

# MINUTES OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 2 December 2015  
(7:00 - 9:22 pm)

## PRESENT

Cllr Tony Ramsay (Chair)  
Cllr Syed Ghani (Deputy Chair)

Cllr Syed Ahammad	Cllr Jeanne Alexander	Cllr Saima Ashraf
Cllr Abdul Aziz	Cllr Simon Bremner	Cllr Sade Bright
Cllr Laila Butt	Cllr Evelyn Carpenter	Cllr Peter Chand
Cllr Josephine Channer	Cllr Faruk Choudhury	Cllr Edna Fergus
Cllr Irma Freeborn	Cllr Cameron Geddes	Cllr Rocky Gill
Cllr Kashif Haroon	Cllr Chris Hughes	Cllr Amardeep Singh Jamu
Cllr Jane Jones	Cllr Elizabeth Kangethe	Cllr Eileen Keller
Cllr Danielle Lawrence	Cllr Mick McCarthy	Cllr Giasuddin Miah
Cllr Dave Miles	Cllr James Ogungbose	Cllr Adegboyega Oluwole
Cllr Moin Quadri	Cllr Linda Reason	Cllr Lynda Rice
Cllr Darren Rodwell	Cllr Faraaz Shaukat	Cllr Danielle Smith
Cllr Sam Tarry	Cllr Bill Turner	Cllr Dominic Twomey
Cllr Jeff Wade	Cllr Phil Waker	Cllr John White
Cllr Maureen Worby	Cllr Linda Zanitchkhah	

## APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Sanchia Alasia	Cllr Melanie Bartlett	Cllr Margaret Mullane
Cllr Chris Rice	Cllr Lee Waker	Cllr Dan Young

### **27. Minute's silence as a mark of respect for the victims of the Paris terrorist attacks**

The Assembly stood and observed a minute's silence as a mark of respect for the victims of the Paris terrorist attacks.

### **28. Declaration of Members' Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **29. Death of former Councillor Mrs Jean Bruce**

The Assembly paid tribute to former Councillor Mrs Jean Bruce who passed away on Tuesday 24 November 2015.

The Assembly noted that Mrs Bruce was first elected as a Councillor for Abbey Ward in May 1974. Mrs Bruce transferred to Valence Ward where she was re-elected in 1986 and continued to serve until her retirement in 2006. A number of Members paid tribute to Mrs Bruce's huge contribution to the Council.

The Assembly stood and observed a minute's silence in memory of Mrs Bruce.

### **30. Minutes (23 September 2015)**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2015 were confirmed as correct.

### **31. Minutes of Sub-Committees**

The Assembly received and noted the minutes of the JNC Appointments Panel held on 22 September 2015 and the JNC Salaries and Conditions Panel held on 17 November 2015.

### **32. Leader's Statement**

The Leader of the Council presented a verbal statement updating the Assembly on a range of matters which included:

- The Chancellor's Comprehensive Spending review, which was announced last week. Although precise details of the Council's position would not be available until after the local government finance settlement was announced shortly before Christmas, the Ambition 2020 programme would be looking at ways the Council could deliver better services with less money.
- The One Borough Newsletter, which was being emailed to no less than 55,000 residents every fortnight. Thanks were given to the Communications Team for producing the newsletter. The Leader took the opportunity to thank all staff in general for their hard work during the year. In particular there was a special mention for staff recently involved in Operation Shutdown, where an illegal race event in Renwick Road did not take place following proactive action by the Police and the Council.

### **33. Appointments**

There were no appointments to Council Committees and/or other bodies.

### **34. Appointment of Parent Governor (Secondary) Co-optee to the Children's Services Select Committee**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Central Services introduced a report regarding the appointment of a parent governor (Secondary) Co-optee to the Children's Services Select Committee.

The Assembly **resolved** to agree the appointment of Tracy MacDonald to the position of Parent Governor (Secondary) Co-optee on the Children's Services Select Committee for a term of four years.

