


Going the extra mile

Delivering great services
at great value



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Passing on careers advice at a Barnet Homes employment and training day.

Foreword

The successful completion of our Decent Homes programme is a good opportunity to reflect on our achievements and assess how we can best meet the challenges ahead.

We are enormously proud of having delivered our £185million Decent Homes investment programme on time and to budget, making improvements to more than 8,000 homes.

This is more than just improving the fabric of buildings. It is also about building the fabric of a better society – from older people enjoying a warmer home, to thousands of children being given a better start in life.

Yet we have always recognised that our company is about much more than Decent Homes.

By taking a business-like approach to social housing, we have a good track record of developing professional expertise, delivering high quality services and offering good value for money. We believe this provides us with the foundation to grow as an organisation.

Plans to attract new business, particularly our plans to take over additional services from Barnet Council, will help us to ride out the challenges of the national squeeze on public spending.

At the same time, by making best use of resources, creating stronger links with other organisations and empowering communities to do more for themselves, we believe it is possible to achieve more for less, ensuring residents receive improved services while making year-on-year spending reductions.

Over the next two years we will build on our record of:

- Substantial efficiencies. By applying a business focus to social housing, we have managed to cut our operating costs by 15 per cent while retaining good customer satisfaction. But we know we must now go further, and more radical savings solutions must be found
- Successful partnership working. We are currently procuring for ten-year contracts for our maintenance services. This process is crucial to the future quality and value of our services
- Excellent relationship with our sole shareholder, Barnet Council. This will help us to realise our plans for taking over management of some adult social care services, along with other housing services currently delivered directly by Barnet Council. The addition of these services will ensure the company's future viability and success

- Involving and empowering our residents. From having a Barnet Homes leaseholder as Board Chair, to establishing a resident-led scrutiny group, we have long recognised that co-regulation is the best way of ensuring we provide services that meet the needs and wishes of our residents
- Maintaining our properties to a good quality standard. We must ensure we invest our reduced resources in the most cost effective and beneficial way both on our regeneration estates and other council homes across Barnet
- Developing a good quality and committed workforce. We must ensure we have the right people with the right skills and resources to continue to raise the quality of our services to our residents.

The financial challenges ahead are significant but not insurmountable. We are positive about the opportunities for self-financing offered by the government’s review of the Housing Revenue Account, and would welcome the opportunity to involve residents still further in determining how we prioritise investment.

This Business Plan sets out how we will achieve more for less, and continue to build our reputation as an excellent landlord and innovative organisation over the next two years.




Tracey Lees .

Tracey Lees,
Chief Executive



V. B

Vi Britchfield,
Chair of the Board

A young boy with dark hair is captured mid-air, performing a star jump over a large, rectangular hay bale. He is wearing a dark grey t-shirt with a graphic print and white shorts with a small logo on the left leg. His arms are extended horizontally to the sides, and his legs are spread wide. He is wearing white sneakers with black and blue accents. In the background, a multi-story residential building with beige walls and white window frames is visible. A white event tent is set up on the grass in front of the building, with several people standing around it. A red and white striped banner is strung across the area. The scene is outdoors during the day.

Star jumping at one of our first Love where you live events at the Fosters Estate, Hendon – encouraging residents to take pride in their neighbourhood.

Introduction

Our Business Plan sets out our main projects and objectives up to 2013.

Our vision

Great service, delivered at great value, that makes a positive difference to people, homes and communities.

The plan is a path of direction, not a detailed action plan. It will be used to inform action plans to be drawn up and delivered by service areas within Barnet Homes.

These individual plans, and our future Business Plans, will in turn be predicated on the following:

- Clarity over the future of the Housing Revenue Account, and a detailed assessment of the implications of an alternative self-financing system
- More details from the government about the possibility of setting rents for new tenants at 80 per cent of market rates, and a decision on how this might be applied in Barnet
- The government's Localism Bill, including changes to security of tenure and flexible tenancies
- The impact of reforms to the benefits system on the ability of tenants to sustain their tenancies, and extra support they may require

- Progress on regeneration projects at our four priority estates
- Ensuring continued alignment with Barnet Council's corporate priorities and business plans, in support of its One Barnet vision
- The outcome of ongoing discussions with the council about the possibility of Barnet Homes managing its housing needs and resources services, and some adult social care services.

In light of the current uncertainty over these important issues, we have set a two-year timescale to this Business Plan. Our previous Business Plans have extended over a five year period.

