

## **ASSEMBLY**

Wednesday, 4 April 2007  
(7:00 - 8:45 pm)

### **PRESENT**

Councillor J Davis (Chair)  
Councillor W F L Barns (Deputy Chair)

Councillor A Agrawal	Councillor J L Alexander
Councillor Mrs S J Baillie	Councillor R J Barnbrook
Councillor G J Bramley	Councillor R J Buckley
Councillor Ms E Carpenter	Councillor S Carroll
Councillor H J Collins	Councillor N Connelly
Councillor J R Denyer	Councillor R W Doncaster
Councillor C J Fairbrass	Councillor M A R Fani
Councillor Mrs K J Flint	Councillor S S Gill
Councillor D Hemmett	Councillor Mrs D Hunt
Councillor I S Jamu	Councillor S Kallar
Councillor Mrs C A Knight	Councillor Miss T A Lansdown
Councillor J E McDermott	Councillor M E McKenzie
Councillor Mrs P A Northover	Councillor W W Northover
Councillor E O Obasohan	Councillor B Poulton
Councillor Mrs J E Rawlinson	Councillor Mrs L A Reason
Councillor Mrs V Rush	Councillor L Rustem
Councillor L A Smith	Councillor Miss N E Smith
Councillor J Steed	Councillor Mrs P A Twomey
Councillor G M Vincent	Councillor L R Waker
Councillor P T Waker	Councillor Mrs M M West
Councillor J R White	

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor R W Bailey	Councillor Miss C L Doncaster
Councillor Mrs S A Doncaster	Councillor N S S Gill
Councillor J K Jarvis	Councillor R C Little
Councillor M A McCarthy	Councillor D A Tuffs

#### **92. Minutes (28 February 2007)**

**Agreed.**

#### **93. Presentation on Docklands Light Railway by Richard de Cani, Head of Development and Planning, Docklands Light Railway**

Richard de Cani, Head of Development and Planning, Docklands Light Railway, gave a presentation on the progress of the proposed DLR extension to Dagenham Dock, highlighting the primary objectives for the scheme, key constraints and issues that need to be taken into account. He confirmed that DLR are looking at the possibility of an extension to Chequers Corner and Dagenham Heathway, as requested by the Council.

Members raised various points, including:

- Making the station at Dagenham Dock accessible to future leisure facilities in the area;
- Timescales for completion of the scheme;
- Expressed reservations about the need to extend the scheme to the Heathway as it is well served by other means of transport

which Mr de Cani responded to and the Chair thanked him for his presentation.

#### **94. Local Issue - 2005/2006 Joint Audit and Inspection Letter**

Janette Whitfield, Barking and Dagenham's Relationship Manager from the Audit Commission gave a presentation on the draft 2005/2006 Audit and Inspection Letter, the main messages for the Council being:

- Barking and Dagenham Council is performing well, as evidenced by the fact that it has been classified as three star (up from two star) in its current level of performance under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA);
- The Council's auditors issued an unqualified opinion on the Council's 2005/2006 accounts and an unqualified value for money conclusion; and
- Improvements in service areas have been recognised in recent inspection and review scores

Ms Whitfield also gave details of actions needed by the Council arising from this report.

In terms of the timing of the document, it was noted that it was slightly later than normal because of the activities around the CPA Inspection, as it was recommended that feedback from residents on their satisfaction levels and indicators produced by Mori be included. There will be a similar reporting timeframe for next year.

Councillor Barnbrook requested that he be sent a hard copy of the full audited accounts for Barking and Dagenham.

The Chair thanked Ms Whitfield for her presentation on behalf of the Assembly.

#### **95. Customer Care in Pupil and Family Support, Children's Services**

Anna Harskamp, Head of Pupil and Family Support, gave a presentation on customer care within her division, which delivers services to children and young people and those who live and work with them. Details were given of the service areas within pupil and family support, their priorities, within the context of community and Council priorities, performance relating to school admissions, complaints and attendance and teenage pregnancy.

Members raised issues relating to sex education for primary school children and teenage pregnancy which Ms Harskamp said she would take forward with her colleagues.

#### **96. Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel: Members' Allowances 2007/08**

Derek Johnson, Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel, introduced the report, giving Members some background to the work of the Panel, and requested that the Assembly adopt the scheme.

Councillor Fairbrass thanked the Panel for their hard work. He also commented that he hoped the local media would now correct their statement that the increase to the basic allowance payable would be 6%, when in fact it will be 2.7%.

