

# MINUTES OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 26 July 2023  
(7:00 - 7:35 pm)

## PRESENT

Cllr Irma Freeborn (Chair)  
Cllr Tony Ramsay (Deputy Chair)

Cllr Andrew Achilleos	Cllr Dorothy Akwaboah	Cllr Princess Bright
Cllr Sade Bright	Cllr Faruk Choudhury	Cllr Muhib Chowdhury
Cllr Alison Cormack	Cllr John Dulwich	Cllr Edna Fergus
Cllr Cameron Geddes	Cllr Rocky Gill	Cllr Kashif Haroon
Cllr Manzoor Hussain	Cllr Jane Jones	Cllr Elizabeth Kangethe
Cllr Mohammed Khan	Cllr Giasuddin Miah	Cllr Margaret Mullane
Cllr Fatuma Nalule	Cllr Adegboyega Oluwole	Cllr Simon Perry
Cllr Michel Pongo	Cllr Moin Quadri	Cllr Regina Rahman
Cllr Hardial Singh Rai	Cllr Chris Rice	Cllr Lynda Rice
Cllr Ingrid Robinson	Cllr Paul Robinson	Cllr Muhammad Saleem
Cllr Muazzam Sandhu	Cllr Jack Shaw	Cllr Harriet Spoor
Cllr Dominic Twomey	Cllr Phil Waker	Cllr Maureen Worby

## APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Saima Ashraf	Cllr Josie Channer	Cllr Syed Ghani
Cllr Donna Lumsden	Cllr Glenda Paddle	Cllr Darren Rodwell
Cllr Emily Rodwell	Cllr Faraaz Shaikat	Cllr Lee Waker
Cllr Mukhtar Yusuf	Cllr Sabbir Zamee	

### 16. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

### 17. Minutes (17 May 2023)

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2023 were confirmed as correct.

### 18. Minutes of Sub-Committees

The Assembly received and noted the minutes of the JNC Appointments, Salaries and Structures Panel held on 22 May 2023.

### 19. Leader's Statement

The Deputy Leader, Councillor Twomey, presented the Leader's Statement on behalf of the Leader. Amongst the issues raised were:

**Climate Emergency:** Temperatures in much of Europe and America had risen to over 50 degrees which had resulted in devastating wildfires across those areas. It

had been a year since the Borough experienced its own fire at the Leys, which resulted in 14 families losing their homes, and the Deputy Leader stressed the need for global warming and air quality issues to be taken more seriously.

**TFL Update:** A new EL4 bus route had been agreed, which would connect Thames View to Romford. A new cycle route, known as causeway 42, had also been announced that would better connect the Barking Riverside area to Barking Town Centre. Other proposals include Barking Town Centre being part in the Mayor of London's new super loop initiative, which would enhance connections with Walthamstow and North Woolwich Ferry.

**C2C Update:** C2C had now ended its consultation regarding the closure of the ticket offices at both Barking and Dagenham Dock Stations. The Deputy Leader expressed the Council's disappointment at the closures and the impact that would have on passenger safety due to a lack of station staff, especially at Dagenham Dock, and strongly urged C2C to reconsider the plans.

**Borough Celebrations:** The Deputy Leader advised on the celebrations that took place last month to mark 75 years since HMS Windrush arrived at Tilbury Docks from the Caribbean and the events to mark South Asian heritage month. The Deputy Leader also reminded colleagues that the eighth Barking Folk Festival would commence on 5th August.

**Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy:** The Council had raised over £1m which had supported 120 community projects.

**Lord Kerslake:** The Deputy Leader reflected on the sad passing of Lord Bob Kerslake. Lord Kerslake had given eminent service to the local and national government sectors for over 40 years and was knighted for his services to local government in 2005 before receiving a crossbench peerage in 2015. Lord Kerslake had also been a prominent figure in Barking and Dagenham in recent years, having been appointed as Chair of the Council's regeneration and development company, Be First, on its inception in 2017 and, more recently, Chair of the Barking and Dagenham Trading Partnership.

## **20. Appointments**

Assembly **agreed** to appoint Councillor Princess Bright to the Member Development Group.

## **21. Appointment of Statutory Chief Financial Officer**

The Chief Executive introduced a report on the proposed appointment of the Council's statutory Chief Financial Officer.

In accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Government Finance Act 1988, every local authority was required to appoint a suitably qualified officer to be responsible for the proper administration of its financial affairs. At Barking and Dagenham Council, that responsibility was currently designated to the post of Strategic Director, Finance and Investment.

At the JNC Appointments, Salaries and Structures Panel on 22 May 2023, it was

noted that the current postholder, Philip Gregory, had tendered his resignation with effect from 18 July 2023. By Minute 3(v) of that meeting, the Chief Executive was authorised to appoint an interim Strategic Director, Finance and Investment for a period of up to 12 months while arrangements to fill the post on a permanent basis were progressed.

