this area, frontloading our own investment and making use of government funding programmes in order to maximise jobs and training opportunities for the Borough's young people in green and related industries.



- **A new Food Hub:** Ten per cent of the capital's economy is food related. The City of London Corporation's proposal to consolidate London's three historic wholesale markets – Billingsgate, Smithfield and New Spitalfields – at Dagenham Dock will bring thousands of new jobs to the Borough and create new opportunities to generate additional food-based employment over the next decade. The Council is working with the Corporation and others to deliver this new investment to the Borough and to build a sustainable food sector alongside the markets relocation. We are working for this to include the development of a new food hub in Barking town centre, with retail markets and space for SME food production, alongside a world class food school offering training and apprenticeships to residents

- **Modern employment space to support growth:** Barking & Dagenham's historic legacy of large manufacturing employers means that it has the most industrial floor space of any London Borough. However, much of this space is out of date, with over 60% built before 1970. This exacerbates problems of low job density and limits the scope to attract new high skill sectors and employers to the Borough. Our draft Local Plan sets out policies to support industrial intensification to modernise the employment space in the Borough and underpin an expansion of local jobs. To support this, we have secured GLA Good Growth funding to explore and trial how we can intensify and improve existing Strategic Industrial Land, using the former Remploy site on River Road as a test case. The Council has also purchased the former Welbeck Steel site, also on River Road, to showcase a model that can support stacked logistics.

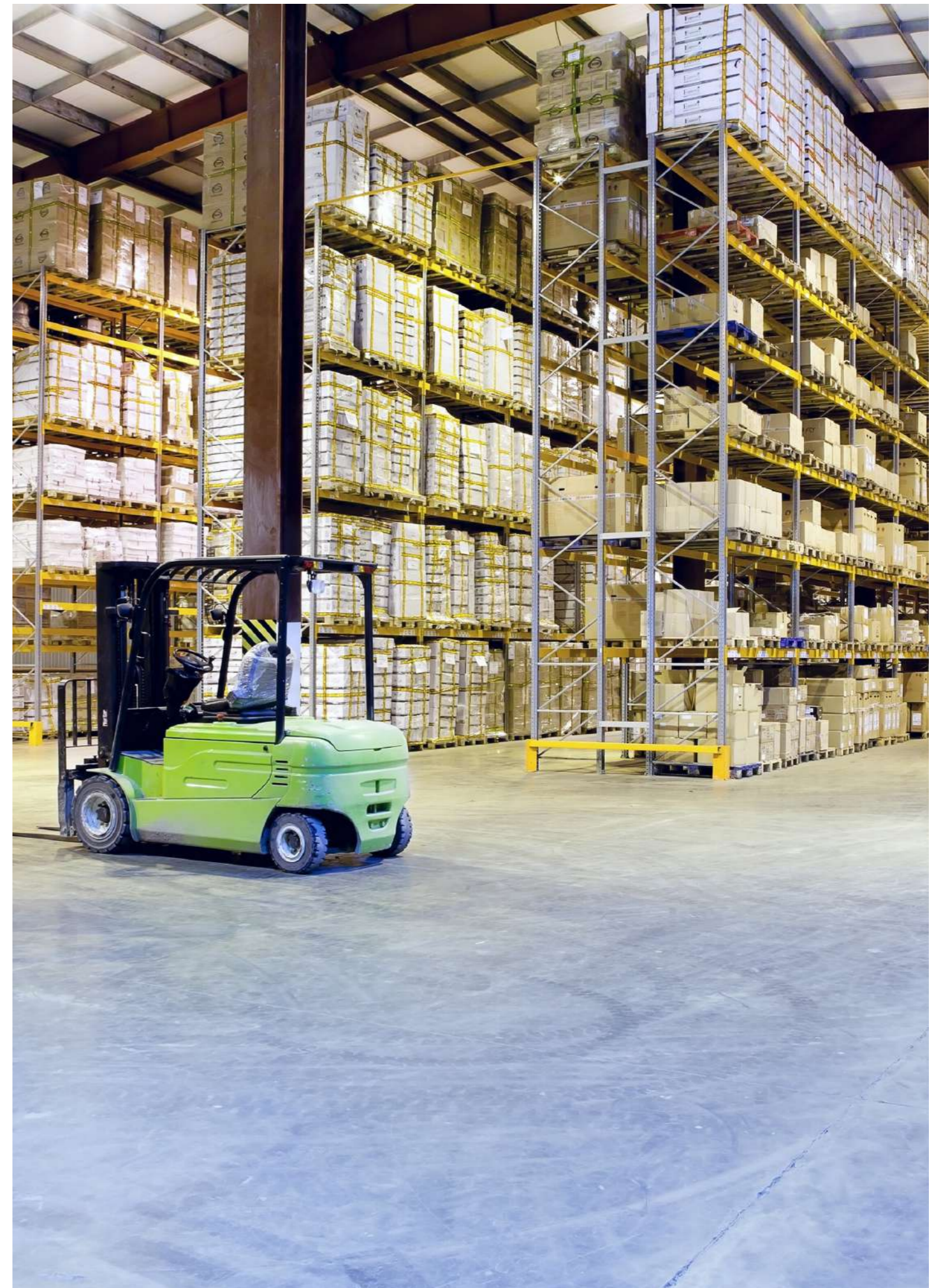
- **The creative and cultural industries:** Over the last few years, the Council has led a range of interventions and partnerships to support the creative industries in the Borough – including the establishment of a Borough-wide partnership to promote cultural activity