The successful delivery of our vision will require:

- Understanding our **residents** and their priorities
- Delivering the right **services** at the right quality
- Ensuring we have the right **people** in place to deliver these services in the most effective way
- Offering **financial value** in all that we do, achieving efficiencies and attracting new business
- Working with partner organisations and residents to make efficiency savings and long-term improvements to wider **communities**.



Riffat and Waheed Butt with their severely disabled daughter Zoha, who is enjoying a better quality of life thanks to Barnet Homes adaptations to their West Hendon home.

What our residents say about our services	2008 (STATUS)	2010	London Avg (2008)
Tenants happy with overall service	71%	73%	68%
Tenants happy with repairs service	70%	68%	66%
Tenants who felt staff were helpful	78%	83%	73%
Leaseholders happy with overall service	31%	40%	37%
Leaseholders happy with repairs service	30%	33%	33%
Leaseholders who felt staff were helpful	51%	59%	48%

To measure the success of this plan we have set these targets:

- Improve tenant satisfaction to 76% by 2012
- Improve leaseholder satisfaction with overall services to 44% by 2012.

Residents

We pride ourselves on our good customer care, reflecting the diverse needs of our residents. We are a listening organisation that involves our residents in all that we do.

Aim 1: We will have a clear understanding of our residents, including their needs and priorities

- We will carry out regular surveys of residents so that we have comprehensive information about the people we are serving, their priorities and their satisfaction with the quality of services
- We will keep existing information about our customers up to date by sending out profiling questionnaires with all appropriate correspondence, with a clear explanation of why we are doing this
- We will encourage more residents to join the 3,000 people already on our Viewpoint system, so that they can be consulted on the issues that matter to them.

Aim 2: Residents will receive useful and timely information about Barnet Homes and our services in the format they want

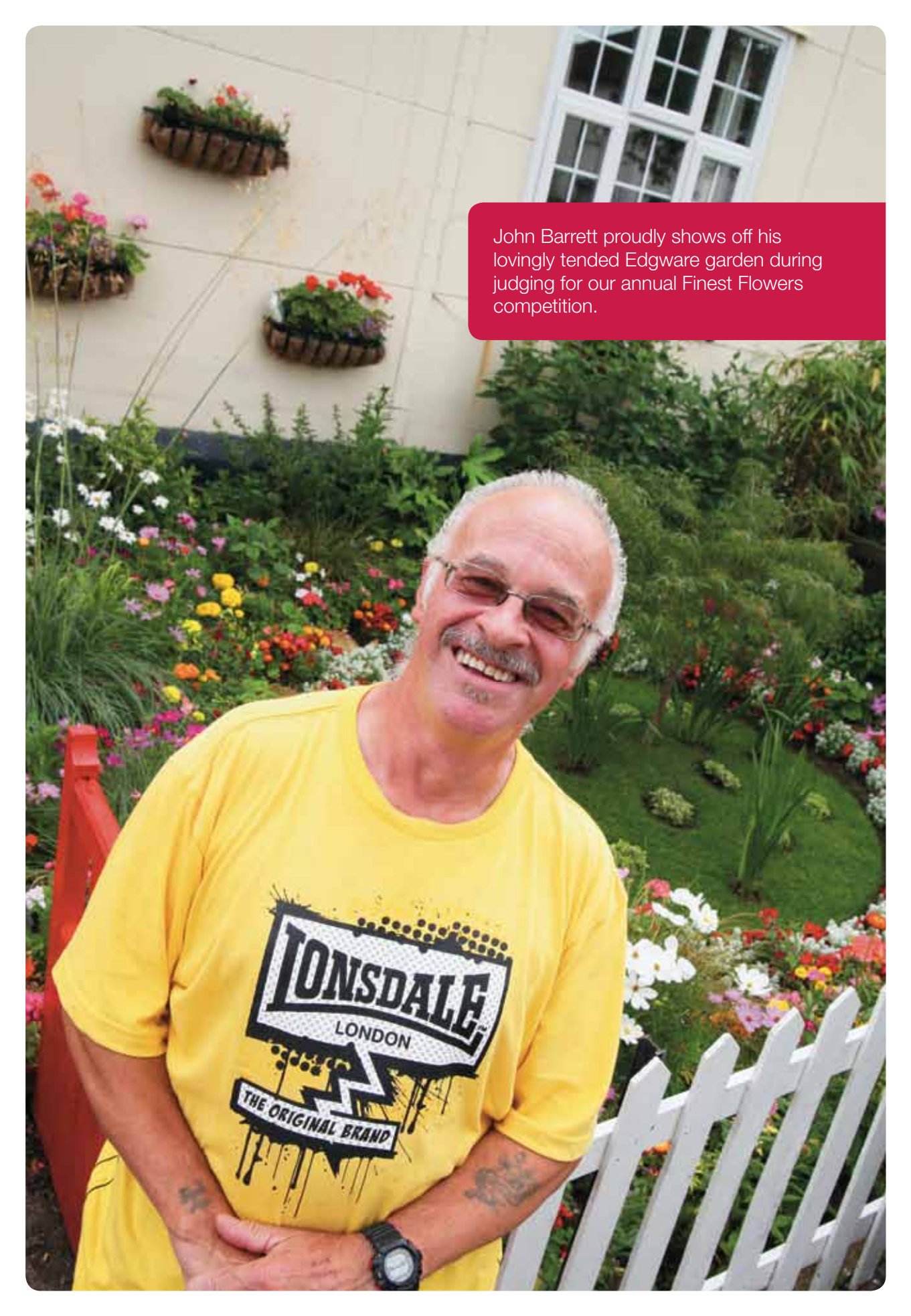
- We will carry out further improvements to our website, involving residents, to make information more accessible and to enable more online transactions
- We will work with residents to quality check our standard letters and other outgoing correspondence
- We will actively encourage residents to sign up to email and texting services as a cost-effective alternative to receiving printed correspondence.

