

# MINUTES OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 3 March 2021  
(6:00 - 8:10 pm)

## PRESENT

Cllr Elizabeth Kangethe (Chair)  
Cllr Faruk Choudhury (Deputy Chair)

Cllr Andrew Achilleos	Cllr Dorothy Akwaboah	Cllr Sanchia Alasia
Cllr Saima Ashraf	Cllr Abdul Aziz	Cllr Toni Bankole
Cllr Simon Bremner	Cllr Princess Bright	Cllr Sade Bright
Cllr Laila M. Butt	Cllr Evelyn Carpenter	Cllr Peter Chand
Cllr Josie Channer	Cllr John Dulwich	Cllr Edna Fergus
Cllr Irma Freeborn	Cllr Cameron Geddes	Cllr Syed Ghani
Cllr Rocky Gill	Cllr Kashif Haroon	Cllr Amardeep Singh Jamu
Cllr Jane Jones	Cllr Eileen Keller	Cllr Mohammed Khan
Cllr Donna Lumsden	Cllr Olawale Martins	Cllr Mick McCarthy
Cllr Giasuddin Miah	Cllr Dave Miles	Cllr Margaret Mullane
Cllr Adegboyega Oluwole	Cllr Glenda Paddle	Cllr Simon Perry
Cllr Moin Quadri	Cllr Foyzur Rahman	Cllr Tony Ramsay
Cllr Chris Rice	Cllr Lynda Rice	Cllr Ingrid Robinson
Cllr Paul Robinson	Cllr Darren Rodwell	Cllr Muhammad Saleem
Cllr Faraaz Shaukat	Cllr Dominic Twomey	Cllr Lee Waker
Cllr Phil Waker	Cllr Maureen Worby	

## APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Emily Rodwell

### 53. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

### 54. Minutes (27 January 2021)

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2021 were confirmed as correct.

### 55. Death of Former Councillor George Shaw

The Assembly noted the sad passing on Sunday 14 February of former Councillor and Freeman of the Borough, George Henry Shaw.

Members paid tribute to Mr Shaw's significant contribution to the Borough throughout his life and especially during his 31 years as a councillor, where he was affectionately known as 'Mr Housing'.

The Assembly held one minute's applause in memory of Mr Shaw.

## 56. Leader's Statement

The Leader of the Council presented a verbal statement updating the Assembly on a range of matters since the last meeting:

**Budget Announcement:** The Leader expressed dismay that the Government's budget announcement earlier in the day had again only offered the minimum for working people and did nothing to resolve the under-funding of local government.

**Thames Freeport:** One of the key areas for Barking and Dagenham addressed in the budget announcement today was the go ahead for the Thames Freeport, which would be brought to fruition with joint working between the Council, Ford Motor Company and other partners.

**Culture, Arts and Creative Centre:** The Council was working with the Mayor of London to launch a £33m project to build a cultural, arts and creative centre in the Thames Ward area which had the potential to create 250 new jobs in the Borough.

**Domestic Abuse Commission:** The Council's Domestic Abuse Commission report was set to be formally launched at an online event on Wednesday 10 March at 5.45pm. The Commission, chaired by Polly Neate, CEO of Shelter, had put forward a range of proposals as to how domestic abuse could be tackled in the Borough by addressing the very cultural roots which lay at its heart. Most important of all, the Commission's report reflected the voices of survivors of domestic abuse and the various communities that make up the borough. The key message from the Commission was 'We believe you'.

The launch also coincided with the start of Women's Empowerment Month which had a wide programme of activities throughout March despite the lockdown.

**Becontree Forever – launched on centenary of Becontree Estate:** The Council had unveiled plans to mark the 100th anniversary of the Becontree Estate through the launch of 'Becontree Forever', which would include a programme of art, architecture and infrastructure.

**Investors in People - Gold Accreditation:** The Council had recently been officially recognised as a 'Gold Investor in People' organisation, which was a reflection of the commitment shown by the Council and its staff and even more rewarding given the significant additional pressures stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic over the last 12 months.

**COVID-19:** The Borough had recently passed the sad milestone of 500 COVID-related deaths and the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration gave an update to the Assembly on the latest issues.

On a more positive note, the Cabinet Member advised that the case rate was now at 85 per 100,000 and while that represented significant progress, it was stressed that residents should not be complacent and should continue to follow the national guidance regarding staying indoors as much as possible and wearing a mask and social distance when out and about.

