

# MINUTES OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 23 November 2022  
(7:00 - 8:35 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 Faruk Choudhury	Cllr Nashitha Choudhury	Cllr Muhib Chowdhury
Cllr Alison Cormack	Cllr John Dulwich	Cllr Syed Ghani
Cllr Rocky Gill	Cllr Kashif Haroon	Cllr Manzoor Hussain
Cllr Jane Jones	Cllr Elizabeth Kangethe	Cllr Mohammed Khan
Cllr Donna Lumsden	Cllr Giasuddin Miah	Cllr Margaret Mullane
Cllr Adegboyega Oluwole	Cllr Glenda Paddle	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 Darren Rodwell
Cllr Muhammad Saleem	Cllr Muazzam Sandhu	Cllr Faraaz Shaukat
Cllr Jack Shaw	Cllr Dominic Twomey	Cllr Maureen Worby
Cllr Mukhtar Yusuf	Cllr Sabbir Zamee	

## APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Edna Fergus	Cllr Cameron Geddes	Cllr Victoria Hornby
Cllr Olawale Martins	Cllr Fatuma Nalule	Cllr Emily Rodwell
Cllr Lee Waker	Cllr Phil Waker	

### 33. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

### 34. Minutes (28 September 2022)

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2022 were confirmed as correct.

### 35. Minutes of Sub-Committees - JNC Appointments, Salaries and Structures Panel (8 November 2022 )

The Assembly received and noted the minutes of the JNC Appointments, Salaries and Structures Panel held on 8 November 2022.

### 36. 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:

**Rita Giles MBE:** The Leader advised Members of the sad news that Rita Giles, MBE and Freewoman of the Borough had passed away at the weekend. He paid tribute to her tireless community work across the Borough, particularly in the Dagenham Village. Members stood for a minute's silence as a mark of respect and it was noted that a full report would be presented at the next meeting, at which point Members would have the opportunity to present personal tributes.

**Government's Mismanagement of the Economy:** The Leader focussed on the Government's mismanagement of the economy which had led to the current cost-of-living crisis. He highlighted the billions wasted by the Government during Covid, the gamble of the mini-budget and the Autumn Budget Statement announcement about tax rises and public sector cuts, all of which had implications for local authorities, particularly in relation to funding additional adult social care costs, estimated in this Borough to be of the order of £10m.

The Leader commented that despite those challenges, Barking and Dagenham had led in a number of areas and he referred to a model for community safety adopted by the Government and Opportunity for London, a major campaign promoting long-term, sustainable investment into London Boroughs and communities, which the Leader was also involved in through his role on London Councils. He also referenced the fact that despite being the most deprived Borough in the country, Barking and Dagenham provided more support to residents in need when compared to most other local authorities, including the neighbouring Borough of Havering. He also highlighted a number of key projects and initiatives led by the Borough which would benefit local residents including the creation of many new jobs as a result of the relocation of the three historical London Markets to the Borough, the construction of more than 1,600 new affordable homes below market rent at Dagenham Green together with more affordable units in future phases of development at Beam Park on and around the former Ford Motor Company site. It was also noted that those new developments would recognise the heritage of the Borough and the legacy of the Ford's women strikers through the naming of roads and buildings.

**Local Authority Upstander Award:** The Leader congratulated Councillor Ashraf, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community Leadership and Engagement, on receiving a Local Authority Upstander Award for promoting cohesion and tackling hate crime in the Borough. Members gave her a round of applause.

### **37. Appointments**

The Labour Group Secretary announced that Councillor Mullane had been appointed to the vacancy on the Audit and Standards Committee.

### **38. Babies, Children, Young People and Families (0-25) Partnership - Best Chance Strategy**

The Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care and Disabilities presented a report outlining a 3-year Strategy for babies, children and young families entitled the Best Chance 0-25 Partnership Strategy which had been developed by the Council and its partners with the aim of giving young people every opportunity to live their best lives and reach their full potential. This against the backdrop of living in the most

deprived borough in London, exacerbated by a general lack of investment, widening inequalities following Covid and now the cost-of-living crisis.

