

MINUTES OF THE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 20 July 2011
(7:00 - 8:50 pm)

PRESENT

Councillor N S S Gill (Chair)
Councillor E Kangethe (Deputy Chair)

Councillor S Alasia	Councillor A Gafoor Aziz
Councillor G Barratt	Councillor P Burgon
Councillor E Carpenter	Councillor J Clee
Councillor J Davis	Councillor R Douglas
Councillor C Geddes	Councillor R Gill
Councillor M Hussain	Councillor A S Jamu
Councillor I S Jamu	Councillor E Keller
Councillor G Letchford	Councillor M A McCarthy
Councillor J E McDermott	Councillor M McKenzie MBE
Councillor D S Miles	Councillor M Mullane
Councillor E O Obasohan	Councillor J Ogungbose
Councillor T Perry	Councillor B Poulton
Councillor H S Rai	Councillor L A Reason
Councillor C Rice	Councillor L Rice
Councillor D Rodwell	Councillor T Saeed
Councillor S Tarry	Councillor G M Vincent

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor J L Alexander	Councillor S Ashraf
Councillor L Butt	Councillor J Channer
Councillor H J Collins	Councillor L Couling
Councillor D Hunt	Councillor A K Ramsay
Councillor A Salam	Councillor L A Smith
Councillor D Twomey	

18. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest

19. Minutes (18 May 2011)

The minutes of the Assembly meeting held on 18 May 2011 were confirmed as correct.

20. Appointments

Assembly **agreed** the following appointments:

- **Councillors Geddes and Douglas as Chair and Deputy Chair respectively of the Pensions Panel**

- **Councillor Obasohan** to the vacant position on the **Licensing and Regulatory Board**
- **Councillor Tarry** to the vacant position on the **Safer and Stronger Communities Select Committee**
- **Councillor Poulton** to the vacant position on the **Standards Committee**
- **Councillor Douglas** to the **Corporation of Barking & Dagenham College for a term of 4 years**
- **Councillor Carpenter** to the **Corporation of Barking & Dagenham College for a further term of 4 years when her appointment expires on 4 December 2011**
- **Councillor Letchford** to the **East London Waste Authority**

Assembly noted:

- the appointment by **Councillor Alexander** of her deputies to **London Council's Grants Committee, namely Councillors Collins, Geddes, P Waker and White**
- and**
- the appointment by **Councillor Vincent** of his deputies to **London Council's Transport and Environment Committee, namely Councillors N Gill, I S Jamu, Letchford and Miles.**

21. Petition - Local Involvement Network (LINKS) Funding

Assembly **agreed** at the request of the Lead Petitioner to defer this item to the 14 September 2011 meeting.

22. Petition - 67 East Street Barking

Assembly received and noted the terms of a petition presented by the Lead Petitioner, Mr Erturk, that objected to the opening of another pawnbrokers and jewellers in Barking town centre.

Mr Erturk provided the Assembly with background to the petition, namely:

- a jewellery business, had been operating at 1 London Road, Barking for over 30 years;
- in 2006 Mr Erturk purchased the shop lease and goodwill of the business known as Barking Discount Jewellers and renamed it Turquoise Jewellers;
- his business had been facing difficulties when stalls in Barking market, which he felt had lower overheads than him, began selling jewellery and watches, repairing watches and buying gold;
- on receipt of a letter from the Planning Department in December 2010,

advising of the application to change the shop front at 67 East Street (the premises), (next door to Mr Erturk's business) Mr Erturk ascertained that the applicant was Albemarle and Bond plc, whose business comprises pawnbroking and buying and selling jewellery;

- the premises had a retail licence but was not licensed to allow financial activities;
- three months after the premises had opened for business officers from the Planning Department confirmed to Mr Erturk that the premises was not licensed to act as pawnbrokers;

Mr Erturk advised Assembly that he organised a demonstration against the opening of the premises, at which 210 people signed the petition but that subsequently over 1,000 people had signed it. Support had been received from Margaret Hodge MP and some Councillors but none had been received from the Abbey Ward Councillors, where the premises was situated.

