

MINUTES OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 26 February 2020
(7:00 - 8:45 pm)

PRESENT

Cllr Elizabeth Kangethe (Chair)
(Deputy Chair)

Cllr Andrew Achilleos	Cllr Dorothy Akwaboah	Cllr Sanchia Alasia
Cllr Saima Ashraf	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 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 Muhammad Saleem	Cllr Faraaz Shaukat	Cllr Bill Turner
Cllr Dominic Twomey	Cllr Phil Waker	Cllr Maureen Worby

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Rocky Gill	Cllr Kashif Haroon	Cllr Emily Rodwell
Cllr Lee Waker		

50. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

51. Minutes (29 January 2020)

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2020 were confirmed as correct.

52. Death of former Councillor Alan Stevens

The Assembly noted with deep regret that former Councillor Alan Stevens passed away on 14 January 2020 and was cremated at South Essex Crematorium on 11 February 2020.

Mr Stevens was first elected to the Council in a by-election for the former Triptons ward in December 1980 and then went on to serve as a ward councillor for the Eastbrook ward between 1982 and 1986. During his time on the Council, he served on a range of committees.

Mr Stevens was also a School Governor for Henry Green and Richard Alibon as well as Eastbrook, where he eventually became the Chair, a role he worked tirelessly in for many years.

Councillors Ramsay and McCarthy spoke warmly of their memories of their former colleague and friend.

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

53. Leader's Statement

The Leader of the Council presented a statement updating the Assembly on a range of matters since the last meeting. His statement followed a short video about the Government review of the Fair Funding Formula which demonstrated that it is anything but fair and as stated in last month's statement contradicted the Prime Minister's post-election promise to 'level up' poor areas. Other matters covered in the statement included:

The Budget – The Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services will be presenting the Budget at the meeting which is not just about setting the Council Tax and how the Council's books are balanced but also about where the Borough has come from and where it is going. The Council are ensuring that basic services such as cleaning the streets, dealing with fly tipping etc continue as well as promoting a sense of solidarity and togetherness with the community through things like the 'Wall of Shame' and Summer of Festivals. The message is whilst much has been achieved there is still much to do, which the Cabinet Member will elaborate on in his Statement.

UCL Pearl – The developer has started demolition works on a part of the former Sanofi site to build a world class facility for science and innovation in the Borough.

Film Studios – The expectation was that a planning application for the film studios would be made this month. High level discussions with key players are ongoing to enable this exciting project to come to fruition.

Barking Riverside - Clipper Boat – Heads of terms have been signed with Barking Riverside Ltd which will bring the Clipper Boat down the Thames to Riverside from 2021.

3 London Markets – The City of London plan to present to Parliament in November the proposal to relocate the three markets onto the former Barking Power Station site.

Executive Lead on London Councils and LGA – Noted a number of events attended by the Leader in his capacity as the Executive Lead where he has spoken about the Borough's 'Wall of Shame', the failure of successive government's to build affordable housing and the huge growth in short term lets by unregulated bodies.

Coronavirus- The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration updated the Assembly on the local response to the Coronavirus following a number of local school trips including Sydney Russell to Northern Italy, the Region

of a recent outbreak. It was noted that none of the school parties had visited the areas which are subject to 'lock down' and consequently the risk of infection is extremely low. The advice of Public Health England is if a pupil displays flu like symptoms then they should go home and self-isolate in which case self-testing kits will be provided.

54. Appointments

There were none.

55. Budget Framework 2020/21 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 - 2023/24

A video highlighting the Borough's key developments and initiatives during the year was shown before the Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services introduced the Council's proposed budget framework for 2020/21 which incorporated the following:

- The General Fund revenue budget for 2020/21
- The level of Council Tax for 2020/21
- The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2020/21 to 2023/24
- The draft Capital Investment Programme for 2020/21 to 2023/24; and
- An update on the Dedicated Schools Grant and Local Funding Formula for Schools.

The Cabinet Member provided the context to this year's budget and specifically the Prime Minister recent announcement referred to in the Leader's Statement about the so called 'levelling up' by redistributing monies through the review of the Fair Funding Formula. Based on an analysis of the implications of the government's thinking conducted by the LGA it is suggested that despite being one of the most deprived communities in the country the Borough stands to lose more than £3m.