As part of the process key stakeholders were spoken to which allowed for the Partnership to describe its collective strengths, address key challenges, identify opportunities, and capture quick wins along the way. This collective vision led to the Partnership agreeing a set of strategic outcomes of 'We want our babies, children and young people to:

- get the best start, be healthy, be happy and achieve;
- thrive in inclusive schools and settings, in inclusive communities;
- be safe and secure, free from neglect, harm and exploitation; and
- grow up to be successful young adults.

The presentation set out five Partnership pledges which the Cabinet Member outlined explaining the meaning of each.

A governance structure had also been drawn up to allow the Partnership to work together as a system, streamlining governance arrangements and holding partners to account. This would be coordinated by the 'Best Chance 0-25 Partnership' a newly created group reporting to the Borough Partnership, and which would own the strategic vision for babies, children and young people in the borough, shaping action plans to deliver the strategy and monitor progress against the outcomes framework.

The Cabinet Member set out a summary of the next steps and concluded that the strategy represented a statement of intent and a step forward in a journey to make Barking & Dagenham a great place to grow up. She concluded the presentation that it was the Council's collective mission to realise the brightest future for our babies, children and young people, and to give them the best chance in life.

In response to the presentation Members welcomed the report, its ambitions and collaborative and holistic approach to doing the best for our young people. A point was raised about partnership resources and funding to which the Cabinet Member responded that the approach was developed on the basis of all partners working together, understanding each other's plans around resources and ensuring any funding gaps are filled, rather than leaving it to the Council to address and fund. The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health Integration added that the strategy represented a new way of working which did not necessarily mean the need for more resources and funding.

Accordingly, the Assembly **resolved** to endorse the Barking & Dagenham Best Chance Strategy 2022-25 as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, including the proposed governance arrangements.

### **39. Treasury Management 2022/23 Mid-Year Review**

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Core Services presented a report on the Treasury Management 2022/23 Mid-Year Review.

The review report provided details of the mid-year position for treasury activities and highlighted compliance with the Council's policies previously approved by the

Assembly on 3 March 2022 as part of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2022/23.

The Cabinet Member commented that the focus of the report was on the challenging economic situation for the Borough with increasing inflationary pressures and higher borrowing costs, creating the current cost-of-living crisis which was influenced by not only global factors but also because of the mismanagement of the economy by the government driven by the disastrous mini budget. He referenced the effects this had on the Borough's housing programme, which to date had delivered the most affordable housing provision in London, but where many schemes were now becoming unviable due in part to the steep rise in construction costs.

The report set out the Council's current investment arrangements and rates of return which remained in the top quartile when compared to its peer group, as well as details of current and future borrowing arrangements, the reduction in cash balances which was due in part to the significant cash receipts secured on a number of commercial sites, the strategy of which supported the objective of maintaining Council services for the benefit of the residents.

The Assembly therefore **resolved** to note:

- (i) The Treasury Management Strategy Statement Mid-Year Review 2022/23,
- (ii) The economic update covering the increase in inflation and the potential for an increase in the Bank of England Base Rate,
- (iii) That the value of the treasury investments and cash as at 30 September 2022 totalled £109.2m, and that the Treasury Investment Strategy outperformed its peer group, with a return of 1.27% against an average of 0.95% for London Local Authorities (as at 30 June 2022),
- (iv) That the value of the commercial and residential loans lent by the Council as at 31 March 2021 totalled £168.1m at an average rate of 3.3%,
- (v) That the total borrowing position as at 30 September 2022 totalled £1,086b with £295.9m relating to the Housing Revenue Account and £791.1m to the General Fund,
- (vi) That interest payable was forecast to be £15.8m against a budget of £15.7m,
- (vii) That interest receivable was forecast to be £7.2m against a budget of £7.5m, representing a deficit of £0.3m,
- (viii) That capitalised interest was forecast to be £9.0m,
- (ix) That Investment and Acquisition Strategy (IAS) income was forecast to be £6.7m against a budget of £7.0m, representing a deficit of £0.3m,
- (x) That the IAS surplus, held in a reserve, was currently £29.3m and was forecast to increase to £37.6m by the end of the year, of which £11.0m was

ringfenced for lease and leaseback properties,

- (xi) The post Gateway 4 cashflows, including the impact of Gascoigne East 3B and the pressures on the current pipeline schemes, as outlined in paragraph 9.2 of the report, and
- (xii) That in the first half of the 2021/22 financial year the Council complied with all 2021/22 treasury management indicators.

