

ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 7 June 2006
(7:00 - 7:56 pm)

PRESENT

Councillor W F L Barns (Deputy Chair in the Chair)

Councillor A Agrawal	Councillor J L Alexander
Councillor R W Bailey	Councillor Mrs S J Baillie
Councillor R J Barnbrook	Councillor G J Bramley
Councillor R J Buckley	Councillor Ms E Carpenter
Councillor S Carroll	Councillor H J Collins
Councillor N Connelly	Councillor J R Denyer
Councillor R W Doncaster	Councillor C J Fairbrass
Councillor N S S Gill	Councillor 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 A Obasohan	Councillor B Poulton
Councillor Mrs L A Reason	Councillor Mrs V M 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	Councillor Mrs M M West
Councillor J R White	

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor J Davis	Councillor Miss C L Doncaster
Councillor Mrs S A Doncaster	Councillor M A R Fani
Councillor Miss T A Lansdown	Councillor Mrs J E Rawlinson
Councillor Miss N E Smith	

16. Minutes (17 May 2006)

Agreed, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Mrs Baillie on the list of councillors present.

17. Petition for changes to the Experimental Traffic Management System in the Cavendish Gardens Area

Received a report regarding a petition for changes to the experimental traffic management system in the Cavendish Gardens area, Barking.

Agreed, in order to address the concerns raised by petitioners whilst maintaining a traffic management scheme to reduce the impact of traffic flow on the Leftley Estate, to:

1. modify the current experimental scheme by changing the following one-way roads to two-way traffic:
 - Woodbridge Road between Oulton Crescent and Brockdish Avenue
 - Stratton Drive between Oulton Crescent and Brockdish Avenue
2. the preparation of Traffic Management Orders to make the following roads one-way:
 - Cavendish Gardens between Beccles Drive and Stratton Drive towards Stratton Drive
 - Service Road behind Longbridge Road shops adjacent to residential flats towards Stratton Drive; and
3. the measures on site being modified in accordance with the decisions above.

18. Local Issue - Waste Management Communication Strategy 2005 - 2020

David Woods, Corporate Director of Customer Services, gave a presentation on the Waste Management Communication Strategy which builds on the work already done, ensuring a more co-ordinated and long-term approach to communication, consultation and staff and community empowerment.

19. Appointments

Appointments to Political Structure Meetings

- Audit Committee – Councillors S Carroll (Chair), G Bramley, J Denyer, C Fairbrass and Mrs P Twomey
- Development Control Board (Panel B) – Councillor Mrs L Reason
- Personnel Board – Councillor Mrs L Reason
- Scrutiny Management Board – Councillor Mrs M West

Appointments to Outside Bodies

- Association of London Government:
 - Culture and Tourism Forum – Councillor W Northover as the deputy representative
 - Health and Social Care Forum – Councillor Mrs L Reason as the deputy representative
 - Housing Forum – Councillor J McDermott as the deputy representative
 - Local Government Employers Forum – Councillor Mrs Twomey
- East London Waste Authority – Councillor Mrs Twomey
- East London Waste Authority Integrated Waste Management Service Contract Liaison Committee – Councillor Mrs Twomey
- Employee Joint Consultative Committee – remove Councillor Mrs D Hunt
- Employee Joint Safety Committee – replace Councillor N Gill with Councillor H Collins
- Pension Fund Panel – Councillors G Bramley, Ms E Carpenter, S Carroll and S Gill
- Thames Accord Partnership Board – Councillor Denyer

20. Report of the Executive

Agreed, the recommendations in the report and the necessary changes to the Council Constitution.

21. General Question Time

Councillor Rustem asked why the Community Forums had been suspended?

Councillor Fairbrass stated that Community Forums have been suspended until a report has been considered by the Executive. This is a similar situation as the Citizen's Panel which was suspended in order to carry out a review of its effectiveness; we are always reviewing Council processes.

People should not wait for their Community Forum to raise a complaint, they should get in touch with their councillor; most councillors have published their telephone number and given their address.

