



UNISON Council's 2024/25 response to Barnet Restructure Proposals

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1. Executive Summary

Barnet UNISON has, since September 2024, proposed financial savings which we believe should be tried before any of these other posts are deleted. To date we have had no response and instead our members' jobs and services are now at risk. Please see our budget saving recommendations below:

- Withdraw the compulsory redundancies due to the anticipated receipt of income of **£7.8million** from the Pension Fund.
- Reduce Executive Directors by deleting the following **3 Executive Director** roles: Strategy and Innovation; Resources; Assurance and Public Protection.
- Delete the Deputy Chief Executive role
- Create one Executive Director role: Corporate Resources. All of the services covered by the deleted Executive Director roles transfer to the newly created Corporate Services Directorate with the exception of Public Protection which should be transferred back into the Environment Directorate as it was before the TUPE transfer to Capita in 2013.
- Greenspaces should be moved from Communities, Adults & Health back into Environment.
- The Assistant Director (AD) role for Greenspaces and Leisure should become the A.D for Libraries and Leisure.
- The Senior Management Team (SMT) restructure should incorporate all Heads of Service and Assistant Heads of Services levels of management in order to ensure greater equity in terms of numbers of staff managed by individual managers.
- The Senior Management Teams (SMT) of The Barnet Group (TBG) and Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS) are to be included in this restructure to deliver savings, avoid redundancies and making cuts to services.
- For transparency and accountability Barnet Council should instruct BELS and TBG to publish all salaries over £50K as per the Localism Act 2011 – Openness and accountability in local pay.
- All workers providing Council services to enjoy the same terms and conditions including having access to the Local Government Pension Scheme.
- To end what our members in the outsourced services believe to be institutional racism whereby the lowest paid jobs are those most likely to be staffed by Black and migrant workers and outsourced.
- Save **£7.299 million annually** by insourcing services thus avoiding the increase in national insurance which has been imposed on the private sector by the Labour Government.
- Impose financial penalties on Capita for underperforming of the collection of Council Tax and Business rates.
- Conduct an urgent review of the back-office services of TBG and BELS.
- Use economies of scale to help deal with the increased wage bill
- Barnet Homes, part of TBG, should be brought back into the Council.
- The Housing Service should be merged with the Directorate of Growth to become the Housing & Growth Directorate.
- No redundancies should be carried out until an Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and consulted with the staff and the trade unions.

2. Background

2.1 Barnet UNISON understands that Local Government funding has been subject to an ideological attack by successive Tory Governments over the past 14 years. Our members have suffered because of the funding shortfall for example the mass outsourcing of services to companies like Capita and ISS to name two. Our members have been asked **to do more for less** and many of our members are working way beyond their paid hours for fear of falling behind. Central Government funding for local councils has been cut by over **40% since 2010** demonstrating a catastrophic neglect of our local areas. This alone has left many Councils declaring bankruptcy or on the brink of declaring bankruptcy.

2.2 Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) has been sought by **19 Councils** in the last financial year see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/exceptional-financial-support-for-local-authorities-for-2024-25>

[Funding shortfall of £4bn leaves councils on a precipice | News, Press release | News | UNISON National](#)

[How have English councils' funding and spending changed? 2010 to 2024 | Institute for Fiscal Studies](#)

