

## CABINET

21 October 2014

<b>Title:</b> Renaming of Northern Relief Road	
<b>Report of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration</b>	
<b>Open Report:</b>	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Wards Affected:</b> Abbey	<b>Key Decision:</b> Yes
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<b>Accountable Divisional Director:</b> Jeremy Grint, Divisional Director of Regeneration	
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Steve Cox ,Director of Growth	
<b>Summary</b> <p>A number of options have been considered for renaming the Northern Relief Road so it has a more fitting and less perfunctory name with local meaning. Options explored in the options appraisal include Equinox Way, Northbury Way and Berica Way. However it is recommended that the Barking Northern Relief Road is renamed Gurdwara Way. This is a more fitting name for the road on which the Barking Gurdwara Singh Sabha is a prominent and well known local landmark mid way along its length. It also recognises the contribution the Sikh Community has made to the local area and to the country in both world wars.</p> <p>If agreed the Council needs to make an order to change the street name. This involves, at least one month before making the order, posting a notice of the order at either end of the Northern Relief Road with a deadline for objections of 21 days. Provided there are no objections the Order can be confirmed and major statutory authorities and the Land Registry notified of the change. Finally, following a change of name, new street signs would need to be installed.</p>	
<b>Recommendation(s)</b> <p>The Cabinet is recommended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(i) Approve the proposed renaming of the Northern Relief Road to Gurdwara Way; and</li><li>(ii) Authorise officers to carry out the necessary statutory procedures to confirm the change of name.</li></ul>	
<b>Reason(s)</b> <p>This proposal gives the Northern Relief Road a meaningful name referenced to a well known community landmark clearly visible from the bypass and recognising the contribution the Sikh community has made to the borough and to the country in both world wars. This proposal helps deliver the Council's vision, in particular by encouraging civic pride by helping to build pride, respect and cohesion across the borough and promoting a welcoming, safe and resilient community.</p>	

## **1. Introduction and Background**

- 1.1 On 29 September 1990 the new Barking Northern Relief Road was opened by the Mayor Councillor Fred Jones MBE. This enabled East Street, Station Parade and Ripple Road to be pedestrianised. The Northern Relief Road has retained this “temporary” and perfunctory name ever since.
- 1.2 There are no properties addressed from the Northern Relief Road however three buildings, the Barking Gurdwara, Northbury Primary School and Victoria Medical Centre enjoy vehicular access from it.
- 1.3 A number of options have been considered for renaming the Northern Relief Road so it has a more fitting and less perfunctory name with local meaning. Options explored in the options appraisal include Equinox Way, Northbury Way and Berica Way. However it is recommended that the Barking Northern Relief Road is renamed Gurdwara Way. This is a more fitting name for the road on which the Barking Gurdwara Singh Sabha is a prominent and well known local landmark mid way along its length. It also recognises the contribution the Sikh Community has made to the local area and to the country in both world wars. More detail is provided in the next section of this report and this is followed by an options appraisal which looks at the other names which were considered.

## **2. Proposal**

- 2.1 The Barking Gurdwara Singh Sabha was opened 18 April 1971 serving the Sikh Community which stretched from Aldgate East to Romford. Prior to this the Sikh Community used space in Ripple School on Suffolk Road, Barking. The Barking Gurdwara Singh Sabha is a distinctive building which is locally listed. It is situated on the corner of North Street and the Northern Relief Road. It was built in 1908 in the Queen Anne Style as a Friends Meeting House for the Quakers. The Gurdwara is open daily from 6am – 9pm and as well as serving the Sikh community from across North-East London also welcomes other communities including providing free food and distributing meals to the homeless. It hosts weddings and funerals along with regular prayer services, and holds fundraising events for local hospitals, hospices and the Red Cross.
- 2.2 As the Sikh community has grown so has the Gurdwara which has been extended incrementally over the last forty years. Most recently planning permission was granted for a further extension which will provide a grand and imposing frontage to the Northern Relief Road including a 23 metre tower topped with a dome which is a modern interpretation of the elaborate ornate traditional designs of the Punjab.
- 2.3 As with other minority groups representatives of the local Sikh community have provided leadership in challenging intolerance and improving community cohesion since the 1970’s through the Barking Community Relations Council and more recently the Barking and Dagenham Race Equality Council and the Mayoralty which has been held by Councillors Inder Singh Jamu, the late Councillor Nirmal Singh Gill and most recently Councillor Hardial Singh Rai.
- 2.4 2014 marks the 100 year anniversary of the First World War. In the initial stages of the First World War it was apparent that the Allies did not have enough forces to

