

Towards a Better Newham

Covid-19 Recovery Strategy



People at the Heart
of Everything We Do

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Mayor's Foreword



We are at a critical moment in Newham. Covid-19 has laid bare the endemic inequality that exists in our borough and wider society.

And it has exposed the increased vulnerability of those most socially and economically deprived. The disproportionate impact of the virus in places scarred by deprivation and in communities enriched by diversity, has hurt our people.

We know clearly, if we ever needed a reminder, that poverty and race inequality lowers your life chances. It manifests in Covid-19 mortality rates, in health inequality, in jobs that expose the precarious daily choices being made by so many of our residents simply to earn a living.

The monumental impact that Covid-19 has wrought on our lives and ways of living, requires a radical rethink and bold interventions to accelerate change in Newham for the better. It will require more investment and adapting of our existing programmes and resources. It will also demand from all of us a range

of behavioural changes and a readiness for future disruptions of whatever kind: another virus, climate change or something not yet known to us.

This moment must be seized as a catalyst to initiate a sea change in the agenda we started in the borough two years ago when I stepped into office through our Community Wealth Building agenda. We must accelerate the new methods and collaborative endeavours that were initiated by a global pandemic of unprecedented proportions.

Newham's Covid-19 Recovery Strategy, as set out in this report, is a fundamental shift to embed an economy which places the health and wellbeing of our residents' and race equality central to our aspirations of inclusive growth, quality jobs and fairness in Newham.

That's why, as we reimagine a better Newham, economic security, health, equality and the environment will be the focus of our rehabilitation and recovery.

Rokhsana Fiaz OBE
Mayor of Newham

November 2020

Introduction

Now is an important moment for Newham and its communities and economy. In the face of the Covid-19 crisis and as we work towards recovery, we need to re-think the type of economy we want for our people and in our borough.

The pandemic has highlighted the increased pressures on household and family life; challenges for children and young people not least with the interruption of education; and the deep recession which will have damaging mental and physical health impacts as well as long term economic effects.

Issues of poverty, financial isolation, inequality and disproportionate impact on black and minority ethnic populations, have been brought into sharp focus by Covid-19. This has led to the point of recognising the need for a step-change in the Council's approach, focussing upon quality of life and wellbeing for those who have been hit so hard.

The Covid-19 pandemic has once again shown us that the traditional approaches to developing and supporting the economy are not working well enough for Newham. It is why we have adopted Community Wealth Building, driven by our inclusive economy strategy, which sits at the heart of council policy, building on the principles of economic, social and environmental justice so that long-term prosperity, fairness and wellbeing can be embedded for all residents in the borough.

As we navigate our way through the current crisis and contend with the impending recession, we need to act to shape the economy that we want in light of this new reality; one that works for our residents and delivers a place where communities, no matter what their background, share the benefits of a strong and vibrant economy as we build a Better Newham through a recovery strategy that sets the foundation for doing this.

The economic and psychological impacts of both the pandemic and subsequent recession will have a fundamental and lasting impact on the borough. We must make sure that our response is not only to the immediate challenges but addresses the underlying conditions which have led to us being one of the most impacted places in the country.

In developing this strategy and our response, we have had to contend with the lasting impacts of austerity and a national Covid-19 response, which does not do enough for our residents. As such, we need to adapt existing budgets and resources as well as continuing to lobby government to ensure they understand the long-term impacts of their policy on our borough.

As we do this, we not only appreciate our challenges set out here, but also recognise our strengths. Newham has one of the most entrepreneurial, diverse and young populations in the UK. We are as connected globally as we are to other parts of London and the UK.

Whilst we are realistic about the current position, we are optimistic that we have the foundations to create a more positive and fair economy.

Our recovery strategy

Our strategy is focussed upon two distinct stages of activity: recovery and reorientation.

Recovery focuses upon the next 12 months, a period where we will need to respond to sustained challenges for individuals and businesses.

Reorientation will follow, the time when we start to make more fundamental changes which help us create the inclusive economy we want: an economy which addresses the inequalities - including race inequalities

- which exist, as well as tackling the poverty and deprivation that too many of our residents still face. The explicit focus is the needs of our residents; we will ensure that they have everything they need to deal with the challenges of recession and thrive as our economy recovers. We will support an activity which directly contributes to our residents leading more healthier, prosperous and happy lives in Newham.

