

ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 23 February 2011
(7:10 - 8:06 pm)

PRESENT

Councillor M Hussain (Chair)
Councillor J Davis (Deputy Chair)

Councillor S Alasia	Councillor J L Alexander
Councillor S Ashraf	Councillor A Gafoor Aziz
Councillor R Baldwin	Councillor P Burgon
Councillor L Butt	Councillor E Carpenter
Councillor J Channer	Councillor J Clee
Councillor R Douglas	Councillor C Geddes
Councillor N S S Gill	Councillor R Gill
Councillor D Hunt	Councillor A S Jamu
Councillor E Kangethe	Councillor E Keller
Councillor G Letchford	Councillor M A McCarthy
Councillor J E McDermott	Councillor M McKenzie MBE
Councillor D S Miles	Councillor J Ogungbose
Councillor B Poulton	Councillor H S Rai
Councillor A K Ramsay	Councillor L A Reason
Councillor C Rice	Councillor L Rice
Councillor T Saeed	Councillor A Salam
Councillor L A Smith	Councillor S Tarry
Councillor D Twomey	Councillor G M Vincent
Councillor J Wade	Councillor P T Waker
Councillor J R White	Councillor M M Worby

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor G Barratt	Councillor H J Collins
Councillor L Couling	Councillor I S Jamu
Councillor M Mullane	Councillor E O Obasohan
Councillor T Perry	Councillor D Rodwell
Councillor L R Waker	

53. Declaration of Members' Interests

Councillor Poulton declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 6 as a former trustee of Thames Side Community Support.

Councillors Geddes and Channer both declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 6 as they hold surgeries at the Advice Centre.

54. Minutes - To confirm as correct the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2010

Agreed

55. Appointments

Received and noted this report introduced by the Monitoring Officer.

Agreed that the independent member vacancy on the Standards Committee be left vacant at this time and reconsidered when the future of the Standards regime is more certain.

56. Appointment of Monitoring Officer

Received and noted the report introduced by the Corporate Director of Adult and Community Services.

It was further noted that Thurrock Council had agreed at their Cabinet meeting on 18 February 2011 to enter into an agreement with this Council regarding the proposed appointment set out in the report.

Agreed to:

1. appoint Tasnim Shawkat, Head of Legal and Democratic Services at Thurrock Council, as this Council's Monitoring Officer during the period of her secondment to Barking and Dagenham on a part-time basis from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012, and
2. authorise the Acting Chief Executive or his appointee to make any necessary contractual arrangements with Thurrock Council to give effect to the arrangement.

57. Response to Petition - The Advice Centre, Bastable Avenue, Barking IG11 0LG

Received and noted this report introduced by the Head of Community Cohesion and Equalities. It was further noted that the Council has been advised that the Advice Centre was closed in November 2010 due to lack of funds.

Councillor Alexander, Cabinet Member for Crime, Justice and Communities, recognised the many years of help and advice given to the residents of Thames Ward by Thames Side Community Support. Referring to the Coalition Government's cuts in funding to local authorities, she stated that the Council had to look at the needs of the Borough as a whole. She confirmed the Council's commitment to supporting local people in accessing high quality advice services and that the Community Legal Advice Centre had increased the quality of general and specialist advice available for local people since it opened in May 2010.

Agreed:

1. to acknowledge the concerns of the residents;
2. to note the work of the Community Legal Advice Centre in providing generalist and specialist advice services across the borough;

3. that, due to the current financial climate, it is not possible for the Council to fund separate local advice services in addition to borough-wide provision by the Community Legal Advice Centre.

58. Local Development Framework - Adoption of Barking Town Centre Area Action Plan

Received and noted this report introduced by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration.

Following a question, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration confirmed an error on page 64 of the Area Action Plan in relation to the partnership with First Base scheme being delivered by the Local Housing Company.

Agreed to adopt the Barking Town Centre Area Action Plan, which will form part of the Barking and Dagenham Local Development Framework.

59. Review of Council's Financial Rules

Received and noted this report introduced by the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources.

Agreed to:

1. approve the new Financial Rules for full adoption across the Council as set out in Appendix B to the report; and
2. approve all consequential changes to the Council's Constitution including the Scheme of Delegation.