He outlined the challenges that Barking & Dagenham has faced over the decades and those currently as a result of the Government's austerity measures over the past ten years which in stark terms shows that for every £1 of funding available in 2010 we now have 33p to meet our needs. Viewed against the backdrop of some of the lowest land values in London, the second highest population growth in London and with one of the youngest boroughs in the country means local residents continue to face huge challenges in terms of unemployment, poor educational attainment as well as chronic health outcomes.

Turning to this year's budget proposals the Cabinet Member explained that whilst the Council strives to deliver basic services like collecting rubbish and fixing potholes, its biggest costs concern social care with out of every £1 spent 70p going towards supporting the elderly and vulnerable children who cannot live at home with their families. The Council's social care budget has fallen by £8m since 2016 and the overspend on children in care is on par with London as a whole. Whilst Barking and Dagenham is doing more with less money the budget situation coupled with increasing pressure on the NHS means social care services are increasingly needing to step in. On top of this are mounting pressures in other services such as housing and homelessness.

For more than a decade the government has made huge cuts to the Council's funding and whilst for many years a council tax freeze was maintained the cumulative impact of the freeze has eroded the tax base to the extent that for every £1 the Council spends only 16p is generated from Council Tax.

Nonetheless without it the Council would struggle even more to provide services, and therefore it was proposed to increase Council Tax by 3.99%. which included 1.99% for general Council services raising an additional £1.2m, plus a further 2% specifically ring-fenced as an adult social care precept which overall represented an increase of 95p per week for the average family in Band D.

The Cabinet Member commented on the 2020/21 budget consultation that had taken place during January 2020, which included both face-to-face events with the local community and local businesses and a Facebook live Q&A session. The interaction across social media generated a significant response with surprisingly only a small number of residents opposing increasing the Council tax or paying a little more towards adult social care costs.

The Cabinet Member summed up where the Council was today and that whilst much had been achieved there was still much to do. He highlighted a number of the positive things happening including the continued Summer of Festivals which next year will mark the 100th anniversary of the Becontree Estate, the growing redevelopment opportunities including the relocation of London's iconic markets, the Film Studio in Dagenham, UCL Pearl, the state of the art research centre, the growing Youth Zone, a first in London as well as the launch of Beam Energy and the provision of more community food clubs to help residents save money on their shopping bills.

He emphasised the importance of getting the basics right including making the streets cleaner, investment in new street cleaning vehicles and bin trucks, the successful launch of a white goods collection service, enforcement initiatives including the Borough-wide landlord licensing scheme and 'Wall of Shame' videos, the prevention of nearly 480 households from becoming homeless, continuing to build new affordable homes for local people, initiating community participation and engagement projects such as the Good Neighbour Guide, as well as achieving Good or Outstanding Ofsted ratings in 9 out of 10 of Schools.

The Cabinet Member said that although 2020/21 would be another tough year for the Council both in terms of maintaining savings and services, the focus would be to continue tackling poverty and disadvantage and delivery for all. He concluded the budget presentation by highlighting what the Council had achieved despite all the financial difficulties and challenged this government to play their part by giving the Council fair funding.

A number of comments followed the presentation including:

- Ensuring that the Council is clear what is meant by affordable housing in the context of the offer to local residents,
- With the development of up to 50,000 new homes in the Borough and the increased deployment of CPZ's it is important to use these debates to put pressure on the public transport operators, particularly the rail providers,
- In acknowledging residents' concerns about the level of serious crime in the Borough it should not be forgot that under this government more than

1,000 Police Officers have been lost across the BCU in the last decade and which this Council will continue to campaign for more resources.

- In that respect paid thanks to the work of the London Mayor who has campaigned to get both more Police Officers and Fire Fighters as well as keep fare increases down, and finally
- Paid tribute to the staff and the Unions who have had to work under very trying conditions over the past decade due to the austerity imposed by this government.

In accordance with paragraph 10.3.2 of Part 2, Chapter 3 of the Council Constitution, the budget was put to a recorded vote and was **agreed** as follows:

For: Councillors Achilleos, Akwaboah, Alasia, Ashraf, Aziz, Bankole, Bremner, Princess Bright, Sade Bright, Butt, Carpenter, Chand, Channer, Dulwich, Fergus, Freeborn, Geddes, Ghani, Jamu, Jones, Kangethe, Keller, Khan, Lumsden, Martins, McCarthy, Miah, Miles, Mullane, Oluwole, Paddle, Perry, Quadri, Rahman, Ramsay, Chris Rice, Lynda Rice, Ingrid Robinson, Paul Robinson, Darren Rodwell, Saleem, Shaukat, Turner, Twomey, Phil Waker and Worby (46)

Against: None (0)