This is not, however, a fresh start for us. The actions in this document are rooted in the principles and aspirations of our Community Wealth Building Action Plan and Inclusive Economy Strategy. For this reason, we are positive that the strategy set out here can inform the early stages of a better future for Newham.

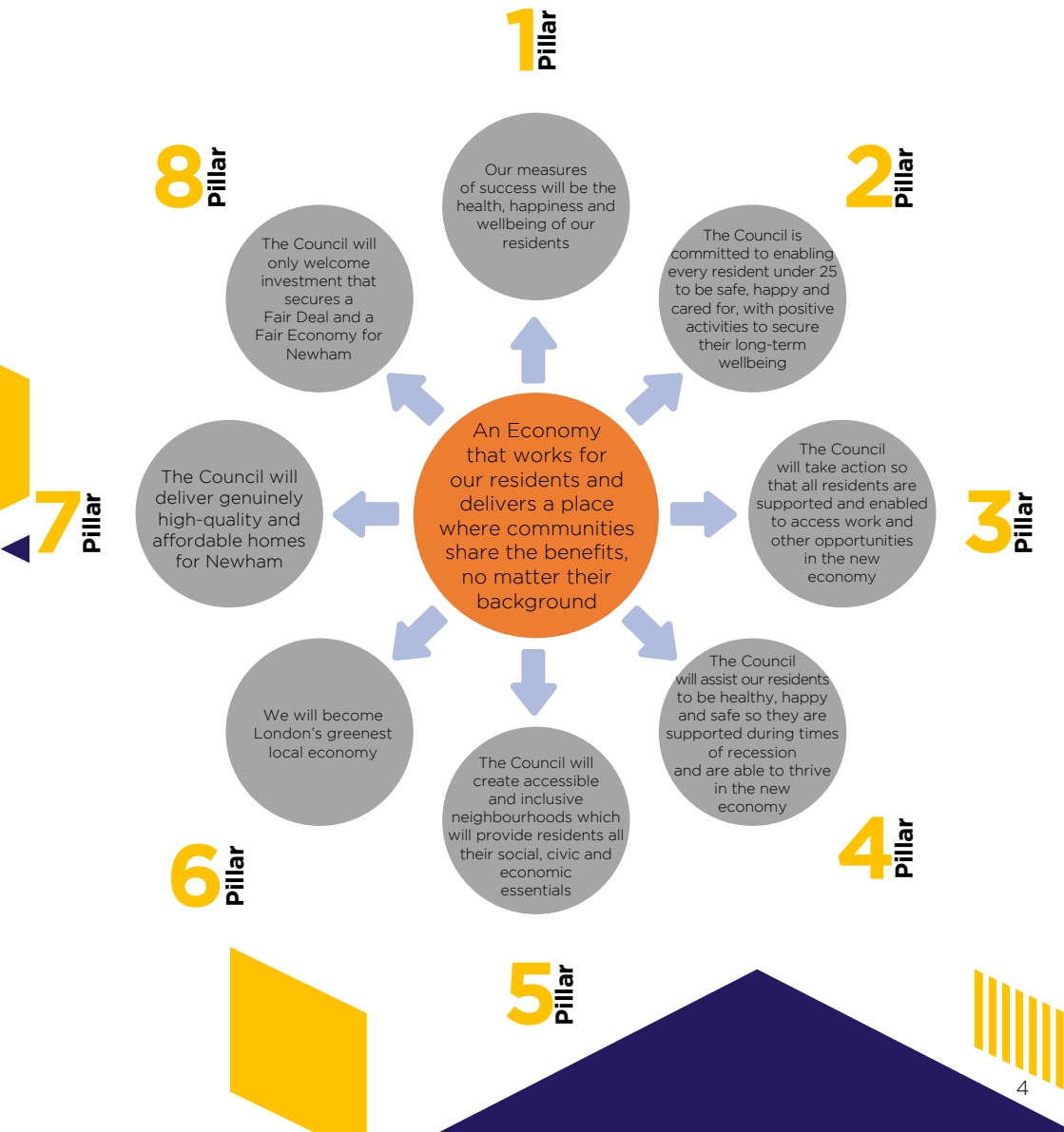


The eight pillars of recovery

What we’re going to do: we have centred our strategy on eight delivery pillars that outline our commitment to recovery and reorientation in Newham. Our strategy is designed to be as simple and understandable as possible. Each pillar has an associated strategic action

plan that clearly outlines the action that we will take to recover and reorient.

