

MINUTES OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 11 September 2019
(7:00 - 7:58 pm)

PRESENT

Cllr Elizabeth Kangethe (Chair)
Cllr Faruk Choudhury (Deputy Chair)

Cllr Andrew Achilleos	Cllr Dorothy Akwaboah	Cllr Sanchia Alasia
Cllr Saima Ashraf	Cllr Abdul Aziz	Cllr Toni Bankole
Cllr Simon Bremner	Cllr Princess Bright	Cllr Sade Bright
Cllr Laila M. Butt	Cllr Evelyn Carpenter	Cllr Peter Chand
Cllr Josie Channer	Cllr John Dulwich	Cllr Edna Fergus
Cllr Irma Freeborn	Cllr Cameron Geddes	Cllr Syed Ghani
Cllr Kashif Haroon	Cllr Amardeep Singh Jamu	Cllr Eileen Keller
Cllr Donna Lumsden	Cllr Olawale Martins	Cllr Mick McCarthy
Cllr Giasuddin Miah	Cllr Dave Miles	Cllr Margaret Mullane
Cllr Adegboyega Oluwole	Cllr Glenda Paddle	Cllr Simon Perry
Cllr Moin Quadri	Cllr Foyzur Rahman	Cllr Tony Ramsay
Cllr Chris Rice	Cllr Lynda Rice	Cllr Ingrid Robinson
Cllr Paul Robinson	Cllr Darren Rodwell	Cllr Emily Rodwell
Cllr Muhammad Saleem	Cllr Faraaz Shaukat	Cllr Phil Waker
Cllr Maureen Worby		

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Rocky Gill	Cllr Jane Jones	Cllr Mohammed Khan
Cllr Bill Turner	Cllr Dominic Twomey	Cllr Lee Waker

22. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

23. Learning Disability Week

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration welcomed the Learning Disability Choir to the meeting and invited the group to lead the signing of 'This is Me', which they had performed as part of the celebrations of the recent Learning Disability Week. The Cabinet Member also praised the Makaton Choir from Heathlands, who were unable to be present at the meeting but were shown on video taking part in the performance during Learning Disability Week.

24. Minutes (24 July 2019)

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2019 were confirmed as correct.

25. Minutes of Sub-Committees

The Assembly received and noted the minutes of the JNC Appointments, Salaries and Structures Panel held on 13 August 2019.

26. Leader's Statement

The Leader of the Council presented a verbal statement updating the Assembly on a range of matters since the last meeting as follows:

- Domestic Violence – The Council's campaign to tackle the growing problem in the Borough of domestic violence and promote greater gender equality took another step forward last month with the joint launch of the DV Partnership by the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration and the Chief Executive of Refuge. This was intended to send a strong message to the local community that giving your partner "a slap" is not right and will not be tolerated.

In response to comments the Leader confirmed that he was writing a letter to Government disapproving and seeking the revoking of the Knighthood to Geoffrey Boycott, given his previous DV conviction in 1998 against a former partner. Members added that this was an indictment of the whole honours system.

- Housing – According to the latest report in Evening Standard, Barking & Dagenham is the only London Borough to buck the trend in falling house prices since the EU Referendum in 2016 which in part is due to the work of the Council in attracting new investment to the Borough. It is also a reflection on how the borough is responding to the Brexit uncertainty. Aside of home ownership this Borough now have over 800 affordable properties for rent.

It was noted that Council officials have recently contacted the producers of the recent C4 TV series by George Clarke calling on the government to build 100,000 new Council homes with a view to highlighting the work in this Borough.

- Government Spending Review – The 1-year spending review announced by the Chancellor last week reflects this Government's continuing mismanagement of the public finances which is making a hard situation even tougher for local government, which has had an unprecedented loss of funding with this Council's budget reduced by two-thirds since 2010. This is at the same time as a growing demand for social care and homelessness services, adding pressure to already stretched services.
- Samuel Garside fire – Since reporting to the last meeting work has been underway to repair the block and the residents' insurers have agreed to continue to underwrite their stay in temporary accommodation until their homes are put right. The Leader announced that he had called for the Council to instigate an independent review of what had happened since the fire in June so as to campaign for the Government to ensure that the right powers were in place so that all buildings below 18 metres in height were

deemed safe, be they residential, hospitals, schools etc.

