Transforming Our Borough - London’s Growth Opportunity

The findings of the independent Growth Commission will help us to establish a blueprint for transforming the borough over the next 20 years and beyond. We have already seen early benefits from the Commission’s work by securing one of 11 new London Housing Zone.

The Growth Commission recommended that ten key steps were essential for realising our vision.

We have already agreed those recommendations and are in the process of implementing the 10 key steps.

Building on what the Commission proposed, we commit ourselves to a set of principles.

We will:
- Develop with partners a 20-year vision for the borough, backed by a series of measurable goals.
- Support the renewal of civic culture through much more active involvement of the local people and communities, organised and empowered to support and challenge the public and private sectors.
- Develop the housing offer in the borough to reflect London’s diversity - including social housing for rent, affordable sub-market stock, a well-regulated private rented sector and a very substantially increased stock of owner-occupied housing.
- Increase a vibrant local business community providing a home for local entrepreneurs and businesses, large and small from around the world.
- Leave no-one behind, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential and benefit from the borough’s growth.
- Ensure that the local community and business, as well as the Council and other public sector organisations, each play an appropriate leading role.
- Benchmark everything the Council does against the excellence that is part of the best of the Borough’s history in housing and manufacturing.
- Take decisions based on the very best available evidence.

Over the next 12 months, we will lead the development of the ‘Barking and Dagenham Manifesto’, which will set out what the borough needs from its London and national partners, with a programme to develop those proposals and a sustained commitment to seeing them delivered on the ground.
As part of our ‘Ambition 2020’ programme to transform the Council, we propose to set up a borough-wide regeneration vehicle as recommended by the Commission. That would bring together the expertise of the Council, other statutory partners, and the private sector in a new Council-owned company to manage the delivery of the borough’s housing and regeneration plans.

We will ensure that our progress in implementing these, and the other recommendations, is reviewed and reported publicly on an annual basis. Once agreed, the key targets in the Borough Manifesto will provide the framework for managing our performance and the accountability of others for achieving them.

The Commission’s recommendations about each specific area of the borough will be considered as part of the local planning processes. We will not, however, be taking any further action on their proposal to consider a large scale voluntary transfer (LVST) of the council’s housing stock. We do not consider that it would be financially beneficial at this stage; and we believe that the management of our council housing stock can be better achieved by a different approach - which we are proposing as part of our plans to transform the council - ‘My Place’. We also do not agree with their recommendation to pause the development of Barking Riverside when we should be looking to accelerate it to boost numbers of new homes.

We will be engaging local schools and other partners in considering the Commission’s recommendations about supporting people through early years, educational attainment, and skills development. We will formulate our action plans in the light of that engagement. Given the current government proposals on schools’ funding and status, we will need time to work with our education partners on the right targets and priorities. But we are clear that closing the gap with London and exceeding the average is an essential ambition for our children and young people.

We believe that the residents should also reap the benefits of economic growth by seeing the profits from investment being re-invested in our public services. The Council will develop a capital investment programme of our own.

This will involve the identification of potential investment opportunities in both residential and commercial properties. Our aspiration is to invest as far as possible inside the borough to act as a boost to regeneration and economic development. Investments will be sought outside the borough if they provide an appropriate level of return.

In addition to the 10 year plans which we already have to invest £200 million in new council homes and £350 million in maintaining our stock, we propose to invest at least £100m over the next 5 years, with a target net rate of return of 5%. That will generate an annual net income for the Council of £5 million by 2020/21.
Ten Key Steps for Barking and Dagenham

| The Borough should identify and adopt a series of ambitious, measurable targets. |
| The final articulation of these targets should be developed through processes of consultation with the community and voluntary sectors, business and other stakeholders in the area. |
| The Commission believes Barking and Dagenham should adhere to a series of principles in the delivery of its ambitions. |
| An action plan to develop civil society organisations both across, and in different parts of, the Borough. This should include the provision of very modest funding to enable meetings to be held and information to be circulated. Support should be available both to enable existing organisations to modernise and increase their reach in the community and to enable new community interests to come together and find their voice. |
| A commitment to do market research to underpin everything that the Council does next, in order to establish what the residents of the Borough want from it and its partners. |
| A very significantly improved communications capacity to steward the interface between the Council leadership and its workforce, the community and stakeholders. |
| Working with delivery partners in schools, commissioners in the NHS, with neighbouring boroughs on matters of shared interest, the focus of the Council and its staff should be on enabling every resident of the Borough to fulfil their potential through the reform and the delivery of services aimed at reducing dependency and increasing employment, skills and wage growth in every part of the community. This is principally the work of the Ambition 2020 programme in the Council. The Commission’s view is that seeing that programme fulfilled ought to be the driving focus of the Council. |
| The creation of a Borough wide regeneration vehicle would be an early statement of the Council’s new-found intent and this is what the Commission recommends that the Council should do. |
| The creation of a new delivery vehicle will require upfront investment if the gains are to be secured. In this area, leadership can be brought in with new people. The same is true at the top of the Council, where further investment at third tier level is vital. But at every level throughout the Council, the new approach needs to be embedded. This needs to done through a major commitment to organisational development. |
| The kind of change programme which the Council is to embark on should be accompanied by a programme of member development. |
| The Council, once its top team is significantly in place, should undertake a top team development process, leveraging the experience of over places such as |
Manchester which have gone through significant change.

A particular emphasis in organisational development should be placed on policy expertise and research skills. Some of these must be in-house within the Council. Some might also be located in partner organisations such as the North East London Strategic Alliance.

Arising from this Commission’s work should be a clearly articulated statement of what the Borough needs from its London and national partners, a manifesto with a programme to develop these proposals and a sustained commitment to seeing them delivered on the ground.

Central to the embedding of a new way of working across the Borough needs to be a “One Borough” programme. The Commission believes the best way is to intensify community outreach combining heritage and cultural activities.

In addition to reporting through Council mechanisms, there should be pre-agreed staging posts at which progress will be reported, achievements celebrated and setbacks discussed.

Either by reconvening the Commission or by appointing an independent reviewer, the Council should commit at the outset to a public annual review report, and its wide dissemination across the community, which would set out the achievements and obstacles in the past period and assess the likely immediate future in the delivery of the Council’s objectives.