

ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 16 May 2007
(7:00 - 7:55 pm)

PRESENT

Councillor S S Gill (Chair)
Councillor J R White (Deputy Chair)

Councillor A Agrawal	Councillor J L Alexander
Councillor Mrs S J Baillie	Councillor R J Barnbrook
Councillor W F L Barns	Councillor G J Bramley
Councillor Ms E Carpenter	Councillor S Carroll
Councillor H J Collins	Councillor J Davis
Councillor J R Denyer	Councillor Miss C L Doncaster
Councillor R W Doncaster	Councillor Mrs S A Doncaster
Councillor C J Fairbrass	Councillor M A R Fani
Councillor Mrs K J Flint	Councillor N S S Gill
Councillor D Hemmett	Councillor Mrs D Hunt
Councillor I S Jamu	Councillor J K Jarvis
Councillor S Kallar	Councillor Mrs C A Knight
Councillor R C Little	Councillor M A McCarthy
Councillor J E McDermott	Councillor M E McKenzie
Councillor Mrs P A Northover	Councillor W W Northover
Councillor E O Obasohan	Councillor B Poulton
Councillor Mrs J E Rawlinson	Councillor Mrs V Rush
Councillor L Rustem	Councillor L A Smith
Councillor D A Tuffs	Councillor Mrs P A Twomey
Councillor G M Vincent	Councillor L R Waker
Councillor P T Waker	

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor R W Bailey	Councillor N Connelly
Councillor Miss T A Lansdown	Councillor Mrs L A Reason
Councillor Miss N E Smith	Councillor J Steed
Councillor Mrs M M West	

1. Appointment of Chair and Deputy Chair

Agreed the appointment of Councillor S S Gill as Chair and Councillor J R White as Deputy Chair of the Assembly in accordance with the recommendations set out in Appendix B of the Report of the Corporate Director of Resources: Appointments to the Political Structure and Other Bodies 2007/2008 (agenda item 8).

2. Declaration of Members' Interest

There were no declarations of interest

3. Minutes (4 April 2007)

Agreed.

4. 'Tell Us'

Received a presentation by the Corporate Director of Customer Services on the 'Tell Us' initiative, which encourages anybody who lives or works in the Borough to tell the Council what concerns them. This has been piloted over the last 18 months and over 2,000 suggestions and questions have been received, resulting in changes to some services. In the future it is intended to make 'Tell Us' the brand for all surveys and comments, improve the Council's responses to enquiries, publish more information and analyse the information better.

5. The Council's Statutory Officers

Received a report from the Chief Executive seeking approval for a change to the appointment of the Chief Financial Officer and advising of changes to designated deputy positions in respect of the S151 and Monitoring Officer roles.

Agreed to appoint the Divisional Director of Corporate Finance as the Chief Financial Officer with immediate effect.

Noted that the Chief Executive and Divisional Director of Legal Services remain as Head of Paid Service and Monitoring Officer respectively, and that the three statutory officers have designated the following officers to deputise in their absence:

- Roger Luxton, Corporate Director of Children's Services and Deputy Chief Executive for the Head of Paid Service
- Patrick Clackett, Head of Strategic Finance & Audit, for the Chief Financial Officer
- Nina Clark, Assistant Chief Executive (Democracy & Partnerships) for the Monitoring Officer.

6. *Governance Working Party

Received a report summarising the work of the Governance Working Party, which undertook a review of the Council's political structure arrangements.

Agreed:

Executive Arrangements

- Pending the final content of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, that the size of the Executive remains at ten Members. Also that based on the proposed models of executive governance, the option of an indirectly elected Leader with a four year term, with provisions for votes of no confidence, be favoured as this matches closest our existing model.
- That a pilot be introduced for six months to trial individual decision-making

within the remit of the Deputy Leader's housing portfolio. This will be reported back on with any related recommendations in time for any changes to be implemented for the 2008/09 council year. In agreeing this pilot, however, to reaffirm the principle that cross cutting portfolio decision making should continue to be conducted through the Executive. The administrative arrangements for the pilot to be worked up by officers for implementation at the earliest opportunity.

- That the process of appointing non-Executive members to support portfolio holders be formally approved on an annual basis by the Assembly to maintain integrity and transparency.
- That job profiles for Executive Members be amended to provide for regular portfolio briefings to take place with the wider Council membership at least quarterly.