- GCSE and A level results – Noted another successful set of GCSE exam results, with three in five pupils achieving the national standard and continued success at A levels with the number of young people being accepted to top universities and employers on the rise.
- Real funding for Police Officers – Following the Prime Minister’s recent announcement of 20,000 new Police Officers and given the need for improved police visibility, the Leader has written to the Assistant Met Police Commissioner calling for more officers for the Borough.

27. Appointments

There were none to report.

28. Polling Districts and Polling Places Review 2019

The Director of Law & Governance (DL&G) presented a report from the Chief Executive, in his capacity as Acting Returning Officer, on the outcome of a statutory review of Polling Districts (areas within ward boundaries) and associated Polling Places (stations).

It was noted that, with regard to the type of buildings used as polling stations, every effort had been made to reduce the reliance on school buildings to avoid disruption to pupils. However, given the lack of suitable alternative premises in some polling districts it was still necessary to use some school sites.

The proposals had been the subject of a public consultation which ran between 8 April and 28 June 2019 and the views of those with an expertise in access to premises and facilities for people with disabilities were sought as part of that process. Appendix A to the report set out the details of the proposals together with a summary of representations made on a ward-by-ward basis.

The DL&G explained that there are no changes to the existing arrangements in 13 of the 17 wards, with those wards directly affected being Abbey, Goresbrook, Longbridge and Thames. It was noted that a number of the changes in those wards had already been implemented since the last review in 2014.

The Assembly **agreed** to:

- (i) Approve for publication the final proposals arising from the review of polling districts and associated polling places as detailed in Appendix A, and in so doing allowing for public representations objecting to any of the proposals with reasons to the Electoral Commission within a six-week period. The EC will then consider any representations and where appropriate will direct the Council to consider alterations to polling places that they deem necessary under the review, and
- (ii) Authorise the Chief Executive in his capacity as the ARO to agree any permanent or temporary arrangements that are deemed appropriate until the commencement of the next statutory review in respect of alternative

polling stations and/or reconfiguration of polling districts, subject to consultation with relevant ward councillors.

29. Motions

There were none.

30. Questions With Notice

Question 1

From Councillor Dulwich

“What has the Council been able to do to prepare for Brexit”?

Response from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community Leadership and Engagement.

We are a borough with rapid population change, acute deprivation and inequality of outcomes compared to the rest of London, meaning that any negative economic outcome as a result of Brexit is likely to have a significant impact, especially leaving without a deal. This is something this Council takes very seriously. To combat this the Council has continued to seek to attract new investment for the Borough. Furthermore, the Council’s current capital programme does not include any existing scheme in receipt of EU funding.

The Council has been preparing for all eventualities. We have been working in close partnership with other London Councils. We have also created a risk log which has sought to prepare for every eventuality and lists various areas of concern including with suppliers and contractors and which officers have been monitoring over the past months. The main areas of risk around which we have been taking mitigating actions include dealing with shortages of food and fuel, doubling our efforts on wider community engagement and participation, and ensuring our workforce including social care workers, many of which are EU nationals, have been provided with information and support on applying for settled status in the UK so as to minimise possible disruption.

Question 2 from Councillor P Bright

“Can the Cabinet Member for Educational Attainment & School Improvement update the Assembly on this year’s GCSE and A level results in the Borough”?

Response from Cabinet Member for Educational Attainment & School Improvement.

The Cabinet Member for Educational Attainment & School Improvement reminded the Assembly that our schools are not just exam factories. They are inclusive places where students of all abilities & backgrounds attend & learn together, offering a rich curriculum with nationally revered cultural education as well as health programmes.

Turning to this year's results the exam specifications at GCSE and A level are still relatively new. They are tougher and mainly based on final exams with little coursework. A full report submitted would be presented to Cabinet in November 2019 once the Council had national comparative information on exam results.