and careers to young people in schools and the provision of new affordable workspace for creatives in Barking Town Centre. This includes developing studio space in the Icehouse Quarter and bringing forward the ground-breaking House for Artists that will provide affordable accommodation to local artists in return for them giving back to the community. We want to build on these foundations to make Barking and Dagenham a place where the best of new creative and cultural talent can live and work – whilst integrating with and enriching the local community. For instance, the Council is exploring proposals to bring other major cultural and educational institutions to the Borough.

**In particular,** over the next couple of years the Council and its partners will be focused on:

Developing strategies to create strong training and work pathways into our key growth sectors, such as food and film, based on commissioned studies into both areas by sector specialists. Actions will focus on building new relationships between training and education providers, and industry; developing brokerage support to proactively link residents with emerging training and work opportunities; developing a strong and high profile local skilled talent pipeline for both industries; supporting and growing local supply chains for both industries (with specific actions to follow dependent on how our sector strategies in these areas develop).

Securing the agreement of the GLA to a comprehensive industrial land use strategy for the Borough, which enables the delivery of Barking and Dagenham's housing target while meeting the need for good quality, modernised employment space for small, medium and large businesses in key locations around the Borough. We want to deliver pilot schemes at 12 Thames Road (which will mix commercial and residential development) and the former Remploy site, which will explore ways of modernising and intensifying industrial uses.





**The jobs of today.** Improving existing jobs and businesses in the everyday economy.

Delivering Inclusive Growth and tackling the root causes of high unemployment and low pay, does not solely rely on attracting new high skill industries to the Borough (or enabling local people to start and grow new businesses). Ensuring local people benefit from growth also requires action to improve job quality and performance in the mainstream sectors where most people currently work. We are convening new alliances and strategies to drive change in local growth sectors within this ‘everyday economy’:

- **Construction:** The scale of our investment in affordable housing over the coming years will bring new jobs to the Borough and creates a unique opportunity to shape the local construction sector. In July 2019 we became the first London Borough to sign the Unite Construction Charter and we are working to ensure staff on Be First developments are paid the London Living Wage. We already use our planning powers to create new employment and training opportunities in construction for residents and will ensure Be First projects set the gold standard, providing clear pathways into good jobs, with a goal for 25% of workers on Be First projects being local residents by 2025. In the current economic climate, construction appears to be one of the sectors with greater resilience, with continued investment into the sector at national level and a reasonable ability to continue functioning within lockdown conditions.
- **Care:** The care sector is a growing source of local employment as well as being crucial to how we care for our vulnerable residents. The nature of the pandemic also means that it is more resilient than many other sectors in terms of the stability of vacancy levels. And it now has a new level of profile and recognition. It is also a sector in which the Council has significant levers to make a difference, as a direct provider or commissioner of services. We have launched a new commissioning approach in adult

homecare that seeks to create partnerships with local care providers to promote high standards of care driven by a fairly paid, well-trained and engaged workforce. We will work with Care City to build an action plan with these providers and other commissioners to improve pay, performance, and workforce development in the sector. In addition, we intend to work with Care City, the Barking Enterprise Centre, and other key partners to capitalise on the current political pressures for better pay and conditions, and opportunities for greater sector resilience and diversity in the care sector more broadly. We will work to proactively support, grow and strengthen the broader care sector, across our own and our neighbouring Boroughs, as an important employer for our residents and procurer of goods and services from local businesses.

- **High streets and retail:** High streets are undergoing huge changes, under pressure from on-line retailers, and currently facing an additional massive economic shock in light of Covid-19. At the same time, our town centres, district centres and shopping parades are about much more than shopping. They can play a crucial role in bringing people and communities together and providing a far wider range of services. We are committed to developing distinctive and sustainable futures for them, that are resilient beyond the immediate challenges of social distancing and vastly reduced footfall. In particular, we will set out a clear vision and plan for Barking town centre, informed by engagement with local residents, businesses, experts and other stakeholders. The plan will explore how to build a thriving town centre that makes better use of its assets and heritage (from Barking Station and Vicarage Fields to the market, the Abbey Green and the River Roding); delivers a new cultural offering including a new art house cinema; improves the food and beverage offer; and drives footfall to the local retail and hospitality sectors. We will develop plans to improve other local high streets, retail centres and

shopping parades (such as Dagenham Heathway) as a next step. In the short-term, we will work closely with local retail businesses to support them to operate as safely as possible in current conditions, and to maximise local footfall including through promoting a ‘shop local’ approach within our Borough.