Mr Erturk expressed his concern that Albemarle and Bond plc had failed to apply for a licence to enable them to carry on the business of pawnbrokers, particularly as the premises displayed a large pawnbroker sign.

He stated that he was not against competition provided it was fair and balanced but that on this occasion he felt it was not fair of the Council to allow a large jewellers and pawnbrokers to commence business next door to an existing jewellers that had served the people of Barking and Dagenham for over 30 years. He questioned why the Council had allowed this to happen when there were already several pawnbrokers in Barking Town Centre.

Assembly then received the response to the petition introduced by Rob Williams, Group Manager, Environment and Trading Standards.

It was noted that:

- (a) Planning Officers had explained the planning situation to Mr Erturk at a meeting on 5 May 2011, namely that the premises had an existing planning permission for use as a retail shop and that consequently the current use predominantly as a jewellers did not require a planning permission;
- (b) moral and ethical issues were not material considerations in determining a planning application;
- (c) the element of competition that Mr Erturk may be experiencing is not an issue that would fall within the planning regime;
- (d) officers would be monitoring the balance of trading between that of a jeweller and that of a pawnbroker and should circumstances change that could constitute a material change of use, then appropriate action would be taken by officers.

In response to Mr Erturk's assertion that no Councillors from Abbey Ward had supported the petition, Councillor Saeed (Abbey Ward) confirmed that he had visited Mr Erturk with the Planning Officers.

Following discussion, Assembly **agreed**:

1. to acknowledge the concerns of the lead petitioner,
2. to note the outcome of the investigations and action taken by Officers;

- and
3. to request Officers to report back to the nearest Assembly meeting in six months' time (*22 February 2012 or sooner, if appropriate*) as to the monitoring of the balance of trading at the premises between that of a jeweller and that of a pawnbroker.

23. Approval of Second Local implementation Plan

Assembly received a report from Councillor McCarthy, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration on the Second Local Implementation Plan (LIP2) setting out the Council's transport strategy for 2011/12 to 2013/14.

Assembly noted that the draft LIP2 had been the subject of extensive consultation and while the fundamental principles of the LIP2 were unaffected several amendments had been put forward, the main aspects being a new indicator to monitor bus journey time, reference to the importance of River Roding Bridge for the Barking to Royal Docks Bus Corridor scheme and added emphasis given to residential 20 mph zones.

Members discussed:

- the enforcement of 20 mph zones
- traffic congestion in the borough, particularly the A13
- public transport access to local hospitals and hospitals in neighbouring boroughs
- public transport links from Barking to Stratford to give residents of the borough access to job vacancies at the Westfield Centre
- the use of the River Thames to move freight

Councillor Vincent, Cabinet Member for Environment advised the Assembly that this borough and the London Borough of Havering were lobbying Transport for London regarding public transport access to Queen's Hospital in Romford.

Assembly **agreed** to approve the changes to the draft Second Local Implementation Plan and submit the final version of the document to Transport for London.

24. The Council Plan

Assembly received a report from Councillor Geddes, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Revenues and Benefits on the Council Plan for 2011/12 summarising the main activities to deliver the Council's key priorities for the coming year, with particular focus on the areas of raising household incomes, raising standards in school and post-16 education and housing and estate renewal.

Referring to the Better Future section of the Plan, the Cabinet Member advised that the investment figures of £270 million in the borough's secondary schools and £18 million in the primary schools were correct prior to the Coalition Government axing the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. As a consequence of this action, this year the Council would be investing:

- £3 million in the borough's secondary schools; and

- £15 million in the borough's primary schools.