### **35. Adoption of London Councils' Code of Practice for Affixing Traffic Signs and Street Lighting to Buildings in London**

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration introduced a report regarding the adoption of London Councils' Code of Practice for Affixing Traffic Signs and Street Lighting

to Buildings in London.

The Assembly **resolved** to:

- (i) Note the new powers in the London Local Authorities and Transport for London Act 2013 (the 2013 Act) with regard to the erection of signage and street lighting on buildings in private ownership;
- (ii) Agree to adopt the London Council's Code of Practice "Affixing Traffic Signs and Street Lighting to Buildings in London" in relation to the London Local Authorities and Transport for London Act 2013 Part 2(4) with effect from 1 February 2016 to enable the Council to exercise the new powers; and
- (iii) Authorise the Strategic Director of Customer, Commercial and Service Delivery to publish notice of the passing of the resolution in (ii) above, in accordance with the requirements of section 3(4) of the 2013 Act.

### **36. Council Tax Support Scheme 2016/17**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Central Services introduced the Council Tax Support Scheme 2016/17.

In response to questions from Councillor Gill, the Cabinet Member confirmed that:

- The Council would implement a clear policy to ensure it could set its own criteria of whom would qualify for a discretionary reduction;
- There had been no applications as yet; and
- There had been no reduction in Council Tax collection rates to date.

The Assembly **resolved** to agree that the Council Tax Support Scheme implemented for 2015/16 be retained for 2016/17, subject to the following minor amendments:

- To adopt the same non-dependant deductions that apply to Universal Credit applicants;
- Apply the lowest non-dependant deduction for those receiving work related or sickness benefits (to be specified);
- To realign Council Tax Support with the Housing Benefit legislation so that entitlement ends on the Monday following the last day of entitlement.

### **37. Treasury Management Strategy Statement Mid-Year Review 2015/16**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Central Services introduced the Treasury Management Strategy Statement Mid Year review for 2015/16.

The Cabinet Member referred to the low energy street light replacement programme, which the Cabinet had approved at its meeting on 10 November 2015. The proposals would involve the replacement of the borough's existing street lights with low energy light emitting diode (LED) lanterns and entering into an agreement with the Green Investment Bank (GIB) to finance the procurement and replacement on an 'invest to save' basis.

In response to questions from Councillors, the Cabinet Member confirmed that:

- The Treasury Team were monitoring the Council's investments, particularly those at RBS and Lloyds, and would make sure the Council would not be exposed to risk;
- With regard to the Council's existing borrowing commitments, that they did not include any 'toxic' LOBO (Lender Option Borrower Option) arrangements, as stated at Assembly in July 2015; and
- The Council would continue to invest in schemes, where appropriate, with the GIB.

Clarification was sought by Assembly regarding the following end dates for LOBO's and the following confirmed by the Strategic Director, Finance and Investment:

- Barclays (LOBO) – confirmed end date 30/05/2078
- Dexia (LOBO) – confirmed end date 30/05/2077
- RBS (LOBO) – confirmed end date 30/05/2060
- RBS B (LOBO) – confirmed end date 30/05/2059

The Assembly **resolved** to:

- (i) Note the Treasury Management Strategy Statement Mid-Year Review 2015/16;
- (ii) Note that in the first half of the 2015/16 financial year that the Council complied with all 2015/16 treasury management indicators;
- (iii) Agree to maintain the delegated authority given to the Strategic Director of Finance and Investment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, for the duration of the 2015/16 financial year to proportionally amend the counterparty lending limits agreed within the Treasury Management Strategy Statement to take into account the additional £89m from the European Investment Bank; and
- (iv) Authorise the Strategic Director of Finance and Investment to make the necessary adjustments to the Treasury Management Strategy to reflect the borrowing of funds and the Capital Financing Requirement to accommodate the additional borrowing arising from the Cabinet's decision under Minute 67, 10 November 2015 to finance the Low Energy Street Light Replacement Programme via the UK Green Investment Bank's Green Loan

### **38. Motions**

Moved by Councillor Twomey and seconded by Councillor Quadri.

