

MINUTES OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 13 September 2017
(7:08 - 8:09 pm)

PRESENT

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

Cllr Syed Ahammad	Cllr Jeanne Alexander	Cllr Saima Ashraf
Cllr Abdul Aziz	Cllr Simon Bremner	Cllr Sade Bright
Cllr Laila M. Butt	Cllr Evelyn Carpenter	Cllr Josephine Channer
Cllr Faruk Choudhury	Cllr Edna Fergus	Cllr Irma Freeborn
Cllr Cameron Geddes	Cllr Kashif Haroon	Cllr Amardeep Singh Jamu
Cllr Jane Jones	Cllr Elizabeth Kangethe	Cllr Danielle Lawrence
Cllr Giasuddin Miah	Cllr Margaret Mullane	Cllr James Ogungbose
Cllr Adegboyega Oluwole	Cllr Moin Quadri	Cllr Hardial Singh Rai
Cllr Chris Rice	Cllr Lynda Rice	Cllr Darren Rodwell
Cllr Faraaz Shaukat	Cllr Danielle Smith	Cllr Liam Smith
Cllr Bill Turner	Cllr Dominic Twomey	Cllr Jeff Wade
Cllr Phil Waker	Cllr Maureen Worby	

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Rocky Gill	Cllr Chris Hughes	Cllr Eileen Keller
Cllr Mick McCarthy	Cllr Dave Miles	Cllr Sam Tarry
Cllr Lee Waker	Cllr John White	

18. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

19. Minutes - (19 July 2017)

The minutes of the Assembly held on 19 July 2017 were confirmed as correct.

20. Death of Former Councillor Darrin Best

The Assembly paid tribute to former Councillor Darrin Best who passed away on 18 August 2017.

The Assembly noted that Mr Best was first elected as a Councillor for the Village Ward in 1990 and served until his resignation in 2004. During his time on the Council he served on a number of committees including Finance, Education, Planning and Development, Housing, Establishment and Social Services. He also served as Deputy Chair on the Health and Consumer Services Committee and the Assembly.

The Assembly paid tributes to Mr Best, recalling fond memories of time spent

together.

The Assembly stood and observed a minute's silence in memory of Mr Best.

21. 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:

- The Overground extension to Barking Riverside, which had been approved;
- The Number 5 bus service from Romford to Canning Town, which now stopped at Queen's Hospital giving a direct bus service for residents; and
- The transformation of the Councils services, which would be reaching a key milestone in October.

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

- Councillor Ashraf's work to help to secure funding for Participatory City;
- Councillor Bright's meetings with community groups and faith groups to help build community cohesion;
- Councillor Carpenter's work supporting local schools;
- Councillor Worby's work overseeing Personal Emergency Plans for all residents in Council supported living accommodation, in response to the tragic events of the Grenfell fire;
- Councillor Butt who, alongside the Leader, had been working to improve the new tri-borough police partnership Base Command Unit (BCU) and was heavily involved in the campaign to save Dagenham Police Station from closure;
- Councillor Rice's pilot of deep cleaning the Borough's roads;
- Councillor Geddes taking the fight to the Government over the closure of Dagenham Job Centre;
- Councillor Twomey's leading role in the development of the Council's Investment Strategy which would play a key part in the future funding of services; and
- Councillor Turner's ongoing meetings with Cabinet colleagues to review performance across all Council services and ensure that proper plans were in place to meet targets and improve services.

22. Appointments

There were no appointments.

23. Appointment of Faith Representative Co-optees to the Children's Services Select Committee

The Director of Law and Governance introduced a report regarding the appointment of faith representatives to the Children's Services Select Committee.

The Assembly **resolved** to appoint Ingrid Robinson and Glenda Spencer to the positions of Faith Representative Co-optee (Church of England) and Faith Representative Co-optee (Roman Catholic Church) respectively, on the Children's

Services Select Committee for four year terms.

