

# MINUTES OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 25 November 2014  
(8:20 - 9:55 pm)

## PRESENT

Cllr Tony Ramsay (Chair)  
Cllr Syed Ghani (Deputy Chair)

Cllr Syed Ahammad	Cllr Sanchia Alasia	Cllr Jeanne Alexander
Cllr Saima Ashraf	Cllr Abdul Aziz	Cllr Melanie Bartlett
Cllr Simon Bremner	Cllr Sade Bright	Cllr Laila Butt
Cllr Evelyn Carpenter	Cllr Peter Chand	Cllr Josephine Channer
Cllr Faruk Choudhury	Cllr Edna Fergus	Cllr Irma Freeborn
Cllr Cameron Geddes	Cllr Rocky Gill	Cllr Kashif Haroon
Cllr Amardeep Singh Jamu	Cllr Jane Jones	Cllr Elizabeth Kangethe
Cllr Eileen Keller	Cllr Danielle Lawrence	Cllr Giasuddin Miah
Cllr Dave Miles	Cllr Margaret Mullane	Cllr James Ogungbose
Cllr Adegboyega Oluwole	Cllr Moin Quadri	Cllr Hardial Singh Rai
Cllr Linda Reason	Cllr Lynda Rice	Cllr Darren Rodwell
Cllr Faraaz Shaukat	Cllr Danielle Smith	Cllr Bill Turner
Cllr Dominic Twomey	Cllr Jeff Wade	Cllr Lee Waker
Cllr Phil Waker	Cllr Maureen Worby	Cllr Dan Young
Cllr Linda Zanitchkhah		

## APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Chris Hughes	Cllr Mick McCarthy	Cllr Chris Rice
Cllr Liam Smith	Cllr Sam Tarry	Cllr John White

### 22. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest

### 23. Minutes (17 September 2014)

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2014 were confirmed as correct.

### 24. Death of Freeman Vera Reynolds

The Assembly noted with deep regret that Freeman Vera Reynolds had passed away on Monday, 29 September 2014.

Councillors spoke in tribute to Vera, noting the work that she did supporting all members of the community, from young children at the Noah's Ark Centre to the Girls Brigade and the over 50s Breakaway Club.

The Assembly stood for a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

## 25. Appointments

The Assembly **agreed** the following appointments:

- Councillor Freeborn to the Children's Services Select Committee;
- Councillor Ahammad to the Licensing and Regulatory Board following Councillor Butt's resignation;
- Councillor Rai to the Personnel Board following Councillor Quadri's resignation;
- Councillor Young to the Public Accounts and Audit Select Committee, following Councillor Ahammad's resignation;
- Councillors Freeborn and McCarthy to the Safer and Stronger Select Committee;

**And noted** the appointment by Councillor Geddes, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, of Councillor L Rice as deputy on the London Councils Transport and Environment Committee.

## 26. Members' Allowances - Payment to position of Chief Whip

The Assembly received this report introduced by Fiona Taylor, Monitoring Officer, which related to a request made at Annual Assembly in June 2014 for a legal view regarding the decision to cease making a payment to the position of Chief Whip as part of the Members' Allowances Scheme that had been adopted at that meeting. Clarification was also requested on why the position had changed since the local scheme had been adopted in 2010 and whether the payment made at that time had been illegal or unlawful.

The Chair invited Councillor Rodwell, the Leader of the Council, to speak, who said:

"Members, as the report states, this was requested at our Assembly meeting in June when we took the decision to stop paying an allowance to the Chief Whip. It clarifies the legal position at the same time as providing a wider background to the payment of Chief Whips.

At the time, I was given clear advice by officers that the payment of an allowance to the Chief Whip was not a legal payment. As the report clearly says, and I am pleased to clarify, this is not the case. I do accept that the advice on which I was speaking was wrong. So, I welcome the opportunity to put the record straight.