Aim 3: Our residents will be given the tools to scrutinise our performance and drive change

- We will further develop the scrutiny role of our resident Performance Advisory Group. The group will also take responsibility for drafting our Annual Report to residents and leading a review of our complaints process
- We will promote our 20 new service standards and encourage residents to hold us to account if we fail to meet these standards
- We will encourage residents to submit ideas for service improvements and efficiencies through a dedicated area of our website, alongside promotion in our athome newsletter and other communications channels
- We will continue to hold Hub meetings across the borough and attract new residents through strong promotion. Our managers and key staff will be attending Hub meetings to answer residents' questions.

Key project

We will further develop the scrutiny role of our residents' Performance Advisory Group. The group will also take responsibility for drafting our Annual Report to residents and leading a review of our complaints process.

A photograph of John Barrett, a man with a mustache and glasses, smiling in his garden. He is wearing a yellow t-shirt with a 'LONSDALE LONDON THE ORIGINAL BRAND' logo. The garden is lush with various flowers and plants, and there are hanging baskets on the wall behind him. A white picket fence is visible in the foreground.

John Barrett proudly shows off his lovingly tended Edgware garden during judging for our annual Finest Flowers competition.

Services

Delivering excellent services with reduced resources is Barnet Homes' biggest challenge. It is crucial that we concentrate our efforts on services that will have the biggest possible benefit to residents, and that we challenge our working practices to deliver these services in the most efficient way possible.

Aim 1: All of our residents will be able to live in safe homes with modern facilities

- We will oversee the delivery of a £9.5million refurbishment programme at three tower blocks in Granville Road, taking almost 200 properties to beyond the Decent Homes standard
- We will prioritise our investment spending on making safety improvements in line with legislation, and on vital work to replace failing elements of properties
- We will undertake a major programme of fire safety works using a risk-based approach
- We will agree a new home quality standard with residents following the completion of our Decent Homes programme and use this to inform our forward investment plan
- We will support our partner Village Heating to deliver a 3-star gas service with which will give cost savings and maintain our excellent gas safety record.

Aim 2: All of the 15,000 homes managed by Barnet Homes will be well maintained

- We will achieve high quality ongoing maintenance of our stock at the best possible value for money through our procurement of ten-year maintenance contracts, starting in April 2012
- We will involve residents at every stage of the procurement process, including ongoing monitoring of the contracts once in place

- We will complete a review of repairs at void properties, creating a more efficient system that can be delivered at better value for money and that will improve resident satisfaction with newly-let homes
- We will focus on improving satisfaction with our repairs service by prioritising areas of dissatisfaction in our investment programme
- We will work with Barnet Council, its regeneration partners and residents to review our plans for ongoing maintenance and investment in regeneration properties, and keep residents up to date with developments.