Councillor Mrs Knight asked how much money is set aside for projects specifically related to citizenship.

Councillor Fairbrass replied none! Citizenship Ceremonies have been self funding since day one and in fact we expect to make about £50,000 profit this year. All expenses are met by the applicants.

Councillor Bailey asked why is the Home Office expecting 600 people to take up citizenship per year in Barking and Dagenham yet last year alone 1,611 certificates were presented to adults? Why are children not included in these figures?

Councillor Fairbrass responded that the original figure had come from the Home Office in 2004. Applying for citizenship was not new, only the citizenship ceremony was and the Council was carrying out the law. Families are welcomed to attend so that their children are involved, although the ceremony would mean nothing to many children aged four or five.

Councillor Fairbrass suggested that such questions should be addressed to the Home Secretary or to Councillor Bailey's local MP, who, so he has been told, has been quite helpful to Councillor Bailey in the recent past.

Councillor Barnbrook asked why have council properties boarded up not appeared on the bidding system, yet are being used to house people?

Councillor L Smith replied that he welcomed questions from Councillor Barnbrook in respect of housing policy and was pleased that he acknowledged that people were being housed. Councillor Smith went on to explain that special schemes are in place where people need help in securing a property. Management transfers take place which, for example, are backed up by the Police. The aim is to re-house people in like for like accommodation. With the ongoing regeneration of the Borough, the Council is pulling down old tower blocks built in the 1950s and so decanting needs to take place smoothly in order to reduce stress. Properties that are adapted with, for example, stair lifts are kept back for other people who may need such facilities.

Councillor Smith stated that the Labour Group does not waste tax payers' money and that he felt it was appropriate to hold back up to 1% of vacant homes to meet these needs.

Councillor Buckley withdrew his question regarding refuse bags and wheelie bins as this had been answered during the presentation of the Waste Management Communication Strategy.

Councillor R Doncaster asked when was the last time a flyer was sent to the Borough residents regarding recycling of domestic refuse collection.

Councillor McKenzie replied that the question had been answered in the presentation of the Waste Management Communication Strategy.

Councillor Denyer asked would the Lead Member for Resources agree with him that people who are elected to public office should set an example when it comes to paying their council tax and council rents.

Councillor Bramley replied that he did agree with Councillor Denyer that people in public office should set a good example. With regards to council tax and council rents the Council takes two approaches. Where there are genuine hard times, for example someone who is ill and needs treatment, then the Council can advise how to apply for the relevant benefits to help with payment. There is a minority, however, who think that council tax is an option; the Council deals harshly with these people who are taken to court and made to pay up.

The Council has a duty to collect council tax and people have a duty to pay for the services they receive. It is the Labour Group's policy of keeping rents low; this Council has the second lowest rents in London and yet some still choose not to pay. If the Council doesn't collect council tax or rents this means that those who do have to make up the shortfall, if not then services, as referred to by Councillor Smith, will fall by the way side.

Councillor Bramley went on to say that Councillor Buckley is the first councillor in over 25 years to be taken to court for non payment of council tax and noted that Councillor Miss C Doncaster owed the Council £2,000. Councillor Bramley had noted the British National Party's 'Africans for Essex' campaign but asked had they informed voters that they owed the Council money. The British National Party make claims of a witch hunt; at least the so called witches in the 1700's were innocent.

Councillor Bramley felt that it was a disgrace that people in public life don't pay and asked that the British National Party gets its house in order and pays up. If any of the councillors concerned had any ounce of integrity they should resign. It is disgraceful.

22. Report of the Corporate Director of Resources - Futures 2006/2007 - Barking and Dagenham's Corporate Plan

Received a report presenting for approval the narrative of 'Futures 2006/2007 – Barking and Dagenham's Corporate Plan' which is a statutory document setting out how the Council has performed and its priorities for the future.

Agreed, in order to meet the statutory publication deadline, to:

1. approve the Plan for publication; and
2. allow other small changes or amendments that are required in order to ensure the plan complies with statutory requirements.