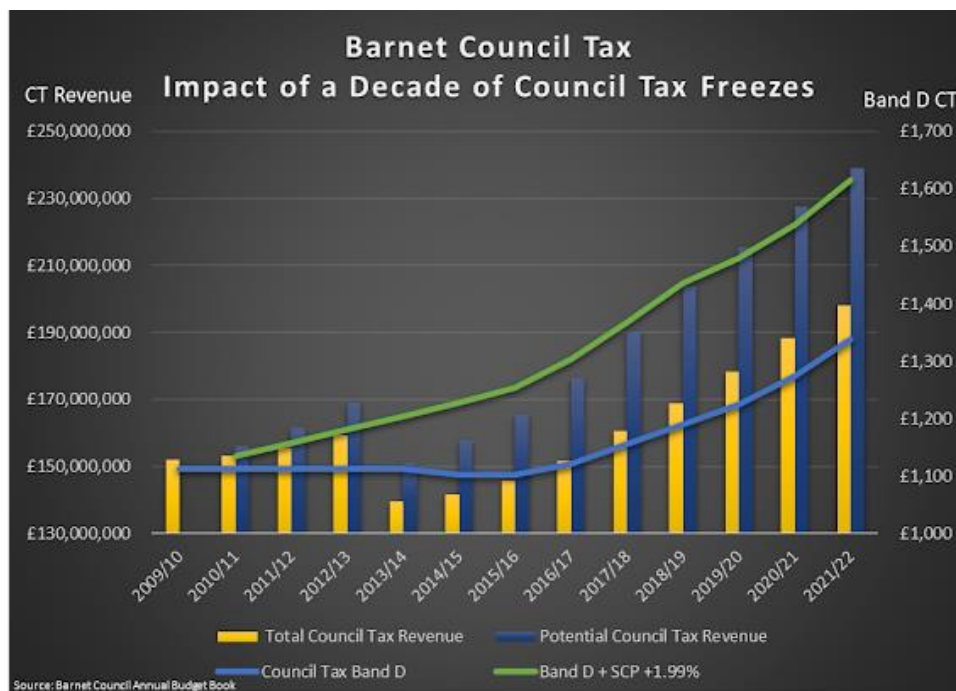
[Exceptional financial support for local authorities - GOV.UK](#)

2.3 However, there were **local decisions** made by Barnet Council specifically about Council Tax that UNISON believes have contributed to the current financial crisis.

2.4 Local Blogger and Barnet resident Mr Reasonable has produced an informative post about the damage that has been done because of putting politics before public services.

“What the figures show is that if Barnet had taken modest rises of 1.99% every year instead of freezing or cutting council tax, by 2022 there would have been £41m a year more revenue coming from Council Tax.”

Source: <https://reasonablenewbarnet.blogspot.com/2025/01/a-bit-of-context-for-barnets-current.html>



2.5 Barnet Council was warned many times about the critical danger of following a political ideology rather than looking after the public purse and the inevitable consequences to both staff and the community they serve. Denying income for critical services to support a political ideology has impacted on the local situation in Barnet.

2.6 In turn there has been a deterioration of services the Council is able to offer the residents of Barnet. Where services are happening, members of the public note it is harder to receive a service and the quality and consistency of what they receive is debatable. Examples of these are the downgrading of the library service where **libraries are unstaffed for much of their opening times**, the near non-existent youth services and the fact that when calling the Council for a service, members of the public (and staff!) experience difficulties being put through to the right person.

2.7 Barnet UNISON knows that the increasing demand for adult social care continues to rise whilst at the same time **mainstream politicians are all failing** to detail their long-term plan to implement sustainable funding of the provision of social care services which must include a commitment to end the **terror of low pay** and include access to a **decent pension scheme and occupational sick pay** for what is a largely female workforce.

2.8 Barnet UNISON knows that the **cost of temporary accommodation** continues to rise. Urgent action must be applied to **Prime Minister Starmer** to reverse his decision not to apply rent controls across London. This decision must be reversed. Most London Councils are experiencing price hikes from private landlords because they know that Councils have no choice but to pay.

2.9 Notwithstanding this Barnet UNISON believes there are still financial choices to make that are within the control of the Council. We note the Council proposals which are to cut posts, mostly identifying lower paid positions for deletion, which then means this work will be given to other colleagues to carry out or will mean the work stops completely.

2.10 The Council was aware of its financial difficulties months before the restructuring consultations were announced. Yet these consultations over the whole Council have been knocked out with the minimum possible notice and consultation period and with colleagues struggling to receive the most basic information (see our comments regarding Meaningful Consultation). This could and should have been discussed with colleagues well in advance of the proposals. For some colleagues it has had a devastating effect with one colleague, now at risk of redundancy, agreeing to go part time earlier in 2024 oblivious to the fact that in just a few months their job would be at risk and their redundancy figures would be based on the new part time rate! There is nothing dignified in such an approach.

2.11 Barnet UNISON has, since September 2024, proposed financial savings which we believe should be tried before any of these other posts are deleted. To date we have had no response and instead our members' jobs and services are now at risk.

3. Senior Management Structure

3.1 Barnet UNISON notes the interim Chief Executive restructure aims to make **£0.5million** in savings. We believe this does not go far enough. We note it excludes the Head of Service and Assistant Head of Service tiers of management, and we note there are anomalies with some senior managers managing less than 3 staff members whilst others manage more than 3.