Members discussed:

- the difficulties faced by residents in low paid employment who could not afford to pay tuition fees to enable them to improve their qualifications and their prospects for better paid employment
- the benefits of the Apprenticeship Scheme
- the Skills Centre
- internships
- the Trident Scheme
- the improvement in cleansing across the borough
- the delivery of Playbuilder sites across the borough
- National Play Day which would take place on 3 August in Mayesbrook Park

Councillor R Gill, the Cabinet Member for Children and Education, in response to points raised by Councillor Tarry regarding internships, advised that he would provide a full response to him.

Following concerns raised by Councillor Poulton with regard to the number of "eyesore" gardens and uncut amenity greens in Thames Ward, Councillor Vincent, Cabinet Member for Environment, advised that he would meet separately with Councillor Poulton to discuss this issue further.

Assembly **agreed** to approve the Council Plan as set out in Appendix 1 to the report subject to the amended figures reported by Councillor Geddes in respect of addressing the effects of the axing of the BSF programme.

25. Barking & Dagenham Partnership Annual Report 2010/11

Assembly received and noted the annual report of the Barking & Dagenham Partnership as presented by Councillor R Gill, the Deputy Leader of the Council.

26. Treasury Management Annual Report

Assembly received this report introduced by Councillor Geddes, the Cabinet Member for Finance, Revenues and Benefits.

Assembly **agreed to:**

- (a) Note the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2010/11;
- (b) Note that the Council complied with all 2010/11 treasury management indicators;
- (c) Approve the actual 2010/11 prudential and treasury indicators as set out in the Annual Report;
- (d) Note that the Council did not borrow in 2010/11 to finance its capital programme but utilised internal cash in line with its strategy; and
- (e) With regard to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) reforms, agree in

principle that:

- i. In the event of favourable market conditions and the issuing of the directive from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) before 1 April 2012, the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources be permitted, after consultation with the Council's treasury management advisers, to borrow the appropriate finance, currently estimated to be in the region of £281m;
- ii. Finance may be raised for the HRA reform using any or a combination of the borrowing instruments referred to in paragraph 10.3 of the Cabinet Member's report.

27. Council Constitution - Standards for Members of the Public (Volunteers) Undertaking Council Activities

Assembly received a report from the Standards Committee on a proposed amendment to the *Standards for Members of the Public (Volunteers) Undertaking Council Activities* (a document that forms part of the Council Constitution) to clarify the fact that the Council covered the costs of any Criminal Records Bureau checks.

Assembly **agreed**:

1. the amendment to paragraph 5 of the document; and
2. the associated change to the Council Constitution to take immediate effect.

28. Motions

Assembly **agreed** in accordance with the provisions of the Council Constitution that the motion on the agenda concerning changes to the proposed Welfare Reform Bill be withdrawn, as Councillor Twomey, the mover of the motion, was not present at the meeting.

29. Leader's Question Time

Question from Councillor Wade:

"There has been much talk about people moving from central London to Barking and Dagenham because they are failing to meet housing costs.

Even now, within our Borough, more people are being EVICTED through no fault of their own.

Regular payers of rent to private landlords are sometimes told by them that their property is being re-possessed because of mortgage payment arrears but not to worry, they can stay there. After a while the tenant receives an eviction notice from the landlord's bank/mortgage lender and a date when the bailiffs will arrive. So, at short notice, the tenant starts looking for somewhere else to rent BUT a deposit is required. Where does the tenant get that from?

Whilst helping the tenant is paramount, would the Leader tell us whether the Council looks into the landlord's situation, as early help may have prevented an eviction and saved the Council money?"

Response from Councillor R Gill, the Deputy Leader of the Council, in the absence of Councillor Smith:

"We are seeing new types of landlords - Right to Buy and Buy to Let – who are supported by reckless lending by some of the banks. Once that money has been loaned, the individuals find it difficult to pay it back. The tenant then becomes a victim. We have one of the highest rates of re-possession in the country.

The Private Sector Housing team has now conducted two surveys since December 2010 of local lettings agencies and private landlords in the Borough to take stock of the private rented market in Barking & Dagenham. The current position is that there are very few empty private rented homes and the growing demand for this sector is coming from households who are in employment and not benefit dependent.

