

MINUTES OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 13 July 2016
(7:00 - 8:15 pm)

PRESENT

Cllr Syed Ghani (Chair)
Cllr Edna Fergus (Deputy Chair)

Cllr Syed Ahammad	Cllr Sanchia Alasia	Cllr Jeanne Alexander
Cllr Saima Ashraf	Cllr Abdul Aziz	Cllr Simon Bremner
Cllr Sade Bright	Cllr Laila M. Butt	Cllr Evelyn Carpenter
Cllr Peter Chand	Cllr Josephine Channer	Cllr Faruk Choudhury
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 James Ogungbose	Cllr Adegboyega Oluwole	Cllr Moin Quadri
Cllr Tony Ramsay	Cllr Linda Reason	Cllr Chris Rice
Cllr Darren Rodwell	Cllr Danielle Smith	Cllr Bill Turner
Cllr Dominic Twomey	Cllr Jeff Wade	Cllr Phil Waker
Cllr John White	Cllr Maureen Worby	Cllr Dan Young

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Dave Miles	Cllr Margaret Mullane	Cllr Hardial Singh Rai
Cllr Lynda Rice	Cllr Faraaz Shaukat	Cllr Liam Smith
Cllr Sam Tarry	Cllr Lee Waker	

13. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

14. Minutes (18 May 2016)

The minutes of the Assembly held on 18 May 2016 were confirmed as a correct record.

15. Minute's Silence in Memory of Jo Cox MP

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Rodwell, paid tribute to Jo Cox, MP who was brutally murdered on 16 June 2016 outside a public library in her constituency.

The Assembly stood for a minute's silence in her memory and as a mark of respect.

16. Leader's Statement

The Leader of the Council presented a verbal statement updating the Assembly on

a range of matters since the last meeting which included:

- Meetings with the Mayor of London's Office to discuss issues such as housing (including affordable housing) and transport. Further meetings were planned to discuss the Council's priorities and the ambitions for a 'cut and cover' tunnel to be built along the A13.
- The Leader and officers had met with the HM Treasury team to discuss how the Borough was coping with austerity and cuts in Government funding.
- The Right to Invest initiative was launched, which would enable Council tenants to purchase a stake in their home and continue to contribute to their local community.
- Bidding had started for the Council to become the 'green energy capital of London' by establishing an energy services company with the aim of cutting the borough's carbon footprint. The new company, B&D Energy Limited was expected to start trading in early 2017.

Other key achievements that the Leader referred to were:

- £1 billion of investment secured in the last two years in new homes and jobs;
- £35m deal on Vicarage Fields to deliver homes and revitalise the shopping centre;
- Selection of a developer to build 3,000 new homes at Beam Park Dagenham;
- Agreement for a three-screen cinema to help the night time economy in Barking Town Centre.
- £7.4m secured for 2,500 low energy street lights;
- £350m committed to modernise council housing;
- The 'Modern University of the Year' which would move into Dagenham Civic Centre;
- Dagenham Library winning the Library of the Year award; and
- Valence House Museum voted one of the 50 best free things to do in London.

In conclusion the Leader paid tribute and thanked staff across the range of Council services who helped and supported the more vulnerable members of the community affected by the floods on 23 June 2016, as well as putting in place measures to allow polling to take place relatively incident free.

17. Development Control Board Membership

The Director of Law and Governance introduced a report advising on a proposed change to the membership of the Development Control Board to reflect the recent change in Cabinet portfolios and the consequential changes required to the Council Constitution.

Having considered the proposal the Assembly **resolved** to:

- (i) Agree to increase the voting membership of the Development Control Board

to 19 members, two of whom shall be ex-officio voting members by virtue of their portfolio responsibilities, namely the Cabinet Members for Economic and Social Development and for Finance, Growth and Investment; and

- (ii) Note that the Monitoring Officer shall make the necessary amendments to the Articles of the Development Control Board (Chapter 9, Part 2 of the Council Constitution).

18. Appointments

The Assembly **resolved** to appoint Councillor L. Smith to the Development Control Board to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Councillor White from the Board.

19. Treasury Management Annual Report 2015/16

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Investment introduced the Treasury Management Annual Report 2015/16 which set out the Council's outturn position in respect of its treasury management activities during the year.