The Parsloes Surgery, Hobart Road, Dagenham and Broadway Theatre in Barking Town Centre were the main vaccination centres in the Borough and the Council

had recently provided a bus to GP colleagues for pop-up clinics in various places across the borough.

## **57. Appointments**

There were no appointments.

## **58. Budget Framework 2021/22 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2024/25**

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services presented a report on the Council's Budget Framework 2021/22 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2024/25.

The Cabinet Member advised that the Council had incurred significant costs with regard to the response to COVID-19 and supporting residents through the pandemic and, whilst Government grant funding had been received to cover some of that expenditure, it would take the Council a number of years to recover from the full cost of COVID-19, especially on the back of 10 years of austerity cuts by the Government. However, he remained confident that despite all the difficulties, the Council would once again deliver a balanced budget and his message to residents was that the Council was on their side and would continue to do everything possible to protect the most vulnerable, build more truly affordable homes, create new jobs, provide more job opportunities for residents, particularly the young, and promote social responsibility and civic pride.

The Cabinet Member also alluded to the Government's budget announcement and expressed his disappointment that the additional £20 for those in receipt of Universal Credit was only announced today, when it could have been made much sooner to put residents' minds at rest. The Government's offer of a mere 1% pay rise to NHS staff was also an insult to all those who had gone above and beyond to keep people safe.

The Cabinet Member highlighted some of the key achievements over the last year, the Medium Term Financial Strategy forecasts and the Council's future investment plans which would help to fund essential Council services going forward. The Assembly noted, however, that against the backdrop of COVID-19 expenditure and in order to deliver the Council's vision and aspirations, it would be necessary to increase the level of Council Tax for 2021/22 by the maximum (unrestricted) levels of 1.99% for general services and 3% for social care. Those increases equated to an average annual rise of £64.11 for those living in a 'Band D' property. The Greater London Authority had also announced an increase of 9.5% to its precept, which covered support services such as the London Fire Brigade and the Metropolitan Police, meaning that the overall Council Tax charge for a Band D property would increase by a total of £95.70 to £1,712.57.

The Cabinet Member referred to the outcome of the public consultation on the draft budget proposals which was carried out in January, with residents being supportive of the Council's plans to continue to support its most vulnerable residents. There was also clear support for increased street cleansing, improvement to parks and leisure facilities, support for local businesses and efforts to tackle anti-social behaviour and grime crime in the Borough. He also

commended the scrutiny of the budget proposals by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other backbench Members who were present at the meeting on 26 January 2021.

During the debate, several Members commented on the Government's budget announcement which would impact hardest on ordinary, working people and expressed concerns that the real impact of health inequalities from COVID-19 would be seen across the population for many years to come.

In accordance with paragraph 10.3.2 of Part 2, Chapter 3 of the Council Constitution, the budget was put to a recorded vote and was **agreed** as follows:

For: Councillors Achilleos, Akwaboah, Alasia, Ashraf, Aziz, Bankole, Bremner, P Bright, S Bright, Butt, Carpenter, Chand, Channer, Choudhury, Dulwich, Fergus, Freeborn, Geddes, Ghani, Haroon, Janu, Jones, Kangethe, Keller, Khan, Lumsden, Martins, McCarthy, Miah, Miles, Mullane, Paddle, Perry, Quadri, Rahman, Ramsay, C Rice, L Rice, I Robinson, P Robinson, D Rodwell, Shaukat, Twomey, L Waker, P Waker and Worby (46)

Against: None (0)

Abstain: None (0)

(Note: Councillors Gill, Oluwole and Saleem were temporarily unavailable during the vote)

The Assembly **resolved** to:

- (i) Approve a base revenue budget for 2021-22 of £174.326m, as detailed in Appendix A to the report;
- (ii) Approve the adjusted Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) position for 2021-22 to 2024-25 allowing for other known pressures and risks at the current time, as detailed in Appendix B to the report, including the revised cost of borrowing to accommodate the capital costs associated with the implementation of the MTFS;
- (iii) Note the observations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 26 January 2021 in respect of the Cabinet's savings and growth proposals for 2021/22 and beyond and the outcome of the public consultation on the budget proposals, as set out in section 14 of the report;
- (iv) Approve the budget savings and growth proposals for 2021/22 and beyond, as detailed in section 8 and Appendix C to the report;
- (v) Delegate authority to the Chief Financial Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services, to finalise any contribution required to or from reserves in respect of the 2021-22 budget, pending confirmation of levies and further changes to Government grants prior to 1 April 2021;
- (vi) Approve the Statutory Budget Determination for 2021-22 as set out at

