

MINUTES OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 31 January 2024
(7:00 - 9:07 pm)

PRESENT

Cllr Irma Freeborn (Chair)
Cllr Tony Ramsay (Deputy Chair)

Cllr Andrew Achilleos	Cllr Dorothy Akwaboah	Cllr Saima Ashraf
Cllr Princess Bright	Cllr Sade Bright	Cllr Josie Channer
Cllr Faruk Choudhury	Cllr Muhib Chowdhury	Cllr Alison Cormack
Cllr Cameron Geddes	Cllr Syed Ghani	Cllr Rocky Gill
Cllr Kashif Haroon	Cllr Victoria Hornby	Cllr Manzoor Hussain
Cllr Jane Jones	Cllr Elizabeth Kangethe	Cllr Mohammed Khan
Cllr Giasuddin Miah	Cllr Margaret Mullane	Cllr Fatuma Nalule
Cllr Adegboyega Oluwole	Cllr Glenda Paddle	Cllr Simon Perry
Cllr Michel Pongo	Cllr Moin Quadri	Cllr Regina Rahman
Cllr Hardial Singh Rai	Cllr Chris Rice	Cllr Lynda Rice
Cllr Ingrid Robinson	Cllr Paul Robinson	Cllr Darren Rodwell
Cllr Muhammad Saleem	Cllr Muazzam Sandhu	Cllr Faraaz Shaukat
Cllr Jack Shaw	Cllr Summya Sohaib	Cllr Harriet Spoor
Cllr Dominic Twomey	Cllr Lee Waker	Cllr Maureen Worby
Cllr Mukhtar Yusuf	Cllr Sabbir Zamee	

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr John Dulwich	Cllr Edna Fergus	Cllr Donna Lumsden
Cllr Emily Rodwell	Cllr Phil Waker	

47. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

48. Minutes (22 November 2023)

The minutes of the Assembly meeting held on 22 November 2023 were confirmed as correct.

49. Death of Haji Mohammed Siddique, Freeman of the Borough

The Assembly noted with deep regret the recent passing of Haji Mohammed Siddique, Freeman of the Borough, aged 93.

The Chief Executive presented a tribute report, advising that Haji had arrived in the UK in 1955 aged 26 as an economic migrant, leaving behind his loved ones in Pakistan and a career as a teacher of mathematics and physical education. A short while later, he settled in Barking and Dagenham and held jobs at Ford's Dagenham and a local rubber factory before going on to be a supervisor at London

Transport and ending his working career in the food industry.

Haji was instrumental in the development of the Pakistani Muslim Association and was the founding father of the Barking Muslim Association. Upon being elected Chairman of the Association, Haji restructured it into a charitable trust and grasped, at the time, the very visionary idea of promoting and working towards inter-community tolerance, integration and the development of good relations between all.

Haji was bestowed the Freedom of the Borough in May 2016 for his commitment to community cohesion in the Borough, his work on behalf of the Pakistani Muslim community and his global charity work.

A number of Members paid tribute to Haji, remembering his contributions and dedication to the borough.

50. Death of Former Councillor Albert Gibbs, Freeman of the Borough

The Assembly noted with deep regret the recent passing of former Councillor and Freeman of the Borough, Albert Gibbs, aged 98.

The Chief Executive presented a tribute report, advising that Albert was first elected to represent Chadwell Heath ward at a by-election in May 1983 and continued to represent the area, becoming a councillor for Whalebone ward in May 2002 following a local boundary review, until May 2006 when he stood down.

During his time on the Council, Albert represented the Chadwell Heath Residents' Association and served on numerous committees, including the Parks, Contractual Services, Planning and Technical Services Committees, and was a very active member of the Wellgate Community Forum which covered the Chadwell Heath and Whalebone ward areas. Another of Albert's passions was the town twinning between Barking and Dagenham and Witten, Germany. Albert was also a member of the Royal British Legion and received a Branch Certificate of Merit from them.

Albert was conferred the title of Honorary Freeman of the Borough in 2004 in recognition of his service to the Council and the Chadwell Heath / Whalebone community in particular.

A number of Members paid tribute to Albert, remembering him fondly, not only for his contributions to the borough but also his efforts during World War II.

51. Death of Former Councillor Roy Patient, Freeman and Alderman of the Borough

(The Chair agreed that this item could be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency under the provisions of Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972.)