**In particular,** over the next couple of years the Council and its partners will be focused on:

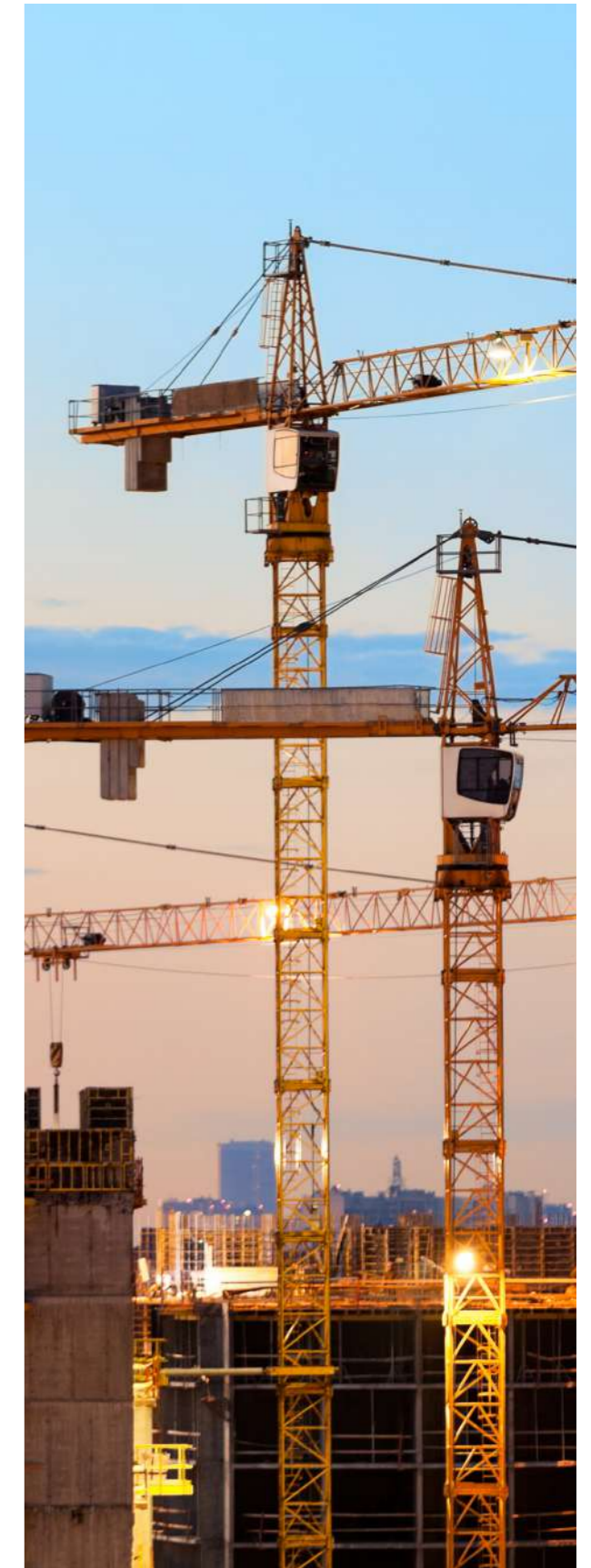
Embedding and testing newly agreed arrangements to secure jobs, training and supply chain opportunities for local residents and businesses from construction activity in the Borough (both through Be First and other developers, via s106 agreements), while ensuring compliance with the Unite Construction Charter on Be First schemes.

Building a plan to support residents and suppliers to understand and access opportunities in the local construction sector – including through working towards the creation of a non-profit training agency to improve the quality of apprenticeships, in partnership with contractors and local educational institutions; and a programme of events and wider support to build the capacity of the local supply chain and ensure the investment in construction benefits the local economy.

Developing an action plan with local care providers to improve pay, retention, productivity, and quality standards in the care sector.

Produce a vision and strategy for the regeneration of Barking Town centre, setting out its distinctive future role within the Borough and the major interventions the Council will undertake to stimulate and propel this vision (as well as providing a framework for businesses, developers and other key stakeholder with a contribution to make).

Develop a plan to rejuvenate the shopping parade at Dagenham Heathway, to enhance the retail and residential offering, linked to improvements in the local public realm.







**Strong local supply chains.** Supporting small businesses to benefit from local growth.

Barking & Dagenham has a culture of entrepreneurialism, with small business owners and sole traders making up most of our local business base. Supporting these businesses to access new opportunities, grow and improve will be critical to increasing job density and delivering Inclusive Growth.

In 2011 the Council supported the establishment of the Barking Enterprise Centre, which offers affordable office space in Barking Town Centre and free training and advice to start-ups and existing businesses across the Borough. We also support Participatory City, which runs Collaborative Business Incubator programmes, helping local people to test and develop their ideas into viable business models in collaboration with other entrepreneurial residents. Finally, we have established affordable studio space for artists and creatives in the Icehouse Quarter, with plans to extend this further into the town centre. In 2019 we set up a new Barking & Dagenham Business Forum to better communicate with, engage and understand the needs of local businesses, with a steering group of local business leaders, and training and business support providers. The Forum works with the Barking Enterprise Centre and other local partners to deliver quarterly events and a newsletter to keep businesses updated on the support and opportunities in the Borough that could benefit them.