Scrutiny

- That the Scrutiny Management Board (SMB) adopts a more strategic approach to planning their activity which has regard to knowledge around performance and complaints etc. and which also incorporates ways of holding individual portfolio Members to account for their areas, The approach should also consider ways of scrutinising performance and financial issues.
- That the SMB also reviews new ways of working in relation to scrutinising the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and the Local Area Agreement (LAA), and to build this into its scrutiny planning process. The implications of the forthcoming legislation in relation to the "Community Call for Action" powers will also need to be built into the Council's scrutiny function.
- That the SMB considers, in advance of legislation, the appointment of a standing Scrutiny Panel, similar to the Health Scrutiny Panel, to scrutinise police activity.
- That the SMB should make sure that scrutiny focuses predominantly on issues that will make a difference to the community, and to that extent there should be more Member engagement with and within the community as a whole. With this in mind further regard will be had as to the effects of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill in terms of the emphasis being placed on the setting up of Local Involvement Networks (LINKs) which will enhance local authorities' role to scrutinise health provision.
- The Call-In process to (a) lose the challenge element introduced last year, and revert back to a one stage procedure whereby a minimum of two Members are required to Call-In a decision, and (b) relate only to decisions to be implemented by the Executive.

Policy Commissions

- Reinforce the role and usefulness of Policy Commissions as a tool within the Council's overall political structure to assist with the development of policy, including that influenced through the Local Strategic Partnership.

Other Meetings

- To reaffirm that the existing responsibilities/roles of other meetings should remain as they are with the exception of a number of staffing related matters appertaining to the functions of the Executive and the Personnel Board to bring them in line with the requirements of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations SI 3384/2001 as follows:
 - The composition of Panels to deal with dismissals as well as consider disciplinary action and grievances against all JNC employees and Statutory Officers to be agreed at the Assembly as part of the normal appointments process, and having regard to the political balance requirements, the membership to be drawn from a wider selection of Members, with at least two Members of the Executive to include the Leader of the Council and the relevant Lead Member.
 - All decisions regarding the redundancy of non-JNC posts to be managed by the Chief Officers with an appeal line to the Chief Executive as Head of the Paid Service.
 - With the exception of appeals against final written warnings and dismissal which will remain with the Personnel Board, other employment related appeals by non-JNC employees will be to the Chief Executive as Head of the Paid Service.

Resources

- To note (a) the need for a review of staffing resources to enhance support for the scrutiny function, but also to support Members generally in their democratic and community leadership roles, and that (b) the Chief Executive will bring forward proposals to relevant meetings in due course.

Constitution

- That appropriate amendments be made to the Council Constitution to give effect to the agreed recommendations including waiving the appropriate sections to enable the six months' individual decision making pilot to proceed.

7. Annual Review of the Council Constitution

Received a report from the Corporate Director of Resources seeking approval for changes to the Council's Constitution as set out in a schedule attached to the report and to take account of the earlier decisions made in relation to the Governance Working Party and Statutory Officers.

Agreed the said changes.

8. *Appointments to the Political Structure and Other Bodies 2007/2008

Received a report from the Corporate Director of Resources seeking to appoint Members to the various elements of the political structure and other internal and

external bodies for the coming year.

Agreed:

1. to elect Councillor Fairbrass as Leader of the Council and, as such, his appointment as Chair of the Executive;
2. to elect Councillor L Smith as Deputy Leader of the Council and, as such, his appointment as Deputy Chair of the Executive;
3. the membership of the various Council meetings as set out in Appendix A; which includes that substitute Members are no longer appointed to the Licensing and Regulatory Board;
4. to appoint the Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the various Council meetings as set out in Appendix B;
5. to appoint statutory Co-opted Members as set out in Appendix C;
6. to appoint representatives on various internal and external bodies as set out in Appendix D; and
7. to appoint trustees of local charities as set out in Appendix E.

9. Motions

Barking Hospital Site

Received the following motion moved by Councillor Fairbrass and seconded by Councillor L Smith:

“This Assembly welcomes the Primary Care Trust’s plan to provide extra health care services at the Barking Hospital site.

We are pleased that £5m has been allocated towards the estimated £7-8m cost of these improvements but we oppose the suggestion that land at the site should be sold to fund the shortfall of £2-3m.

We urge the appropriate Authorities, who in the recent past have acknowledged that this Borough’s health services have been under funded for many years, to finance the shortfall, and in view of our growing population retain the land for the future development of the NHS in this Borough.”