We have looked at the best projects from around the world and have come up with a programme of activity which we believe will be genuinely impactful and can change Newham’s economic story.



Where are we now?

The impacts of Covid-19 should not be seen as distinct or different to the inherent challenges that have affected the borough over recent decades. In developing this strategy, we have considered both.

Recovery - responding to the impacts of Covid-19

Covid-19 has brought distinct and stark challenges, which places Newham as perhaps the most impacted borough in London.

- At the height of the pandemic, the Covid-19 mortality rate in Newham (196 per 100,000) was the second highest in the country. It has touched all parts of the borough but has been most significant in our most deprived neighbourhoods

- As of July 2020, we had 102,000 residents on furlough, or unemployment benefits – 35,000 more than our neighbours, Tower Hamlets and Hackney, and around the same as Kensington & Chelsea, Kingston upon Thames, Richmond, Westminster and the City of London combined
- Between February and July 2020, the claimant count increased by more than 200% (even before the end of the Job Retention Scheme)
- Based on the government's current economic scenario, over 40,000 jobs in Newham are at risk in the recession

Covid-19

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impact on
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Almost
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Reorientation – addressing our fundamental challenges

The impacts from Covid-19 have their roots in the well-known and embedded challenges we need to overcome if we are going to create the economy we want. These include:

Historic low incomes

- 49% of Newham households are classified as living in poverty 52% of children grow up in low income households
- Average earnings are £6,000 below the London average; 1 in 3 residents earns less than the Living Wage
- Gross disposable household income is less than £20,000 per year – this is 66% of the London average
- Housing costs are 65% of average incomes

49%

living in poverty



Racial and geographic imbalance

- The employment rate for different Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAME) groups is between 65% and 80% of that for white British residents
- Four Newham wards are in the bottom 10% in London for overall quality of life (Forest Gate South, Custom House, Canning Town North and South)
- Notwithstanding the mobilisation of the sector during the pandemic, Newham has the lowest level of formal participation in volunteering civil society activity of any London borough

Historic lack of higher value jobs

- The proportion of jobs within knowledge-based activities is half that of London
- The proportion of high growth (scale up companies) in Newham is one fifth of the national average.

£6,000
below average
earnings



What we're going to do: the eight pillars of recovery and reorientation in Newham

Our strategy is designed to be as simple and understandable as possible. It's built around eight pillars of activity, focussed on both phases of recovery and reorientation.

We have looked at the best projects from around the world and have come up with a programme of activity which we believe will be genuinely impactful and can change Newham's economic story.

1 Pillar

Our measures of success will be the health, happiness and wellbeing of our residents

The Council will move to measure success in terms of inclusion, fairness & wellbeing rather than the traditional measures of growth, productivity and land value uplift. This recognises that traditional measures of economic success are increasingly irrelevant to people's lived experiences and belie the everyday experiences of our neighbourhoods and communities.

A refocused approach will provide new and more granular insight on the characteristics and wellbeing of residents, communities and places and will help to govern how the council engages across the borough, delivers services and makes decisions.

Recovery

We will be the first borough in London to formally focus on livelihood, wellbeing and happiness as our prime measure of economic success. We will establish new core measures which we will adopt to do this and will report back on how we are doing, making insights available to our partners and communities.

Reorientation

We will change the way we make decisions about our economy, using new and better information. We will partner with the UCL Institute for Global Prosperity to continue their long-term tracking of prosperity in the borough, using this and other evidence to develop wellbeing spending budgets. We will expect all projects and partners to respond to this, reporting upon these measures and tell us how they will contribute.

What residents can expect

- A focus on an economy which better reflects their daily experience.
- Clear information on how the council is doing in delivering against its economic objectives.

Inspiration

New Zealand has replaced GDP with focusing upon the wellbeing and happiness of its population as its principle measure of economic success.

2 Pillar

The Council is committed to enabling every resident under 25 to be safe, happy and cared for, with positive activities to secure their long-term wellbeing

This recognises that Newham is a young borough and young people (particularly those from low income households) will be hardest hit by the recession. Proactive and targeted action is needed to enhance the support available to every young person no matter what their background.