The Assembly noted with deep regret the passing of former Councillor, Freeman and Alderman of the Borough, Royston Alan James (Roy) Patient, earlier in the week, aged 90.

The Chief Executive presented a tribute report, advising that Roy was first elected as a Labour councillor representing Thames ward in May 1982 and, alongside his good friend and colleague, the late George Shaw, he worked tirelessly for the residents of Thames View for the next 20 years, standing down from the Council in May 2002. Upon his election, Roy soon established himself as a senior figure amongst the political leadership at the Council and, as well as serving on a whole host of committees and sub committees during his tenure, he was also a long-standing Chair of the Council's Cleansing Committee, Technical Services Committee and the B&D Road Safety Council, in addition to being the Chair of the Barking & Dagenham Sports Council.

Roy was also one of Barking & Dagenham's two appointed representatives on the East London Waste Authority (ELWA), the statutory Waste Disposal Authority covering B&D, Havering, Newham and Redbridge, and he held the position of ELWA Chair for a number of years before stepping down as a councillor in 2002. As Chair, Roy was instrumental in the development and implementation of ELWA's 25-year Integrated Waste Management Services contract, which was still operating today.

Roy's most long-standing and lasting legacy related to his role on the Eastbury Community School (formerly Eastbury Comprehensive School) Governing Body. Roy served on the Governing Body for over 50 years, the majority of those as Chair of Governors, and continued in that role right up to his passing. He was highly respected amongst the teaching staff and pupils and had been referred to as "Mr Eastbury" by his colleagues on the Governing Body.

In recognition of his standing and contribution to Barking & Dagenham Council, Roy was elected as Mayor for the 1991/92 municipal year and raised many thousands for his chosen charity, the Sick and Needy Appeal. That recognition was extended further in 2003 when Roy was conferred the title of Honorary Freeman of the Borough and yet again in 2017 when he was made an Alderman of the Borough.

A number of Members paid tribute to Roy, remembering his contributions and dedication to the borough.

Following the conclusion of the tributes, Members held a minute's applause as a mark of respect to and in memory of Haji Mohammed Siddique, Albert Gibbs and Roy Patient.

52. Minutes of Sub-Committees

The Assembly received and noted the minutes of the JNC Appointments, Salaries and Structures Panel meetings held on 14 and 19 December 2023.

53. Leader's Statement

The Leader presented a verbal statement updating the Assembly on a range of matters since the last meeting, including:

Upcoming Elections: The Mayor of London and London Assembly Elections

were being held on 2 May 2024, with the high probability that a General Election would take place later in the year. The Leader commented that a change in power in the Government was needed following 'Partygate', the longest Junior Doctor strike in history, the doomed Rwanda project, the housing crisis and, of course, the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. He also remarked on the continuing, severe financial pressures facing local government as a result of the Government's austerity programme, commenting that for every £1 of Central Government funding that the Council received in 2010, it now only received 66p.

Family Hubs: The recently launched Family Hubs were the latest element in the Council's new locality model and formed part of the Community Hub network.

Bobby Moore Sports Hub: The Bobby Moore Sports Hub opened to the community in December and was the only facility of its kind in London, providing 16 grass pitches, two 3g football pitches and a national league system pitch as well. It also contained gym activities, a cafeteria and changing facilities.

Visit by the Duke of Edinburgh: The Leader was very proud to welcome the Duke of Edinburgh to the Borough recently to mark the opening of the new Wharf studios and he remarked on the many new employment and education opportunities being created in Barking and Dagenham.

Remembering the Holocaust: On 26 January, Council representatives were joined by community members from a range of different backgrounds and cultures to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day and he welcomed the united stand in promotion of the Council's aspirations for "one Borough, one community, no one left behind".

54. Appointments

There were no appointments.

55. BAD Youth Forum Annual Report 2023

The Assembly received the Barking and Dagenham (BAD) Youth Forum and Young Mayor's Annual Report, introduced by the Head of Participation, Opportunity and Wellbeing, who then handed over to representatives of the Youth Forum.

The report detailed the achievements of the BAD Youth Forum during the past 12 months, outlining the work of each of its sub-groups, their aims and the impact of the work completed.

The Youth Forum were concerned about the rise of misogynistic material on social media and the increasing view of sexual harassment and sexual assault being acceptable among some young people. Forum members had designed a survey to capture young people's thoughts, feelings and experiences of sexual harassment and abuse to understand what was happening in the borough. While waiting for survey responses, the Forum created some products to give to young people to highlight the issue of sexual harassment and sexual assault. These items included oyster card holders, lip balms, rulers and banner pens.

