

MINUTES OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 30 November 2016
(7:00 - 9:27 pm)

PRESENT

Cllr Syed Ghani (Chair)
Cllr Edna Fergus (Deputy Chair)

Cllr Syed Ahammad	Cllr Jeanne Alexander	Cllr Saima Ashraf
Cllr Simon Bremner	Cllr Sade Bright	Cllr Laila M. Butt
Cllr Evelyn Carpenter	Cllr Josephine Channer	Cllr Faruk Choudhury
Cllr Irma Freeborn	Cllr Cameron Geddes	Cllr Rocky Gill
Cllr Kashif Haroon	Cllr Chris Hughes	Cllr Amardeep Singh Jamu
Cllr Jane Jones	Cllr Elizabeth Kangethe	Cllr Mick McCarthy
Cllr Giasuddin Miah	Cllr Dave Miles	Cllr Margaret Mullane
Cllr James Ogungbose	Cllr Adegboyega Oluwole	Cllr Moin Quadri
Cllr Hardial Singh Rai	Cllr Tony Ramsay	Cllr Linda Reason
Cllr Chris Rice	Cllr Lynda Rice	Cllr Darren Rodwell
Cllr Faraaz Shaukat	Cllr Danielle Smith	Cllr Sam Tarry
Cllr Bill Turner	Cllr Dominic Twomey	Cllr Lee Waker
Cllr Phil Waker	Cllr John White	Cllr Maureen Worby
Cllr Dan Young	Cllr Linda Zanitchkhah	

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Sanchia Alasia	Cllr Abdul Aziz	Cllr Melanie Bartlett
Cllr Peter Chand	Cllr Eileen Keller	Cllr Danielle Lawrence
Cllr Jeff Wade		

35. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

36. Minutes (5 October 2016)

The minutes of the Assembly held on 5 October 2016 were confirmed as a correct record.

37. Leader's Statement

The Leader of the Council asked the Chair to grant permission for the Assembly to observe a minute's silence in memory of the victims of Stephen Port.

The Assembly stood for a minute's silence.

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

- Noting the contribution Wyn Chapman, who had recently passed away, made to the Council particularly in her support of Mayoral Charities;
- The announcement of the Government Autumn Statement, which would hit the lower income families the hardest again;
- The creation of the Accountable Care Organisation, led by Councillor Worby, which was being undermined by the Governments Sustainability and Transformation Plan; and
- The work undertaken by Councillor Geddes in the campaign the Council had waged against “Pay to Stay” and for his work on the Right to Invest Policy.
- As seen on the recent BBC2 documentary, the Council had 18,000 families a year presenting as homeless against the backdrop of only 640 council homes became available a year. Despite this, the Council had one of the best records in London for replacing council homes lost under the Right to Buy.

The Leader also announced that he had recently been appointed as the Executive Member for City Development at London Councils.

The Leader spoke highly of the work recently undertaken by the Cabinet, including:

- Councillor Twomey’s efforts to bring the Children’s Care & Support budget back in line;
- Councillor Carpenter leading the fight against Grammar Schools and helping the Boroughs schools to become more robust;
- The introduction of one hour free parking in town centres and shopping parades by Councillor Butt;
- The Borough Manifesto which would shape the Councils goals, successfully led by Councillor Ashraf;
- Councillor Lynda Rice for achieving a record response from residents on the green waste consultation;
- Councillor Bright for her work on equalities, for which the Council were recently presented with a GEC award; and
- Councillor Turner for making sure that performance was at the core of everything the Council does.

38. Appointments

The Assembly **resolved** to appoint Councillor Haroon to the Personnel Board.

39. Barking and Dagenham Member Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2015/16

The Chair of the Member Corporate Parenting Group presented the Barking and Dagenham Member Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2015/16.

The Member Corporate Parenting Group had a responsibility to closely scrutinise the work undertaken by officers and partner agencies to support young people looked after and care leavers to achieve the best outcomes.