"This Council notes, with regret, that the Housing and Planning Bill currently being debated in Parliament will have a negative impact on residents in Barking and Dagenham.

If passed in its current form, the Bill would threaten this Council's ability to provide truly affordable homes to rent and buy. It does nothing to help families and young

people on average incomes in our borough and fails to address the recent rise in homelessness.

This Council resolves to make our concerns public and support the Leader in writing to the Secretary of State to outline the negative impact that this Bill will have on residents in Barking and Dagenham.”

Members spoke in support of the motion and expressed their concerns that the Bill severely threatened the Council’s ability to provide affordable homes for the Boroughs residents. Concerns were also raised that the Bill had the potential to deplete the Councils housing stock by approximately 800 homes due to the changes proposed to the Right to Buy Scheme.

In response, Councillor Twomey expressed his thanks to Members for their supporting comments and expressed his disappointment with the Housing Associations acceptance of the Bill.

The motion was put to the vote by way of a show of hands and **carried**.

## **39. Questions With Notice**

### **Question 1**

#### **From Councillor Ahammad**

“Can the Cabinet Member update us, after fifteen months of introducing the Private Rented Licensing Scheme (PRLS), what has been done so far to improve the quality of private rented housing in this borough?”

#### **Response**

Councillor Butt, Cabinet Member for Crime and Enforcement, advised that as from 1 September 2014, any landlord operating a privately rented house was required to have applied for a licence. Since the scheme started the Council had received over 11,000 PRLS applications and over 7,000 properties had been visited and assessed.

Of the circa 450 properties being visited a month, approximately 15% were being identified as initially failing the licensing standard and requiring enforcement. In most cases the Council were able to work with landlords to obtain compliance but for those that did not, the Council would use powers to enforce repairs, remove overcrowding or improve standards of safety. Where a notice was served, not only would the landlord be treated as a potential ‘Landlord of Concern’, meaning that their properties may be restricted to annual licensing, but they were also liable for a charge of £490 for any Housing Act notice served.

#### **Supplementary Question**

Councillor Ahammad asked if the Council had taken any action against landlords in the Borough.

Councillor Butt confirmed action had been taken.

## **Question 2**

### **From Councillor Ghani**

“Can the Leader update the Assembly on the proposals to build a tunnel called the Riverside tunnel beneath the A13, and what benefits it will bring our community of B&D?”

### **Response**

Councillor Geddes, Cabinet Member for Regeneration advised that the new tunnel would bring many benefits to the Borough, including unlocking land for 5,000 new homes and the creation of 100 jobs, removal of the Lodge Avenue flyover and the replacement of old industrial buildings with new homes. The proposal would also reduce pollution along the stretch of the A13 which was one of the five most polluted roads in London.

### **Supplementary Question**

Councillor Ghani enquired as to whether there was an update on the ferry crossing which had been proposed for 2025.

Councillor Geddes advised that work on the crossing would follow the commencement of the works on the tunnel.

## **Question 3**

### **From Councillor Shaukat**

“I am sure the Cabinet Member for Housing will share my concern at last week’s report in the Evening Standard about the rising rate of homelessness in London which has risen by 38% since 2012. The grant the Government gives local councils to tackle homelessness has dropped by £5m during the same period, and outer London Boroughs like Barking and Dagenham have been worst hit with B&D suffering a cut of 31%.

Can the Cabinet Member for Housing explain what we are doing to tackle the crisis in homelessness given the massively reduced support we are receiving from the Government?”

### **Response**

Council Ashraf, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, advised that in order to mitigate the impact of the reduction in homeless grant from Central Government from £650,000 in 2012/13 to the current annual grant of £415,000 the Council had developed a range of cost effective initiatives to reduce expenditure on homelessness. Examples included utilising decanted council stock as temporary accommodation and converting former residential homes for the elderly to Council-managed hostel accommodation.