60. 2011/12 Budgetary Framework

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources (CDFR) gave a short presentation covering:

- Policy house – the Council's vision and priorities
- Budget process successes
- The Council's plans for making savings
- The impact of grant cuts
- The risks in balancing this budget

The key messages from the presentation are that:

- This is a balanced budget for 2011/12
- The policy led approach will continue to ensure that the budget reflects Member and community priorities
- The size of reductions creates risks in planned savings
- The reserves position is better than last year but cannot be reduced due to budget risks
- More savings will need to be found for 2012/13 onwards
- New legislation (localism, housing, benefits) and the Olympics in 2012 will have an impact

Councillor Geddes, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Revenues and Benefits, introduced the budgetary framework for 2011/12 report, setting out:

- the three year Council Plan
- the Medium Term Financial Strategy and a two year summary level financial model for the council
- a four year capital investment programme
- detailed annual revenue estimates for revised 2010/11 and 2011/12, and
- the proposed level of council tax for 2011/12

In presenting the detail the Cabinet Member thanked the CDFR and her staff for their support during the budget preparation process, as well as the Members and members of the public who had taken part in the consultation process.

He confirmed that the Council was facing cuts of £20.2 million over the next two years and noted that many officers had been lost to the Council through the voluntary redundancy scheme, which would inevitably lead to a higher workload for those remaining.

He was pleased to note that this Council is in the forefront in working across borough boundaries, as exemplified by the Assembly's agreement to working with Thurrock Council as detailed earlier in this meeting and by the series of meetings that he and Councillor Channer had arranged with various other councils.

Despite the severe cuts imposed by the Coalition Government, the Cabinet Member was pleased to confirm that this Council:

- is continuing to invest in our schools,
- will be opening a Skills Centre for 14-19 year olds,
- has one of the best adult care services in the UK,
- is working to reduce the housing waiting list,
- will have a £9m sports facility in Mayesbrook Park as a result of the 2012 Olympics,
- will be freezing Council Tax for a third consecutive year,
- will not be closing libraries, and
- will not be closing children's centres or leisure centres.

In finalising the report, the Cabinet Member stated that Members and officers across all departments are taking collective responsibility for this balanced budget and that the Council's priority is to build a fairer, prosperous and aspirational Barking and Dagenham.

The Chair invited members to comment on the budget proposals.

Members noted their concerns at the aggressive cuts imposed by the Coalition Government, in the face of which this Council has worked extremely hard to minimise job cuts in services that the people of this borough rely on. None of the cuts are welcome but Members noted that this is a robust and balanced budget that had been scrutinised and analysed fully.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Smith, seconded the budget proposals and

congratulated the Cabinet Member on his excellent presentation. Councillor Smith further thanked the people of this borough for supporting the Members at the May 2010 elections and noted that as a result of consultation (which he gave his word would continue) with the Trade Unions and members of the public, this budget had not occasioned ugly scenes of protest as had been experienced by other boroughs.

The budget proposals were put to a vote by a show of hands and it was **agreed** unanimously to approve:

- (i) The Council Plan "Building a Better Life for All" as set out at Appendices A and B to the report;
- (ii) The Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2011/12 - 2013/14 as set out at Appendices C and D to the report;
- (iii) The Capital Investment Programme for 2010/11 - 2014/15 as set out at Appendix G to the report;
- (iv) The savings summary for 2010/11 - 2013/14, revised budget for 2010/11 and base budget for 2011/12 as set out at Appendices E, J and K to the report, resulting in a freeze in Council Tax levels for 2011/12 for the third year in succession;
- (v) The position on reserves as set out in paragraph 2.7 of the report;
- (vi) The Council's Prudential Indicators as set out in Appendix H to the report; and
- (vii) The Statutory Budget Determinations and Amount of Council Tax for the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham for 2011/12 as set out at Appendix L (final precept confirmed by Greater London Council) and Appendix M to the report.

61. Motions

None

62. Leader's Question Time

None

63. General Question Time

None

64. David Woods - Acting Chief Executive

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Smith, announced that Mr David Woods, the Acting Chief Executive, would be retiring from the Council in March 2011. Unfortunately Mr Woods was unable to attend this evening's meeting.

Paying tribute to him, Councillor Smith advised Members that Mr Woods had been presented with a certificate recognising his forty years' service with this Council. During his service Mr Woods has worked in various posts, starting out in environmental health and working his way up the ladder to become a Director of Housing, a Corporate Director of Customer Services and ultimately Acting Chief Executive. Councillor Smith expressed his personal thanks to Mr Woods for all

his help and support over recent years.

The Assembly placed on record their appreciation of the service Mr Woods has given to this Council over such a long period of time and wished him a very happy retirement.