Recovery

We will improve communication so that all young people are linked into new Workplace and Moneyworks provision as well as Youth Empowerment Services. A new Youth Empowerment Fund will provide direct support to young people to overcome barriers to economic participation and training.

We have developed an innovative new apprenticeship partnership with Newham College (supporting opportunities in digital, health and science and engineering amongst others). We will also pilot new paid internships to give young people access to new career experiences, whilst still providing them an income.

Reorientation

We want young people to drive our long-term change. We will develop a new enterprise commitment, which will provide space and support for any young person with a new business idea. Through this, we will nurture a new generation of entrepreneurs who will become the future engine of our local economy. New youth facilities in Stratford and Royal Docks will provide exemplar spaces for young people which will become the benchmark for other centres in the borough.

What residents can expect

- A partner in challenging times
- Improved access to information
- New ways to develop skills and lower barriers to trying new opportunities
- A consistent and supportive partner in starting a career or a business.

Inspiration

Business Launchpad helps London youth to build enterprise skills, overcome barriers and become leaders to set up their own business. In Brixton they have taken on space in a vacant public sector building to offer free space and support the local young people with business ideas.

3 Pillar

The Council will take action so that all residents are supported and enabled to access work and other opportunities in the new economy

We will develop a consolidated service to ensure that all residents can access the support they need to cope in recession making sure work and other opportunities such as volunteering, are accessible, rewarding and enjoyable.

The Council will develop a wraparound support service that is easily accessible for all residents, and will also prioritise getting a fairer deal for Newham workers in terms of working conditions, compensation and quality of life. The response will build on the existing infrastructure provided by Newham Workplace, moving beyond basic employment brokerage services to directly meet the diverse support needs of residents.

Recovery

We are remodelling Workplace and Moneyworks to ensure that they are ready to focus upon the direct needs of residents, particularly as the government's Job Retention Scheme

comes to an end. The new service will act as an umbrella for vital Council responses, as well as providing information and referral on government and London-wide support services. Alongside this, we are launching our Employment Rights Hub, an innovative new service to help drive up working conditions in Newham.

Reorientation

A rebranded, reoriented, and renamed Workplace will be at the heart of our new approach to economic development and support. It will be our community wealth building hub, providing outreach and access for all residents, linking them to opportunities in a more locally focussed, mutually beneficial economy. We will develop new approaches to cooperative development to address areas of work in Newham which are unfair and ensure greater ownership of our new economy.

What residents can expect

- A supportive partner through difficult economic times
- A clearer route to support and information
- A meaningful work experiences
- Maximised opportunities to benefit from any government Covid- related funding supporting creation of new jobs
- Better working conditions
- Support to start businesses where they want to do this.

Inspiration

Bologna has refocussed upon resident participation and need, through its 'urban commons'. A new Office for Civic Imagination has enhanced collaboration between the city, university, and local residents, linking residents not only to work, but training and a collective conversation about the future of the city.

4 Pillar

The Council will assist our residents to be healthy, happy and safe so they are supported during times of recession and are able to thrive in the new economy

Recovery

Our first order of business is to continue to address the physical and psychological issues associated with Covid-19 and the challenges associated with future waves of infection.

We will do this through a more locally focussed approach promoted in our new strategy for public health, '50 Steps to a Healthier borough'. We are making practical commitments focussing upon the broad care needs to enable enhanced physical and mental wellbeing. We will develop a plan with a focus on the links between health and positive economic outcomes, working with a wide range of partners across the health and social care system to ensure services remain resilient, responsive and person-centred.

We will ensure residents are healthy enough to thrive, even in times of recession, and that when care and support services are required that residents receive a seamless, person-centred approach to their care with good quality services ensuring that they are happy and safe.

Reorientation

We will further develop links between the formal provision of health services and economic opportunity. We will develop new models of provision that link residents to opportunities and training as part of their health care. Well Newham will better link services together as well supporting local projects linked to health and wellbeing. This will look broadly at all factors which impact upon resident health and care needs including transport and access to better facilities.

What residents can expect

- Clearer routes from ill health to positive economic activity
- Stronger support to make positive choices in relation to health
- More opportunities to easily engage with activities relating to health and wellbeing
- Improvements to facilities.