However, the report also throws new light on the regulations surrounding payments to Chief Whips where they are members of a majority group with an unassailable majority on a Council – just like here in B&D. I refer to the position of the Independent Remuneration Panel for London Councils, highlighted in the advice before you, which says local authority whips should only receive an allowance if they help get business through the Council. They should not simply

receive a payment just for helping keep party political discipline. That is the sole remit of political parties. On this basis, justifying an allowance for the Chief Whip where there is a single party only, or where that party holds the vast majority of seats on the Council, becomes very vague. It becomes very problematic and, I believe, open to question. It is for this reason that I believe we have set off in the right direction by deciding not to make a payment to the Chief Whip from May.

It is vital we heed that advice very closely. Councillor Gill in his question to me later in the meeting refers to the Nolan principles. I think this is a good example where this administration is holding dear to those principles.”

The Assembly **agreed** to note the report.

## 27. Council Constitution

The Assembly received this report introduced by Councillor Ogungbose, Cabinet Member for Central Services.

In presenting the report the Cabinet Member thanked the members of the Public Accounts and Audit Select Committee for the work they had carried out in their consideration of the Constitution.

- (i) The Assembly **considered** the proposed main changes to the new Constitution detailed in section 2 of the report, taking into account the views of PAASC both in relation to the main changes and other aspects put forward by that Committee as detailed;
- (ii) The Assembly **agreed** In the light of (i) above, to adopt the new Constitution as presented to the last meeting subject to the following amendments:
  - (a) That the merger of the ‘Leader’s Questions’ and ‘General Questions’ processes into a single ‘Questions With Notice’ process also make provision for supplementary questions to be asked in the following terms: “After the initial answer, the Councillor who submitted the question may ask one supplementary question arising directly out of the initial question or answer, without notice, and the person who answered the initial question shall respond to the supplementary question wherever possible. There shall be no further debate on the issue.”
  - (b) To confirm the creation of a Licensing Sub-Committee to determine applications, with a membership of three to be made up of Members of the Board, while noting the overriding provision within the Licensing and Regulatory Board’s terms of reference which enable the full Board to consider any matter delegated to the Sub-Committee or officers.
  - (c) That the appointment of non-Cabinet Councillors to the various JNC Panels should be the responsibility of the Assembly as part of its general responsibilities in respect of Member appointments, and that the appointment arrangements be amended so that a pool of four non-Cabinet Councillors are appointed for the respective Panels and

the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, is authorised to appoint the two non-Cabinet Councillors from the pool to sit on each panel.

- (d) That the business at ordinary meetings of the Assembly be amended to include "Receive the minutes of the meetings of JNC committees, sub-committees and panels".
  - (e) That the terms of reference of the JNC Salaries and Conditions Panel be amended to include "... to consider and make final decisions in relation to senior management (JNC) structures / reorganisations" and that the corresponding amendments be made to the Officer Scheme of Delegation; and
- (iii) to authorise the Monitoring Officer to make any consequential amendments prior to the publication of the document, the provisions of which will come into effect at 12 noon on Wednesday, 26 November 2014.

## **28. Adoption of Community Infrastructure Levy**

The Assembly received this report introduced by Councillor Geddes, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, providing background on the implementation of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which would largely take over from Section 106 planning agreements as the primary means of obtaining a contribution from developers towards new infrastructure requirements.

The Cabinet Member referred to the areas that would be funded by CIL contributions in the future and those that would continue to be funded via Section 106 monies. He also advised that the Planning Inspector responsible for examining the Council's proposals had recommended that the charging schedule was appropriate and should be approved in its published form.

In debating and supporting the report Members raised the following points:

- very little funding appeared to be going into infrastructure, community space and park improvements in Dagenham;
- the £70 psm for Zone 1 be reviewed;
- that the CIL be examined through the Living and Working Select Committee and PAASC.

The Assembly **agreed** to:

- (i) Adopt the LBBB Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule as set out at Appendix 1 to the report;
- (ii) Approve the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy rates from 2 March 2015;
- (iii) Approve that how residents and businesses are consulted on the neighbourhood CIL allocation be agreed on a case by case basis, in agreement with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration;

- (iv) Agree to allow the payment in kind of CIL by land or infrastructure payments;
- (v) Approve the S106 / Planning Obligations Planning Advice Note as set out at Appendix 4 to the report; and
- (vi) Delegate authority to the Divisional Director for Regeneration, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, to make any final amendments permitted by the Examiner's Report.