**Agreed** the Members' Allowance Scheme for 2007/08 as set out in Appendix A to the report to take effect from 1 April 2007, in accordance with the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

#### **97. Report of the Executive - Recent Business**

**Agreed** to formally adopt the draft Statement of Principles policy document – Gambling Act 2005, as appended to the report.

#### **98. Motions**

##### **Motion 1 BME Meetings**

This motion was withdrawn because, within the framework of the existing Constitution, it is not a matter for decision of the Council Assembly but for officers of the Council.

##### **Motion 2 Closure of Residential Care Homes**

Received the following motion moved by Councillor Rustem and seconded by Councillor Barnbrook:

“That Brocklebank Lodge and Lakeside (sic.) residential care homes should not be closed.”

The following amendment to the motion was moved by Councillor Fairbrass and seconded by Councillor L Smith:

“That we await the completion of the review of residential accommodation.”

The amendment was put to the vote and by a majority vote was **agreed**.

**Agreed**, that we await the completion of the review of residential accommodation.

### **Motion 3 Bidding for Housing Stock**

Received the following motion moved by Councillor Buckley and seconded by Councillor Barnbrook:

“That the bidding system should exclude anyone outside the borough from bidding for the housing stock in Barking and Dagenham.”

The following amendment to the motion was moved by Councillor L Smith and seconded by Councillor Fairbrass:

“We adhere to our current policy that only persons resident in the borough and on our waiting list or who have a long standing local connection may bid for property.”

The amendment was put to the vote and by a majority vote was **agreed**.

**Agreed**, that we adhere to our current policy that only persons resident in the borough and on our waiting list or who have a long standing local connection may bid for property.

### **Motion 4 Introduction of Sarah’s Law**

Received the following motion moved by Councillor Mrs Knight and seconded by Councillor Barnbrook:

“That the council accept in principle and lead the way in introducing Sarah’s law in the borough.”

The following amendment to the motion was moved by Councillor Alexander and seconded by Councillor Fairbrass:

“That this is a matter for Parliament to decide, and that the motion is noted.”

The amendment was put to the vote and by a majority vote was **agreed**.

Councillor Connolly asked that his vote for Sarah’s Law and against the amendment be recorded.

**Agreed**, that this is a matter for Parliament to decide, and that the motion is noted.

### **Motion 5 Member Representation on Wards**

Received the following motion moved by Councillor Barnbrook and seconded by Councillor Buckley:

“That the council reject the notion of having ‘one member wards’ – relating to Chapter 3 of the local government white paper ‘Stronger and Prosperous communities’.”

The following amendment to the motion was moved by Councillor Fairbrass and seconded by Councillor L Smith:

“That this Assembly accepts the recommendation of the Governance Working Party (GWP) of 30 January 2007 confirmed by the GWP of 23 February. The recommendation of the GWP is that we oppose the introduction of one Member Wards. Members are asked to note that because of time limits constraints on the White Paper consultation this recommendation has already been sent to the appropriate body.”

The amendment was put to the vote and by a majority vote was **agreed**.

**Agreed**, that this Assembly accepts the recommendation of the Governance Working Party (GWP) of 30 January 2007 confirmed by the GWP of 23 February. The recommendation of the GWP is that we oppose the introduction of one Member Wards. Members are asked to note that because of time limits constraints on the White Paper consultation this recommendation has already been sent to the appropriate body.

#### 99. General Question Time

**Question:** Councillor Fairbrass said that Councillor Barnbrook has published the following during the last ten months:

- (1) That the Labour Party had organised an Africans for Essex campaign
- (2) That this Council has given preference to asylum seekers with reference to housing accommodation
- (3) That Westminster Council provides payments of up to £100,000, with a minimum of £50,000, for immigrants to purchase properties in this Borough.

Councillor Fairbrass went on to say:

The fact is that the Labour Party has **never** organised any such campaign

The fact is that this Council has **never** given preference to asylum seekers

The fact is that Westminster Council has **not** provided payments of up to £100,000, with a minimum of £50,000, for immigrants to purchase properties in Barking and Dagenham

These true facts have been clearly pointed out to Councillor Barnbrook in previous meetings of this Assembly. Will he now take this opportunity to withdraw his inaccurate statements?”

