

MINUTES OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 24 November 2021
(7:00 - 8:51 pm)

PRESENT

Cllr Toni Bankole (Chair)
Cllr Faruk Choudhury (Deputy Chair)

Cllr Andrew Achilleos	Cllr Dorothy Akwaboah	Cllr Saima Ashraf
Cllr Princess Bright	Cllr Sade Bright	Cllr Josie Channer
Cllr Edna Fergus	Cllr Irma Freeborn	Cllr Syed Ghani
Cllr Rocky Gill	Cllr Kashif Haroon	Cllr Jane Jones
Cllr Elizabeth Kangethe	Cllr Olawale Martins	Cllr Dave Miles
Cllr Fatuma Nalule	Cllr Adegboyega Oluwole	Cllr Glenda Paddle
Cllr Simon Perry	Cllr Ingrid Robinson	Cllr Paul Robinson
Cllr Emily Rodwell	Cllr Muhammad Saleem	Cllr Dominic Twomey
Cllr Lee Waker	Cllr Phil Waker	Cllr Maureen Worby

36. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were recorded for Councillors Alasia, Aziz, Bremner, Butt, Carpenter, Chand, Dulwich, Geddes, Jamu, Keller, Khan, Lumsden, McCarthy, Miah, Mullane, Quadri, Rahman, Ramsay, C Rice, L Rice, D Rodwell and Shaukat who were unable to attend the meeting due to the social distancing arrangements within the Council Chamber.

37. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

38. Minutes (29th September 2021)

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2021 were confirmed as correct.

39. Minutes of Sub-Committees

The Assembly received and noted the minutes of the JNC Appointments, Salaries and Structures Panels held on 1 and 8 November 2021.

40. Leader's Statement

The Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Community Leadership & Engagement presented a verbal statement updating the Assembly on a range of matters since the last meeting including:

- **Broadway Theatre:** The Deputy Leader attended a lecture on the history of Barking Abbey at the Broadway Theatre.
- **Stephen Port Inquest:** Barking Town Hall continued to host the inquest into

the murders of Daniel Whitworth, Jack Taylor, Anthony Walgate and Gabriel Kovari;

- **Winter Lantern Parade:** Over 6,000 residents attended the Winter Lantern Parade to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Becontree Estate;
- **Women's Empowerment Month:** The 7th Women's Empowerment month and Women's Empowerment Awards would be taking place in March 2022. The Deputy Leader encouraged applications for the Women's Empowerment Awards to be submitted to the Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Aspiration;
- **Interfaith Week:** The Deputy Leader was pleased to address a reception during Interfaith Week and took the opportunity to pay tribute to the role of faith communities throughout the pandemic
- **Employer of the Year –Investors in People (IIP) Gold:** The Council had been shortlisted for the Employer of the Year awards for IIP Gold. Although the Council had not won the award, the Deputy Leader congratulated the Managing Director, Strategic Director, Law and Governance, and the Director of Workforce Change for their hard work;
- **Looking forward to 2022:** 2022 was looking positive already with various projects underway including:
 - o Work was underway to build two new film studios;
 - o Progress was being made to bring three famous food markets to the Borough (Smithfield's meat, Smithfields fruit and flower and Billingsgate fish markets),
 - o The borough was building one in five of all affordable homes in London with eight out of ten homes going to local residents;
 - o The East End Women's Museum was planning to open its doors for the first time;
 - o An extension to the Thames Clipper Service to include Barking; and
 - o A new railway station being built at Barking Riverside.
- **Christmas:** The Deputy Leader thanked everyone who would be working over the Christmas period this year.

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration also provided an update on the current COVID-19 situation in the Borough. The Cabinet Member advised that it had been 21 months since the pandemic started and, in that time, 584 residents from the borough had sadly passed away. Currently there were 80 new cases a day, an increase of 30 since the last meeting of the Assembly.

It was noted that, disappointingly, only 55% of local residents had received two COVID vaccinations against a national average of 80%. Nationally, 26% had received their booster jab while only 12% had received it in the Borough. The Cabinet Member encouraged residents to take up the vaccination offer as soon as possible to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

41. Appointments

There were no appointments.

