

MINUTES OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 12 September 2018
(7:02 - 9:08 pm)

PRESENT

Cllr Elizabeth Kangethe (Chair)
Cllr Faruk Choudhury (Deputy Chair)

Cllr Andrew Achilleos	Cllr Dorothy Akwaboah	Cllr Sanchia Alasia
Cllr Abdul Aziz	Cllr Toni Bankole	Cllr Simon Bremner
Cllr Princess Bright	Cllr Sade Bright	Cllr Laila M. Butt
Cllr Evelyn Carpenter	Cllr Peter Chand	Cllr Josie Channer
Cllr John Dulwich	Cllr Edna Fergus	Cllr Irma Freeborn
Cllr Cameron Geddes	Cllr Syed Ghani	Cllr Rocky Gill
Cllr Kashif Haroon	Cllr Amardeep Singh Jamu	Cllr Jane Jones
Cllr Eileen Keller	Cllr Mohammed Khan	Cllr Donna Lumsden
Cllr Olawale Martins	Cllr Mick McCarthy	Cllr Giasuddin Miah
Cllr Dave Miles	Cllr Margaret Mullane	Cllr Adegboyega Oluwole
Cllr Glenda Paddle	Cllr Simon Perry	Cllr Moin Quadri
Cllr Foyzur Rahman	Cllr Tony Ramsay	Cllr Chris Rice
Cllr Lynda Rice	Cllr Ingrid Robinson	Cllr Paul Robinson
Cllr Darren Rodwell	Cllr Emily Rodwell	Cllr Muhammad Saleem
Cllr Faraaz Shaukat	Cllr Bill Turner	Cllr Dominic Twomey
Cllr Lee Waker	Cllr Phil Waker	Cllr Maureen Worby

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Saima Ashraf

21. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

22. Minutes (18 July 2018)

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2018 were confirmed as correct.

23. 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:

- A tribute to Gary Doolan, a highly-respected Islington Councillor and GMB Officer who had recently passed away;
- The positive comments that he had received at the recent LGA Conference regarding the progress being made by the Council;
- The need to maintain pressure on the Government to properly fund the NHS and social care after years of underfunding.
- The excellent work being undertaken by the Cabinet Member for Social Care and

Health Integration and officers to protect children from the dangers posed by the internet and other potential risks.

- His appointment to the London Councils' Executive as Lead for Housing and Planning.

- The fantastic GCSE and A level results achieved by the Borough's pupils this year;

- The Council's success in the "Best Social Housing Initiative" category at the Municipal Journal Awards 2018; and

- The Council's congratulations to the Al Madina Mosque on being awarded '5 Star Beacon status' in recognition of its leadership and work in the community.

24. Appointments

There were no appointments.

25. Appointment of Parent Governor (Primary) Co-optee to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Monitoring Officer presented a report on the appointment of a Parent Governor (Primary) Co-optee to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Nominations to fill the vacancy had resulted in one successful application from Mr Baba Tinubu, a Parent Governor at Dorothy Barley Junior Academy.

The Assembly **resolved** to agree the appointment of Mr Baba Tinubu to the position of Parent Governor (Primary) Co-optee to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for a term of four years.

26. Parks and Open Spaces Strategy Update

The Leader of the Council introduced an update report on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Community Leadership and Engagement in respect of the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. The report provided Members with an overview of the work that has been undertaken since the strategy was adopted some 14 months ago, to deliver the agreed priorities for parks, which included:

- Three major transformational schemes under development at Central Park, Parsloes Park and Abbey Green.
- Innovative community food growing and healthy eating programmes were being introduced in several parks; effective partnership working with community groups and residents has enabled external funding to be secured for two new state of the art children's play facilities; and community management opportunities were being actively pursued to make better use of existing facilities in the parks and to bring redundant facilities back into use.
- It was clear there were benefits for residents in terms of remaining active and to enjoy sports and there was a wider benefit from parks in terms of mental health and wellbeing. Green spaces were being improved and community involvement was welcomed. The Council were keen to encourage residents to seek the ownership of green spaces. In addition,

crime and anti-social behaviour in parks was being deterred, despite a reduction in police resources.