Inspiration

Volunteering in Blackburn has been chosen as the focus for social prescribing in the belief it leads to more long-term benefits than other activities. Patients are linked to positive civil society opportunities through a partnership with the local CVS. 80 per cent reported an improvement in overall wellbeing and two thirds felt they had improved their chances of finding work.

5 Pillar

The Council will create accessible and inclusive neighbourhoods which will provide residents all their social, civic and economic essentials

The Council will support the evolution of accessible and inclusive high streets as the beating heart of neighbourhoods where residents can live a full and enriching life with friends, family, connections, experience, and opportunity.

This recognises the vital role that the borough's high streets play in providing the social connections, goods and services to support residents' essential needs. Now, more than ever, there is a need to ensure that they continue to thrive as diverse, vibrant and successful hubs which act as local focal point for all of our communities, provide a platform for engagement in community wealth building, and provide opportunities for the development of personal economic outcomes.

We have six town centres and 13 local centres, each of which can play a vital role in providing the social connections, goods and services to support residents' essential needs. These will be the places

our recovery takes place and so, we will strive to ensure that they are physical embodiment of stronger more engaged communities.

Recovery

We are already mapping the social and civic functions of our town centres to make sure they have the spaces and facilities to serve their local area. Where gaps exist, we are identifying owned buildings which can support more generative activity. Civic activity will support town centres and enable businesses with an offer that benefits local communities to thrive and recover from the economic impact of Covid-19. Building upon our work in partnership with GLA at Green Street and a rapidly evolving Stratford, we are identifying new ways that our local centres can be the physical locations where people can play a more active role in area governance – one of the key recommendations of our Democracy Commission.

Reorientation

We will adopt a new inherent foundational approach to high streets and local centres, where local needs, diverse culture and civic participation are the drivers of success. We will improve walking, public spaces and transport links to local centres, embedding the principles of accessibility and social value into our planning policy.

What residents can expect

- Accessible high streets which support daily needs
- More opportunities to meet, talk and celebrate.

Inspiration

Paris is embedding the principles of 15-minute neighbourhoods in all of its local centres to ensure that all social, civic and economic essentials can be reached within a 15-minute walk and cycle ride.

6 Pillar

We will become London's greenest local economy

The Council will quicken the greening of Newham, capitalising on local sparks – and the Royal Docks specifically – to support evolution as a clean, safe borough with London's greenest economy.

This recognises the Climate Emergency declared by the borough, and the need for proactive action to change behaviours and to encourage new ways of working, living and moving around. In practice, this means embedding new standards and expectations within the built environment, encouraging greater responsibility across businesses, investors and residents, and proactive work to support the development of green skills, enterprise and innovation across the borough.

Recovery

Initial pilot projects are being developed and delivered including a new focus upon circular economy whilst new investment in the Royal Docks is focussing specifically upon the green economy. To develop this further,

we will launch an Innovation Challenge Fund to support new approaches to Newham's most significant issues, including climate change. We will continue the climate emergency conversation, as well as supporting residents to retrain and develop their skills to better participate in the green economy.

Reorientation

We will lead in the borough, supporting the development of greener homes and raising expectations of our supply chains and partners. We will seek to develop new educational facilities which support workforce transition to a new, greener economy. We will develop new models of green business support and look at long term ways of driving new investment and finance in Newham's green entrepreneurs. We will scale pilot activities, creating a new green business ecosystem. We will make green activities and sustainable development principles a central point of a new normal in our business base. We will catalyse a range of pipeline Investments and events to create focus upon green technologies and eco provenance.

What residents can expect

- New opportunities to engage with jobs of the future
- Support to develop ideas and work in a new green economy.

Inspiration

The Green Bronx Machine in New York is a school-based programme using urban agriculture and key school performance indicators to grow healthy students, develop their business skills, all the while building greener communities.

7 Pillar

The Council will deliver genuinely high-quality and affordable homes for Newham

The Council will strive to support and deliver significant additional housing in the borough at a price and level of quality which can enhance the lives of residents, allowing communities to settle and put down roots in Newham.