42. Appointment of Statutory Scrutiny Officer

The Strategic Director for Law and Governance introduced a report on the appointment of a statutory Scrutiny Officer.

The Council must designate one of its officers to discharge the functions of statutory Scrutiny Officer, as required under section 9FB of the Local Government Act 2000 (amended by the Localism Act 2011).

The Strategic Director advised that the former Director of Strategy and Participation was the designated statutory Scrutiny Officer prior to leaving the Council at the end of August 2021. The statutory Scrutiny Officer cannot be the Council's Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive), the Monitoring Officer (Strategic Director, Law and Governance) or the Chief Finance Officer (Finance Director).

Henry Gregg was recently appointed as Interim Director of Strategy and Culture and it was proposed that he be designated as the Council's statutory Scrutiny Officer.

The Assembly **resolved** to agree to designate Henry Gregg, Interim Director of Strategy and Culture, as the Council's statutory Scrutiny Officer.

43. Member Champions' Annual Report 2020/21

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration introduced the 2020/21 annual report on the work of the Member Champions.

On 18 February 2018 Assembly agreed new governance arrangements including the establishment of Member Champion roles. Councillor Irma Freeborn and Councillor Chris Rice were appointed as Member Champions for Quality of Care and for Mental Health respectively in December 2018 and Councillor Andrew Achilleos as Member Champion for Climate Change in May 2020.

The Cabinet Member advised that the Member Champion for Quality of Care had faced a difficult year as she was unable to visit the care homes due to the pandemic, however she had volunteered for BD CAN in order to continue supporting residents. Similarly, the Member Champion for Mental Health had undertaken several activities and joined forums to keep in touch with residents during the pandemic.

The Cabinet Member commented that the pandemic had shown how many of the Borough's residents had underlying issues with mental health requiring extra support, which unfortunately meant increased waiting times for those seeking help.

Councillor Achilleos addressed the Assembly on climate change issues which included:

- The effects of climate change becoming more evident in the Borough with the recent flash floods and a tornado;
- The COP26 conference in Glasgow, the outcomes of which he felt were modest at best;
- That while the Government was failing to meet environmental targets, the Council was excelling by retrofitting over 18,000 properties, internal and external wall insulation, heat pump technology and solar panels.
- The development of a Borough walking and cycling strategy;
- The 'Wild and Free' scheme that had come to life with the help of

- Eastbrookend Country Park Rangers; and
- The launch of a new website for the County Parks (barkinganddagenhamcountryparks.com)

The Assembly **resolved** to note the Annual Report of Member Champions for 2020/21.

44. Local Safeguarding Adults' Board Annual Report 2020/21

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration introduced the Local Safeguarding Adults' Board Annual Report 2020/21.

The Annual Report described the work and priorities of the Barking and Dagenham Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) from April 2020 to March 2021. It set out how the Board had worked to improve the protection of vulnerable adults across the Borough along with its achievements and key priorities for the future.

The Annual Report was agreed by the Safeguarding Adults Board at its meeting on 20 October 2021 and was presented and discussed at the Health and Wellbeing Board on 9 November 2021.

In response to questions, the Cabinet Member advised that there was no direct correlation between isolation and access to GP services within the borough.

The Assembly **resolved** note the Safeguarding Adults' Board Annual Report for 2020/21.

45. Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2020/21

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration introduced the Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2020/21.

The annual report provided an overview of what the Council was doing well, key achievements in the last year, the key challenges and plans to address those challenges in 2021/22 and beyond.

The Cabinet Member gave a summary of the key achievements in 2020/21, which included:

- Strong and effective senior leadership with an unrelenting focus on improving outcomes for vulnerable children, young people, and their families;
- Lead Member led Corporate Parenting Group going from strength to strength with honest conversations with children, young people, foster carers, and partners resulting in better understanding of experiences, what needs to be different and agreed actions for improvement;
- Further work to do, but continued improvement in partnership working, with education and health outcomes improving;
- Innovative and exciting Specialist Intervention Service continues to develop interventions that reflect children, young people and community needs to help keep children in their families or return home;
- For those children in care, a strong in-house fostering service supported by the Mockingbird programme continues to keep placements stable and responding

to the variety of needs of our children, with stronger Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) footprint evident.;

- Effective Virtual School during the pandemic demonstrating good outcomes for children in care and care leavers; and
- Work with care leavers underpinned by “no expiry date” ethos for our care and support offered, with strengthening relationships, good rates of keeping in touch, and celebration of their achievements.