#### **40. Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Health Scrutiny Committee Annual Reports 2021/22**

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) in 2021/22 presented an Annual Report highlighting the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in that period.

Given the number of new Members to the Council the former Chair opened her presentation with a brief overview about the structure and function of the Committee explaining the purpose of scrutiny and its importance to the operation of the Council by helping to improve services for the benefit of the local community. She explained that OSC had a wide remit and was able to look into internal Council services, as well as those of our external partners such as the Police, BDSIP and Be First, holding decision makers to account, including the Cabinet, whilst reviewing policy and in so doing, making recommendations for improvement.

She advised that the year had again begun by meeting with Cabinet Members, Directors and officers to learn more about their thoughts around key issues, which also helped to guide the Committee in developing a meaningful work programme. She recognised the support given by Cabinet Members who were committed to the scrutiny process and had always attended OSC meetings wherever possible, listening to the Committee's feedback and responding to any questions.

OSC covered a wide range of items during 2021/22, of which the former Chair highlighted a few of the achievements including the impact of change to the Reside affordability threshold in line with the Housing Allocations Policy, a review of Targeted Early Help services, and acting as a forum for Borough representatives to talk to the Police on response times and community engagement, and specifically greater engagement with the LGBTQ+ community.

Throughout the year the Committee also provided further suggestions for consideration, such as generating more income by the Council utilising space on the sides of waste trucks for local business and private advertising and officers approaching ward councillors to ask whether they would be willing to use part of their allocated ward budget for pollution-busting plants close to school buildings, to reduce pupils' exposure to carbon emissions.

Councillor Glenda Paddle took over the role of Chair at the beginning of this municipal year and the Committee was set for another busy year with a wide-ranging work programme on key topics such as the review of the first Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) programme and engagement on the second phase,

Employment Support and the Housing Offer for Vulnerable Groups.

In conclusion the former Chair thanked Masuma Ahmed, Claudia Wakefield, Fiona Taylor and Alison Stuart for their support to her and the Committee.

The Leader commended the work of both the former and current Chair, who he meets with monthly. He recognised the value of the overview and scrutiny process in the checks and balances it provided to ensure open and transparent decision making through collective leadership.

The Chair of the Health Scrutiny Committee (HSC) then presented an annual report highlighting the work of the Committee in 2021/22, similarly explaining the role and function of the Committee for the benefit of new Members.

Over the last year it was no surprise that a key topic of the work programme continued to be the response to the Covid-19 pandemic, due to the profound impact that it was having on health services since its onset. To that end the Chair expressed the Committee's continued thanks to all frontline staff and partners, for their dedication in supporting residents affected by Covid-19, as well as to key colleagues for their ongoing support in the scrutiny response.

The Committee had addressed a broad range of topics this year, from smoking cessation through to engagement on the new St George's Hospital Development, which would be able to be used by Barking and Dagenham residents in the future. Despite a busy work programme, the Committee also addressed other areas of key importance such as NELFT's Care Quality Commission Inspection.

Moving forward HSC would continue to oversee the Council's and health partners' response to Covid-19 as well as fulfilling a demanding and broad work programme for 2021/22, which amongst other things included exploring key topics such as how to manage the waiting lists for urgent and non-urgent health conditions, and priorities for the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

He paid thanks to Masuma Ahmed, Yusuf Olow, Claudia Wakefield and Matthew Cole for their support to himself and the Committee as well as to Councillor Worby as the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health Integration and partners, for their continued support, honesty and willingness to take on board the Committee's feedback.

The Assembly **resolved** to note both the Overview and Scrutiny and Health Scrutiny Committee Annual Reports 2021/22 set out in Appendix A and B to the report respectively.

#### **41. Motions**

There were none.

#### **42. Questions With Notice**

There were none.