## 29. Proposed Byelaw to Prohibit Spitting in Public Places

The Assembly received this report introduced by Councillor Butt, Cabinet Member for Crime and Enforcement, relating to a petition co-ordinated by the Barking Labour Party containing over 2000 valid signatures from borough residents requesting that the Council seek Secretary of State approval to the making of local byelaw(s) prohibiting spitting and urinating in public places.

In response to Members' questions, the Cabinet Member went on to say that other boroughs including Enfield have already applied for such a byelaw. The issue of enforcement was important and initially work would be undertaken in areas where this is happening, such as the Heathway and the Town Centre. She emphasised the importance of building respect and civic pride in our borough through our schools to stop this dirty habit.

Members further proposed a campaign to eradicate spitting, suggesting that our local football teams might join us, thereby setting a marker within the football environment.

The Chair thanked Councillor Alexander for the work she had done in highlighting this unacceptable behaviour.

The Assembly **agreed** to:

- (i) Seek the Secretary of State's approval to the making of a byelaw prohibiting spitting in public spaces and imposing a fine for non compliance; and
- (ii) **noted** that as urinating in a public place is currently enforced by the Police under Section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986, there was no need to impose a separate byelaw.

## 30. Sealing of Byelaw Order to Ban Skateboarding in Barking Town Square

The Assembly received this report introduced by Councillor Butt, Cabinet Member for Crime and Enforcement, relating to a byelaw to prohibit skateboarding in Arboretum Place and the Town Square.

Members raised concerns as to the criminalising of young people.

Councillor Alexander made the following points:

- There is a park at Castle Green that the young people do not want to use as

- they say the surface in the Town Centre is better.
- The skaters frighten residents by riding towards them and then swerving at the last minute.
- They stay in the town centre until 11/11.30 at night.

The Leader of the Council, in agreeing with Councillor Alexander's points, said this was a matter of social responsibility; that the young people had been given ample opportunity to work with the community but had chosen not to.

In responding to Members' questions, the Cabinet Member thanked Councillor Alexander and emphasised that it was the surface that attracted the skateboarders and that many were teenagers coming from outside the borough.

Officers further advised that whilst enforcement would be as a matter of course, someone would have to have seen the offence taking place, so generally it would come to the Council as the result of a complaint. Initially, though, the skateboarders would be asked to move on.

The Assembly **agreed** to approve the byelaw agreed by the Department for Communities and Local Government set out at Appendix 2 to the report, authorise its sealing and proceed with the necessary steps to complete its making as a byelaw of the Council.

### 31. Treasury Management Mid-Year Review

The Assembly received this report introduced by Councillor Twomey, the Cabinet Member for Finance, which provided details of the mid-year position for treasury activities and highlighted compliance with the Council's policies previously approved by the Assembly.

In response to Members' questions, the Chief Finance Officer advised that:

- LOBO (lend option/borrow option) were structured loans whereby the Council borrowed at a certain rate. The bank had an option to change that rate, following which the Council would have an option of repaying the loan without penalty;
- The Council's exposure was £40m with four commercial banks, which were considered to be good value loans at the time they had been taken out.

The Assembly **agreed** to:

- (i) Note the Treasury Management Strategy Statement Mid-Year Review 2014/15;
- (ii) Note that in the first half of the 2014/15 financial year the Council complied with all 2014/15 treasury management indicators;
- (iii) Note the borrowing of £89m through a loan facility from the European Investment Bank (EIB) to support an urban regeneration and economic growth programme agreed by the Assembly on 17 September 2014; and
- (iv) Delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the

Cabinet Member for Finance, to proportionally amend the counterparty lending limits agreed within the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for the duration of the 2014/15 financial year, subject to a review of this authority in the February 2015 Treasury Management Strategy report to take into account of any potential additional borrowing from the EIB which has been agreed previously by Cabinet.