The report showed the achievements of the previous year, as well as setting out the challenges faced in the coming year. The report also provided a summary of

the progress that had been made in relation to the 'promise' made to children looked after and the 'pledge' to care leavers by the Member Corporate Parenting Group as part of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

In response to questions, the Assembly were advised that:

- The Borough was the third highest London Borough for the number of children adopted, although it was noted that the number had gone down slightly;
- A scrutiny review on adoption was currently being undertaken by the Children's Services Select Committee and the outcome would be reported to the Assembly in due course; and
- Visits at a minimum frequency of six weeks to children for the first year of being in care had dropped by 17.5%. Work had been undertaken to stabilise the service and the key focus was in ensuring visits were made and tracked.

The Assembly **resolved** to note the 2015/16 Annual Report of the Member Corporate Parenting Group.

40. Safeguarding Adults Board and Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Reports

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration presented a report on the Local Safeguarding Adult Boards (SAB) and Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs).

The Boards had a statutory obligation to compile and publish an Annual Report and to provide this to the Cabinet Member as Chair of the local Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Annual Reports highlighted the work of the SAB and LSCB, setting out the key achievements, work of the partners and future priorities and sought to demonstrate how the Safeguarding Board had worked to improve the protection of vulnerable adults and children across Barking and Dagenham. The reports contained contributions from a range of organisations who were involved in safeguarding vulnerable adults and children in the Borough.

The Cabinet Member reported that partners had worked successfully together over the past year. The statutory partners had provided financial resources to support the SAB and LSCB to fulfill their functions and to support the undertaking of Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) and Children's Serious Case Reviews.

All Members of the Council were corporate parents and would therefore be updated on a regular basis on statistics relation to the SAB and LCSB.

In response to a question from Assembly, the Cabinet Member advised that following the independent inquiry on child sexual exploitation in Rotherham, the Council had reviewed its processes accordingly. The Cabinet Member advised that the Council must also talk openly about the various issues faced by adults and children, including female genital mutilation and domestic violence, to raise awareness.

The Assembly **resolved** to receive the Safeguarding Adults Board and Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Reports.

41. Treasury Management Strategy Statement Mid-Year Review 2016/17

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Investment presented a report on the Treasury Management Strategy Statement Mid-Year Review 2016/17.

The Assembly were advised that regulation changes had placed greater onus on elected Members in respect of review and scrutiny of treasury management policy and activities. This mid-year review report was important in that respect as it provided details of the mid-year position for treasury activities and highlighted compliance with the Council's policies previously approved by the Assembly.

The Assembly agreed the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2016/17 on 25 February 2016 which incorporated the Prudential Indicators. This report, which was presented to and endorsed by the Cabinet at its meeting on 15 November 2016, updated Members on treasury management activities in the current year.

The Cabinet Member highlighted some of the key issues in the report, advising of external factors following the referendum held on 23 June 2016 which included sterling falling dramatically and the Bank of England cutting the Base Rate to 0.25%.

In response to questions from Assembly on borrowing, the Cabinet Member advised that there were no plans to borrow up to the Council's limits. The Council had been advised that the Lender Option Borrower Option (LOBO) loan with Barclays had changed terms which were not advantageous for the Council. Further options had been explored and it was noted the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) had the ability to borrow £10m. Finally, the Cabinet Member advised that all reserves together for the Council currently totalled £41m.

The Assembly **resolved** to:

- (i) Note the Treasury Management Strategy Statement Mid-Year Review 2016/17;
- (ii) Note that the Council complied with all 2016/17 treasury management indicators during the first half of the 2016/17 financial year;
- (iii) Note that the value of investments as at 30 September 2016 totalled £259.0m;
- (iv) Note that the value of long-term borrowing as at 30 September 2016 totalled £454.9m, comprising market, PWLB and EIB loans; and
- (v) Note that the value of short term borrowing as at 30 September 2016 totalled £63.9m.

42. Motions

None had been received.

43. Questions With Notice

Question 1

From Councillor L Waker

“There are parking issues at the Heathway shopping centre where congestion and obstruction is caused through inconsiderate parking on double yellow lines.