Abstain: None (0)

The Assembly **resolved** to:

- (i) Approve a base revenue budget for 2020/21 of £155.796m, as detailed in Appendix A to the report,
- (ii) Approve the adjusted Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) position for 2020/21 to 2023/24 allowing for other known pressures and risks at this time, as detailed in Appendix B to the report, including the additional cost of borrowing to accommodate the capital costs associated with the implementation of the MTFS;
- (iii) Delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services, to finalise any contribution required to or from reserves in respect of the 2020/21 budget, pending confirmation of levies and further changes to Government grants prior to 1 April 2020,
- (iv) Approve the Statutory Budget Determination for 2020/21 as set out at Appendix C to the report, which reflects an increase of 1.99% on the amount of Council Tax levied by the Council, an Adult Social Care precept of 2.00% and the final Council Tax proposed by the Greater London Assembly (3.6% increase), as detailed in Appendix D to the report,
- (v) Note the update on the current projects, issues and risks in relation to Council services, as detailed in sections 9-12 of the report,
- (vi) Approve the Council's draft Capital Programme for 2020/21 totalling £318.006m, of which £72.540m are General Fund schemes, as detailed in Appendix E to the report,

- (vii) Approve the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy as set out in Appendix F to the report,
- (viii) Note the update on Dedicated Schools Funding and approve the Local Funding Formula factors as set out in section 15 and Appendix G; and
- (ix) Note the Chief Finance Officer's Statutory Finance Report as set out in section 15 of the report, which includes a recommended minimum level of reserves of £12m.

56. Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2020/21

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services presented the draft Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2020/21 which in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 2003 set out the Council's borrowing, investment and funding plans for the year ahead. The report was considered and endorsed by the Cabinet at its meeting on 17 February 2020.

The Cabinet Member referred to the key issues within the TMSS, including the potential effects of a range of external economic factors such as Brexit and interest rate movements, the requirements for a Capital Strategy, cash balances at financial year end and the medium-term capital finance budget position. The report also set out details of the Council's operational boundary and authorised external borrowing limits for 2020/21.

The Cabinet Member stressed that without a successful TMSS the Council would not be able to deliver much needed investment for residents through its vision of growth and regeneration. In that respect in response to a question the Cabinet Member explained that the Council adopts an ethical stance to its approach to investments

Accordingly, the Assembly **resolved** to adopt the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2020/21 and, in doing so, to:

- (i) Note the current treasury position for 2020/21 and prospects for interest rates, as referred to in section 7.2 of the report;
- (ii) Approve the Annual Investment Strategy 2020/21 outlining the investments that the Council may use for the prudent management of its investment balances, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (iii) Approve the Council's Borrowing Strategy 2020/21 to 2023/24, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report;
- (iv) Note that the Capital Strategy 2020/21, incorporating the Investment and Acquisitions Strategy, shall be updated and presented for approval in June 2020;
- (v) Approve the Capital Prudential and Treasury Indicators 2019/20 – 2023/24, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report;

- (vi) Approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement for 2020/21, representing the Council's policy on repayment of debt, as set out in Appendix 4 to the report;
- (vii) Approve the Operational Boundary Limit of £1.25bn and the Authorised Borrowing Limit of £1.35bn for 2020/21, representing the statutory limit determined by the Council pursuant to section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003, as referred to in Appendix 4 to the report; and
- (viii) Delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services, to proportionally amend the counterparty lending limits agreed within the Treasury Management Strategy Statement to consider the increase in cash from borrowing and any subsequent decrease in cash balances as payments are made to the Special Purpose Vehicle.

57. Pay Policy Statement 2020/21

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services presented the Council's draft Pay Policy Statement for 2020/21 in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

The Statement included details of the pay ratios showing the Chief Executive's salary against the median salary figure for all employees and against the lowest paid employees.

The Cabinet Member referred to the proposed uplift in the London Living Wage (LLW) from £10.55 to £10.75 per hour with effect from 4 November 2019. The increase would also apply to a range of apprenticeship posts across the Council.

In continuing to support this Council's long-standing commitment to pay employees at or above the LLW, and led by a tribute from the Leader, Members in recognising that the staff are the Council's main asset, placed on record their thanks and gratitude to them for their continued hard work during the past decade of austerity.

Accordingly, the Assembly **resolved** to approve the Pay Policy Statement for the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham for 2020/21 as set out at Appendix A to the report, for publication on the Council's website with effect from April 2020.

58. Questions With Notice

There were none.