Appendix D to the report, which reflects an increase of 1.99% on the amount of Council Tax levied by the Council, an Adult Social Care precept of 3.00% and the final Council Tax proposed by the Greater London Assembly (9.5% increase), as detailed in Appendix E to the report;

- (vii) Note the update on the current projects, issues and risks in relation to Council services, as detailed in sections 8-10 of the report;
- (viii) Approve the Council's draft Capital Programme for 2021-22 totalling £399.105m, of which £30.845m are General Fund schemes, as detailed in Appendix F to the report;
- (ix) Approve the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy as set out in Appendix G to the report;
- (x) Note the update on Dedicated Schools Funding and approve the Local Funding Formula factors as set out in section 13 and Appendix H to the report; and
- (xi) Note the Chief Financial Officer's Statutory Finance Report as set out in section 15 of the report, which includes a recommended minimum level of reserves of £12m.

(Standing Order 7.1 (Chapter 3, Part 2 of the Council Constitution) was suspended at this juncture to enable the meeting to continue beyond the two-hour threshold).

## **59. Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2021/22**

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services presented the draft Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2021/22 which, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003, set out the Council's borrowing, investment and funding plans for the year ahead. The report was considered and endorsed by the Cabinet at its meeting on 15 February 2021.

The Cabinet Member highlighted that there was a significant expected increase in debt of £950m relating to the portfolio of housing schemes within Be First. Nearly 4,400 properties were being delivered for residents through Be First, which would also bring additional income to the Council through the Council Tax.

The Cabinet Member also referred to the potential to deliver another 9,000 new homes in the next decade, which would need significant funding. To that end, the Cabinet Member advised that he was aware that there was not limitless access to funds and, therefore, the Council were being prudent with investments.

The Assembly **resolved** to adopt the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2021/22 and, in doing so:

- (i) Noted the current treasury position for 2021/22 and prospects for interest rates, as referred to in sections 4 and 8 of the report;
- (ii) Approved the Annual Investment Strategy 2021/22 outlining the investments that the Council may use for the prudent management of its

investment balances, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;

- (iii) Approved the Council's Borrowing Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report;
- (iv) Noted that the Capital Strategy 2021/22, incorporating the Investment and Acquisitions Strategy, shall be updated and presented for approval in April 2021;
- (v) Approved the Capital Prudential and Treasury Indicators 2021/22 to 2023/24, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report;
- (vi) Approved the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement for 2021/22, representing the Council's policy on repayment of debt, as set out in Appendix 4 to the report;
- (vii) Approved the Operational Boundary Limit of £1.70bn and the Authorised Borrowing Limit of £1.80bn for 2021-22, representing the statutory limit determined by the Council pursuant to section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003, as referred to in Appendix 4 to the report; and
- (viii) Delegated authority to the Finance Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services, to proportionally amend the counterparty lending limits agreed within the Treasury Management Strategy Statement to consider the increase in short-term cash held from borrowing.

## 60. Pay Policy Statement 2021/22

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services presented the Council's draft Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22, in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011, which represented the expected position at 1 April 2021.

The Cabinet Member advised that the draft Statement had been considered and endorsed by the Cabinet at its meeting on 15 February 2021 and the Cabinet had also agreed to apply the uplift in the London Living Wage with effect from 9 November 2020, which increased the minimum hourly rate of pay for staff from £10.75 to £10.85 per hour.

The Assembly **resolved** to approve the Pay Policy Statement for the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham for 2021/22 as set out at Appendix A to the report, for publication on the Council's website with effect from April 2021. The Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services presented the Council's draft Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22, in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011, which represented the expected position at 1 April 2021.

The Cabinet Member advised that the draft Statement had been considered and endorsed by the Cabinet at its meeting on 15 February 2021 and the Cabinet had also agreed to apply the uplift in the London Living Wage with effect from 9 November 2020, which increased the minimum hourly rate of pay for staff from

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The Cabinet Member advised that the draft Statement had been considered and endorsed by the Cabinet at its meeting on 15 February 2021 and the Cabinet had also agreed to apply the uplift in the London Living Wage with effect from 9 November 2020, which increased the minimum hourly rate of pay for staff from £10.75 to £10.85 per hour.

The Assembly **resolved** to approve the Pay Policy Statement for the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham for 2021/22 as set out at Appendix A to the report, for publication on the Council's website with effect from April 2021.

#### **61. Motions**

There were no motions.

#### **62. Questions With Notice**

There were no questions with notice.