### **32. Polling Districts and Polling Places Review 2014/15**

(The Chair agreed that this matter could be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency under the provisions of Section 100B (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 to meet the statutory requirements of the Electoral Registration and Administrative Act 2013 in respect of the completion of a review of Borough polling districts and associated polling places by 31 January 2015.)

The Assembly received this report introduced by the Chief Executive, Graham Farrant, in his capacity as Acting Returning Officer, on the outcome of a statutory review of polling districts (areas within ward boundaries) and associated polling places (stations), which was carried out between 19 August and 19 September 2014.

In response to questions from Members, the Democratic Services' Group Manager (DSGM) stated that the location of polling stations within polling districts FD (Longbridge) and JE (Thames) were still under consideration. If it is not possible to identify permanent buildings in the lead up to the Parliamentary elections in May 2015, then portacabins would be used. Consultation as to the precise locations would be undertaken with the appropriate ward members.

The DSGM also advised that the registration system had changed with effect from 10 June this year from household to individual registration. This had resulted in comparing individuals' electoral data with that held by the Department for Work and Pensions and those that successfully matched were automatically transferred on to the new register, which will be published on 1 December 2014. A considerable amount of work was now being undertaken to ensure that going forward the electoral register captures as many qualifying names as possible in the run up to the Parliamentary election. This includes door to door canvassing, comparing existing data held by the Council as well as a borough wide mail out confirmation of registration letter.

The DSGM asked all Councillors in their dealings with the community to encourage residents to register in person or on line.

The Assembly **agreed** to:

- (i) Approve for publication the final proposals arising from the review of polling districts and associated polling places as detailed in Appendix A to the report; and
- (ii) Authorise the Chief Executive in his capacity as the ARO to agree any permanent or temporary arrangements until the commencement of the next review that are deemed appropriate in respect of alternative polling stations and/or reconfiguration of polling districts, subject to consultation with relevant ward councillors.

### **33. Motions**

The Chair announced that no motions had been received.

### **34. General Question Time**

#### **GQ1 from Councillor Quadri:**

“How many £millions for infrastructure works and other developments have been brought into Barking and Dagenham in the last six months?”

#### **Response from Councillor Geddes, Cabinet Member for Regeneration:**

“I cannot give an exact figure, but:

Barking Station revamp - £5m

London Overground extension £190m – presuming we get this extension

EIB on new affordable housing £89m – there is scope for £150m

Plus facility for another £61m

Schools funding at Barking Riverside £30m

Stage 2 road at Barking Riverside £10m

London East - Marstons Pub - Restaurant under construction

London East - SOG acquisition c£5m

London East - junction works

Dagenham Dock - Stolthaven expansion under construction

Dagenham Dock - Chinnook Waste to Energy Plant under construction c£100m

Dagenham Dock –Thames Gateway Park expansion

Dagenham Dock - Provision of Ocado Distribution centre

South Dagenham west - Orion Park Kuehne and Nagel new logistics premises –  
plus £500,000 S106

Marks Gate Phase2 housing- £3m

Lymington Fields Phase 1B and 2 c£30m

Magistrates' Court residential conversion and expansion c£3.5m

Additional TfL funding for public realm works

We are talking about a total in excess of £500m.

This will help next year and for some time to come. Clearly, what we are doing is working extremely hard to ensure that jobs created go to local people.

#### **GQ2 from Councillor Channer:**

“Can Councillor Rodwell, Leader of the Council and portfolio holder for Communities, explain what response there had been to this year’s White Ribbon Campaign, and why is this so important for Barking and Dagenham?”

#### **Response from Councillor Rodwell, Leader of the Council:**

“It has been a hair-raising experience!

By far the best result so far is Billy Bragg’s pledge post - 37,952 likes and more importantly 13,240 shares – a fantastic response.

I am really proud of all the officers involved. We are taking the White Ribbon Campaign very seriously. We are the first Council to have a women’s



empowerment campaign.”

