

# MINUTES OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 27 September 2023  
(7:00 - 7:34 pm)

## PRESENT

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

Cllr Andrew Achilleos	Cllr Dorothy Akwaboah	Cllr Saima Ashraf
Cllr Sade Bright	Cllr Josie Channer	Cllr Faruk 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 Manzoor Hussain
Cllr Jane Jones	Cllr Elizabeth Kangethe	Cllr Mohammed Khan
Cllr Donna Lumsden	Cllr Giasuddin Miah	Cllr Margaret Mullane
Cllr Fatuma Nalule	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 Summya Sohaib
Cllr Harriet Spoor	Cllr Dominic Twomey	Cllr Lee Waker
Cllr Phil Waker	Cllr Maureen Worby	Cllr Mukhtar Yusuf
Cllr Sabbir Zamee		

## APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Princess Bright                      Cllr Emily Rodwell

### 27. Welcome to Councillor Summya Sohaib

The Chair welcomed Councillor Sohaib to her first meeting of the Assembly following her election at the recent Mayesbrook Ward by-election.

### 28. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

### 29. Minutes (26 July 2023)

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2023 were confirmed as correct.

### 30. Minutes of Sub-Committees

The Assembly received and noted the minutes of the JNC Appointments, Salaries and Structures Panel held on 25 July 2023.

### 31. Leader's Statement

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

**Central Government:** The Leader criticised the many policy U-turns by the Government over the summer period, most notably on Climate Change, which he felt harmed the country going forward.

**Visit by Sir Keir Starmer:** Sir Keir Starmer, Leader of the Labour Party, recently attended Sydney Russell School and participated in the School Debating Team's discussion on the Climate Change agenda. Bridget Philipson, Shadow Education Minister, was also in attendance for the visit.

**Housing:** The Council found itself facing higher bills for repairs and maintenance to its properties following the Covid pandemic and as a consequence of the Government's ongoing austerity programme. Residents were struggling to heat their homes due to the cost-of-living crisis, which had increased issues with mould and damp in their homes. The Leader advised that the Council had already addressed hundreds of mould and damp cases and continued to liaise closely with the Housing Ombudsman to ensure that every home with issues was dealt with. The Leader commented that similar issues were being faced by Councils across the country, and not just by Labour-led Councils as had recently been alluded to by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

**Medium Term Financial Plan:** Members of the Council had recently attended a briefing on the Council's current financial situation, where it was explained that, across the local government sector, there was a projected £300bn funding shortfall. In respect of Barking and Dagenham, the Leader advised that for every £1 the Council received from the Government in 2010, it now only received the equivalent of 66p. The Leader commented that despite that significant reduction in funding, the Council had been very proactive in addressing its financial pressures and he was confident that it would not be necessary to issue a Section 114 notice.

**OFSTED:** Following a recent OFSTED inspection, 96% of schools in the borough were now rated as 'Good' to 'Outstanding'. The Leader thanked the Cabinet Member for Educational Attainment and School Improvement, her predecessors, the Borough's schools and Council staff for all their efforts working with the borough's young people.

**Industria Barking:** Industria, working in partnership with Be First, had brought the first multi-storey industrial development in the country to Long Reach Road in Barking.

**A House for Artists:** The Leader was pleased to announce that the Council's 'A House for Artists' social housing scheme had been nominated for the RIBA Stirling prize, the highest accolade in UK architecture. A House for Artists was an ambitious model for affordable and sustainable housing tied to long-term public engagement in Barking Town Centre.

**Nigerian Independence Day:** Nigerian Independence Day would be recognised on Friday 29 September with a flag raising ceremony at the Town Hall.

**Black History Month:** Black History Month would again be celebrated throughout October and the Council were holding a variety of events across the Borough in recognition of the contribution of the black community.

### **32. Appointments**

Assembly **resolved** to appoint Councillor Hardial Singh Rai to the Member Development Group.

### **33. Appointment of Monitoring Officer**

The Chief Executive introduced a report on the proposed appointment of a new statutory Monitoring Officer, in accordance with the requirements of Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (as amended).

The Leader of the Council paid tribute to Alison Stuart, Chief Legal Officer and current Monitoring Officer, who would shortly be leaving the Council to take up a Director-level role at the London Borough of Islington. The Leader also welcomed the proposed appointment of Deirdre Collins, who had worked for the Council for over 10 years and been its chief litigator throughout that period, as the Council's new Monitoring Officer,

The Assembly **resolved** to appoint Deirdre Collins, Head of Legal Services, as the Council's Monitoring Officer with effect from 28 September 2023.

### **34. Appointment of Interim Statutory Scrutiny Officer**

The Chief Executive introduced a report on the proposed appointment of a new statutory Scrutiny Officer, in accordance with the requirements of section 9FB of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011).

It was noted that the interim Director of Strategy and current statutory Scrutiny Officer, Alex Powell, would be leaving the Council later in the week when his secondment came to an end. It was proposed that Leanna McPherson, who was responsible for the governance and support to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Health Scrutiny Committee, be designated as the Council's interim statutory Scrutiny Officer pending the recruitment of a new Director of Strategy.

The Assembly **resolved** to designate Leanna McPherson, Principal Governance Officer, as the Council's statutory Scrutiny Officer with effect from 29 September 2023.

### **35. Annual Youth Justice Plan**

The Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care and Disabilities presented the Barking and Dagenham Youth Justice Plan for 2023/24, which set out the work and achievements of the service over the last 12 months and how it had impacted first time entrants into the criminal justice service, re-offending of children and young people and reduced the numbers of children in custody.

The Cabinet Member was pleased to report that, overall, the service had positively impacted all three areas, with all three performance indicators decreasing over the last five years. Whilst Barking and Dagenham remained higher than London and National averages with regard to use of custody and first-time entrants, the Cabinet Member clarified that the Borough had the highest proportion of 0-16 year olds in the country as well as high levels of deprivation.

The Cabinet Member highlighted other achievements within the service and confirmed that the Plan had been agreed by the local multi-agency youth justice management board and submitted to the Youth Justice Board in line with the conditions of grant and national expectations.

Assembly **resolved** to adopt the Barking and Dagenham Youth Justice Plan 2023/24, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

### **36. Motions**

There were no motions.

### **37. Questions With Notice**

There were no Questions with Notice.