The Leader referred to the innovative approach to attract funding for projects, with £11m to support parks improvement and £12 m investment in a Youth Zone, which improved the life chances of young people. He was also proud of the of investment in smaller parks.

The Assembly welcomed the report and thanked the Commissioning Director for Culture and Recreation for his work in the cultural development of the Borough, with particular reference made to the Central Park masterplan.

The Assembly also welcomed the development of partnerships with residents and officers and were keen to ensure that the Green Belt was preserved and defended. It also wished to ensure that wildlife was protected within the Council's parks and opens spaces. They noted that under funding in respect of planning applications, £350K had been provided for the development of Beam Park.

The Assembly **resolved** to note the work to date in addressing the priorities set out in the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy and the proposed approach and themes for future work plans.

27. Community Solutions - Update Report

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration introduced a joint report providing an update on the Council's new Community Solutions service which was launched in October 2017.

The report set out the main priorities for the service for 2018 and beyond. The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration commented on the transformational approach of the Community Solutions service, at the heart of which was a shift to supporting individuals, families and communities to become more self-reliant and resilient.

The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Aspiration commented on the integrated work and skills service and she also referred to the Dagenham One Stop Shop transition into Community Solutions from March 2018. The integral role of volunteers was discussed and, in that regard, it was noted that three volunteers had recently been conferred with the Freedom of the Borough in recognition of their service to the local community.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration commented on the challenge to maintain and improve services at a time of Government funding cuts and he also referred to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which placed further responsibilities on local authorities without the proper funding.

The Leader of the Council added that it was a challenging time for Local Government and placed on record the Council's appreciation to staff for their hard work and commitment.

The Assembly welcomed the report and discussed a range of issues including:

- Members' casework and feedback;
- The need for work to be done to improve primary care with particular reference to mental health issues;
- Concerns at overcrowding in social and private rented housing;
- The need to ensure that young people's views are taken into account and to meet their aspirations for the future;
- The need for effective performance monitoring across the Community Solutions service.

The Assembly **resolved** to note the key progress and achievements of the Community Solutions service to date and its main service priorities for the current financial year.

28. Motions

There were none.

29. Questions With Notice

Question 1

From Councillor Lumsden

Will the Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills & Aspiration explain what the Council is doing to support young apprentices in the borough?

Response

The Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Aspiration advised that the Council had an active programme to develop apprenticeship opportunities within its own workforce, taking advantage of the funding available through the apprenticeship levy (which the Council pays). The Council offered apprenticeships at Level 2 (GCSE equivalent) and Level 3 (A-Level equivalent) across a range of sectors and occupations. Currently a total of 457 16-17 year olds in the Borough were on an apprenticeship (8.3%), which compared to 4.5% across London.

Apprentices directly employed by the Council (who aren't on formal trade apprenticeship schemes or employed by schools) were paid at or above the London Living Wage and at east £10.20 an hour almost three times the national minimum wage rate for apprentices (£3.70 an hour).

In addition, the Council promoted and supported apprenticeships across the borough via a dedicated in-house apprenticeship team.

In order to boost the recruitment of Care Leavers into apprenticeships, the Council had introduced a transition grant of £50 per week, rising to £70 per week for two-year apprenticeships, which was paid in addition to the apprenticeship wage. Any Care Leaver who applies for a Council apprenticeship, and meets the minimum criteria, was guaranteed an Interview.

Question 2

From Councillor Paul Robinson

Given the rising levels of knife crime in our borough will the relevant Cabinet Member tell the Assembly what is being done to prevent knives from being sold to young people in Barking & Dagenham and ensure that local shops act responsibly?

