

# MINUTES OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 27 July 2022  
(7:01 - 7:54 pm)

## PRESENT

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

Cllr Andrew Achilleos	Cllr Dorothy Akwaboah	Cllr Saima Ashraf
Cllr Princess Bright	Cllr Sade Bright	Cllr Josie Channer
Cllr Nashitha Choudhury	Cllr Muhib Chowdhury	Cllr Alison Cormack
Cllr John Dulwich	Cllr Edna Fergus	Cllr Cameron Geddes
Cllr Syed Ghani	Cllr Rocky Gill	Cllr Kashif Haroon
Cllr Jane Jones	Cllr Elizabeth Kangethe	Cllr Mohammed Khan
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 Lynda Rice
Cllr Ingrid Robinson	Cllr Paul Robinson	Cllr Darren Rodwell
Cllr Muhammad Saleem	Cllr Muazzam Sandhu	Cllr Faraaz Shaukat
Cllr Jack Shaw	Cllr Dominic Twomey	Cllr Phil Waker
Cllr Maureen Worby	Cllr Mukhtar Yusuf	

## APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Faruk Choudhury	Cllr Manzoor Hussain	Cllr Donna Lumsden
Cllr Olawale Martins	Cllr Giasuddin Miah	Cllr Glenda Paddle
Cllr Chris Rice	Cllr Emily Rodwell	Cllr Lee Waker
Cllr Sabbir Zamee		

### 12. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

### 13. Minutes (25 May 2022)

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2022 were confirmed as correct, subject to an amendment to show that Councillor Shaw was present.

### 14. Minutes of Sub-Committees - To receive the minutes of the JNC Appointments, Salaries and Structures Panel held on 4 July 2022

The Assembly received and noted the minutes of the JNC Appointments, Salaries and Structures Panel held on 4 July 2022.

Arising from the recommendations, the Assembly **resolved** to approve the redesignation of the Director of Finance and Investment post to Strategic Director, Finance and Investment, at grade CO5 (£132,825) and the appointment of Philip Gregory to the permanent role.

## 15. Leader's Statement

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

- **Loss of Homes in Ballards Road area:** There had been a devastating fire in the Ballards Road area in the previous week which resulted in 14 homes being completely destroyed and many more families having to leave their homes. The Council had led the immediate response with the setting up a rest centre for those residents who were affected and had created a 'GoFundMe' page which had already received donations exceeding £35,000. The Leader took the opportunity to thank the emergency services for their swift response, Council staff and other volunteers who had provided support and to Steve Thompson, Managing Director of Dagenham and Redbridge Football Club and Nick Cavanagh of Londoneast UK for their contributions.

Village Ward Councillors also spoke on the incident and extended local residents' appreciation to the emergency services for their quick actions in evacuating residents, helping to save lives.

- **Heatwave:** During the unprecedented heatwave earlier in the month, Council employees continued to undertake their roles despite the heat, ensuring that residents received vital services such as refuse collection. Staff were supported throughout the heatwave to ensure their wellbeing.
- **Barking Riverside Station:** The new London Overground station in Barking Riverside was opened officially by the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, earlier in the week, providing essential access for residents and workers in the Borough.
- **Eastbrook Film Studios:** Work had begun on the Eastbrook Film Studios development which, once completed, would be the only site in London to have world leading media, data and film industries.
- **School Crossing Patrol Officers:** Schools would be offered financial support from the Council to appoint school crossing patrol officers from September. The financial support would be raised from the controlled parking zones, which would also fund highways works to the Borough.
- **Cost-of-Living Crisis:** The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community Leadership and Engagement was leading an initiative with the Councils equal partners in the voluntary sector to pool resources to offer people help ahead of the winter. The Leader and the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Core Services would be holding a 'Leaders Live' session on 11 August 2022 where they would be answering residents' questions on the cost-of-living crisis;
- **Platinum Jubilee Celebrations:** More than 20,000 people enjoyed a weekend of free entertainment in the borough to celebrate Her Majesty's 70-year reign. Cockney knees-up, Beacon lighting and fireworks were just some of the highlights from the weekend; and

- **Pride Event:** The Council once again took part in the London Pride celebrations and the Leader announced that the Council was planning to hold its first ever Pride Event in Barking.

## 16. Appointments

Further to Minute 8 (ii) (25 May 2022), the Labour Group Secretary announced that Councillor Quadri had been appointed to the position of Chair of the Pensions Committee.

## 17. Treasury Management Annual Report 2021/22

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Core Services introduced the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2021/22 which set out the key areas of performance during the year.