The area is already very congested at almost all times of the day now, but with the amount of stationary vehicles in particular mini cabs it not only makes things very frustrating for other drivers but is a serious health and safety problem with them obstructing emergency vehicles police, fire and ambulances.

With an increase in Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) being issued in the Borough, are there any plans to start giving PCNs to the cars that park on the Heathway shopping area double yellow lines?”

Response

The Cabinet Member for Enforcement and Community Safety advised that the Heathway area was patrolled and enforced regularly. In October 2016, 55 penalty charge notices were issued for various parking contraventions to parked vehicles. The Heathway was recognised as a priority area for enforcement and the Council had previously engaged with the local mini cab firm and would continue to do so.

Supplementary Question

Councillor L Waker enquired as to whether there were any transportation plans for the Borough and the Heathway.

The Cabinet Member confirmed this was currently being discussed.

Question 2

From Councillor L Waker

“The green waste collections were stopped by the Council at the end of September and subsequently a consultation card was sent to residents to ask if they would opt for some form of green waste service if they paid £1 a week.

If a resident pays £1 a week, what service do they receive?”

Response

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene advised that the consultation was very successful, with a total of 7,690 responses. 49.87%

of those residents who responded indicated they would be willing to pay £1 a week and therefore the Council would look at developing a paid service.

Supplementary Question

Councillor L Waker asked for details of what type of service residents would get for £1 a week.

The Cabinet Member would advise on the details of any future collection scheme in due course.

Question 3

From Councillor Mullane

“In the light of the tragic events in Church Elm Lane and Wyhill Walk, Dagenham, which ended in the tragic loss of a young life and injuries to others, could the Leader of the Council confirm what measures are being put in place to both reassure and protect our community?”

Response

The Leader of the Council expressed his condolences to the family of Duran Kajiamia for their loss and advised that the other victim was recovering from their physical injuries. Along with Ward Members, the Council and Police held a community meeting on 24 November and 186 people had attended. Residents concerns were listened to and a number of actions arising from the meeting had already been put in place. Ongoing consultation would continue with the residents.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Mullane advised that CCTV cameras were mentioned at the meeting and asked that Ward Councillors be informed of the proposed locations at the earliest opportunity.

The Leader confirmed ward members would be contacted in due course.

Question 4

From Councillor Haroon

“Can the Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth & Investment explain what impact the Chancellor’s recent Autumn Statement will have on the Council and local residents?”

Response

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Investment advised that the Government had abandoned its commitment to reduce public sector net borrowing to a surplus by the end of this Parliament and was now looking at a deficit of £21.9bn rather than at the previous projected surplus of £10.4bn.

There were no further savings to the benefits budget, and the triple lock on the state pension remained, ensuring pensioners' income increased in line with the cost of living.

The Cabinet Member referred to the National Living Wage increase, which would rise to £7.50 in April. It was noted that the Council paid the London Living Wage which would rise to £9.61 in April.

Question 5

From Councillor Freeborn

"Now that the public consultation on the Council's Borough Manifesto has closed, can the Cabinet Member for Community Leadership & Engagement set out the next steps for this project?"

Response

The Cabinet Member for Community Leadership & Engagement advised that nearly 3000 people responded to the consultation. A conference with over 100 attendees took place on 14 November and the feedback from this and the consultation would be used to develop the Borough Manifesto. The Borough Manifesto would set out a series of outcomes and priorities for the Borough to focus on for the next 20 years.

Question 6

From Councillor Shaukat

"Will the Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth & Investment clarify what progress is being made to ensure the budget for the Council's Children's Care and Support service in 2017/18 is not overspent?"

Response

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Investment advised that at its height, the estimated pressures in the Children Social Care budget exceeded £11m. Next year the projection is it will come in on and this will have been achieved without compromising the service.

Question 7

From Councillor Hughes

"Can the Cabinet Member for Equalities & Cohesion outline what steps the Council is taking to promote the health and wellbeing of its workforce?"

