

MINUTES OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 30 September 2020
(5:03 - 6:13 pm)

PRESENT

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

Cllr Andrew Achilleos	Cllr Dorothy Akwaboah	Cllr Sanchia Alasia
Cllr Saima Ashraf	Cllr Toni Bankole	Cllr Simon Bremner
Cllr Princess 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 Mohammed Khan
Cllr Donna Lumsden	Cllr Olawale Martins	Cllr Mick McCarthy
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 Darren Rodwell
Cllr Emily Rodwell	Cllr Muhammad Saleem	Cllr Bill Turner
Cllr Dominic Twomey	Cllr Lee Waker	Cllr Phil Waker
Cllr Maureen Worby		

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Abdul Aziz	Cllr Sade Bright	Cllr Eileen Keller
Cllr Giasuddin Miah	Cllr Paul Robinson	

20. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

21. Minutes (22 July 2020)

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2020 were confirmed as correct.

22. Minutes of the JNC Appointments, Salaries and Structures Panel (18 August 2020)

The Assembly received and noted the minutes of the JNC Appointments, Salaries and Structures Panel held on 18 August 2020.

23. Death of Roger Luxton, OBE and Freeman of the Borough

The Assembly noted the sad passing on 12 September of Roger Luxton OBE, former Director of Children's Services and Freeman of the Borough.

Members paid tribute to Mr Luxton's significant contribution to the education of children in the Borough throughout his 23 years of service as well as his contribution on a national level, which had been recognised in 1999 with the award of the Order of the British Empire for 'Services to Education Standards'. Members also fondly remembered his wit, warmth of personality and powers of public speaking.

The Assembly observed a minute's silence in memory of Mr Luxton.

24. Leader's Statement

The Leader of the Council presented a verbal statement updating the Assembly on a range of matters since the last meeting, with a particular focus on the latest information around the Borough's management of Covid-19.

The Leader outlined the pro-active work being undertaken in the Borough to reinforce the public health messages including the use of media and social media, leaflet drops to every household and targeted communications in areas of high infection rates, other areas of high footfall and outside schools.

The Leader then invited the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration to provide the latest clinical update of the situation. The Cabinet Member spoke on the increasing rates of infection across all age ranges and the need to protect the more vulnerable members of the community, stressing the importance of everybody abiding by the public health message of washing hands, wearing face coverings and maintaining social distancing.

The Leader expressed his concerns at the lack of cooperation and mixed messaging from the Government which made it difficult for the Council to properly protect communities. He highlighted the withdrawal of some local testing facilities as an example and also referenced the lack of powers available to local authorities, such as the ability to fine individuals for not wearing masks in enclosed spaces. The Leader also condemned a number of the big supermarket chains for not enforcing the rules locally and for putting profit before people and confirmed that the Council would continue to take enforcement action to protect the community.

The Leader advised that Council was pulling together information about the social and economic impact of Covid-19 in order to strengthen its case for more support from the Government. He also paid tribute to the efforts of his Cabinet colleagues and staff in continuing to deliver services in the face of the pandemic, highlighting specific areas of work under the remits of the Cabinet Members for Educational Attainment and School Improvement, Community Safety and Enforcement, Social Care and Health Integration and Community Leadership. He also made mention of the 'Lost Hours' campaign, led by Councillor Worby in partnership with Councillors Carpenter and Mullane, aimed at tackling youth violence and making all parents aware of their responsibility for their children.

Other issues covered in the Leader's statement included:

- **Stephen Port Inquest** – The Council had agreed to the Ministry of Justice's request to use Barking Town Hall as the venue for the inquest into the murders

committed by Stephen Port in Barking between 2014 and 2015. The inquest was due to start in January 2021 and expected to last for up to six weeks;

- **A13 tunnel** – Lodging the case for the A13 tunnel to the Government’s comprehensive spending review;
- **Film studios** - Securing circa £5m from the Government to enable work on the Film Studios to move forward;
- **Homes for Artists** – Following planning permission, work had commenced on a ‘Homes for Artists’ project in Linton Road, Barking, backed by Turner Prize-winning artist Grayson Perry, to support home-grown talent and attract artists and craftspeople to the borough;
- **London Councils** – His recent appointment as Deputy Leader of London Councils;
- **Facebook Live event** – A successful test event to bring contact with Council Leaders closer to the people; and
- **One Borough One Love Festival** – Over 26,000 people had taken part in the event and the Leader congratulated everyone involved.

25. Appointments

There were none to report.

26. Report of the Local Government Ombudsman on a matter relating to Blue Badge Applications (Non-Visible Disabilities)

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services presented a report on the outcome of a complaint that had been determined by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) regarding the way that the Council had dealt with and managed an application for a blue badge under the non-visible disabilities criteria.

The Cabinet Member explained that the LGO had found that the Council had failed to properly assess the application and that, upon that determination and following a request by the applicant, it had failed to undertake a further review of the application. Fault was found as to the Council’s record keeping which had impacted on its ability to clearly evidence reasons as why the applicant was not eligible for a Blue Badge automatically and why an offer was not made for eligibility subject to further assessment. Finally, fault was found in the process for the rejection of the application. Consequently, the LGO had chosen to issue a report in the public interest detailing the outcome of the complaint.

The Cabinet Member acknowledged the faults by the Council and referred to the action plan that had been developed, as set out in section 3 of the report, responding to the LGO’s recommendations to remedy the injustice. The action plan set out a number of changes to current processes to ensure the Council was fully compliant in the future and details of the proposal to contact those whose applications had been rejected during the last six months to resubmit their applications for fresh consideration.

The Assembly noted

- (i) The report issued by the Local Government Ombudsman, its publication and the notice that appeared in local news sources, and

(ii) The action taken to date to remedy the complaint as directed.

27. Annual Report of Member Champions 2019/20

The Leader introduced the second Annual Report of the three Member Champions, introducing Councillor Achilleos following his recent appointment to champion Climate Change as well as Councillors Freeborn and Chris Rice in their capacities as Member Champions for Quality in Care and Mental Health respectively. He thanked all three Members for their hard work and achievements to date as well as the Cabinet Members for Social Care and Health Integration and Regeneration and Social Housing as the sponsors during this difficult year in terms of the impact of Covid-19.

All three Member Champions provided an overview of what they have achieved in their respective areas setting out their conclusions and plans for the year ahead.

Assembly **noted** the annual reports for 2019-20.

28. Sergeant Matt Ratana

The Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Enforcement made a statement regarding the tragic death of Sergeant Matt Ratana, who was fatally shot in an incident at Croydon Custody Centre on Friday 9 October, and commented that the incident was a stark reminder of the dangers that Police officers faced every single day at work.

The Assembly conveyed its sincere condolences to Sergeant Ratana's family, friends and colleagues and joined the Cabinet Member in a minute's applause in recognition of the work of Police officers and other emergency service staff.