Aim 3: Leaseholders will receive improved services at better value for money

- We will introduce a key leaseholder scheme, through which leaseholders will agree to become liaison points between Barnet Homes and other leaseholders on issues such as communal repairs and service charges
- Through improved forward planning, we will oversee year-on-year reductions in variations between estimate and actual service charges
- Through targeted promotion, we will encourage more leaseholders to make use of our online Service Charges Direct system.

Aim 4: Residents will receive appropriate and targeted support to help them sustain their tenancies and live independently

- We will carry out focus group sessions with residents identified as most at risk of arrears to determine causes and agree action plans
- We will promote the use of direct debit through targeted campaigns to tenants
- We will encourage more tenants to take advantage of credit unions through prominent information on our website and through *athome*
- We will offer an enhanced housing management service at all of our sheltered housing schemes following Barnet Council's approval of plans to reconfigure housing and support options for older people. We will work with the council to ensure older residents continue to receive appropriate levels of care and support through its proposed sheltered plus schemes.

Aim 5: We will re-let empty properties more quickly to new tenants

- We will support Barnet Council in delivering its new allocations policy. This will enable those in housing need to find more suitable housing of their choice more quickly, and our work will include agreeing with residents a variable void standard to help with tackling hard-to-let properties
- Subject to government permission, we will offer assured shorthold tenancies at empty regeneration properties on the Grahame Park Estate. This will minimise lost rent and open up hard-to-let stock to new temporary tenants.

Key projects

- We will achieve high quality ongoing maintenance of our stock at the best possible value for money through our procurement of ten-year maintenance contracts, starting in April 2012
- We will work with Barnet Council to review sheltered housing provision with the aim of continuing to provide high-quality services to older residents
- We will continue to support Barnet Council in delivering the outcomes of its systems review of allocations and lettings and will agree with residents a variable void standard to help with tackling hard-to-let properties.



The future vision for tower blocks at the Granville Road Estate, Childs Hill, following our biggest ever redevelopment project

People

Our staff are our greatest asset. We can only deliver excellent services if we also have a positive, innovative and committed workforce.

What our staff say about us	2007	2010	2010 Benchmark
I am proud to work for Barnet Homes	75%	76%	73%
In my opinion this organisation is committed to customer satisfaction	<i>comparable question not asked</i>	89%	84%
My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment	69%	75%	75%
I am treated with fairness and respect	75%	81%	77%



Barnet Homes staff in discussions at a 'See it, sort it' event on the importance of good quality customer care.

Aim 1: We will have the right people in place to deliver high quality services to our customers

- We will develop a clear talent management and succession plan to encourage the most talented members of staff to develop in our employment
- We will encourage and develop staff with the right attitude and skills for delivering good customer service
- We will offer learning and development opportunities to staff that meet the needs of the Barnet Homes business and encourage personal growth
- We will further embed our new leadership structure to make better use of synergies between teams and improve information sharing across the company to deliver better customer service.

2. We will give members of staff the tools and support they need to do their job to the best of their ability

- We will develop a new intranet site to improve internal communications and enable a system of 'self-service' for day-to-day information and forms
- We will seek new office accommodation that offers good value for money and remains accessible to our residents
- We will continue to roll out and develop mobile working to enable staff to access and update information on site, and encourage more flexible working patterns that suit both our customers and our staff
- Working with staff we will review and refresh our corporate values

- We will involve staff in developing our business by encouraging suggestions and ideas for innovation through 'Dragon's Den'-style events in front of senior managers
- Non-frontline staff will attend resident events to meet tenants and leaseholders and build on their understanding of the communities we serve
- We will develop a major IT strategy to include a review of our integrated housing management software and implementation of a dedicated Customer Relationship Management system.

Key projects

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Finance

The national squeeze on public spending means we must make year-on-year savings throughout the duration of this Parliament. If we are to achieve more for less, we must ensure we make the best possible use of our reduced resources and attract new business to the organisation.

Aim 1: We will offer value for money in all that we do

- We will take full advantage of the government's proposed replacement of the Housing Revenue Account with a system of self-financing, working with residents to ensure we invest rental income where it is most needed and in a cost-effective way
- We will develop a programme of systems thinking reviews for identified areas of our business where early intervention will improve services for residents and achieve efficiencies
- We will consult and involve residents in our budget setting process to ensure our priorities reflect residents' priorities
- Our selection process for ten-year contracts covering all of our maintenance services from 2012 will have value for money at its core
- By offering appropriate support and good quality services to residents, we will build on our record levels of income collection for both rents and service charges.