### **Supplementary Question**

Councillor Shaukat asked for further information on hostel accommodation.

Councillor Ashraf advised that there was an ongoing demand for hostel and temporary accommodation, with 1647 households currently in temporary accommodation.

#### **Question 4**

##### **From Councillor Miah**

“Can the Cabinet Member for Crime and Enforcement update Assembly on what progress is being made in reducing burglaries in the borough?”

##### **Response**

Councillor Butt reported good progress, with a sustained reduction in burglary in Barking and Dagenham between March 2011 and October 2015 of 29%. This was one of the highest reduction rates in the North East London Area. A wide range of initiatives had been introduced including Met Trace, joint work between the Council and Police, and the relaunch of Neighbourhood Watch.

##### **Supplementary Question**

Councillor Miah asked for statistics on yearly crimes within the Borough.

Councillor Butt agreed to respond in writing

#### **Question 5**

##### **From Councillor Quadri**

“What assurances can the Cabinet Member for Crime & Enforcement provide that this Council is cracking down on rogue landlords who cause untold misery for people renting privately?”

Councillor Quadri confirmed his question had already been answered by the response given to question 1 from Councillor Ahammad.

#### **Question 6**

##### **From Councillor Choudhury**

“Fly-tipping is a growing problem in my ward and across the borough and its vital we do all we can to tackle the problem. Can the Cabinet Member for Crime & Enforcement let me know what action the Council is taking to tackle fly-tipping and if we can do more in the future?”

##### **Response**

Councillor Butt explained that the amount of fly-tipped material the Council had collected had fallen significantly, with a reduction of 45% between 2013/14 and 2014/15, saving £74,000 in disposal costs. The action being taken included making it easier for residents to report fly tipping, ensuring the Council's services for cleansing and waste were good, affordable charges for bulky waste collection and better monitoring of commercial waste contracts.

## **Question 7**

### **From Councillor Freeborn**

“Can the Leader set out what the Council is doing to raise awareness around the issue of violence against women and what support he has given this cause on behalf of the Council?”

### **Response**

Councillor Rodwell, Leader of the Council, explained that as part of the Council's support for the White Ribbon campaign, a range of activities and awareness raising events were held throughout the year to raise the profile of violence against women and girls. At a conference on 25 November, the Council launched an on-line directory of useful contacts for those residents who were experiencing domestic or sexual violence.

Councillor Rodwell also advised on activities that he had been personally involved in and informed Assembly that he would shortly be handcuffed to Councillor Butt to demonstrate the negative controlling aspect of domestic abuse.

### **Supplementary Question**

Councillor Freeborn asked the Leader to set out what was being done for the same sex community.

Councillor Rodwell, in response, took the opportunity to remind the Assembly that Councillor Bright was appointed last month as the Council's Women's and Equality Champion.

## **Question 8**

### **From Councillor Ghani**

“Can the Cabinet Member for Education let me know what progress is being made with the new £44m Barking Riverside School for 2,700 children and when it will be opening?”

### **Response**

Councillor Carpenter, Cabinet Member for Education and Schools, advised that she had attended the ground-breaking ceremony at the 23,000 square metre site for the Riverside Schools on 20 November. The current primary and special schools operating from temporary premises would move into the new school in September 2016 and the school would open fully in September 2017.

Councillor Carpenter took the opportunity to thank Mike Freeman and his team for their work to create school places for the rising population, and also James Hodgson and Judith Black, who prepared the application for funding amounting to £44 million.



## **Supplementary Question**

Councillor Ghani asked if Transport for London would be working with the school due to the additional volume of people travelling to the site.

Councillor Carpenter confirmed that the transport routes around the site were to be upgraded.

## **Question 9**

### **From Councillor Haroon**

“It would appear that following the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Chancellor gives with one hand and takes with another. Can the Cabinet Member confirm that George Osborne’s u-turn on scrapping cuts to tax credits for low-paid workers, freezing funding for the NHS, and slashing police budgets, will mean deeper cuts for local authorities like Barking & Dagenham?”