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9.30 pm

In order to conclude the business of the meeting the Assembly **agreed** in accordance with the Council Constitution, Article 1, paragraph 5.3 to extend the meeting to 10 pm.

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**GQ3 from Councillor Ahammad:**

“I am delighted to be informed about, and welcome, the innovative approach of the European Investment Bank in Barking and Dagenham. However, I should like to know :

- the total amount that Barking and Dagenham Council will be receiving.
- Is this a loan or a grant?
- Is there any agreement to paying the amount back and, if so, then more details, please?
- How this investment benefit our residents and will it benefit residents in Longbridge ward, the ward that I represent?”

**Response from Councillor Twomey, Cabinet Member for Finance:**

“Thank you for the question Councillor Ahammad.

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is very flexible in terms of drawing down and paying off loans. An initial loan of £89m has been agreed, which will be repaid over 30 years, though there is scope to make early repayment if the opportunity arises. Following further discussions with EIB, there is potential to borrow up to £150m towards the development of green energy and further regeneration in the borough

The investment on the Gascoigne Estate will impact on the whole borough. The properties will be of mixed tenure, making the Gascoigne a good place to live. It will help our young people who we want to remain in this borough.

The wider implications are that this investment will impact on the whole of the borough.”

**GQ 4 from Councillor Jones:**

“Can the Cabinet Member for Finance please give an update on the Council’s position on paying staff the increased £9.15 living wage? Does the Cabinet Member agree that the increase should not be paid for by the 2.2% pay increase but instead should be implemented ASAP with the 2.2% increase paid as well on top of this? We have continually supported both our staff and the living wage and so I take it the Cabinet Member would agree the staff would look unfavourably if he were to use their hard earned pay award in order to continue a commitment made under the last administration?”

**Response from Councillor Twomey, Cabinet Member for Finance:**

“Thank you Councillor Jones for highlighting that, after a delay, the need to pay our hard working staff a fair living wage is now more widely accepted.

In terms of the question, of course we would like to do exactly what Councillor

Jones suggests. The issue is one of balance in the exceptionally challenging financial times all Councils find themselves operating in. Accordingly we have to balance our commitment to pay people fairly for the excellent work they do for the Council against the need to protect jobs and services to residents. I believe that our staff understand this tension as we have been very open about the challenge of saving over £50m from our budget in addition to the £93m that has already been taken. There is also the issue of pay differentials that we need to consider, ensuring that there is sufficient difference between the pay rates of staff on the lower scales and their supervisors. The implications of the increase in the London Living Wage need to be worked through.

We are a Council that wants to pay its staff fairly but we are also a Council that wants to protect as many jobs as possible and therefore it does not make sense to rush such a decision.”

**GQ 5 from Councillor L Waker:**

“Could the Cabinet Member for Finance please explain why the additional appointments of a political assistant, scrutiny officer and leader’s and members’ service manager are all being appointed at the top end of each pay scale? Could he also clarify why it is felt there needs to be more political assistance at a time in which we are asking all other departments to make cutbacks on their support?”

**Response from Councillor Twomey, Cabinet Member for Finance:**

“Thanks for your question. The short answer is no, we have not agreed to pay at the top end of the scale. They have been shown at the top end of the scale for budget purposes, to show the full budget cost of each appointment.

In 2012 we were described as “...an authority with a reputation for leading the way in shaping local policy...”

We needed political assistance then and we need it now to continue raising the profile of the borough, supporting significant change in the Council and to establish the Council’s profile on the London agenda.”

**GQ 6 from Councillor Gill:**

“Can the Cabinet Member for Finance please explain why the new £13m Barking Leisure Centre was not opened as scheduled in September 2014 and the reasons for the delay? What is the new projected timeframe for the completion of this project and will the Council enforce financial penalties against the build contractors?”

**Response from Councillor Twomey, Cabinet Member for Finance:**

“Thanks for this question; I am glad it has been raised. I too have raised issues on slippage in terms of what we do.