Early results for Barking and Dagenham schools show a solid improvement on the headline measure of grades 9-5 as well as 9-4 in English and Mathematics which on the whole comparable with national averages. There had been some outstanding results across the various schools, the highlights including six students having achieved a 'clean sweep' of seven grade 9's and several students gaining six grade 9's.

The new A level exams have proved challenging both locally and nationally and with some falls on the headline indicators, so there had been a more mixed picture this year. Despite this challenging context Headteachers had reported that most students had achieved the grades to go on to their intended destinations, with increasing success for our students in gaining entry to the more competitive universities. The Cabinet Member summarised a number of successes across the various borough schools.

Question 3 from Councillor Perry

"What developments have we seen since the announcement that Barking & Dagenham is the preferred option for the three markets of London"?

Response from Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Social Housing.

Following recent misinformation on the reporting of the preferred location, the good news is that it has now been confirmed that the three markets will occupy the site of the former power station site at Dagenham Dock. Since the announcement the City of London (CoL) had been working with the Council and Be First on a number of work strands. Good progress is being made on a Memorandum of Understanding between all parties to ensure a shared vision for the markets' location and its delivery. This is very important seeing as the host borough the Council would want to secure the maximum benefits whilst seeking to minimise the disruption to residents.

Pre-planning applications meetings are underway with the objective of an outline planning application being submitted next Spring. As part of this process more stakeholder consultation is being planned. CoL are carrying out initial research into the feasibility of removing redundant powerlines as well as drawing up an approach to the remediation of the former power station site.

The public consultation which closed on 6 August has 252 responses which were largely positive, albeit not surprisingly many had concerns about increased traffic on the local road network especially the A13. CoL favour maximising the use of the River Thames as a transport solution. The Council already had ambitious plans to improve the particular section of the A13, and it was hoped this project would provide the impetus with the appropriate agencies.

Work is also looking at the scope for a Food College to benefit local students to

obtain the appropriate qualifications so as to secure good jobs on the food industry.

A further briefing will come before members in a few months at which amongst other things the design of the buildings will be discussed, there being a desire of both the Council and CoL to achieve an iconic design that everybody can be proud of.

Question 4 from Councillor Oluwole

“Since its’ opening in May as the first Youth Zone in London, how successful has the Future Youth Zone been in engaging young people from across the Borough”?

Response from the Leader of the Council

Since April, when His Royal Highness Prince Harry, officially opened the Future Youth Zone 4,500 young people have taken out membership with more than 1,600 visits a week. On average young people from the borough had made over 20,000 visits, of which nearly 20% received free school meals.

A vital role of the Youth Zone is to raise civic pride and encourage young people to give something back to the community, on top of providing a safe and vibrant place to go to outside of home and school.

This is the very first Youth Zone in London, and yet another reason for Barking & Dagenham being on the map for new innovative thinking and good practice. So far, there had been visits from the Mayor of London, the former Home Secretary (now Chancellor) and the current Home Secretary, as well as a host of other people who want to see for themselves the work the Youth Zone is doing. The Leader had written to both the Chancellor and the Home Secretary calling on the Government to support a Youth Zone model and a national network across the rest of the country. It was no coincidence that the Chancellor name dropped Future Youth Zone in his speech on the Spending Review last week.

The Leader took the opportunity to announce today that the Council had already starting to invest time and effort (but not Council monies) in developing a second Youth Zone in the Borough, giving young people the best start in life to become the leaders of tomorrow.

Supplementary question - Councillor Oluwole asked that as a Champion of good health would the Leader in collaboration with the Cabinet Member for Educational Attainment & School Improvement approach CUC London to include sports science courses.

The Leader stated that the Youth Zone was only one element of a whole educational package which when taken together would provide the Borough’s young people the best facilities possible. The Council had invested £m’s in our Schools, the family of which needs to remain together and managed in such a way that it maximises young peoples’ learning opportunities together with CUC London, with whom the Council had been in regular contact. The University continued to look at the best provision of courses which included providing bespoke programmes for young teachers and social workers as well as working with the

NHS and doctors. This would also include sports science courses.