Other key highlights of the report included:

- Undertaking workshops to understand sexual harassment, unwanted attention and gender based violence;
- Creating a Young Persons' tab on the Council's BD Money webpages;
- Raising money for the Young Mayor's Charity, Centre Point, by undertaking a group sleepout and bucket shakes at events in the borough;
- Volunteering at Barking Foodbank and creating wellbeing bags for homeless people;
- Events attended by the Young Mayor, Regina Mudibo Pamba, which included Mayor Making and the Civic Parade, Women's Empowerment Awards and Transgender Remembrance Day; and
- Various additional events providing new experiences and opportunities for young people.

The Assembly thanked the Forum for their presentation and hard work during 2023.

The Assembly **resolved** to note the work and achievements of the BAD Youth Forum in 2023.

56. Adoption Annual Report 2022/23

The Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care and Disabilities presented the Adopt London East Annual Report for 2022/23.

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.

The report had been produced by the Head of Service for the ALE and all four Local Authorities received the report. The ALE report, attached at Appendix A to the report, provided a comprehensive overview and evaluation of adoption activity for 2022/23 in the following areas:

- Recruitment and training of adopters;
- Family finding for children with an adoption plan; and
- Post adoption support to children, adoptive families, and birth families.

The Cabinet Member identified key highlights from the 2022/23 ALE report:

- Adoption preparation training continued to be developed and improved. In 2022/23, a total of 21 placements were approved, which included one foster carer wishing to adopt. Just over a quarter of those adopters wanted to be approved as Early Permanence Carers;
- There was an increase in the number Adoption Plans being made by the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) - a total of 43 made across ALE, with six being LBBD children; and
- Across ALE, 25 children were placed with eight being from LBBD. 76% of the children were between the ages of 0-2 years and the oldest child matched was five-year's old. Of the 25 children placed, 10 were placed via Early

Permanence.

The Assembly **resolved** to note the report.

(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 two-hour threshold).

57. Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25

The Cabinet Member for Finance, Growth and Core Services presented a report on the outcome of the public consultation on proposals for a new, statutory local Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme for working age recipients for 2024/25.

The Cabinet Member reminded colleagues that the Government's welfare reforms, which included the introduction of the Universal Credit (UC) system to replace Housing Benefit (HB), Income Support and other benefits / tax credits, meant that the Council's current CTS scheme had become far less aligned with HB administration. The welfare reforms also meant that many more individuals became liable for paying towards their Council Tax and the amount of support given to local authorities, to help those on very low incomes with their Council Tax bill, had been cut by approximately 10% by Government.

As a consequence, the Cabinet considered alternative CTS models at its October 2023 meeting and its preferred option was an 'income banded discount' scheme, described as Model 1 in the report, which was more aligned with the new benefits regime, easier for the Council to administer and, most importantly, simpler for claimants to understand whilst being less reactive to changes to their individual circumstances.

A public consultation exercise took place between 23 October and 24 November 2023 and covered a range of issues, including alternative options. The consultation was widely promoted on the Citizens Alliance Network website alongside the main Council website, via social media and awareness campaigns via the BD_Collective. Furthermore, every CTS claimant was written to directly and direct engagement was sought from key voluntary sector partners, the Citizens' Advice Bureau and the Disablement Association for Barking and Dagenham.

The Cabinet Member advised that although the level of survey responses was relatively low, the response to the Model 1 scheme was predominantly positive and acknowledged the need for change. Individual comments and issues raised by respondents had been reflected upon and the intention was for the new CTS scheme, which was set out at Appendix 1 to the report, to take effect from 1 April 2024. The Cabinet Member also referred to the proposal to carry forward £250,000 Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Funding, provided within the Welfare Reserve, from 2023/24 to 2024/25, to provide additional support for those local residents who may be slightly worse off under the new CTS scheme.

The Assembly **resolved** to:

- (i) Agree, in light of the positive response to the public consultation, to adopt Model 1 as set out in sections 1.17 - 1.20 of the report as the Council's

replacement Council Tax Support Scheme for 2024/25; and

- (ii) Agree the carry forward of £250,000 Council Tax Discretionary Hardship Funding, provided within the Welfare Reserve, from 2023/24 to 2024/25.

58. Motions

There were no motions.

59. Questions With Notice

There were no questions with notice.