The original programme was amended due to extensive archaeological investigations undertaken by the Museum of London. This resulted in a revised contractual date of 28 November 2014 completion; a 61 week period.

On top of that the contractors, Wilmott Dixon Construction (WDC), are reporting a 9 week delay to the contract completion date (28th November 2014); the new completion date being 30 January 2015.

They have good reasons for this delay - build being slower than programmed for, the construction in relation to the ground works, the external walls, installation of the main pool tank and construction of the circular staircase. This has had a detrimental effect on other elements of the build such as the installation of the steel works and installation of the roof covering. Officers have had extensive discussions with WDC, including their Managing Director, in an attempt to mitigate these delays. As a result of this, the amount of labour has doubled on site and the contractor is working weekends up until Christmas and is looking at working over Christmas as well.

Within the contract we can claim damages from the contractor for the loss of revenue for the delay in completion of these works. The contract allows the Council to claim up to the value of £41,855.00 per week, providing a potential of £376,695.00 of damages, if the full 9 weeks' delay is claimed. This cost will need to be fully evidenced prior to being able to be claimed through the contract and obviously this cost is being disputed by the contractor. We will update Members as and when that happens.

We are arranging other meetings with WDC to ensure a smooth transition between handover and opening.”

**GQ7 from Councillor Bartlett:**

“The Interim Housing Director recently wrote to staff advising them that he is implementing a new structure that will consist of four Director posts (one Corporate and three Divisional) and that he has consulted staff about these proposals.

This would mean that we will have increased from one and a half Directors to four Directors in four years, and in terms of a permanent establishment from, one and half to four Directors in just six months, with no Member agreement.

Does the Cabinet Member for Housing agree that it would be better if JNC grade increases were not allowed without the specific agreement of this Assembly?”

**Response from Councillor Ashraf, Cabinet Member for Housing:**

“Thanks for your question.

Since I have been appointed as Cabinet Member for Housing, I have asked for some changes, such as bringing Capital Delivery into Housing.

The Housing service previously comprised one Corporate Director and two Divisional Directors. There has been no increase in the number of Corporate Directors. There is now just one additional Divisional Director in the structure. This post will lead on managing and delivering the Council's £100 million housing capital programme and on leading the transformation of the repairs and maintenance service.

The top level Chief Officer structure of the new Housing Directorate was approved by the JNC Salaries and Conditions Panel in September 2014, being a Panel established under the Assembly in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.”

**GQ8 from Councillor Bartlett:**

“Does the Cabinet Member for Health agree that NHS PFI contracts have not provided value for money & have resulted in reduced spending on local health services with the enhanced pressure of closure of A&E units?”

**Response from Councillor Worby, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health:**

“I could just say yes.

I think we know here in Barking and Dagenham with the changes to BHRUT what a disaster the PFI is. I well remember Councillor Smith when he was Leader saying that he had concerns.

These challenges facing us are on our local agenda. I, along with Councillor Keller the Chair of the Health and Adult Services Select Committee, are watching this situation very closely.

Our local hospital has not get anywhere near the national target. It has failed every week at Queens.

It is not clear what the government is going to do.”

**GQ9 from Councillor Mullane:**

“Can the Cabinet Member for Finance please explain what actions are being taken to tackle the causes of the projected gross overspend of over £5m in the Children's Services Department, as highlighted in recent Cabinet meetings?”

**Response from Councillor Twomey, Cabinet Member for Finance:**

“Thank you for the question Councillor Mullane. It is slightly reassuring that we are looking at this historically.

The recent Cabinet budget monitoring report, as have those earlier in the year, includes a significant pressure in the Children's Services budget for the current financial year. The same report also includes a specific appendix which focuses solely on the financial position in Children's Services, the causes of the pressures, actual actions taken, plus potential actions identified and that the large demographic pressures and new Council responsibilities for Children's Services have been recognised in the Council's medium term financial strategy.

There is far more detail in that appendix than I can go into tonight and I would recommend that all Members take the time to read it and the last Budget Monitoring report that went to Cabinet.”