Engagement with businesses through the Business Forum has informed our commitments to improve:

- **Access to employment space:** We know that Covid-19 is likely to impact on the demand for and the nature of workspaces in future. In the Town Centre, we will ensure that mixed used developments provide flexible spaces that are able to adapt to future circumstances. This will include expanding the number of studios in the Icehouse Quarter, opening new affordable workspace for creatives in Barking town centre and explore how we can further increase the scale of affordable studio and workspace across the Borough (underpinned by the policy framework set

out in our draft Local Plan). In our industrial areas we will intensify economic activity on available land, through the provision of modern, flexible workspace that is suitable for the post-Covid-19 economy. Across these developments, businesses, entrepreneurs, and freelancers will be provided with support, and asked in return to contribute to and participate in initiatives with the local community. We want to deliver pilot schemes that test this approach at 12 Thames Road (which will mix commercial and residential development) and the former Remploy site, which will explore ways of modernising and intensifying industrial uses.

- **Access to new markets:** We have set a target to ensure 25% of goods and services bought by the Council and its contractors come from businesses based in and around the Borough. This goal is embedded as part of the Council's new policy and approach to securing greater Social Value from its major contractors. With that new policy approved, we will work with other major local employers and key partners to increase procurement with local businesses and ask organisations that want to do business in the Borough to 'buy local' and support sector-focused initiatives to build the capacity of key local supply chains.
- **Access to training, mentoring and support:** We will work with an alliance of local training and business support providers including Barking Enterprise Centre, Participatory City, Care City, CU London and Barking & Dagenham College to tackle the challenges facing local businesses and to improve the range and visibility of available support. In the immediate term, this will encompass support to cope with the economic fallout from the Covid-19 situation, and we will be working closely with businesses to evolve and target our business support offer in the light of their evolving needs in this context. As a first step, we are piloting a new Growth and Improvement Programme with the Barking Enterprise Centre that targets small

businesses in priority sectors to help them meet public sector procurement standards and improve their ability to recruit and retain staff through improvements in leadership, pay and staff engagement. The pilot will offer a programme of one-to-one mentoring, workshops, and signposting to small businesses with a focus on construction and care sector businesses.

- **Access to and retention of talent:** The Council's Job Shops offer a free Recruitment and Selection Service to identify, prepare and sift local candidates for employers. We will explore how this service can further support employers to tap into the diverse pool of talent in the Borough and better retain staff, including through advice on how to set up high quality apprenticeships, become Disability Confident, and adopt other inclusive employment practices.

**In particular,** over the next couple of years the Council and its partners will be focused on:

Further developing the Barking & Dagenham Business Forum, with regular communications, events and engagement with the local business community, including work with partners (such as the Barking Enterprise Centre, Barking and Dagenham Chamber of Commerce, Barking and Dagenham College, CU London and others) to improve access to space, finance, new markets and support for businesses in the Borough.

Working with the Barking Enterprise Centre to deliver and evaluate a Growth and Improvement business support pilot aimed at improving job quality and performance in the local care and construction sectors (before deciding whether and how to extend the approach).





### Promoting inclusive business practices.

Supporting and partnering with employers that invest in the local economy and community.

Alongside the sector-focused initiatives described above, the Council is exploring how it can use its power as a major employer, planning authority and procurer of goods and services to promote Inclusive Growth and drive investment into the local economy and workforce:

- Securing social value:** The Council is committed to using its procurement, planning, and convening powers to secure strong social, economic, and environmental benefits for the Borough. A key priority is how we generate investment in the local economy and workforce by delivering more jobs paying a real London Living Wage, more high-quality work experience placements and apprenticeships, more employment opportunities for disadvantaged residents and greater use of local suppliers. In addition to these local economic benefits, we will ask organisations seeking a contract with the Council to help deliver goals to improve environmental sustainability and support initiatives to tackle issues such as domestic violence and high rates of obesity.
- The Council as an exemplar employer:** We will seek to provide visible leadership by ensuring that our recruitment and employment practices embody the good practice we are seeking to promote in Barking and Dagenham. We are proud that we pay all employees the London Living Wage and have been awarded the silver standard by Investors in People. We are committed to promoting diversity. We are a Level 2 Disability Confident employer and have signed the Armed Forces Covenant to ensure veterans are supported in their communities. We have also developed several successful 'grow your own' schemes in recent years. This has led to an increase in the number of higher-level apprenticeships at the Council and the development of an internship scheme for young people leaving local authority care.

In 2019 half of the new entrants to our graduate scheme were from the Borough. We are also taking active steps to improve recruitment and retention rates as well as development opportunities for BAME employees. This will include analysing data on workforce profile to identify under-representation before actively seeking to remove barriers and improve messaging.