Local landlords are encouraged to sign up for the London Landlord Accreditation scheme and to join the Borough's Landlord Forum to ensure that good practice is followed. The private rented sector comprises over 7,000 homes in the Borough and is important in terms of housing. The Council's Private Sector Housing team will intervene when there are allegations of illegal eviction or harassment of tenants by landlords.

It should also be noted that the Living & Working Select Committee, as part of its scrutiny role, is looking at the private rented sector in Barking & Dagenham.

Response from Councillor P Waker, Cabinet Member for Housing –

"There are two aspects to this. Private renting in general where a landlord can quite easily evict, i.e. serve the required notice. The other scenario is where the landlord is getting the rent from the tenant but is not paying the mortgage. The tenant then gets all the hassle

If people are evicted through no fault of their own, it becomes a Council responsibility, especially where children are concerned.

Some people might have been in the borough for only six months – this is not fair. As a result we are embarking on a public consultation exercise on possible lengths of residency and local connection rights.

We are trying to move things forward, although due to the complexity of the issue, I cannot offer this meeting a quick fix solution.

On a positive note, the Council has taken the opportunity to secure grants, which have enabled 143 new council house builds. We have also opened up empty buildings as temporary accommodation and are spending £40m on backlog work on decent homes

Finally, officers put in a competitive bid for £25 m and the Council has been awarded £18.3m, which whilst not solving all the issues, will significantly assist in addressing the borough's housing needs."

30. General Question Time

General Question 1 from Councillor Carpenter:

"It was very disappointing when Tory-led Government cuts forced this Council to cut back its ground-breaking Apprenticeship Scheme to just 30 places. However, I have heard that there is still a strong demand for creating apprenticeships across the Council. Departments so value the work of the young people recruited to our scheme that, to date, there have been 79 applications across all service areas for the assigned 30 funded places.

Would the Cabinet Member for Regeneration please let us know:

1. what measures are being taken to maximise the number of Council apprenticeships this year;
2. how many have been approved, and
3. what Departments or sections will have apprentices in 2011/12? "

Response from Councillor McCarthy, Cabinet Member for Regeneration:

"Despite tough financial times, Members remain wholly committed to maximising the impact of apprenticeships in the Borough – both within the Council's own workforce, and in partnership with others. Direct experience of the workplace with a training allowance, coupled with high quality technical training is an ideal model for many of our young people.

The budget made available for the 2011/12 apprenticeship programme included funding for a 50% salary contribution (total training allowance cost of £7,200 p.a.) for 30 new apprentice starts.

Due to the previous success of the apprenticeship programme, so far a total of 82 requests from LBBDD departments have been made. This includes both departments that have recruited apprentices previously, and departments recruiting an apprentice for the first time, broken down as follows:

Customer Services Department:

Landlord Services	9
Waste Services	12
Grounds and Horticulture	5
Cleansing	5
Highways, streets and parking	3
Environmental Health & trading standards	1

Finance and Commercial Services

Insurance	1
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Human Resources	2
Assets and Capital Delivery	4
Finance	1
Regeneration, Employment and Skills	1

Children's Services

Children's Centres	6
Catering Services	4
14-19	1
Programmes and Projects	2

Adult and Community Services

Community Safety and Public Protection	4
Leisure	2
Adult Care	19

Total **82**

To meet the demand from the departments and to ensure more local residents benefit from a range of apprenticeship opportunities, it was decided that the available apprenticeship salary budget should be split equally amongst the departments.

Using this budgeted apprenticeship salary figure to support the recruitment of 82 apprentices, this results in a central Council subsidy contribution of approximately 20% to the overall salary, requiring the recruiting department to fund the remaining 80%.

During 2011/12 to date 12 new apprentices have already been recruited (5 Business Admin, 7 Health and Social Care) and 7 apprenticeships have been created in partnership with Elevate.