Councillor Barnbrook made a number of points which included that health care in the Borough is drastically under funded and the land should be retained in light of Barking and Dagenham’s growing population. He then moved the following amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Rustem:

“The Assembly welcomes the Primary Care Trust’s plan to provide extra health care services at the Barking Hospital site.

We are pleased that £5m has been allocated towards the estimated £7-8m cost

of these improvements but we oppose the suggestion that land at the site should be sold to fund the shortfall of £2-3m.

We demand the repayment by the government of the £14m that was taken from the borough last year to fund other councils, and that this be used to fund the Borough's health services, which are acknowledged to have been under funded for many years.

We further propose that any funds raised from the sale of land used by the Borough's health care services be used for the development of a General Hospital in Barking and Dagenham.”

Councillor Fairbrass informed the Assembly that the PCT has announced this week that it is due to receive an extra £26m this year. £267m has been allocated from the Department of Health for 2007/08 - an increase of 10.9% on last year, and above the national average of 9%.

He continued that plans have already been drawn up as to how to spend the money, with three main areas being identified:

- Approximately £6m on basic services such as GP practices, dentistry and mental health
- A number of programmes to meet new targets such as surgery waiting times and outpatients in LIFT buildings, which will cost around £21m
- An estimated £6m investment in the future where the PCT is seeking to move ahead of targets and reduce inequalities, such as extended hours for GPs and stop smoking services.

The amendment was put to the vote and by a majority vote was **not agreed**.

The original motion moved by Councillor Fairbrass was put to the vote and by a majority vote was **agreed**.

10. Report of the Executive - Recent Business

Agreed Barking and Dagenham's Housing Strategy for 2007–10.

11. General Question Time

Question: Councillor Vincent asked if the Executive Member for Environment could please comment on the Council's new green waste scheme and current participation levels in Longbridge ward.

Response: Councillor McKenzie said that the green garden waste scheme has been an incredible success. 3,608 residents have signed up to the scheme, which is 1 in every 12 homes. In Longbridge ward 343 people have signed up, which is closer to 1 in 10 homes.

Residents have welcomed the ability to choose how they want to store their waste, with roughly a third of them deciding to purchase a wheelie bin and the

rest deciding to continue to purchase the biodegradable bags. However, the major success is that in the first month of the scheme the Council composted 76½ tonnes of green waste which is an incredible 10 times more than was achieved in the same month last year.

Councillor Mckenzie concluded that he thinks this scheme shows that, with support from this Council, residents are committed to the environment and welcome the Council's policy to encourage them to make their own decision about using bags or wheelie bins.

Question: Councillor N Gill asked if the Executive Member for Community Safety could please comment on both the crime figures and the new bobby van scheme in Longbridge ward.

Response: Councillor Mrs Rush said that she was pleased to be asked about the crime figures for this year and the year just gone, given that the Borough finished the year with a reduction of 6.5% in that group of ten crimes which are deemed to be of most concern to residents and are measured by the British Crime Survey.

Earlier in the year Barking and Dagenham was seeing increases and the progress that the partnership has made in the last six months has been remarkable. Concerns remain, for example, about residential burglary. However, with the new 'Bobby Van', which has been branded as the Safer Homes Project, Councillor Mrs Rush said she is confident that the partnership will continue to reduce this particularly distressing crime. Under this scheme a van manned by a carpenter will go to residents in the Borough, irrespective of tenure, who have become victims of burglary and he will fit new locks to their homes. The police will visit near neighbours, their locks will be surveyed and, if necessary, new locks will be fitted to their properties. Since this project started some five weeks ago there have been 135 referrals to victim support from the police, 97 surveys have been carried out and 32 properties have been made secure.

The crime figures at Ward level go out from the Metropolitan Police and can be accessed on their website. Councillor Mrs Rush said she would be happy to give Members the address so that they can look at this.

Question: Councillor S Gill asked if the Executive Member for Environment could please outline what actions the Council is proposing to tackle illegal crossovers in Longbridge Ward?

Response: Councillor Mckenzie said there are a number of residents in Longbridge Ward, as with other Wards, who gain access to their gardens without an approved crossover. Discussion is underway as to how the Council can increase enforcement to deter this practice. Warning notices are already issued, but consideration is being given to installing physical measures preventing access where there is a safety implication and in other circumstances to installing a crossover and transferring all construction costs for this work. There are obviously legal ramifications that have to be carefully considered but once these are resolved the Council will advertise this action via the press and the Citizen.