**In particular,** over the next couple of years the Council and its partners will be focused on:

Implementing our ambitious new Social Value policy for the Council which ensures we are securing wider community benefits from those winning contracts from the Council and its wholly owned companies (combined with practical support for commissioners and potential contractors, and the development of robust monitoring and enforcement arrangements).

Increasing the number of Council apprentices to 2.3% of our workforce – hitting the government target for public sector organisations – by working with Council teams to consider how they can use apprentices to meet skills gaps and promote leadership development and progression.



## Supporting residents to access new employment opportunities in the Borough and the wider London economy

Achieving a thriving and more inclusive economy in Barking and Dagenham – and tackling the challenges posed by Covid-19 – requires a deliberate strategy to improve the quality and quantity of jobs available locally. However, it also depends on enabling local people to benefit from those enhanced opportunities, especially those who face structural disadvantages. And helping local people to connect to job opportunities across the wider London labour market. Therefore, we are committed to providing targeted support to ensure local residents are able to access new economic opportunities in the Borough and beyond. Within this, we have a particular focus on improving opportunities and outcomes for young people, those who have been unemployed for long periods of time, and those with learning disabilities and physical or mental health conditions.

**Young people.** Supporting the school to work transition.

Young people have always had to compete with older and more experienced employees, but the situation has got worse in recent decades. Today's generation is better educated than their parents and grandparents. Yet it takes them far longer on average to find stable and well-paid work once they leave education than it did in the past. Many young people spend years cycling in and out of unemployment and low paid, insecure jobs, sometimes with lasting effects on their career prospects, as employers have become increasingly unwilling to hire and train them. Historically, those entering the labour market during

a recession have faced a so-called 'scarring effect', with lower employment and earnings prospects that persistent for many years.

In recent years we have made good progress in improving educational outcomes for local young people and supporting them to move from education into sustainable, good quality employment. This progress provides good foundations for our efforts to respond to the current recession:

- Between 2007/8 and 2016/17 we saw a 65% increase in the number of young people progressing to higher education, the highest of any London Borough. That's an extra 670 young people. These improvements have continued since.
- In 2017 we secured the arrival of CU London to Dagenham, enabling access to affordable, flexibly delivered degrees, including degree apprenticeships, from one of the UK's top teaching universities right here in the Borough.
- In September 2019, Barking and Dagenham College become one of just 12 colleges and universities in the UK to be given status as an Institute of Technology – delivering advanced and higher-level vocational training in construction and infrastructure technologies, advanced engineering and robotics, creative digital and IT.
- We continue to work with Barking and Dagenham's Schools Improvement Partnership, part owned by the Council, to promote high quality academic and vocational pathways to young people in the Borough (through one-to-one advice, careers events and work-related learning from primary school upwards).
- We have recognised the role that quality apprenticeships can play in supporting the school to work transition. Since the publication of our apprenticeship strategy in 2017 the Council has delivered 88 new apprenticeships, 80% of which have been for new entrants, with a focus on increasing access for care leavers by guaranteeing them an interview if they meet the minimum criteria.







- Between April 2017 and July 2020, we supported 125 apprenticeship starts in the Borough's maintained schools. We have recruited a dedicated apprenticeship coordinator to drive change and have worked closely with partners to unlock apprenticeship levy funding.
- We have established a specialist team to track and engage all local 16-18 year olds that are not in employment, education or training (NEET) or whose destination is unknown, leading to a reduction in the NEET or Unknown rate from 8.5% in 2015 to 3.5% in June 2019 – faster than the national rate of reduction and in the second quintile nationally.
- We convene a Provider Forum to co-ordinate and shape the opportunities offered to young people by employment and training providers in the Borough and have set up a multidisciplinary panel to put tailored employment plans in place for those leaving local authority care who are NEET.
- In May 2019, London's first Youth Zone opened in Barking & Dagenham. Managed by the national charity OnSide, the Youth Zone provides 'somewhere to go, something to do, someone to talk to' through a range of universal and targeted services for young people that seek to raise aspirations and improve wellbeing. This includes NEET activities and links with employers through OnSide's 'Get A Job' programme.

However, despite all these efforts, rates of youth unemployment and inactivity in the Borough remain too high – and are now rising as a result of the current economic turmoil. Despite improvements, fewer young people go on to higher education from our Borough compared to most other London Boroughs and certain groups including care leavers and white British young people are overrepresented among those who are NEET. Crucially, there is a need to engage more employers, in the Borough and across London, to create new high-quality employment and training opportunities for young people, including for those with learning difficulties and others facing greater disadvantage in the labour market.

We will continue to build on the progress to date, improving access to high quality careers advice and work-related learning in schools, expanding access to the top 30 universities for young people, and tracking and supporting young people who are NEET. Key additional priorities include improving employment support for care leavers and young people with learning disabilities and increasing the number of high-quality vocational education and training pathways into good jobs and careers available to young people in the Borough and London more widely, including through the Council's own apprenticeship strategy.