Response

The Cabinet Member for Equalities and Cohesion advised that the Council was recently successful in securing the London Healthy Workforce Charter. The Council had been awarded for the Commitment Level and were

working towards the Excellence level.

Question 8

From Councillor Quadri

“Will the Leader update the Assembly on the Council’s plans to allow Coventry University to establish a new campus at Dagenham Civic Centre?”

Response

In his response, the Leader confirmed Coventry University’s commitment to the importance of the Civic Centre and confirmed the MP’s surgeries and, when required, meetings would be held at the Civic Centre. Heads of Terms has been agreed and the Council was close to finalising a 20 year lease for the phased occupation by the University starting in January 2017. The Leader advised that the University were actively marketing the campus and teaching would begin in September 2017.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Quadri enquired as to whether there would be subsidized fees for local students.

The Leader advised that the fees at the university would be capped at £6,000 for all students and not £9,000, which was the average fee.

Question 9

From Councillor P Waker

“It would appear to some that the total of the borough’s graffiti removal costs, and possibly more on top, has been attributed to the Housing Revenue Account, and flatted tenants and leaseholders in particular. Could the relevant Cabinet Member tell us if this has happened and if it has what would be the justification for doing this?”

Response

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Investment reassured the Member that this had not happened.

Supplementary Question

Councillor P Waker raised concerns that the Council may be acting illegal and questioned the figures that had been provided to him previously.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that the Council was not acting illegally and advised that in 2015/16 the cost of graffiti removal was £471,529.41 and in total 85% was spent on the housing stock totalling £400,800.00. Of that sum leaseholders had been asked to contribute £129,972.56.

Question 10

From Councillor P Waker

As a way of assisting tenants subject to detrimental aspects of the most recent Housing Act, particularly the so called "pay-to-stay" section of the legislation, a section of the Act that many consider to be a punitive measure that sets out to penalise working people, a part-buy scheme for current tenants has been trialled. What has been the take up of this scheme so far?

Response

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Investment advised that they take up so far had been lower than expected. Around 100 information packs had been issued to residents which had resulted in two firm applications that were currently being progressed.

Supplementary Question

Councillor P Waker raised concerns that the scheme was not going to be the answer to the Councils issues considering the take up so far.

The Cabinet Member advised that the scheme was not planned to answer the Councils housing issues and although take up so far was slow, it would improve over time.

Question 11

From Councillor McCarthy

"I would like to ask the relevant lead member if we have had any discussions with Sainsbury's prior to them announcing that they would not be providing the promised 900 jobs in the borough along with the exciting retail opportunities for our residents following their decision to not build planned supermarkets in Dagenham and Barking having acquired the sites and got planning permission."

Response

The Cabinet Member for Economic and Social Development confirmed that a series of communication had taken place and the news that Sainsbury's were no longer proceeding with the developments. With regard to both developments, the Cabinet Member advised that there were no local reasons for the decision, the reasons cited were associated with the national challenges faced.

Supplementary Question

Councillor McCarthy enquired as to why the Dagenham East Regeneration Group no longer met.

The Cabinet Member advised he would look into this and would respond to

Councillor McCarthy.

Question 12

From Councillor McCarthy

“Can I ask the relevant lead member what discussions at a political level directly with the Exchequer have we had to realise our 2020 ambition following the announcement in the Autumn Statement of 23 November 2016 of an extra £1.1bn for English local transport networks, £220m to reduce traffic pinch points, more than £1bn for digital infrastructure and £1.8bn from Local Growth Fund to English regions, £2.3bn to be used to help provide 100,000 new homes in high-demand areas and another £1.4bn to deliver an extra 40,000 affordable homes?”

Response

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Investment that given the Autumn Statement was only made last week, the Council had not yet had any direct political engagement with the exchequer. However, now the announcements had been made the Council would engage with the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Treasury and aim to do so in partnership with the Mayor of London.