The Assembly **resolved** to note the Corporate Parenting Annual Report for 2020/21 and the plans for 2021/22.

46. Adoption Annual Report 2020/21

The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health Integration introduced a report on the Adoption Annual report 2021.

The adoption functions of Tower Hamlets, Newham and Barking and Dagenham were delegated on 1 October 2019 to the London Borough of Havering within terms drawn up in a detailed partnership agreement. Adopt London East (ALE) formally commenced operational activity on that date.

An Adoption Service review in Barking and Dagenham was undertaken in August 2020 and an area for improvement was identified in relation to contract monitoring meetings and performance metrics. The Cabinet Member advised that the report before Assembly verified the processes that were now in place to ensure formal assessment against targets, holding ALE to account on overarching contract performance.

The Cabinet Member stated that ALE had been operational for 18 months, with 12 of those months being in Covid related lockdown. Despite that much had been achieved:

- The highest rate of children placed in all London Regional Adoption Agencies (RAA's);
- Adopter approval in line with or higher than all London RAA's;
- A large increase in the percentage of black and LGBT adopters;
- A new adopter support offer, both locally and pan London;
- A Covid support offer independently evaluated as outstanding and praised by the DfE;
- Rapid response to Covid including quick development of online training and support
- A productive partnership with We are Family delivering webinars and podcasts as well as direct support; and
- A clear and positive website showcasing work.

In response to a question, the Cabinet Member advised that one of the biggest challenges the Council faced currently was to get siblings adopted together as many larger families were now being presented to the Council.

The Assembly **resolved** to note the contents of the Adoption Report for 2020/21.

47. Treasury Management 2021/22 Mid-Year Review

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Core Services presented a report on the Treasury Management 2021/22 Mid-Year Review.

The review report provided details of the mid-year position for treasury activities and highlighted compliance with the Council's policies previously approved by the Assembly on 3 March 2021 as part of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2021/22.

The Cabinet Member commented that the focus of the report was on the broader economic picture not just in terms of the UK but globally. These were unprecedented times and the UK economy was facing significant pressure in terms of Brexit, Covid and climate issues. All of those would influence both the borough and the Council either directly or indirectly via inflationary pressures and borrowing rates.

The Assembly **resolved** to note:

- (i) The Treasury Management Strategy Statement Mid-Year Review 2021/22;
- (ii) The economic update covering the increase in inflation and the potential for an increase in the Bank of England Base Rate;
- (iii) That the value of the treasury investments and cash as at 30 September 2021 totalled £170.2m and that the treasury investment strategy outperformed its peer group, with a return of 1.51% against an average of 0.24% for London Local Authorities (as at 30 June 2021);
- (iv) That the value of the commercial and residential loans lent by the Council as at 31 March 2021 totalled £171.5m;
- (v) That the total borrowing position as at 30 September 2021 totalled £1.0 billion, with £331.2m relating to the Housing Revenue Account and £669.1m to the General Fund;
- (vi) That interest payable was forecast to be £12.6m against a budget of £13.6m, representing a surplus of £1m;
- (vii) That interest receivable was forecast to be £8.2m against a budget of £6.5m, representing a surplus of £1.7m;
- (viii) That capitalised interest was forecast to be £6.5m against a budget of £5.0m, representing a surplus of £1.5m;
- (ix) That Investment and Acquisition Strategy income was forecast to be £4.9m against a budget of £6.6m, representing a deficit of £1.7m; and
- (x) That in the first half of the 2021/22 financial year the Council complied with all 2021/22 treasury management indicators.

48. Motions

There were no motions.

49. Questions With Notice

There were no questions with notice.