This recognises that good housing is a basic need and should be a foundation to the new, reoriented economy we want to create. We will put residents at the heart of our approach which seeks to directly deliver and refit housing to provide greater supply of quality, greener stock. We will regulate and influence PRS as well as lobbying government to secure a better deal to fund and deliver housing in the borough.

Recovery

To make sure housing in Newham works for residents we will work to develop greater involvement from local people to help them shape services relevant to their locality.

We will make the allocations policy and process clearer, and more focussed on those in need. A new housing strategy and the development of physical housing hubs will help us to do this. We will use redevelopment of Carpenters Estate, Custom House and Canning Town to pilot new approaches to coproduction, ensuring that these link to the other pillars within this strategy. Homelessness and services for private renters, will remain under constant review as we help individuals navigate through recession.

Reorientation

We will accelerate plans for affordable house building, starting with almost 1800 new homes by 2020, 60% of which will be available for social rent. From this foundation we will continue to support the reinvestment surplus revenue generated by our housing company Populo Living, to subsidise affordable housing and to pilot new types of housing and models of delivery. We will work with large and small developers to deliver up to 700 new homes per year, again maximising genuinely affordable homes. Where we are able, we will acquire more property to house vulnerable residents, whilst continuing to lobby government to secure more investment and better policy.

What residents can expect

- Greater say over housing services
- An enhanced role in the production of redevelopment plans for their estates
- Increased housing supply
- Higher quality, greener homes.

Inspiration

We Can Make in Bristol has harnessed the community's skills, resources and know-how, to design prototype home for small sites in Knowle West. The process made it simple to get involved and delivered a collectively produced new type of property.

8 Pillar

The Council will only welcome investment that secures a Fair Deal and a Fair Economy for Newham

The Council will welcome investment, but only where this supports our objectives and makes the borough attractive and accessible as a place to move, work and live.

This recognises that Newham continues to be one of London's most attractive locations for external investment and is home to some of London's most important regeneration opportunities. There is a need to continue to sell and bring new investment into Newham, but doing so in a way which aligns with Newham's social and environmental objectives. To do this, there is an ongoing need for the council to raise expectations and communicate the need for enhanced engagement and commitment from investors and businesses.

Recovery

In partnership with the Royal Docks team, we are simultaneously launching a £13m Good Growth Fund which will support new projects where they

can demonstrate benefits across the borough. Alongside this, we will invite business across Newham to develop business pledges to publicly show how they will tangibly support the council in delivering against community wealth building objectives.

Reorientation

We will adopt new policy to formally articulate our expectations from investors and developers working in Newham. We will actively partner and celebrate those who are pursuing the highest standards in social and environmental responsibility. We will seek to formalise accreditation of the companies and investors who support our objectives; we will also help our existing SMEs to meet these standards.

What residents can expect

- New local investment and a stronger connection to the development and change taking place in the south and west of the borough
- Clearer opportunities to engage with and benefit from new investment and development in the borough
- New funding to help them develop their project ideas.

Inspiration

The Scottish Government has established the Scottish Business Pledge, which is focussed on equality, fairness and innovation. It aims to be a values-led partnership between government and business that is based on boosting productivity and competitiveness through fairness, equality and sustainable employment. Businesses sign up and are accredited once they have shown they can deliver against three core principles and five other themes which they choose.

Day one: what happens now?

This is the start of a process of fundamental change for the borough – it will take time. We will produce 8 action plans for each of our pillars. Right now, however, we will deliver the following immediate actions, all of which are aimed at securing initial impact and developing local capacity and resilience:

- Launch a £13m local Good Growth Fund to support benefits of development and investment to spread across the borough
- Launch the Youth Endowment Fund to give under 25s in Newham the best changes in recession
- Complete the redesign, rebranding and relaunch of Newham Workplace to create better of engagement of residents in our new economy
- Work with first private sector partners who are prepared to support us through ambitious business pledges
- Map Council property assets and see how these can be used better to support our objectives
- Deliver new high street principles through new investments into green street (market) and Stratford (active spaces) to support the long-term reorientation of economic activity
- Create new changemakers grants to enable communities to develop their own solutions to health challenges
- Establish the new Employment Rights Hubs
- Develop new housing hubs and better systems for resident involvement in housing
- Commit to be the first London borough to adopt more appropriate core measures of economic success, with a focus upon wellbeing and happiness.