Supplementary Question

Councillor McCarthy stated that the Council had a record of delivery and asked what the Council were planning to do.

The Cabinet Member advised that the Council would be working very closely with the Mayor of London.

Standing orders were suspended at this juncture to allow the meeting to continue beyond 9.00pm.

Question 13

From Councillor Gill

“Could the relevant Cabinet Member please explain why Barking & Dagenham Council spent £1.8m on 40 temporary senior managers during 2015/16?”

Response

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Investment advised that as a large organisation and employer, the Council always needed to employ a number of temporary managers. The trend however was downwards as the Council spent more money on temporary managers in 2013/14 than in 2015/16.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Gill stated the average cost was £45,000 per temporary manager and enquired of the Lead Member as to what contributions had these temporary managers made to the Council.

The Cabinet Member advised that all temporary managers had in their respective areas made important and worthwhile contributions during a time of great challenge for the Council and that the cost was actually higher in the past, averaging £58,000 per manager in 2013/14.

Question 14

From Councillor Gill

Could the relevant Cabinet Member please confirm the total cost to date of the daily-rate consultants/business analysts working on the Ambition 2020 programme & related activities across the Council?

Response

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Investment advised that the Ambition 2020 programme had concluded in July and therefore there were now no such costs associated with the programme. Some analysts were currently working in the implementation of My Place, which was improving the responsiveness of the repairs and maintenance service.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Gill invited the Cabinet Member to attend the Public Accounts and Audit Select Committee (PAASC) on 5 December 2016 and asked how long before current level of expenditure would cause the Council financial hardship.

The Cabinet Member thanked Councillor Gill for the invitation and confirmed he would attend the PAASC meeting. In response to the question, the Cabinet Member advised that recommendations agreed in July would see savings of £47m year on year being delivered by 2020/21 with just under £10m being delivered next year.

Question 15

From Councillor Young

“Does the relevant Cabinet Member agree on recent reports in the Evening Standard that “Barking and Dagenham is the least prosperous area in London”?”

Response

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Investment confirmed he did not agree with the report.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Young enquired as to what actions the Council was taking to tackle the problems with such reports from London wide papers.

The Cabinet Member advised that the positive press coming out of the Borough significantly outweighed the negative press seen in such papers. Residents and workers in the Borough could see what the Council was doing to build a prosperous Borough day in and day out and this was shown through the vibrant community.

Question 16

From Councillor Young

“Can the relevant Cabinet Member please explain the lack of social housing in the regeneration development plans for Beam Park?”

Response

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Investment clarified that there was no lack of social housing in the regeneration plans for Beam Park.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Young asked if the Council needed to look at the number of social housing being built in the Borough before residents were priced out?

The Cabinet Member advised that the Council were always looking at what it could do for residents. In total 36% of the total housing built on Beam Park would be affordable housing.

Question 17

From Councillor Tarry

“It appears that the North East London Acute Reconfiguration Programme Board is going ahead with the King George Hospital A&E closure as a key part of their Sustainability and Transformation Plan, can the relevant cabinet member confirm that the Council and local residents will have the opportunity to comment on the Sustainability and Transformation Plan before it is finalised?”

Response

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration advised that the North East London Acute Reconfiguration Board Programme Board did not exist, however the consultation on the Sustainability and Transformation Plan was open to everyone in the Borough.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Tarry asked what the impact would be on Chadwell Heath residents.

The Cabinet Member advised that there would be a financial gap that could not be bridged and therefore the impact on residents would not be good.

Question 18

From Councillor Tarry

“Can the Lead Member with responsibility for Health confirm that LBBD will campaign and lobby against the closure of King George Hospital A&E?”

Response

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration confirmed that the Council had campaigned and lobby against the closure and would continue to do so, however it was noted that the decision to close King George Hospital A&E had been taken five years ago.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Tarry asked if the Council would be willing to work together with residents to fight the closure.

The Cabinet Member confirmed this could happen, however she did not want to raise expectations too high of what the Council may be able to do.