### **Response**

Councillor Twomey, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Central Services, advised that the local government finance settlement was due to be announced in the coming weeks and only then would the impact of the Chancellors statement be known.

## **Question 10**

### **From Councillor Haroon**

“At a time when local families are looking to us to set an example by tightening our belts, can the Cabinet Member for Finance confirm whether the Council is on track to make management savings promised earlier this year?”

### **Response**

Councillor Twomey confirmed that the Council were making good progress in delivering the planned management savings. The Assembly noted earlier in the meeting the minutes of the last JNC Salaries and Conditions Panel, which had approved proposals that would result in savings of over £350,000 from the management structures.

The Chief Executive added that he expected to deliver further savings in management costs during the course of the next financial year.

## **Question 11**

### **From Councillor Fergus**

“Our parks and open spaces are a treasured part of our leisure offer in Barking & Dagenham and have a key role to play in attracting people to live here at the same time as being vital for existing residents. Can the relevant Cabinet Member provide an update on what is being proposed for Parsloes Park?”

## **Response**

Councillor Rodwell advised that a master plan for the park was being developed which would address a number of local priorities. A consultation process was currently underway which would help inform the development of the master plan. Furthermore, a funding strategy and a 10 year management plan would also be produced.

## **Question 12**

### **From Councillor Kangethe**

“Will the relevant Cabinet Member set out what the Council is doing to reduce energy costs so that these savings can be ploughed into saving jobs and improving services for residents?”

## **Response**

Councillor Geddes advised that the Council was looking at short, medium and long term schemes to reduce energy costs which included engaging with energy providers, using low energy bulbs in street lighting and negotiating renewable energy schemes for the Borough’s schools.

## **Question 13**

### **From Councillor Quadri**

“Can the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care & Health outline what plans she has to enhance local health services for residents in the Borough?”

## **Response**

Councillor Worby, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, explained that local health services were not in good shape and local hospitals were failing. This had led to the creation of new developments and ideas for pathways into urgent care. Work was also being undertaken to consider the introduction of an Accountable Care Organisation which could deliver both efficiencies and improved care over the coming years.

### **Supplementary Question**

Councillor Quadri enquired as to how the Council would assist the NHS with ever increasing pressures from new homes being built in the Borough.

Councillor Worby confirmed the Council would be doing everything it could to assist the NHS.

## **Question 14**

### **From Councillor Fergus**

“Since the last Assembly meeting in October, the Growth Commission has been launched made up of an independent panel of experts. How will members be engaged when it reports back?”

## **Response**

Councillor Rodwell was pleased to advise that some Members had already taken the opportunity to feed their views into the Commission, including Councillors Twomey, Ashraf, P Waker and himself. The Growth Commission was due present its report in January. Members would then have the opportunity to consider and comment on its recommendations.

## **Question 15**

### **From Councillor Shaukat**

“In times of growing austerity with dwindling Government support, the emphasis on securing external funding is crucial. No more so than in the arts which tends to be the Cinderella service, and the first to lose its funding. Can the relevant Cabinet Member advise me what success we have had in securing external funding for the arts?”

## **Response**

Councillor Rodwell advised that the Council had a strong record of securing external funding to enable the delivery of arts projects in the Borough that otherwise would be unaffordable. 2015 had been a particular good year with over £1.2 million external funding being secured directly by the Council or in partnership with others.

*Standing Orders were suspended at this juncture to enable the meeting to continue past 9.00pm.*

## **Question 16**

### **From Councillor Tarry**

“Can the Cabinet Member for Housing confirm exactly how many Council Houses, as opposed to 'affordable rent' properties, will become available on Marks Gate, as the Cloisters development of over 100 homes nears completion, giving the exact percentage of residents that will be moved from the local ward of Chadwell Heath?”