We will also work with partners to explore how we can support an increase in degree-level vocational pathways available to local young people and attract more leading higher educational institutions to the Borough, starting with the UCL PEARL facility at Dagenham East.

**In addition**, over the next couple of years the Council and its partners will be focused on:

Ensuring that apprenticeships generated by the Council's apprenticeship programme, sector strategies and new Social Value policy generate opportunities for new entrants as well as existing employees; and providing written guidance and information sessions for Council managers, schools and employers seeking to set up high quality apprenticeships that could benefit Borough residents, including new entrants and young people.

Implementing a scheme to redistribute the unspent Apprenticeship Levy funds (up to 25% of the total pot) from the Council and local schools to employers offering apprenticeships to LBBD residents, with priority given to those offering apprenticeships to new entrants, at or progressing to Level 3 or above, and with clear wage and progression gains upon successful completion.



**Working age adults.** Developing a targeted work and skills offer.

Over the last few months, the number of Barking and Dagenham residents who are unemployed has been rising sharply, as a result of the economic impact of Covid-19. However, even before this recession, our Borough had high numbers of people who had been unemployed for a long time and faced significant disadvantages when seeking to access decent work with prospects. About a quarter of the Borough's population is economically inactive, and the employment rate is the one of the lowest in London. Enabling more residents in these situations to access good training and work opportunities is a key test for our Inclusive Growth plans.

At the same time, national funding pressures have led to steady reductions in the specialist services available to unemployed people with more complex needs, including those with learning disabilities and mental and physical health conditions. Extra government funding for those facing greater labour market disadvantage will hopefully be provided as part of the Covid-19 response, but the previous decline in investment has made it harder for local authorities and civil society organisations to offer the more intensive interventions that have been shown to work for these groups.

Access to good work is also an important element of how we can support greater resilience, independence, and wellbeing among, for instance, homeless families and others who are heavily reliant on the Council for support. Education, employment, and income have been found to have a causal impact on mental and physical health, while job loss, unemployment and insecurity are risk factors for homelessness and problem debt.

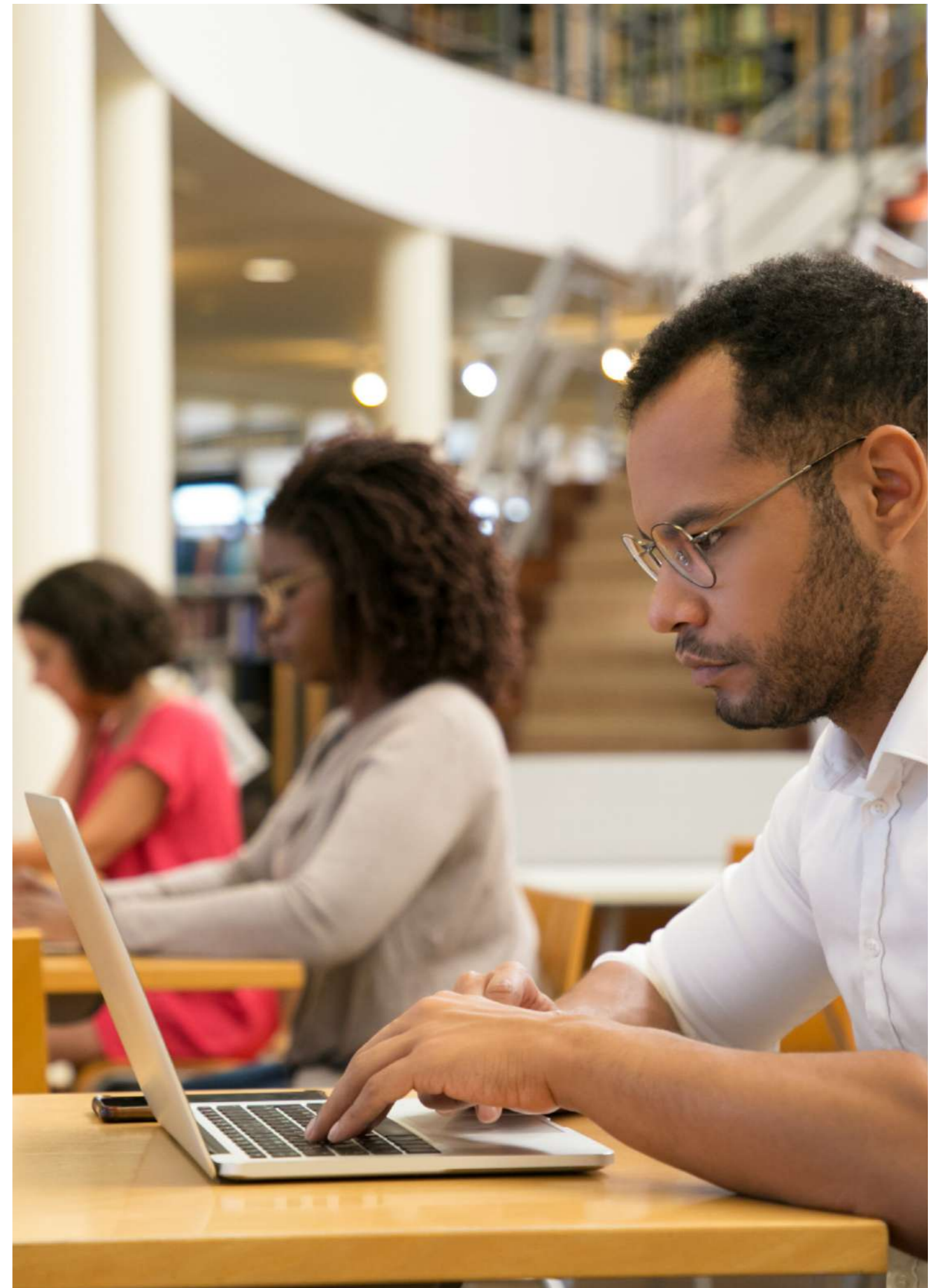
The integrated work and skills service within Community Solutions includes the Adult College and three Job Shops. Through these services, unemployed residents and low paid employees working fewer than 16 hours a week can access one-to-one support from a job coach to develop an action plan tailored to their circumstances; support with CVs, job search and interview techniques, and access to education, training and volunteering.