24. Outcome of Joint Local Area SEND Inspection

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration and the Cabinet Member for Educational Attainment and School Improvement introduced a report to the Assembly on the joint local area Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Inspection in Barking and Dagenham.

Between 27 March and 31 March 2017, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of Barking and Dagenham, to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the disability and special educational needs reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. The inspection was led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors from Ofsted, supported by a team of inspectors from Ofsted and the CQC children's services division.

During the 5-day inspection, the inspection team sought the views and opinions of children and young people, their parents and carers. Inspectors also visited a range of providers and spoke to leaders, staff and governors about how they were implementing the special educational needs reforms.

The Assembly noted that the local area received the final joint inspection letter from Ofsted and the CQC on 21 June 2017. The letter detailed the inspectors' key findings and outcomes in a narrative of areas of strength and areas requiring development, rather than a specific grading. Barking and Dagenham's Local Area SEND Inspection letter was attached to the report at Appendix A.

The Assembly were pleased to note that, overall, the outcome of Barking and Dagenham's inspection was positive. The inspection letter highlighted many strengths across education, health and social care, particularly in terms of the support that was offered to children and young people with SEND and their families.

In terms of development, the inspectors noted that insufficient numbers of parents and young people knew about, or used, the Local Offer to find advice and help. The Local Offer sets out in one place information about provision across education, health and social care for children and young people who have SEN or were disabled – including support for their families. A further area related to the capacity to provide therapies such as speech and language, occupational and physiotherapy, due to issues with recruiting and training staff which led to delays in Educational, Health and Care (EHC) plans. The low proportion of young adults who had learning disabilities in training and employment was also identified as an area for development.

The Cabinet Members advised that in response to the findings of the inspection, an action plan was in development which would be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board. The action plan would include proposals to further improve the offer for children and young people with disabilities and/ or special educational needs in Barking and Dagenham.

The Assembly **resolved** to:

- (i) Note the findings of the SEND inspection, as detailed in the letter at Appendix A to the report; and
- (ii) Note the development of a multi-agency Local Area SEND Action Plan to address the identified areas for improvement and improve outcomes for children and young people with disabilities in Barking and Dagenham.

25. Motions

There were no motions.

26. Questions With Notice

Question 1

From Councillor Freeborn

“Can the Leader explain what the Council is doing in response to MOPAC’s (the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime) proposals to close Dagenham Police Station together with the remaining front counters that help provide a visible police presence in the borough?”

Response

The Leader advised that under new proposals announced by MOPAC, Dagenham Police Station in Rainham Road South would be sold off as part of cost-cutting measures imposed upon the Metropolitan Police. If implemented, the proposals would leave just one 24-hour counter open to Borough residents at Barking Learning Centre, with the counters at Chadwell Heath and Farr Avenue also closing.

The Leader outlined some of the actions taken so far in response to the proposals, which included:

- Residents, Members of the Council, Jon Cruddas MP and London Assembly Member Desai Unmesh staging a protest outside Dagenham Police Station;
- Letters sent to the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, outlining concerns about any proposal to downgrade police presence in the borough; and
- A meeting with the Deputy London Mayor for Policing and Crime, Sophie Linden, to repeat opposition calls to the closure proposals.

Question 2

From Councillor Freeborn

“Can the Leader let me know what action the Council has taken to tackle the under performance of the East Base Command Unit (EBCU), the tri-borough police pilot being shared between Barking and Dagenham, Redbridge and Havering?”

Response

The Leader referred again to the letters sent to the London Mayor voicing concerns about declining police numbers and the Borough Command Unit Area East's ability to respond to the policing challenges faced in Barking & Dagenham.

Meetings had taken place with Sophie Linden, Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime, with Councillor Jas Athwal to discuss ways of improving the BCU.

Three issues were raised at this meeting:

- The need for joint tasking with the Council to improve outcomes;
- The need to strengthen the leadership of the BCU to make it work more efficiently and effectively; and
- And the need to secure additional police resources to ensure that the Borough had the right number of officers.