**Response:**

- (1) Councillor Barnbrook responded that he had no intention of apologising with reference to Councillor Fairbrass’ comments, either on the grants from Westminster Council or the ‘Africans for Essex’. In fact these questions should

be asked of Jon Cruddas MP, because on his own website he said that the census figures for 2001 are out of date and he has stated both to the media and on his website: "That in the last 3 years 5,000 white people have left his constituency to be replaced by 5,000 Africans".

Councillor Barnbrook went on to say they have never said that Barking & Dagenham Labour party had instigated a project 'Africans for Essex', however the Labour government has been in power since 1997 and the demographic change in Barking & Dagenham lays at a Labour government's controlled policy.

The term 'Africans for Essex' that they used in their literature was created by residents living in Village ward during their last by-election.

- (2) In response to Councillor Fairbrass' question on asylum-seekers being given preference; in the last 3 years the mass influx into the borough of asylum-seekers/immigrants from Eastern Europe is such a large amount in comparison to 5-10 years ago indicates that preference has been given to these new people. Councillor Barnbrook quoted from a recent press report '250 new homes a day are needed to house the influx of immigrants'. He suggested that the electorate of Barking & Dagenham be asked what has become of their plight over that of these new people moving into the borough.
- (3) Councillor Barnbrook concluded that literature relating to Westminster Council's £100,000 grants was not stating that people moving from Westminster to Barking & Dagenham had received £100,000 grants but by a report in the media that grants up to £100,000 would be available to residents of Westminster to move into the Thames Gateway development of which Barking & Dagenham is a part, with 15,000 new homes being built in this part of the development. They first heard of this scheme from a newspaper report from last year by Katherine Barney printed in the London Lite. You cannot always trust the media and she may have been lying but it's very unlikely.

**Question:** Councillor Rustem said that considering the Labour party is condemning the loss of life since WW11. As a result of military conflict. It must therefore be presumed that this Labour council therefore considers that no more lives of brave soldiers should be lost in either Iraq or Afghanistan as a result of this governments wretched cow-towing subservience to American foreign policy which has so far, according to BBC figures, resulted in 132 British soldiers killed in Iraq since 2003 with a further forty killed in Afghanistan since 2001. Undoubtedly such military actions at the behest of Blair on behalf of the U.S. played a large part in "**all those innocents...who have died**" in the 7/7 attack in 2005. Is it therefore the case that this council would support the view that is held by the vast majority of British people that UK troops in Iraq and Afghanistan should be brought home?

**Response:** Councillor Fairbrass said that he had a few comments to make before he answered the question. The Labour Party has not condemned the loss of life since WW2, what this Labour Council has done is to build a Peace and Memorial Garden. That garden commemorates all those innocents who died or suffered as the result of military conflict during WW2 and up to the present time, and also includes all victims of the recent terrorist attacks in London. It is also a memorial to over six million victims of the Holocaust. The garden was recently vandalised, that is what this Labour Council condemned.

With respect to the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, Councillor Fairbrass said he would remind Councillor Rustem that in 1998 Al Quaida issued a Fatwa that said it was permissible to kill American civilians. On 9 September 2001 2,973 civilians were killed in New York, 67 of those victims were British. The second Gulf war started 18 months later in March 2003. As for Afghanistan, our military are there as part of a NATO force drawn from across Europe and the USA. They are there in support of a democratically elected Government.

A young soldier, 18 years old, was killed on Monday. He would have been 14/15 years old when the invasion of Iraq took place, so he must have had some idea of where he might be sent. He was a volunteer, a trained soldier doing his duty and I am sure we all regret his death. We wish all our troops well and hope for these conflicts soon to be over but our military are doing what they are trained to do. Guns are not toys, as some of us who have served in the armed forces can testify, they are used to kill.

Councillor Fairbrass went on to say that the House of Commons or political party meetings are the places to put this question, not this Council, so his answer to the question is no.

In conclusion, Councillor Fairbrass said he thought it was sickening that Councillor Rustem had the gall to mention 7/7. His was the party that published pictures of the bus bomb wreckage in a by-election leaflet. His was the party that made a disgusting attempt to exploit people's death and people's crippling injuries for votes.

**Question:** Councillor Buckley said that a recent article in the Times reported that Government both Centrally and Locally spend millions of pounds by employing consultants that have no little or no benefit for the job they are employed to do. With this in mind can the Council confirm the amount that it has cost them to employ Kendrich Ash to look into the transport services and what financial benefit it has provided.