The Cabinet Member alluded to the major, world-wide factors impacting the UK economy and commended the Council's prudent approach to borrowing and vigorous assessment of investment opportunities which, coupled with the excellent work of the Treasury Management team, had resulted in the Council outperforming its targets and benchmarks in a number of areas during 2021/22. Key highlights within the report included:

- Total treasury investments held at 31 March 2022 was £154.9m (2020/21: £210.12m);
- Total cash held at 31 March 2022 was £1.7m (2020/21: £29.0m);
- Total loans and equity held at 31 March 2022 was £148.3m (2020/21: £139.2m);
- Net General Fund Interest for 2021/22 was £3.4m above the projected level, with £1.9m transferred to the Investment Reserve and £1.4m offset against an underperformance in the Council's Investment and Acquisition Strategy (IAS);
- The Council's average treasury interest return for 2021/22 was 1.39%, which was 1.27% higher than the average London Peer Group return of 0.21%;
- The Council's average return on its commercial and property loans was 4.42% for 2021/22 (2020/21: 4.46%);
- Interest payable for 2021/22 totalled £37.3m (2020/21: £31.8m);
- The Council made £140.0m of long-term General Fund borrowing in 2021/22 at an average rate of 1.41% and an average duration of 44.4 years;
- The total long-term General Fund borrowing at 31 March 2022 was £720.5m (2020/21: £600.4m);
- The value of short-term borrowing at 31 March 2022 was £63.0m (2020/21: £67.5m);
- Total Council borrowing at 31 March 2022 was £1.276bn (excluding internal HRA borrowing of £35.9m) and was within the 2021/22 Operational Boundary limit of £1.7bn and Authorised Borrowing Limit of £1.8bn; and
- The Council operated within and complied with all treasury limits and Prudential Indicators during 2021/22.

In response to questions, the Cabinet Member advised that borrowing was likely to continue; however, it would be taken on a case-by-case basis as to whether projects were viable or not. The Cabinet Member further advised that short-term

borrowing was in relation to ensuring the smooth running of the Council.

In response to further questions, the Cabinet Member advised that the Council was confident of reversing the under-achievement against the Investment and Acquisitions Strategy; however it was noted that the Council was relying more on commercial income to achieve that aim due to delays in residential projects as a consequence of increasing costs and the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Assembly **resolved** to:

- (i) Note the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2021/22;
- (ii) Note that the Council complied with all 2021/22 treasury management indicators;
- (iii) Approve the actual Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2021/22, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report; and
- (iv) Note that the Council borrowed £140.0m from the PWLB in 2021/22.

#### **18. Appointment of Parent Governor (Primary) and Church Representative (Church of England) Co-optees to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The Acting Chief Executive introduced a report on the Parent Governor (Primary) and Church Representative (Church of England) co-optee positions on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which were currently vacant.

As stated in Part 2, Chapter 8 of the Council's Constitution and in accordance with the Education Act 1996 and the Local Government Act 2000, membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should include co-optees to scrutinise education matters. Statutory co-optees have voting rights in respect of education matters only.

Nominations to fill the vacancies had been sought and one application for each position had been received.

The Assembly **resolved** to agree the following co-optee appointments to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, for a term of four years:

- Sajjad Ali: Parent Governor (Primary); and
- Richard Hopkins: Church Representative (Church of England).

#### **19. Appointment of Statutory Scrutiny Officer**

The Acting Chief Executive introduced a report on the appointment of a statutory Scrutiny Officer.

The Council must designate one of its officers to discharge the functions of statutory Scrutiny Officer, as required under section 9FB of the Local Government Act 2000 (amended by the Localism Act 2011).

The Acting Chief Executive advised that the former Interim Director of Strategy and Culture had been the designated statutory Scrutiny Officer prior to leaving the Council. It was noted that the statutory Scrutiny Officer cannot be the Council's Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive), the Monitoring Officer (Chief legal Officer) or the Chief Financial Officer (Strategic Director, Finance and Investment).

Alex Powell would be joining the Council on 1 August 2022 as Interim Director of Strategy and it was proposed that he be designated as the Council's statutory Scrutiny Officer.

The Assembly **resolved** to agree to designate Alex Powell, Interim Director of Strategy, as the Council's statutory Scrutiny Officer with effect from 1 August 2022.

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

The Monitoring Officer introduced a report on the appointment of Independent Persons in accordance with the requirements of Sections 28(6) (a) & (b) and 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011.

It was noted that the Council must have at least one Independent Person to carry out an advisory role as part of its arrangements for investigating and determining complaints alleging a breach of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

The Assembly was advised that the Monitoring Officer held the view that the new 2022 Council and the newly composed Audit and Standards Committee ought to have an opportunity to review the functioning of the Independent Persons and that the Committee would review, with the Monitoring Officer, the arrangements and in due course make a recommendation to the Council. As there was a statutory requirement for Independent Persons both for complaints against councillors and statutory chief officers staffing matters, it was necessary to offer the opportunity of retention until the Assembly meeting after Annual Assembly 2023 to the current Independent Persons and recruit in the event they vacate their office.

The Assembly **resolved** to:

- (i) Agree the continuation of the appointment of all the Council's current Independent Persons, those being Michael Carpenter; Dr. Gurpreet Singh Bhatia and Pastor Thomas Adeyemi Aderounmu, until the next Assembly meeting following the Annual Assembly in 2023 when it shall confirm appointments; and
- (ii) Invite the Audit and Standards Committee to consider and advise on the current arrangements regarding the Council's Standards regime.

## **21. Motions**

There were no motions.

## **22. Questions With Notice**

There were no questions with notice.