Aim 2: We will attract new business to Barnet Homes to enable organisational growth

- We will work with Barnet Council on developing a business case for bringing some adult social care services structure into a new organisation which incorporates Barnet Homes
- We will work with Barnet Council to consider whether Barnet Homes should manage housing needs and resources services
- We will develop proposals for offering our bulk waste service on a commercial basis to other organisations
- We will launch a marketing campaign for our Assist emergency alarm services, including our lone worker monitoring system, to encourage sign-up from more non-Barnet Homes residents and other organisations
- We will offer our services as a successful managing agent to other registered social landlords, both in and outside Barnet, to take over the management of more properties
- We will explore opportunities to work more closely with partners and other ALMOs
- We will explore options for replacing our current offer of decoration vouchers to new tenants.

Key projects

- We will work with Barnet Council to take on some adult social care services
- We will work with Barnet Council to consider whether Barnet Homes should manage housing needs and resources services
- A programme of systems thinking reviews of our services.

Income and expenditure	2011/12
Income	£'000
Management Fees	18,984
Repairs & maintenance	8,050
Other income	434
Use of reserves	0
Total income	27,468
Expenditure	£'000
Management	14,189
Operational costs	3,420
Repairs & maintenance	8,145
Contingency/ contribution to reserves	1,714
Total expenditure	27,468

The budget for 2012/13 will be developed and agreed with the Council as part of the 30-year self-financing plan to be introduced following HRA reform implementation in April 2012.

Residents vote on their priority areas for spending at a budget special meeting of our quarterly Hub.



Communities

We want residents to take pride in both their homes and their neighbourhoods, so creating thriving communities.

Aim 1: We will work with partner organisations to combine our efforts on improving neighbourhoods and communities

- Through our “Feeling the Squeeze?” campaign, we will seek to offer job, training and apprenticeship opportunities to our residents wherever possible, and encourage our contractors and partner organisations to do likewise
- We will work with Jobcentre Plus to support the creation of jobs clubs, giving residents a network of support and advice as they seek to find long-term employment
- We will support Barnet Council’s Prototyping initiative by encouraging community-led support and self-help for new tenants, capturing and addressing their needs through early interventions, and reducing long-term public sector service pressure and costs
- We will continue to work with partners such as Barnet Council, Barnet Police, Barnet Community Projects, Barnet Football Club, Nutmeg, Catch 22, and the Barnet Play Association on a wide range of projects to benefit the community and encourage involvement. We will jointly evaluate the impact of projects and campaigns
- We will work with Community Barnet to offer opportunities for staff, members of the community and residents to work together.

Aim 2: We will encourage residents to become more involved in their local neighbourhood and effect improvements

- We will give encouragement and help to residents interested in establishing residents’ associations, and support them to build local scrutiny through estate inspections, mystery shopping and reporting to the Performance Advisory Group
- By offering pro-active advice, support and encouragement, we will help other individuals and groups successfully complete projects that will make a positive difference to their neighbourhood or community.

Key project

We will support the work of a new charitable furniture recycling project, Barnet Furniture Centre. This will benefit the wider community as well as many Barnet Homes residents by offering good quality furniture at discounted rates, new jobs and work experience opportunities for people with special needs and reduce waste disposal to landfill through recycling.