**Response:** Councillor McKenzie responded that the Council is fully committed to ensuring value for money across all budgets and departments. This is especially the case when we choose to procure the services of consultants or private companies. The contract with Kendric Ash who, in his opinion, is doing a good job, is a performance related contract that ensures that if they do not achieve the agreed targets they simply do not get paid. The maximum the Council will pay Kendric Ash is £258,624 per annum for three years. It is important to note that this payment is strictly performance related and unless bankable efficiencies are gained (whilst maintaining the level of service) of this amount or more the payment will be reduced or stopped completely. Therefore, the net cost of the service to the Council is zero and if the current indications on performance are correct/maintained, the project will release significant bankable efficiencies that can be used in other vital areas to the benefit of residents of Barking and Dagenham.

**Question:** Councillor R Gill asked if the appropriate Executive Member could please comment on the controversial plans by Barking and Dagenham PCT to sell off part of the Barking Hospital land for housing in Longbridge Ward?

**Response:** Councillor Fairbrass flagged up that he had given a detailed response to a question about plans for Barking Hospital at the last Assembly meeting. He went on to say that, because of a shortage of capital funding, the Primary Care Trust is considering selling part of this site. He personally opposes this move and the Council will be taking a stand when they have had an opportunity to discuss the matter fully.

Councillor Fairbrass said that this land needs to be retained for future expansion as Barking and Dagenham is a growing Borough with new housing and a new population. The original Barking Hospital was built by public subscription by the people of Barking. He thought it was worth exploring whether a covenant exists, similar to the one for the Barking UEL site which restricted its use for educational purposes, that would restrict the use of the hospital site for medical purposes.

Consultation on the proposals end in June and Councillor Fairbrass urged Members to get their constituents to register their opposition by completing forms that are available at the Town Hall and sending them back. This must be done by public opinion as well as by the Council.

**Question:** Councillor Vincent asked if the Executive Member for Environment could please outline what actions the Council is proposing to tackle the current abuse of the non right turning in Salisbury Avenue at the junction of Upney Lane in Longbridge Ward.

**Response:** Councillor McKenzie thanked Councillor Vincent for raising the matter as it gave him an opportunity to inform the Assembly that the Council will be moving towards seeking authority to enforce against 'moving traffic offences' such as banned right turns and abuse of no-entry signs. There is a need for this to be ratified by the Council to commence the process and reports will be submitted in due course. Once the Council has this power it will be possible to utilise CCTV units to undertake enforcement.

At present responsibility for enforcement of the offences mentioned rests with the Police service and he understands that enforcement has been carried out against drivers making illegal manoeuvres. However, Councillor McKenzie concluded that when considering the problems in these sorts of locations we need to be careful that we do not replace one problem with another. Some drivers do not make the illegal right turn but instead turn left and undertake a u-turn further along Upney Lane, which is possibly more of a hazard.

**Question:** Councillor P Waker asked if the Executive Member for Community Safety could please comment on the crime figures for the Borough.

**Response:** Councillor Mrs Rush thanked the Member for his question and said she was delighted to report that, on the basis of the latest information from the Metropolitan Police for the year ending 18 March, Barking and Dagenham is expected to end the year with a reduction in crime of 5.9%. This compares very well with London as a whole, which is expecting a 6% reduction on the same basis. Further cause for celebration rests in the fact that this success has largely been achieved in the last six/seven months through strong partnership activity around crime.



There is still some work to do around residential burglary, which ends the year around 7.5% up on last year, but there again we are on the right track, having ended the year at that level from a point in July 2006 where we faced a 23% increase on the same period in the previous year. Theft from a motor vehicle is unchanged and remains at 24%. The Borough Commander is clear that any increase is a concern, especially for the victims of crime that it represents, but there is cause for considerable confidence that this impetus for reduction will continue in the months ahead.

In particular the Police are to be commended for their work on detections, which sees some particularly noteworthy successes: for example, 37% detection rate for domestic violence, compared to a target of 32% and a 23% performance last year, for what is our biggest crime of violence in the Borough.

On this basis the future looks bright for continued crime reduction in Barking and Dagenham. Councillor Mrs Rush said we have gone as a Borough from being the third worst in London to being the eighteenth best. We are now one of the top five most improved boroughs in London and she is proud to be part of a partnership that pulls out these types of successes.