The Cabinet Member referred to the to the Council's borrowing strategy and in particular the agreed £150m loan from the European Investment Bank (EIB) secured at a considerably lower rate of interest than that of even the Public Loans and Works Board (PWLB). He reminded the Assembly that the Council had already drawn down £89m of the loan as part of the Gascoigne redevelopment. The remaining £61m would continue to be available to the Council and would be released once suitable regeneration projects had been identified.

With regard to borrowing, the Council was taking advantage of very low interest rates available at the present time, for which there were plans to develop/invest in up to 21 sites in the Borough.

The Cabinet Member outlined the investment decisions taken by the Council during the year which showed that rates of return for the Council had consistently outperformed both London and national averages helping to protect the Council during times of austerity.

Furthermore, the Council had a clear strategic plan in place including paying down 'old' debt taken out at significantly higher rates of interest in the past.

The Assembly **resolved** to:

- (i) Note the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2015/16;
- (ii) Note that the Council complied with all 2015/16 treasury management indicators;
- (iii) Approve the actual Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2015/16;
- (iv) Approve the amendments to the counterparty limits as set out in section 4.4 of the report;

- (v) Note that the Council borrowed £50m from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) in June 2016 to fund capital expenditure;
- (vi) Agree to maintain the delegated authority to the Strategic Director for Finance and Investment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Investments, to continue to proportionally amend the counterparty lending limits agreed within the Treasury Management Strategy Statement to take into account the additional cash holdings resulting from borrowing from the European Investment Bank and the PWLB;
- (vii) Agree to borrow the remaining £61m from the European Investment Bank as soon as suitable regeneration projects are identified;
- (viii) Delegate authority to the Strategic Director Finance & Investment, in consultation with the Director of Law & Governance, and the Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Investment, to negotiate terms with the EIB; and
- (ix) Authorise the Director of Law and Governance, or an authorised delegate on her behalf, to execute all of the legal agreements, contracts and other documents on behalf of the Council.

20. Report of a Decision of the Standards (Hearing) Sub-Committee

The Assembly noted the outcome of the Standards (Hearing) Sub-Committee held on 25 February 2016.

21. Appointment of Parent Governor (Primary) Co-optee to the Children's Services Select Committee

The Director of Law and Governance introduced a report regarding the appointment of a Parent Governor (Primary) Co-optee to the Children's Services Select Committee.

The Assembly **resolved** to appoint Ellen Grant to the position of Parent Governor (Primary) Co-optee to the Children's Services Select Committee.

22. Motions

None had been received.

23. Questions With Notice

Question 1

From Councillor Choudhury

Can the Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Investment outline when the Council expects the first applications from residents for the new 'Right to Invest' housing scheme to be approved?

Response

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth & Investment explained that the 'Right to Invest' tenant shared ownership scheme had been launched following the approval of the Cabinet on 28 June 2016. The publicity promoting the scheme which followed the launch had led to a considerable amount of interest from which it was expected applications would follow.

Question 2

From Councillor Kangethe

Can the Leader provide a progress update on the proposed 'Youth Zone' project in Parsloes Park?

Response

The Leader advised that having attended a meeting at The Vibe it was clear that young people were getting really excited about the project which they had closely been involved with, having named it and discussed its development with the architect.

The Cabinet Member for Community Leadership and Engagement had recently participated in the interviews to appoint the design team. The expectation was that a planning application would be submitted in October 2017, with work starting on site in March 2018 and an anticipated completion of June 2018.

Supplementary question

Councillor Kangethe enquired as to whether consultation had taken place with young people living near the park?

The Leader explained that the project had formed the biggest single consultation and engagement exercise relating to the development of the park with groups and individuals from across the Borough as well as the Parsloes area. Feedback from the One Community Show held in the park last summer also contributed to the consultation process.

Question 3

From Councillor Chand

Can the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration outline the Council's response to the two week trial at Queen's Hospital that will see patients who require non-emergency care being referred to their GP or pharmacist?

Response

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health explained that the Council had worked hard to build a relationship with local health care providers and

therefore given the scale of the Council's ambition to transform local health and social care services together, it was disappointing to receive details of the two week pilot. It was felt the pilot would do little to fix the problems around Accident and Emergency access and GP's were already under enormous pressure.

Supplementary question

In response to comments from Councillor Chand the Cabinet Member for Social Care & Health Integration agreed that the Council would keep up the pressure on Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals (BHRUT) to make sure that the pilot at Queens Hospital did not become a permanent arrangement.