This service also includes a specialist team working with those with secondary mental health conditions. The team have created Lead advisers to work with social workers in the Council's Mental Health, all-age Disability and homelessness services to improve referral pathways, develop employment plans and improve support for their service users. These services are working together to explore how the Council can improve support pathways for those with complex needs. Finally, we have also secured an additional specialist post to support adults with learning disabilities to find and sustain meaningful work opportunities in future.

In light of the significant impact of Covid-19 on unemployment for a range of groups, the design and scope of our support offer will need to be agile and ready to adapt to rapidly evolving needs and pressures. It will also need to be able to swiftly design and implement new short-term interventions to support longer term goals, through accessing and making strategic use of new national funding opportunities.

No matter these changes, the work and skills offer available to adult residents in Barking and Dagenham, will continue to be underpinned by three core principles:

- **Who: Targeting those who are less likely to find work without our support**  
We use local demographic data to understand need and target our resources towards disadvantaged groups and places, ensuring that people can succeed regardless of their gender, ethnicity, or other factors. Our goal is to increase the number of adults supported by the Council into employment each year to at least 1,000, with a focus on long-term unemployed and inactive residents, and those not well served by other mainstream provision. It is also vital that we enable people to sustain employment. This means we continue to work with them and their employers for the first six months in work. We will also seek to develop targeted pathways for parents returning to work, ex-offenders, and those with substance misuse problems, physical and mental health conditions and special educational needs and disabilities.







- **How: Providing employment support alongside help with wider issues which might make getting and keeping a job harder**

We aim to help people with whatever issue is getting in the way of them being able to get and keep a good job that works for them. The Council's integrated work and skills offer seeks to create a pathway to employment from non-accredited community courses and volunteering opportunities that build confidence and wellbeing, through to vocational courses with a clear line of sight to work and job brokerage support.

We are exploring how we can target disadvantaged groups through outreach and co-location and build stronger working relationships and referral pathways with other relevant Council services and community providers to ensure people are supported to address wider issues including debt, domestic abuse, homelessness and needs relating to mental health conditions or disabilities.

- **What: Supporting people into meaningful and sustainable employment**

We are committed to supporting entry to well-paid, secure jobs wherever possible, and seek to support employers to adopt inclusive employment practices. Within our overall target of supporting 1000 residents into employment, we have a specific target of supporting at least 120 residents into jobs in high skill sectors. At the same time our goal is to create 60 high quality apprenticeships and work experience placements, whilst expanding the vocational training offer available at the Adult College, and exploring how we can better engage and influence employer behaviour to increase the number and quality of opportunities and of the training offer for disabled residents.

Across our work and skills services, we are reviewing these goals in light of Covid-19. Our job shops and our adult college we have continued to provide services to residents throughout lockdown using digital tools. In future, we will replicate the success of this model by embedding digital outreach into our permanent offer, whilst continuing to provide face to face support to those who are digitally excluded. Our job shops and our adult college will also be at the heart of the specific Covid-19 response measures already outlined.

**In particular**, over the next couple of years the Council and its partners will be focused on:

Striving to support as many local residents into work as possible (targeting 1,000 people each year) while also designing enhanced support for those heavily reliant on the Council to enter and sustain employment. This will include striking the right balance between the roles of Community Solutions, Care & Support services and specialist providers – based on a mix of Council funding and external grants.

Identifying and implementing the preferred option to increase the number of quality vocational pathways delivered by the Adult College based on available funding allocations, with a particular focus on creating more Level 3 training opportunities (which have better employment and wage benefits), linked to clear pathways into available jobs.