cover all the areas of conflict from Africa, to Europe, to the Middle East. Thus soldiers were recruited from India, forming the largest voluntary force ever assembled. <sup>i</sup> Every sixth British soldier serving during the war would have been from the Indian subcontinent, making the British Indian Army as large as all the forces from the rest of the British Empire combined – including the forces of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. Although accounting for less than 2% of the population of British India at the time, Sikhs made up more than 20% of the British Indian Army at the outbreak of hostilities numbering around 35,000 of 161,000 troops in the Indian Army. By the end of the war around 130,000 Sikh volunteers has joined the British Armed Forces fighting alongside their British, Indian and Commonwealth counterparts in many battles including Ypres, Flanders, Somme, Gallipoli, East Africa and Palestine. <sup>ii</sup> The crucial role of Sikh's in the two world wars is epitomised by quotes from Sir Winston Churchill and British General Sir Frank Messervy

"British people are highly indebted and obliged to Sikhs for a long time. I know that within this century we needed their help twice [in two world wars] and they did help us very well. As a result of their timely help, we are today able to live with honour, dignity, and independence. In the war, they fought and died for us, wearing the turbans." **Sir Winston Churchill**

"In the last two world wars 83,005 turban wearing Sikh soldiers were killed and 109,045 were wounded. They all died or were wounded for the freedom of Britain and the world, and during shell fire, with no other protection but the turban, the symbol of their faith." **British General Sir Frank Messervy**

### **3. Options Appraisal**

- 3.1 The Council has in recent years worked hard to ensure that the names of new streets and buildings are associated with the history of the borough. Examples in Barking Town Centre include Elizabeth Fry House for the new apartment block next to the Gurdwara and Bobby Moore Way next to the Abbey Leisure Centre. Elizabeth Fry was a leading prison reformer and Quaker who would have frequently visited the Society of Friends Meeting House now the site of the Gurdwara. Elsewhere in the borough literally dozens of streets and buildings have been named after people who lost their lives serving Queen and Country, the regiments they served in and the battles they fought. It is therefore consistent with the Council's desire to give streets and buildings locally meaningful names to propose to rename the Northern Relief Road.
- 3.2 The Northern Relief Road was never officially named hence its perfunctory title. In terms of alternatives names the first option is do nothing. The existing road name has endured for 24 years and has served its purpose. Equally it is a very uninspiring name for an important local road. It is very rare to rename an existing road due to the inconvenience it can cause addressees. However the Northern Relief Road is unusual in having no properties addressed off it and therefore the process of changing its name subject to the agreement of the emergency services and Cabinet is relatively straightforward.
- 3.3 In terms of alternative names one needs to consider the other buildings which are prominent on the Northern Relief Road, these are limited to some undistinguished

office blocks off Wakering Road, the Barking Foyer, Equinox House and Northbury School. Equinox House and the Barking Foyer are both high rise buildings with distinctive cladding. Both are residential blocks addressed off Wakering Road and renaming the Northern Relief Road after either of them may cause some confusion. The slip road from the Northern Relief Road to the school has recently been named Northbury Close and so it is not possible to rename the Northern Relief Road as Northbury Way as the emergency services would object. Other options include Elizabeth Fry Way but this name has recently been used for the new apartment block next to the Gurdwara so again this may cause some confusion. The final option is Berica Way. The name "Barking" is from the latin Berecingum ("Berica's people"), an early Saxon settlement. Officers consider that this is a good alternative to Gurdwara Way but clearly does not have the advantage of being named after a prominent building on the road.