## **Response**

Councillor Ashraf confirmed the new development did not include any Council housing. Around 75% of homes had gone to people living or working in the borough with four of the homes allocated to people living directly within the Marks Gate neighbourhood.

## **Supplementary Question**

Councillor Tarry enquired as to whether the Church of England, a key partner, was aware of the change in policy and requested the Cabinet Member attend a residents meeting.

Councillor Ashraf advised she did not know if the Church of England had been advised of the policy however it had been advertised widely. Furthermore,

Councillor Ashraf felt there was no need for her to attend a residents meeting.

### **Question 17**

#### **From Councillor Keller**

“Can the relevant Cabinet Member please confirm if the ‘One Stop Shop’ based at Dagenham library will not be closing and will continue to serve the residents of this borough?”

#### **Response**

Councillor Twomey confirmed that there had been no decision made to close the Dagenham One Stop Shop, however savings had been agreed with Elevate regarding its operation in 2017/18.

#### **Supplementary Question**

Councillor Keller advised that she had been told by one of the voluntary groups occupying the One Stop Shop that it would be closing in April 2016 and asked for further clarification.

Councillor Twomey again confirmed it would not close in April 2016, however the Council were looking at all available options for future service provision including more online and digital services.

### **Question 18**

#### **From Councillor Keller**

“Can the relevant Cabinet Member please advise how many GP practices in the borough have been placed into ‘special measures’ by the Care Quality Commission (CQC)?”

#### **Response**

Councillor Worby confirmed that one practice in the Borough had been placed in special measures. The CQC had on 5th November 2015, published a GP practice inspection report on Abbey Medical Centre. The report raised a number of areas of concern and had concluded that the practice should be placed in special measures.

### **Question 19**

#### **From Councillor Gill**

“Barking & Dagenham has been highlighted in recent media reports as the worst place to live in the UK, having the lowest paid residents and life expectancy in London. Can the Leader of the Council please explain the reported decline in the borough?”

#### **Response**

Councillor Rodwell advised that on average, residents in the Borough earned £13.07 per hour which was not the lowest pay in London. The life expectancy

in the Borough had increased, with both men and women in Barking and Dagenham living three years longer, according to figures covering 2011 – 2013, than compared to a decade ago.

### **Supplementary Question**

Councillor Gill advised that the media had recently stated that the Borough had the worst schools in the Borough and asked the Leader to explain this.

Councillor Rodwell commented that the reports were sensationalised, similar to that of Right Move in previous months. He confirmed that good news was coming out of the Borough on a regular basis.

## **Question 20**

### **Councillor Gill**

“Can the relevant Cabinet Member please advise what actions are being taken to deal with the recent increase in burglaries in Longbridge Ward and violent crime in Barking?”

### **Response**

Councillor Butt referred to her answer to question four and confirmed that there have been some increases in burglary in some wards including Longbridge, however it was hoped that the projects outlined in her earlier response would impact on the number of burglaries.

### **Supplementary Question**

Councillor Gill, in commenting on a suggested major increase in burglaries asked what the Council was doing to hold the Police to account.

Councillor Butt refuted the suggestion of a major increase in burglaries and advised she would set up a meeting with Councillor Gill to discuss the issues raised.

## **Question 21**

### **From Councillor Tarry**

“Can the Council Leader commit to do the following in relation to the Government’s Trade Union Bill: To continue to offer a “check-off” service - the ability of trade union members to have their subscriptions deducted at point of payment to all members of staff in Barking & Dagenham, in spite of Government attempts to remove and if this is not possible, to deliver a local plan to enable alternative methods of payment?”

### **Response**

Councillor Rodwell confirmed his commitment.

### **Supplementary Question**

Councillor Tarry enquired as to whether elected Councillors who were also active members of trade unions would be involved in the drawing up of proposals regarding alternative methods of payment.

Councillor Rodwell advised that members from the three local unions would be involved in discussions regarding the proposals to ensure they were progressed in the best way possible.