Response

The Cabinet Member for Enforcement and Community Safety advised that it was illegal to sell a knife to a person under the age of 18. She stated that the Council had a vital role in protecting young people and it had adopted an Enforcement Policy which proactively investigated the sale of all knives to underage people. The Council worked with businesses to advise them on how they can put in place measures to prevent the sale of knives including test purchases.

Over the past 18 months, officers in the Borough's Trading Standards team have conducted 130 test purchases in a number of retail outlets for knives using the Council's team of young volunteers. Although a majority of shops refused to sell to underage customers, several failed the test by selling knives to the young volunteers who visited them. As a result, enforcement action had been taken. The proactive work of the Enforcement team working with the Metropolitan Police has resulted in only one inappropriate sale taking place in the past six months, resulting in a fine at Court.

The Cabinet Member advised that there had been a significant drop in the sale of knives in the Borough due to the continuous effort the Council were making through the test purchasing operation.

Question 3

From Councillor Rahman

Will the relevant Cabinet Member update the Assembly on what action is being taken to improve roads and pavements in Barking & Dagenham?

Response

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Social Housing advised that the Council had a Capital Highways Investment Programme for footways and carriageways and the current programme runs until 2020 and approximately 3% of the network had footways or carriageways renewed each year under this programme. Necessary repairs were selected following a structural survey in which the most severe defects would take priority. Funding across London had been withdrawn for a two-year period and the Council would therefore need to fund repairs from existing budgets. He added that major carriageway repairs on major roads were funded by Transport for London.

Question 4

From Councillor Ingrid Robinson

Local residents whose doctors are either paid for by another borough but whose practice is in Barking & Dagenham, or those whose doctors are based in another borough, find themselves unable to secure appointments with district nurses within Barking & Dagenham. This means they often have to travel miles from their homes to receive treatment. Can the Cabinet Member for Social Care & Health Integration explain why residents cannot be supported closer to where they live, regardless of which borough funds their GP or where the practice is located?

Response

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration advised that she had been in discussion with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and this matter particularly affected the Borough's residents mainly who were registered with the Chadwell Heath Health Centre. Although located in the Borough, the Health Centre's patients were commissioned by Havering CCG and not Barking and Dagenham CCG. There had been some differences in commissioning plans across Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge Boroughs but Commissioners were working together to ensure a more co-ordinated approach. They were also undertaking work to review service specifications for community health services and working together with NELFT to shape the contract for 2019/20.

Question 5

(Standing Order 7.1 (Chapter 3, Part 2 of the Council Constitution) was suspended at this juncture, to enable the meeting to continue beyond the 9.00 pm threshold)

From Councillor Miah

Can the Cabinet Member for Educational Attainment & School Improvement provide an update on this year's GCSE and A Level results in the borough?

Response

The Cabinet Member for Educational Attainment and School Improvement congratulated the Borough's students on their achievements in the recent GCSE and A level exams. She thanked students, schools, teachers and parents in helping to make this possible. There would be a full report submitted to Cabinet in November 2018 once the Council had national comparative information on exam results.

2018 had seen the biggest changes to GCSE for 30 years since their introduction. Now almost all main subjects had new tougher exams, marked on a 9-1 scale with more content and less course work. Many schools found

this year had been very challenging, however there was ample evidence of the borough's top achieving young people achieving excellent results. One student was one of only 732 young people in the country scoring the new top grade 9 in all their GCSEs.

There were also changes to A levels this year and a further 11 subjects moved to 100% exam with no course work. Nationally the main headline indicators have seen a small drop, and this has largely been the case in the Borough. There was still more progress to be made, however it was noted that several schools had performed strongly. Linked to these results were the opportunities they provided for young people to enter fulfilling careers. It was encouraging also to see students starting to get places on degree apprenticeships with top city firms.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Miah enquired whether the Council have a Bursary Scheme to encourage high performing students.

The Cabinet Member advised that the Council have a Bursary Scheme for top performing pupils at GCSE Grade 9 and awards take place each October annually and Members were welcomed to attend the annual awards ceremony.