**GQ10 from Councillor Reason:**

“Could the Cabinet Member for Housing please provide an update on Althorne Way and whether or not the original proposals for the site are still being delivered on time or if a new plan is being drawn up for the site?”

**Response from Councillor Geddes, Cabinet Member for Regeneration:**

“Thank you Councillor Reason. I am answering this question rather than the Cabinet Member for Housing, as it relates to the regeneration portfolio.

The masterplan for Becontree Heath went through Cabinet in October 2013.

I understand you have been trying to get information about the project for some time.

The decanting has gone as expected. Demolition is scheduled to start in March 2015. I would like that brought forward. I am not sure of a specific timetable; it has been a project that I thought would last longer and I am quite pleased we have got as far as we have done.

I would be happy to meet with Councillor Reason and her colleagues either side of Christmas to discuss this further.”

**GQ11 from Councillor Young:**

“Can the Cabinet Member for Housing please advise Members if any of the EIB borrowing will be used to invest in other major housing projects in the borough or will all EIB loan money be concentrated on the Gascoigne regeneration project?”

**Response from Councillor Geddes, Cabinet Member for Regeneration:**

“A substantial amount will go to Abbey Road.

We need to spend £89m in the next three years and have the potential to borrow up to £150m from the European Investment Bank towards further regeneration and the development of green energy in the borough.

I am happy to meet with Councillor Young to discuss any ideas he might have.”

**GQ12 from Councillor Young:**

“Could the Cabinet Member for Finance please explain why the Council now requires a full time Chief Executive when the national agenda is about shared appointments and especially during a time of increased budgetary constraints?”

**Response from Councillor Twomey, Cabinet Member for Finance:**

“Thank you for your question. I am not sure it is national policy – it is Eric Pickles’ policy.

I have noticed very recently that the report by Lord Adonis into the leading Tory tri-borough – Hammersmith & Fulham, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster City Council – says it is not the way forward to have a shared model. Lord Adonis said that each borough should have its own sovereignty to maintain its decision making process. The Tories will try to push this shared model forward, but it is not for us.

A full time appointment is now needed.”

**GQ13 from Councillor L Waker:**

“Does the Cabinet Member for Housing agree that the delays in building Phase 1 of the Leys site are both unacceptable and unnecessary and also that an independent soil contamination test after demolition should have been undertaken rather than allowing the builder that stands to gain from any work undertaken, to do this. This and other problems have resulted in delays which have led to even more costs following a Travellers occupation and the costly delays appear to be

continuing.”

**Reply from Councillor Ashraf, Cabinet Member for Housing:**

“Thank you for your question.

The delays are disappointing. In 2011, along with Goresbrook Village and the much larger Gascoigne Estate, it was agreed to take a Development Partner Panel approach to these three estates. In the summer of 2012 this changed and it was agreed to allocate £12.6 m from the Housing Capital Programme to complete this project. In 2013 even the lowest tender exceeded the approved budget and other options were requested by Members.

In early 2014 it was agreed to bridge the budget gap by selling 19 of the properties to be built. Subsequently asbestos was discovered and we are now viewing the level of contamination to see how best to proceed.

I am hoping to meet with ward members and other colleagues early in the New Year to see how we can accelerate progress.

These delays are regrettable.”

**35. Leader's Question Time**

**LQ1 proposed by Councillor Mullane:**

“Referring to the recent case highlighted by Jon Cruddas MP regarding the unmarked grave of Arthur Bradford, who fought in World War One and is buried in Eastbrook Cemetery, can the Leader confirm the Council will continue in its tradition of honouring our war heroes, and help the family to ensure a Gravestone can be placed on the grave, at no cost to the Council?”

**Response from the Leader of the Council:**

“As Members will know we have a proud tradition of supporting those who have served our country in the armed forces. The Council recognise and commemorate the sacrifice through our many war and civilian memorials placed across the borough and our remembrance tributes.

Arthur Bradford enlisted in 1915 and was sent to France and following a gas attack was discharged as unfit for military duty in 1916. He died aged 42 in 1931 and was buried in Eastbrookend Cemetery.