Under that authority, Jo Moore was recently appointed to the role of Interim Strategic Director, Finance and Investment. In accordance with the Council's Constitution, the appointment of the statutory Chief Financial Officer (in addition to the other statutory posts of Head of Paid Service and Monitoring Officer) was the responsibility of the Assembly.

The Assembly **resolved** to:

- (i) Note the appointment of Jo Moore as the Council's Interim Strategic Director, Finance and Investment with effect from 20 July 2023; and
- (ii) Approve the appointment of Jo Moore as the Council's statutory Chief Financial Officer.

## **22. The Localism Act 2011- Appointment of Independent Persons**

The Monitoring Officer presented a report on the appointment of Independent Persons in accordance with section 28 of the Localism Act 2011.

The Monitoring Officer advised that a review of the Council's current arrangements had identified a need to increase the number of independent persons from the current number of three, to align with inclusivity and diversity requirements. The Audit and Standards Committee had considered the issue on 7 February 2023 (Minute 27) and noted that there had been only two occasions in the past six years when the involvement of an Independent Person had been required. In light of that, the Committee supported the proposal to retain the three existing Independent Persons and to make an additional appointment to enhance the gender diversity amongst the Independent Persons.

The Assembly **resolved** to:

- (i) Agree the continuation of the appointment of all the Council's current Independent Persons, namely Michael Carpenter; Dr. Gurpreet Singh Bhatia and Pastor Thomas Adeyemi Aderounmu, until the next Assembly meeting following the Annual Assembly in 2025, in accordance with section 28 of the Localism Act 2011; and
- (ii) Note that a further Independent Person appointment recommendation was pending.

## **23. Treasury Management Annual Report 2022/23**

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Core Services introduced the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2022/23 which set out the key areas of performance, borrowing levels and other treasury management issues.

Key highlights within the report relating to the 2022/23 activities and performance included:

- Total Council borrowing (excluding internal HRA borrowing) was £1,547.7m;
- The Council did not breach its 2022/23 Operational Boundary limit of £1,600m or its Authorised Borrowing Limit of £1,700m, and complied with all other set treasury and prudential limits;
- Total treasury investments held was £54.0m (2021/22: £154.9m);
- Net General Fund interest income was a surplus of £6.5m compared to a budget of -£5.2m, an outperformance of £11.7m;
- £7.0m of the outperformance from interest income was transferred to the Investment Reserve, with the remaining balance used to cover shortfalls in the Investment and Acquisition Strategy (IAS);
- Investment income from the Council's IAS totalled £1.5m (2021/22: £4.3m) compared to a budget of £6.1m, an underperformance of £4.6m (covered by the outperformance in interest);
- The Council's average return on its commercial and property loans was 3.65% (4.42% for 2021/22);
- Interest payable totalled £40.9m (2021/22: £37.4m), consisting of £13.5m for PFI / Finance leases, £11.0m for the HRA and £16.4m for the General Fund;
- The Council borrowed £30m of medium-term General Fund borrowing at an average rate of 0.77% and an average duration of 2.4 years;
- The total long-term General Fund borrowing was £729.9m, comprising of market loans, Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), Local Authority, European Investment Bank and other loans;
- The value of short-term borrowing totalled £165.3m;
- HRA borrowing totalled £295.9m of long-term debt and £30.6m of internal borrowing;
- A loan impairment of £2.4m was made in 2021/22 against the loan to Barking and Dagenham Trading Partnership (BDTP) relating to the purchase of London East UK (LEUK), as outlined in paragraph 7.9 of the report; and
- A further impairment of £7.74m was required for 2022/23 relating to additional capitalised interest on the LEUK loan and two working capital loans to BDTP, as outlined in paragraph 7.10 of the report.

The Cabinet Member also referred to the expected increase of up to 0.5%, to 5%, in the Bank of England base rate, which was likely to result in a shift in the Council's borrowing strategy towards short-term borrowing for the time being. He also alluded to a range of measures being implemented to ensure that income from new developments and other investments was realised without unnecessary delays.

The Assembly **resolved** to:

- (i) Note the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2022/23;
- (ii) Note that the Council complied with all 2022/23 treasury management indicators;
- (iii) Approve the actual Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2022/23, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report; and

(iv) Note that the Council borrowed £140.0m from the PWLB in 2022/23.

**24. Motions**

There were no motions.

**25. Questions With Notice**

There were no Questions with Notice.

**26. Alison Stuart, Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer**

The Chair placed on record the Council's appreciation to Alison Stuart, Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer, who was attending her last meeting of the Assembly before taking up a similar role at another London local authority.

Several Members gave their own personal tributes to Ms Stuart, thanking her for her advice, dedication and support throughout her time at the Council and all joined in a round of applause.