- 3.4 In summary the Northern Relief Road deserves a more fitting and less perfunctory name with local meaning. In this instance the renaming process is relatively straight forward and having considered a number of options the name Gurdwara Way is recommended. The Gurdwara is a prominent local landmark half way along the Northern Relief Road and it is also an opportunity to recognise the contribution the Sikh community has made to the borough and to the country in both World Wars.

#### **4. Consultation**

- 4.1 17 January 2012 Cabinet agreed that it should be responsible for all proposals to rename roads and buildings hence the need for this report (Minute 91 refers). Regulations require that two thirds of those premises on the affected street must agree to the change. However no properties are addressed off the Northern Relief Road so this does not apply in this case. The Council however still needs to make an order to change the street name. This involves, at least one month before making the order, posting a notice of the order at either end of the Northern Relief Road with a deadline for objections of 21 days. Provided there are no objections the Order can be confirmed and major statutory authorities and the Land Registry notified of the change. Finally, following a change of name, new street signs would need to be installed.
- 4.2 The emergency services must be consulted on any name change and this is managed by the Fire Brigade. Their guidance advises that renaming / renumbering existing streets and buildings is normally only considered when changes occur which give rise (or are likely to give rise) to problems for the occupiers, Post Office, Emergency Services, etc. Having originally objected to the name change when it was first proposed several years ago the Fire Brigade have more recently confirmed that they have now no objection to the proposal to rename the Northern Relief Road Gurdwara Way.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

Implications completed by: Carl Tomlinson, Group Finance Manager

- 5.1 In changing the name of the Northern Relief Road, the Authority is likely to incur costs in respect of making the order to change the street name, this includes the traffic management order, posting of notices, dealing with any subsequent enquiries, informing the appropriate statutory authorities, notifying the Land Registry

and providing new street signs. These costs are expected to be minimal and met from existing Regeneration and Economic Development budgets.

## **6. Legal Implications**

Implications completed by: Paul Feild Senior Governance Lawyer

- 6.1 The present powers which control the naming and numbering of roads in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and the Greater London area are derived from Part II of the London Buildings Act (Amendment) Act 1939.
- 6.2 The original Act referred only to the inner London area and was amended by Section 43(1) of the London Government Act 1963 to include the whole of Greater London. With the dissolution of the Greater London Council in 1985 the powers held by that Council, in respect of road naming and numbering, were devolved to the London boroughs by virtue of the Local Government Act 1985.
- 6.3 During its existence the Greater London Council applied policies to regulate the naming of roads and the numbering of buildings, and adopted Regulations, formulated by the London County Council in 1952, governing the display of numbers and names on buildings. These have subsequently been adopted by the Council.
- 6.4 The Council Constitution delegates the power to name council property and roads to the Cabinet - Section B - The Cabinet Article 4 - Pages B25- B26 and Scheme of Delegation Pages C15-C16.

## **7. Other Implications**

- 7.1 **Risk Management** – Cabinet agreed on 17 January 2012 that it should be responsible for all proposals to rename roads and buildings even in those cases where no consultation is necessary because there are no residents affected to ensure the risk of inappropriate naming of roads and buildings is minimised.
- 7.2 **Corporate Policy and Customer Impact** – This proposal gives the Northern Relief Road a meaningful name referenced to a well known community landmark clearly visible from the bypass and recognising the contribution the Sikh community has made to the borough and in both world wars. This proposal helps deliver the One Borough; one community, London's growth opportunity vision, in particular by encouraging civic pride by helping to build pride, respect and cohesion across the borough and promoting a welcoming, safe and resilient community. Since no properties are addressed from the Northern Relief Road no one will have to change their address as a result of this name change.

**Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:** None

**List of appendices:** None

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<sup>i</sup> The Sikhs in Britain – Peter Balance 2007

<sup>ii</sup> Empire. Faith and War – Brunei Galley 2014