Arthur Bradford is buried in an un-purchased grave, otherwise known as a “common grave” which is also occupied by another fifteen unrelated people. Given this, despite the undoubted sacrifice made by Mr Bradford, I am not in a position to agree to the request being made to erect a gravestone on this grave.

There is no precedent for commemorating any individual in a common grave from the public purse, and no tradition of marking individual graves of residents who have fought for our country, but who did not die whilst on active service.

As Members will be only too well aware, in previous generations, very large numbers of local people served our country in two world wars and indeed have continued to do so both in later conflicts the 20th Century and in this century. It is

not possible therefore for us as a Council to assist this family when we would not be in a position to assist all such families.

However, I am pleased to be able to tell Members that our cemetery management regulations do allow for a stone vase to be placed on a "common grave". This would be a memorial vase of up to a 25cm square with a name, date of birth to date of passing, plus an inscription of the family's choice. Such a memorial would cost £154 and our staff would be happy to assist with the arrangements if Councillor Mullane would like to put them in touch with the Divisional Director."

**LQ2 from Councillor Gill:**

"Does the Leader of the Council believe that democratically elected Councillors should be able to ask questions and/or make representations on behalf of their constituents' at all public Council meetings, which would be in line with the 'Seven Nolan Principles of Public Life'?"

**Response from the Leader of the Council:**

"Can I thank Cllr Gill for his question. The fact that he is asking a question at tonight's Assembly is testament to this administration's desire for openness and transparency. I would also refer him to the Council's Constitution which sets out the correct procedures on asking questions and is there to help Members. The procedures in the Constitution have been refreshed at tonight's meeting to include recommendations from the Public Accounts & Audit Select Committee of which Cllr Gill is a member - something I very much welcome."

**LQ3 from Councillor P Waker:**

"Does the Leader of the Council believe that it is correct to cease the Green Waste collections earlier than originally agreed in this financial year, which generates a small saving in relation to the overspend, but has a major effect on the front-line staff involved, particularly around the Christmas period, while at the same time proposals are being made that will increase managerial costs at various levels across the Council that affect both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account?"

**Response from the Leader of the Council:**

"Members will all recall that on 17 September we agreed our Vision and Priorities for the borough. Since that time with Cabinet colleagues we have started to look at the organisational arrangements that will enable us to deliver that vision. We are clear that money is scarce and we need to be confident that the budget is being spent wisely. We are clear as a leadership team that we want to protect front line services, promote real growth in the borough and work differently with our community. But such an ambitious change programme does need effective and focussed managerial as well as political leadership if the benefits for residents are to be delivered. I therefore make no apology for the management changes we are making now. But I would also remind Assembly that the budget options we are currently consulting on also set out other areas in which we believe management costs can be reduced.

Again all Members will be aware of the need to manage services within our budget each year and also be aware that earlier this year it became apparent that we were forecasting a significant overspend as our spending on vulnerable children increased. Cabinet therefore took the decision on the 25 September to require all

Chief Officers and budget managers to authorise only essential expenditure relating to their service areas. Therefore across the Council many expenditure reduction initiatives have been put in place.

The Council had planned to operate a free green garden waste collection service for 10 months this year, with a closed season in January and February, when there is very limited green waste produced. Deciding to stop the collection of green garden waste at the end of November this year is just one many service changes being made to help bring the budget back in line this year. I appreciate that the decision is not an easy one for those seasonal staff who were given notice earlier than they had expected and would have preferred to have been in a position to continue to offer them work

I think it is of course important to remind Members that this is not the first time the service has been stopped early. For example in 2011 we ceased the service in October, mainly because of the early onset of a severe winter. This year officers advise that although we continue to experience a warm start to the winter, the volumes of waste now being collected are using only about a quarter of the capacity in place with the four vehicles we are running.

Given the difficult choices we need to make, I am sure Councillor Waker agrees with me that prioritising spending on children over green garden waste is the right thing to do.”

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The meeting closed at 9.55 pm.