3.2 After listening to our members' reactions to the Council proposals, we are proposing the following:

- Reduce Executive Directors by deleting the following **3 Executive Director** roles: Strategy and Innovation; Resources; Assurance and Public Protection.
- Delete the Deputy Chief Executive role
- Create one Executive Director role: Corporate Resources. All of the services covered by the deleted Executive Director roles transfer to the newly created Corporate Services Directorate with the exception of Public Protection which should be transferred back into the Environment Directorate as it was before the TUPE transfer to Capita in 2013.
- Greenspaces should be moved from Communities, Adults & Health back into Environment.
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- The Senior Management Team (SMT) restructure should incorporate all Heads of Service and Assistant Heads of Services levels of management in order to ensure greater equity in terms of numbers of staff managed by individual managers.
- The Senior Management Teams (SMT) of The Barnet Group (TBG) and Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS) are to be included in this restructure to deliver savings, avoid redundancies and making cuts to services.

3.3 We note that the SMT restructure **does not include** the Senior Management of **The Barnet Group** (TBG) or **Barnet Education and Learning Services** (BELS) both of which deliver 100% Council services, and which are owned by and financed by Barnet Council 100%.

3.4 Therefore, it is only right that the **SMTs of TBG and BELS are included** in this restructure to **deliver savings, avoid redundancies and making cuts to services**.

3.5 For transparency and accountability Barnet Council should arrange for BELS and TBG to **publish all salaries over £50K** as per the *Localism Act 2011 – Openness and accountability in local pay*.

4. Effect of Outsourcing

4.1 UNISON's National Policy to end outsourcing has been robustly supported by Barnet UNISON for almost two decades. Barnet UNISON's position on ending the outsourcing of contracts is well understood by Barnet Council.

4.2 We want:

- All workers to enjoy the same **terms and conditions** including having access to the **Local Government Pension Scheme**.
- To end what our members in the outsourced services believe to be **institutional racism** whereby the lowest paid jobs and those most likely to be staffed by Black and migrant workers, are the jobs most likely to be outsourced.
- That by having staff in-house and on decent Council terms and conditions, there is **better accountability** for the services they provide and scope for the quality of the delivery for those services to improve.
- Economies of scale will help deal with the increased wage bill
- Instead of the taxman receiving increased National Insurance contributions, this money the Council will have to pay to outsourced companies (around £1million to TBG alone) should go straight into the pockets of the workers to spend in their local communities. We note that in report 5/12/24 [Business Planning 2024-2030](#) the extra cost of national insurance contributions by the Council to outsourced companies will increase the Council's costs by an estimated **£7.299 million annually**.

4.3 Capita, a key contractor for the Council, is responsible for Council collection of revenues and benefits. It is underperforming and by every **1%** it fails to collect in revenue for Council Tax, this **loses the Council £2.3million**. For business rates **every 1% lost is worth £324,000 lost** to the Council. Capita is on an improvement plan.

4.4 Barnet UNISON wants to see Capita pay **financial penalties** for its underperformance rather than see staff lose their jobs and services to the public being eroded further.

4.5 The Council owns 2 Local Authority Trading Companies – TBG and BELS. It is currently funding 3 separate back-office services for 3 separate organisations (LBB, TBG, BELS) with their **respective senior staff hierarchies**. This includes 3 HR services, 3 payroll services; 3 Chief Executives; 3 Finance Services etc.

4.6 Considering the serious financial crisis facing the Council and deeply felt by LBB staff and residents, Barnet UNISON asks:

- ***How is this a good use of financial resources supporting these services in triplicate?***
- ***We want an urgent and forensic review of these structures. We believe these reviews will deliver savings which will mitigate the need for redundancies across the Council.***

4.7 All other London authorities have decided that Housing should be delivered in-house. We have read their reports which are publicly available [here](#). All the other

London Council reports state that there are **clear organisational and financial benefits** to bringing Housing services back in-house.

4.8 We note a critical front line service provided to assist Barnet residents to find work placements and receive their correct benefits – part of a homelessness prevention strategy - is facing Council funding cuts of 20%. The service is managed by TBG and it seems that redundancies in this service is preferable to looking to reduce the SMT of TBG.

