

## ASSEMBLY

3 March 2021

<b>Title:</b> Death of Former Councillor George Shaw, Freeman of the Borough	
<b>Report of the Acting Chief Executive</b>	
<b>Open Report</b>	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Wards Affected:</b> None	<b>Key Decision:</b> No
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<b>Summary</b>	
<p>The Assembly is asked to note with deep regret that former Councillor and Freeman of the Borough, George Henry Shaw, passed away on Sunday 14 February at the age of 94.</p> <p>Born in Poplar in the east end of London during the 1926 General Strike, George Shaw moved to Barking aged 4 years. He was educated at Roding and Erkenwald Schools and spent 35 years of his working life with a multi-national manufacturer of electric power storage systems.</p> <p>George was an active Trade Unionist all his working life and was a founder member and Chairman for 21 years of the Association of Clerical Technical and Supervisory Staffs – 1/1141 Branch (TGWU). He was also Chairman of the Joint Staffs Negotiating Group covering Dagenham, Manchester and Cannock for eight years before becoming a Member of the TGWU Retired Workers' branch.</p> <p>George was an active Member of the Labour Party for most of his adult life. He held the positions of Ward Chairman, Membership Secretary and Election Campaign Organiser at various points and was a Member of the Barking Labour Party Executive and General Management Committee, as well as a Member of the London East European Constituency Management Committee and the Labour Group Policy Committee.</p> <p>George was first elected to the Council in a by-election for Gascoigne ward in December 1971. At the time, Gascoigne ward straddled the A13 taking in the Thames View Estate, where George and his family lived. He was elected to represent the newly created Thames ward in 1978, a position he held until he stood down from the Council in May 2002. George served on numerous committees, sub-committees, partnership boards and other outside bodies throughout his 31 years on the Council but is best remembered for his role as Chairman of the Council's Housing Committee, becoming affectionately known across the Council and by many residents as "Mr Housing". George had served as Vice-Chairman of the Housing Committee, under the stewardship of his good friend and colleague Councillor John Lawrence, for several years before they swapped roles in 1986 and George became Chairman. George continued in that role until 2000 when the Council moved to its new Executive style of leadership at which point George was</p>	

appointed as the Executive Member for Housing, a position he held until he retired from the Council in 2002.

I believe that it is befitting to share a tribute that I received from Mr Bill Jennings on learning of George's passing. Mr Jennings worked in the Council's Housing Department for almost 40 years before retiring as Group Manager for Housing in 2008.

"It was my good fortune to have known George Shaw since the 1970's.

George was extremely passionate about Barking and Dagenham and particularly about housing within the borough.

In the late 1980's two specific housing initiatives were led by George. The first was the setting up of a group of Councillors and senior officers to look at a specific housing problem, which became known as the 'Targeting of Estates' group. Its brief was to look into the estates in the borough that required major improvements and to develop initiatives, supported by considerable investment, to improve the area and the lives of its residents. The first area chosen was the Castle Green estate. The area consisted of three tower blocks and the various problems experienced there were deemed to be the worst in the borough. Because of the problems, numerous flats were unlet and demand for housing in that area was almost nil. George led the team in setting up major consultation exercises with the local residents to establish what the problems were and also what the 'wish list' was. The main issue was that the residents did not feel safe so the group, led by George, looked at the possibility of installing a Concierge system. A system was designed in-house for a central Concierge Unit to be located between the three tower blocks from where there would be glazed walkways linking the Unit to the blocks. A Concierge Unit was to be manned 24/7 by newly appointed Concierge staff and a large CCTV system was to be installed both inside and outside the blocks. George oversaw the implementation of all of these measures, the blocks were repainted with red and grey stripes and the new name 'Goresbrook Village' was chosen by the residents, who formed a new Residents' Association. Very quickly, all properties at Goresbrook Village were let and there was actually a waiting list. The unique scheme was revolutionary and was copied by many other Local Authorities in later years. This extended the life of these three tower blocks by 20-plus years.

At around the same time, George became very concerned at the shortage of good quality Part 2 Sheltered Units in the Borough, as we had the largest elderly population in London. Once again George led the charge to address this imbalance. He and the Housing Committee negotiated 'barter deals' with large building contractors, which resulted in two state-of-the-art Sheltered Housing complexes being built, one named Catherine Godfrey House in Goresbrook Road and the other Kidd House in St. Georges Road. These were the forerunners of future Sheltered Units in the borough.

George's passing is a very sad moment for the borough."

George was elected by his peers to serve as Borough Mayor for the 1985/86 municipal year and proudly accepted the Freedom of the Borough in 1992.

George derived great pleasure from DIY activity around the family home and was heavily involved in the management of the City Farm on the Thames View Estate. He is also fondly remembered for his continued support to the Barking Labour Party even after he retired as a councillor, always an early riser on election days driving around the Thames View Estate encouraging local residents to vote via the loud speaker on the top of his Ford Cortina and giving many of the elderly residents a lift to and from the polling station.

George leaves behind his wife, Olive, two children, Malcolm and Pam, and two grandchildren.

**Recommendation(s)**

The Assembly is asked to mark the passing of George Shaw with a minute's silence in his memory.