Question 3

From Councillor Haroon

"Could the Cabinet Member Educational Attainment and School Improvement let me know her view on the progress being made by the Borough's schools following the publication of this year's GCSE and A level results?"

Response

The Cabinet Member for Educational Attainment and School Improvement commented that she was delighted to have the opportunity to recognise and celebrate the achievement of the Borough's young people. A Level results had held up well under the new grading arrangements.

The Borough's schools collectively improved by 3% on the crucial English and Maths results against what appeared to be a national drop and specific mention was made of the continued improvements

Question 4

From Councillor Haroon

"Can the Cabinet Member for Economic and Social Development let me know what the Council has done to oppose the closure of Dagenham Job Centre?"

Response

The Cabinet Member for Economic and Social Development advised that a consultation response on the proposed closure was sent to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on 27 February 2017 calling for a dialogue on how a Job Centre Plus (JCP) presence in Dagenham could be

maintained. That request was rebuffed by JCP District officials on the basis that they could not enter any discussion until a decision had actually been made by DWP Ministers.

A further letter was sent to David Gauke, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, on 8 August 2017 after the closure had been confirmed. This again called for a halt to any movement of staff or claimants to the Barking JCP until meaningful discussions had taken place on dedicated employment support for Dagenham residents.

A meeting was due to be held with the JCP District Manager for East London on Thursday 14 September to discuss the closure and wider partnership issues.

Question 5

From Councillor Miah

“Can the Leader explain if the Council has taken any action to raise commuters’ concerns about the continuing delays on the Gospel Oak line due to the delayed electrification works?”

Response

The Cabinet Member for Economic and Social Development advised that the Leader wrote to Sir Peter Hendy, the Chair of Network Rail, on 9 August explaining that residents and businesses had already endured eight months of disruption on the line and to argue that the Borough’s residents should not continue to experience delays to their journeys.

Sir Hendy responded on 18 August and apologised for the continuing disruption and Network Rail had subsequently made some key changes to the way it was managing the project to end further delays. This included changes to the senior project team and more rigorous scrutiny of the works.

The works were due to be completed by Spring 2018, thereby enabling the introduction of the much-needed fleet of new trains which, from 2021, would also serve the Barking Riverside area.

Question 6

From Councillor Miah

“Can the Cabinet Member for the Environment and Street Scene let Members know what action the Council is taking to make the streets of the Borough cleaner?”

Response

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Street Scene advised that a new cleansing regime for the Borough was being designed, based on lessons

learnt from an ambitious deep cleaning exercise recently undertaken by the Council.

The managers and supervisors within the Public Realm service would also be receiving training on how to obtain evidence from fly tipping, which would support the Council's drive to undertake prosecutions and issue fixed penalty notices.

Question 7

From Councillor Choudhury

"Will the Cabinet Member for Economic and Social Development let me know what progress is being made with the long-running campaign to secure a direct bus route to Queen's Hospital for residents of the borough?"

Response

The Cabinet Member for Economic and Social Development advised that this had been a top priority for the Council and, following a successful campaign led by the Council and Margaret Hodge MP, Transport for London had implemented a revised route for the No. 5 service from 26 August 2017 which took it to Queen's Hospital.

27. Resolution to Extend Six Month Attendance Rule for Councillor John White - Section 85 of Local Government Act 1972

(The Chair agreed that this item 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.)

The Assembly received a report from the Chief Executive regarding the consideration of dispensation under the provisions of Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 in respect of Councillor John White's non-attendance at designated Council meetings since 19 May 2017.

The Leader advised that Councillor White had been suffering from serious ill-health for several months which had prevented his attendance at meetings and proposed that the Assembly accept the reasons for his absence.

The Assembly **resolved** to approve Councillor John White's non-attendance at meetings, under the provisions of Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, in the event that he failed to attend a qualifying meeting prior to 20 November 2017.