- **Barnet UNISON believes Barnet Homes should be brought back into the Council and Housing should be provided in-house which will also enable a review of the hierarchy of Barnet Homes to take place.**
- **We propose that the Housing Service is merged with the Directorate of Growth to become the Housing & Growth Directorate.**

5. Meaningful Consultation

5.1 As it stands the Council has, in some of the current restructure consultations, failed to follow its own new policy with respect to this consultation. Barnet UNISON has already written to the Council outlining its concerns and highlighting the areas of the policy where there are gaps in what we have received. The highlighted sections below indicate the things Barnet UNISON and staff members have not received at the start or to date, breaching the Council's policy. We are only being provided piecemeal bits of information making meaningful consultation with the wider workforce almost impossible.

5.2 See below in highlights the information we did not receive at the **start of consultation**:

5.3 From the **Restructuring and Change Management Policy**:

Paragraph 5.3

“Any formal consultation proposals will need to include a clear rationale for the proposed changes, ideally including references to relevant data and/or information from sources independent of the Council (e.g. the Office of National Statistics, professional bodies) and outline their likely impact on staff and service users. Wherever possible, change proposals will also include a review mechanism in order to evaluate the impact of the changes (on staff as well as service delivery) at a determined point in time (e.g. 6-8 months after implementation).”

5.4 From the **Restructuring and Change Management Procedure**:

Paragraph 4. Formal consultation process, 4.1:

“Formal consultation with staff and trade union representatives will be undertaken in respect of any type of change. Where the changes are likely to have a material impact on employment relationships, formal consultation periods will run for at least 30 calendar days. Formal consultation will always take place on the basis of a comprehensive change proposal document (consultation pack) which needs to include at least the following information:

- Background and rationale for the proposed changes
- Possible alternatives to the proposed change that have been considered
- An outline of the proposed new way of operations/service delivery and what it is hoped to achieve.
- A current organisational chart covering the affected service area[s] as well as one showing the proposed new structure.
- Wherever possible/available, current role profile documentation covering all affected roles, as well as draft profiles for proposed new/changed roles. Managers are expected to ensure that any draft role profiles contained within a ‘consultation pack’ have been assessed in line with the Council's Job Evaluation (JE) scheme. Detailed advice on the JE process will be available from HR.

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- An estimate of the annual cost of the existing structure (including employment on-costs), compared with the projected annual cost of the proposed structure, highlighting any savings and/or additional costs.
 - An outline of the proposed timeframe for the changes.
 - The ways in which individual posts (including ones which may currently be vacant) are likely to be impacted by the change.
 - An indication of whether the move to the proposed new structure is likely to involve job matching, ring-fencing, and/or selection exercises and associated timelines (please see Appendix 1 for more details), together with an outline description of the way in which they are likely to be undertaken (e.g. whether a selection exercise will only include interviews or also incorporate some tests or other assessments)."

5.5 Most notably Barnet UNISON has yet to receive a **list of ALL vacant posts** in the Council and yet in one-to-one consultations some managers have stated that they know where the vacancies are. Section 188 of the Trade Union Act states that there is a requirement to share such information to avoid unnecessary redundancies. Failure to provide this information could result in compensation payments being made to colleagues directly affected.

5.6 The fact of not providing this information as per the policy and procedure and legislation means we believe that this consultation has been undermined and restricted the ability of staff and the trade unions to be able to provide informed responses to some and or all of the proposals. For example how is it possible for colleagues and trade unions to meaningfully contribute to this consultation when they do not know:

- What the individual listed proposed measure contributes to the final sum of money the Council wants to save.
- The final sum of money the Council wants to save.
- What happens to the work of staff who are to be made redundant.
- The details of all vacant posts (only those proposed for deletion in the restructures). It is impossible to consider whether other vacant posts could have been chosen over the ones proposed for deletion.

5.7 To the best of our knowledge no Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried for any of the redundancy consultations.

5.8 No redundancies should be carried out until an Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and consulted with the staff and the trade unions.

6. Conclusion

Barnet UNISON believes that the consultation process has been compromised due to Barnet Council failing to provide the information as set out in their own Policy and Procedure in a timely manner (discussed in section 3 “Meaningful Consultation” of this report). We have been informed that one of the major obstacles to providing this information has been the failure of Oracle the new IT system that was introduced in April 2024.

Barnet UNISON remains of the view that no lower paid jobs or services should be subject to cuts until Barnet Council responds to our savings proposals that were submitted several months ago (see our article here [“Three Chief Executives and one plumber”: The unfinished story.”](#)) and are repeated in this report.