Officers in Children's Services are exploring every opportunity to extend the number of apprenticeships in economically challenging times. These include a programme ready to commence with local pharmacies where 18 places will be created across the Borough.

Equally officers are pro-active in maximising the procurement gains from the letting of major construction contracts. The summary position is as follows:

Scheme	Outcomes
Live	
Rivergate Centre (Neilcott)	4 Apprentices
New Build Council Housing (Apollo)	6 Apprentices
Housing Refurbishment (UHL)	6 Apprentices
	16 Apprentices
Pipeline	
Skills Centre	4 Apprentices

Barking Riverside tbc	20 Apprentices (Phase 1)
BSF (revised)	8 Apprentices
UEL School	4 Apprentices
FreshWharf tbc	25 Apprentices
	61 Apprentices
	77 Apprentices

The Council is joining with Barking and Dagenham College, Havering College and Havering Council to form an Apprenticeship Training Agency, which will create a “hub” for employers and young people who are interested in benefitting from apprenticeship opportunities. The council’s own scheme will benefit from this arrangement.

Alan Lazell, who is responsible for 14-19 Education, Employment and Training, has provided me with these figures and I will arrange for them to be circulated to Members. Alan is doing a sterling job and I would like to thank him on behalf of the young people."

General Question 2 from Councillor Tarry:

“Could the Cabinet Member for Children and Education comment on the performance of our Children Centres in the light of the results of a number of recent external inspections?”

Response from Councillor R Gill, Cabinet Member for Children and Education:

"We have had three OFSTED inspections of children’s centres thus far. Abbey, Furze and Sue Bramley were all adjudged to be Outstanding. At this point, we are the only local authority with a 100% record of Outstanding inspections.

Inspectors noted the role of the local authority in achieving such high standards. Strong leadership and management and a rigorous self-evaluation programme have ensured that all 18 of our centre remain focussed on outcomes, able to show the impact of all our services on improvements in the lives of young children and their families. We use data effectively to track and analyse the journey of an LBBD child through a children’s centre to Foundation Stage.

Our staff are well-managed and clear about the relationship between their individual targets and those in corporate plans and national strategies. They are clear about lines of accountability, and expectations about children’s centre standards are uniformly high.

There is effective input from a number of centrally-based staff who ensure the right levels of expertise are available across the core offer of family support, health services, jobs and training support, play and communication and day care.

There is a parents' forum at every centre that ensures parents are able to contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of services. Parent forums are supported to access external funding for additional activities. Many parent forum members look for volunteering opportunities in our centres, then go on to access courses of study or employment. The parent forums are represented at the termly children's centre community forum meeting to which all elected members are invited.

Our partnerships are strong. Children's centre services are delivered in conjunction with health, Jobcentre Plus, training partners, day care providers and a number of third sector organisations. Inspectors commented on the 'seamless and positive' work with partners evident at all three centres.

There are over 5000 attendances at our children's centres every week. This figure has grown month-on-month since monitoring began, showing that our residents see children's centres as hubs for a wide range of community services and activities.

We have just been informed that we have been selected to pilot the Government's new Payment by Results scheme which will reward high-achieving centres for evidencing the impact of services on children and families. We are currently one of only nine Councils participating in this pilot – another indication that our children's centres are operating at the very highest level.

I am taking this opportunity to give you some information about education in our borough. We were invited by the Young People's Learning Agency to bid for funding from the Growth Capital Fund. I too would like to thank Alan Lazell, who prepared a bid for Robert Clack School for £3m. The bid was successful which means we will have an extra 150 places in our school sixth forms – this is a fantastic achievement.

Michael Gove – Secretary of State for Education – has just announced that he will be releasing additional capital funding for schools this fiscal year. Details of that funding will be discussed over the summer break and I will inform members of the outcome in due course.

The Secretary of State has acknowledged the need for school places in London and hopefully I will bring you more good news."