Question: Councillor Mrs Knight asked why the majority party sees fit to downsize the Town Show. Every year it gets smaller and smaller? It used to be the pride and joy of the borough but falling attendances show how disappointed people are. It used to take two days to see all the marquees and the fantastic attractions in the big arena. Now even the arena has been downsized. It seems that our traditions and culture come last on a long list behind everybody else. Dagenham Town Show used to attract people from far and wide, now even the locals do not attend as it is a washout in comparison to how it used to be. It would be nice if it could be organised with a better standard in mind as the Town show has been going for well over fifty years and more. Mrs Knight said please let our children experience our traditions in the borough and enjoy them as we did when it was bigger and far better. She said she had also been asked by various residents of the borough if it was their intention eventually to scrap the show altogether?'

Response: Councillor Fairbrass said that attendance at Dagenham Town Show has not been falling over the past few years, indeed in 2005 and 2006 the attendance held steady at approximately 80,000 visitors over the weekend period.

The Show itself has not been downsized in any way. The Show evolves each year. What people would have found entertaining 50 years ago or even 10 years ago is not the same today, as people have far more access to entertainment via multi media and technology. When Councillor Fairbrass first attended the Three Towns Show, as it was originally, there were rabbits, cage birds, pigeons, and tropical and cold water fish to be seen, not to mention the handicraft work, the homemade cake competition and various other arts and crafts.

In terms of overall attractions, there is a greater range of entertainment around the showground, as opposed to being concentrated around the main arena as used to be the case in the past. The size of the arena is dependent on the specification submitted by the performers, all their requirements are different. One of this year's features in the main arena will be Monster Truck stunts. In addition, there are a number of static arenas and interactive workshops around the showground for all the family to enjoy.

Such is the reputation of the show as one of quality and significant visitor numbers, that the Greater London Authority will be bringing elements of their successful RISE Festival to the event this year.

In terms of fewer marquees on the showground; consultation with various organisations in the Voluntary Sector shows that organisations who would like to come to the show are unable to do so, due to not being able to get people from within the community to volunteer their time freely to help staff stalls. However, it is also true to say that exhibits within each of the marquees are of a much higher standard than in the past.

Those attending the event come from across Essex, London and the South East due to the high quality and extensive marketing campaign. High profile stage acts over the last four years have assisted in increasing attendance at the show and we know from surveys conducted that it is the stage and the entertainment on it that most attracts people to visit the Show

The community play an active role and indeed the Parade, a traditional part of the show, is organised by the community with support from the Council. Councillor Fairbrass said his column in the June edition of the Citizen encourages people to enter the Carnival Parade. The Town Show will continue to offer opportunities for our community to be entertained and to experience and see new things.

The events programme for the Borough is expanding and with the success of events like the Molten Festival and the Barking Mela there are more opportunities than there has ever been in the Borough for the community to enjoy socialising and taking part in art and dance.

In conclusion, Councillor Fairbrass said the Council is anticipating extra sponsorship this year and it is expected that a further £15,000 will be available for even more entertainment to be provided. The Town Show has not been downsized and he confirmed that this Council has no intention or plans to cancel the Town Show now or in the future.

12. Report of the Adult Education 60+ Scrutiny Panel

Received the report of the Adult Education 60+ Scrutiny Panel, introduced by the Lead Member, Councillor Mrs Flint, who thanked the Members and officers who worked with her on the panel for their enthusiasm and hard work.

Agreed that:

- (1) The Corporate Director of Regeneration establishes an Adult Education 60+ Task Group and invites the following parties to participate:
 - Executive Members for Regeneration, and Lifelong Learning
 - Lead Member – Adult 60+ Scrutiny Panel
 - Staff and student representation from The Adult College
 - Voluntary and community sector organisations providing adult education services to residents aged 60+.
- (2) The funding of £5,000 be made available by the Learning and Skills Council (London East) to enable the Task Group to be advised on the range of educational activities currently on offer in the borough for senior residents, and how these might be promoted to encourage greater participation in order to maximise the benefits to health and general well-being.
- (3) The Task Group considers ways to extend adult education opportunities through the development of Neighbourhood Management teams providing outreach facilities.
- (4) The work of the Task Group informs the priorities of the Adult Trust in order to potentially access funding through the LSP sub-group to encourage and support senior residents in educational activities.

13. Annual Reports 2006/07

Received annual reports from the Executive, Ceremonial Council, Scrutiny Management Board, Development Control Board, Licensing and Regulatory Board, Personnel Board, Standards Committee and the Audit Committee.

*Items considered as a matter of urgency with the consent of the Chair under Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.