Specific actions linked to Covid-19 recovery are set out at the beginning of this chapter.



## Money, debt and poverty

Central to our vision for Inclusive Growth is that rising prosperity is fairly shared, and that growth delivers higher standards of living for everyone – and lower inequality. A key strand of our plans therefore relates to a cross-cutting theme around money, debt, and poverty reduction. Put simply, no-one is able to benefit from all the wider opportunities we are trying to develop in the Borough if they do not have enough money to live on, are drowning under unaffordable debt or are living persistently in poverty. This work is particularly important in the context of Covid-19. The pandemic has placed unprecedented financial strain on many of our households. The Council has taken several steps to support residents in managing this burden over the last few months, including:

- Giving discretionary hardship support payments, known as Individual Assistance Payments (IAP) to residents to help with emergency living expenses including food, fuel (gas and electric for customers who pay via a key meter), travel expenses (only on Oyster cards), and household appliances and/or clothing in exceptional circumstances.
- Extending the eligibility criteria for our Community Food Clubs (more information below). Since Covid-19, the initial fee for use of food clubs has been waived and opening hours amended to remove any barriers to access. Food Clubs have also opened to residents with No Recourse to Public Funds. In total, membership has increased by 80% since March.
- Reviewed and implemented various approaches to reminder letters, both for individual debt and business rate arrears. These aim to balance advice and guidance about appropriate support with a proportionate approach to collection.

We will continue to review these measures, as the economic and financial consequences of the pandemic continues to unfold. But, as with the wider unemployment challenge in our Borough, the structural challenges associated with money, debt, and poverty pre-date Covid-19. As a result, our ultimate goal, and the steps we will need to take in order to achieve it, remains the same.

Building on the Borough Manifesto, our goal in relation to **Money, debt and poverty** is to:

“ **Reduce levels of debt and associated money issues in our community through the adoption of an ethical, joined up and data driven approach to the collection, management, and prevention of debt. This means building on the success of the Homes and Money hub through developing their preventative offer, making better use of data and insight to support proactive outreach, and working more closely in partnership with civil society. It means continuing to provide residents with a range of affordable alternatives to the high street, including four additional community food clubs (delivered in partnership with Fair Share) which provide access to affordable, healthy food, alongside personalised debt and money management support. Finally, it means using the opportunity created by the return of the revenues and benefits service into Community Solutions to reform how we manage and collect our debts, balancing how we improve collection across a number of charges including Council tax and rents, whilst supporting residents to longer-term financial independence and maximising the potential for upstream prevention.** ”

These issues related to money, debt and poverty cut across our four core Inclusive Growth themes. For example, the affordability of housing relative to people’s incomes, levels of unemployment and the prevalence of low pay are fundamental to those who are struggling on low incomes. At the same time, in low income households, the cost of utilities, basic consumer products (including white goods and electronics), groceries and clothes can be the difference between some degree of financial security and debt. And debt can take many forms. We know that 6000 households in the Borough are in debt to the Council in the form of Council tax arrears. And experience suggests that many of these residents will also be experiencing other forms of debt, including from credit cards, high interest loans, or high interest consumer products.

In addition to the actions we are committed to elsewhere, we are also committed to the adoption of an ethical and data driven approach to the collection, management, and prevention of debt. This builds on the Council’s Homes and Money hub: Our integrated offer for anyone experiencing issues with money, debt, or poverty. We will also support community food clubs (delivered in partnership with Fair Share) which provide access to affordable, healthy food, alongside personalised debt and money management support. Finally, we will use the opportunity created by the return of the revenues and benefits service into Community Solutions to better integrate how we manage and collect our debts whilst providing the right support at the right time to those in need, wherever possible in a proactive and preventative approach.

**In particular**, over the next couple of years the Council and our partners will be focused on:

A range of commitments linked to homes and employment, as set out in **Homes: For local people and other working Londoners and Jobs: A thriving and inclusive economy.**

Making full use of our data and our insight to identify residents who either are, or might be at risk of, experiencing money and debt issues. Using that understanding to define the right individual support and the best timing and method of engagement in order to manage these risks, including through benefits maximisation, debt management and consolidation, and wider financial advice and guidance.

Expanding the reach of our community food clubs from three to seven locations across the Borough, ensuring that these continue to provide the residents that need it most with access to affordable, healthy food, alongside personalised debt and money management support.

Ensuring the successful transition of the Council’s revenues and benefits service from Elevate into LBBD, using this opportunity to strategically align and redesign the service so that it can both improve collection rates, support residents and business suffering financial hardship and maximise the potential for prevention, in partnership with the wider community solutions offer.

Developing a new in-house ethical collector service for all debts that can work closely alongside revenues and benefits as well as community solutions in order to improve collection rates, to work more closely with residents to improve their financial outlook and to maximise the potential for prevention.

Working alongside social sector organisations to further build community capacity to support our response to debt and building financial resilience. This includes expanding community debt champions and working with BD-Collective and emerging community networks to ensure pathways to financial support are easily accessible.