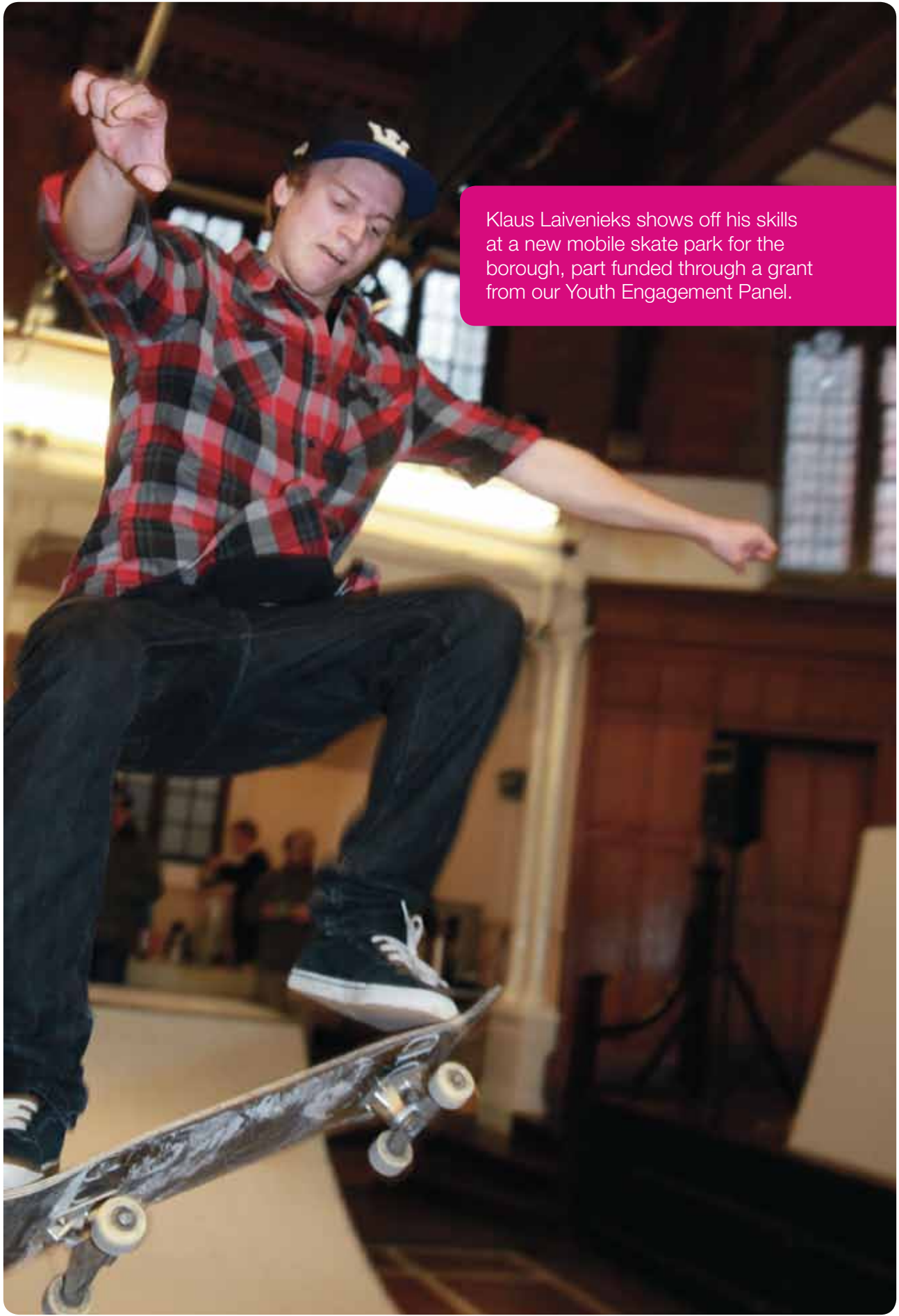


Turning the tables: Staff at a new charity, the Barnet Furniture Centre, set up by Barnet Homes to cut waste and offer good quality used furniture at an affordable price.

- We will evaluate the success of our first 'local offer' to review the frequency of caretaking at residents' request. If successful, we will consult residents on further local offers to benefit individual neighbourhoods
- We will hold further 'Love where you live' days to encourage residents to help Barnet Homes staff in carrying out long-term environmental improvements on targeted estates
- We will recognise and reward those residents who have improved the environment of their estates and the wellbeing of other residents through our annual Finest Flowers competition and Resident Awards, and promote these awards to inspire others
- We will continue to invest in employment and training programmes for residents and offer accredited Chartered Institute of Housing training in-house.

Aim 3. We will provide or support other services with wider community benefits

- We will support the work of a new charitable furniture recycling project, Barnet Furniture Centre. This will benefit the wider community as well as many Barnet Homes residents by offering good quality furniture at discounted rates, new jobs and work experience opportunities for people with special needs and reduce waste disposal to landfill through recycling
- We will encourage non-Barnet Homes residents and organisations to sign up to our Assist emergency alarm service and lone worker monitoring scheme through a dedicated promotional campaign
- We will support residents with projects they wish to introduce in their community by making applications to the National Lottery and other funding sources, or helping them to make their own applications.



Klaus Laivenieks shows off his skills at a new mobile skate park for the borough, part funded through a grant from our Youth Engagement Panel.

For more information visit:
www.barnethomes.org
or phone **0800 3895225**

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