Question 4

From Councillor Haroon

This week marks the 21st anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which saw over 8,000 Muslim men and boys killed by Serbian nationalist forces. Can the Cabinet Member for Community Leadership and Engagement confirm what efforts are being made by the Council to mark this anniversary?

Response

Councillor Ashraf stated that the massacre at Srebrenica was the worst that had occurred in Europe since the Second World War and as one of the darkest chapters in history it was essential that the atrocity was remembered.

Monday 11 July 2016 was Srebrenica Memorial Day and marked the 21st anniversary of the genocide. The Council hosted an event in the Town Square on that afternoon which included the raising of a flag, a two minutes silence and readings from members of the Faith Forum.

Supplementary question

Councillor Haroon enquired as to whether the Borough's Bosnian community was invited to the event to show solidarity.

Councillor Ashraf confirmed that they had been invited.

Question 5

From Councillor Miah

Can the Cabinet Member for Community Leadership and Engagement provide information on how many people had attended the Council's "Summer of Festivals 2016" events so far?

Response

The Cabinet Member for Community Leadership and Engagement advised that despite a wet and muddy start to the Summer of Festivals Programme the public had turned out in large numbers to enjoy the events so far.

It was estimated that 8,000 people had attended the Barking Folk Festival in June, with a further 5,000 people attending the DagFest in the Dagenham Village and approximately 4,000 people enjoyed the Country Fair in Eastbrookend Country Park.

The production of 'The merchant of Venice' which took place throughout last week in Barking Town Centre, played to full houses and received a 4 star review in The Times newspaper.

Supplementary question

In response to a question regarding the overall costs of hosting the events, the Cabinet Member for Community Leadership and Engagement agreed to provide a written response to Councillor Miah.

Question 6

From Councillor Freeborn

Can the Cabinet Member for Equalities and Cohesion detail what efforts were made by the Council to celebrate Pride Week 2016?

Response

Councillor Bright stated that supporting the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer or Questioning and Intersex (LGBTQI) community was a priority for her portfolio and she was proud to have raised the Pride colours outside Barking Town Hall in the presence of representatives from the Police and voluntary and community sector. The colours were also flown at Dagenham Civic Centre ahead of the main Pride weekend and to demonstrate the Council's commitment to this section of the local community, "Flipside", the LGBTQI group for young people would this year be holding the Borough Colours. The Council would also be working with the LGBTQI community to develop a greater presence within the London Pride festival at an appropriate time.

Question 7

From Councillor Ahammad

Can the Leader explain what impact the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union may have on the borough and any Council projects that rely on European funding?

Response

The Leader explained that the impact was potentially very broad. The

Council received funding from the European Union towards the work of the Employment and Skills team, which was an essential service as it:

- Tackled one of the major challenges highlighted by the independent Growth Commission;
- Assisted residents who were struggling with the Central Government policies of welfare reform; and
- Provided one of the central blocks to the proposed Community Solutions services.

Whilst the Council has already secured £89m from the European Investment Bank towards the regeneration of the borough, it needed to ensure that the remaining £61m borrowing facility remained available. The uncertainty in the UK economy had the potential to push down interest rates and this would make it harder to achieve the investment income in the Council's budget. It may, however, provide the Council with opportunities to borrow at lower rates as the Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Investment has indicated earlier in the evening.

Supplementary question.

Councillor Ahammad asked if the Leader had a message to the 62% of residents who voted to leave in the recent EU Referendum.

The Leader corrected the statement insofar as 62% was the overall turnout. He advised that the vote to leave the EU would be felt hardest on those most vulnerable members of the community and consequently this Council would do its utmost to protect its residents no matter how they voted.

24. Non- Attendance of Councillor Liam Smith at Designated Meetings

(The Chair agreed that this item could be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency under the provisions of Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972.)

The Assembly received a report from the Chief Executive regarding the consideration of dispensation under the provisions of Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 in respect of Councillor Liam Smith's non-attendance at designated Council meetings since 24 February 2016.

The Leader advised that he was aware of personal reasons that had prevented Councillor Smith's attendance at meetings and proposed that the period within which Councillor Smith must attend a qualifying meeting be extended by one month to 25 September 2016.

The Assembly **resolved** to grant a one-month dispensation for personal reasons to Councillor Liam Smith, in accordance with the provisions of Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, who shall be required to attend a qualifying meeting before 25 September 2016 or otherwise cease to be a Member of the Council.