

**London Borough of Barking and Dagenham**

**Council Statement of Priorities 2012/13**

***Building a better life for all***

***Managing in tough times***

## **Message from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Liam Smith**

2012/13 will be an exciting year for Barking and Dagenham, in its role as a host borough for the Olympic and Paralympic games, but also a challenging one with the financial pressures we all face.

We are proud that the Olympic flame will come through our borough. The Olympics are already bringing improvements to local sports, arts and leisure provision which will promote health and wellbeing, and we are using this opportunity to promote the borough and encourage investment – which means jobs and opportunities for local people.

Our aim of **building a better life for all** means that investment in our borough is very important. Work to provide new facilities is already underway:

- Our young people will be able to access high quality training at the Technical Skills Academy from September 2012.
- Building on the success of Dagenham's new Becontree leisure centre which opened in May 2011, Barking will benefit from Abbey Sports Centre being rebuilt by Spring 2014 to provide first rate leisure facilities for the whole area.
- A major programme of estate renewal is underway on the Goresbrook Village, Leys and Gascoigne estates.

We are ambitious for the future of Barking and Dagenham. Our aims are:

- **Raising household incomes**  
We will make improvements to employment and skills levels by providing proactive support to help local people back into work or training, and promoting the area to businesses and developers.
- **Improving standards in school and post-16 education**  
Our services focus continually on improving aspirations and achievement to deliver improved skills and employment outcomes for all ages in the borough.
- **Housing and estate renewal**  
Our Housing Strategy for 2012-2017 focuses on delivering a range of improvements including investing in new ways to deliver affordable housing, council housing, decent homes and regeneration.

We know that in 2012/13 many local people are facing tough times so we will freeze Council Tax again this year, and continue to provide support to individuals, families and businesses by working closely with our partners.

The Council continues to face challenges. We have had to make difficult budget decisions already and will continue to do so. We worked hard to involve local people in the budget setting process this year to ensure we focus resources in the right places. Our budget consultation received a positive response and helped us shape the final decisions.

The reduction in our funding from government comes at a time when our community's needs are becoming ever more complex and our population is growing faster than in other parts of London and the rest of the country. We are facing these challenges

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head on, and are working on new ways to continue to deliver services with less money. Some examples include:

- Aiming to save around £70m over seven years through Elevate, our Joint Venture with Agilisys.
- Saving money in administration and costs of running the Council to ensure front-line services are protected and reducing senior management costs.

We want to be an organisation which encourages innovation and initiative, where talent is developed and nurtured, and people are treated fairly and with respect. Our People Strategy sets out what we will do to ensure we have the right organisation and skills across the workforce to deliver our ambition. The focus for 2012/13 continues to be on:

- Workforce planning – having the right people with the right skills at every level, actively developing potential.
- Performance management and reward – rewarding good performance, addressing poor performance.
- Well-being – creating a working environment where people can be productive.
- Employee engagement – keeping our people informed and making them feel part of the future.

Councillors, the senior management team, and staff from across the Council will work together with our partners like health, voluntary groups, businesses, the Police, Job Centre Plus and Barking and Dagenham College, to deliver our aims for the borough.

Councillor Liam Smith  
Leader

## OUR STATEMENT OF PRIORITIES

### Our Borough

Barking and Dagenham is a dynamic place with a vibrant community and complex challenges.

The latest estimate for the total Borough population is 179,700 (Office of National Statistics (ONS) mid-year estimate 2010), an increase of almost 14,000 since 2001. The most significant increases have been within the younger age groups (0-9 years) putting pressure on school places and housing.

The borough offers a unique mix of urban living with good and improving transport links both into London and the Essex countryside, and has its own impressive parks and open spaces. There are significant investment opportunities with substantial brownfield sites for development. We want to encourage growth and unlock the potential of the borough and its residents.

In 2011/12 we have already:

- Opened the new Becontree leisure centre in Dagenham
- Given Barking Station a face-lift - improving the pedestrian area and access
- Secured £45million of Government grant funding to invest in meeting school place demand
- Increased the percentage of secondary schools rated as outstanding or good from 56% in 2009 to 67% in 2011
- Opened the Dagenham Business Centre offering 21 light industrial/office units for sale or to let and the Barking Enterprise Centre offering office accommodation and on-site support

We are still however ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> of 326 authorities in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2010) meaning that the Borough has some of the most deprived areas in England and that there are people in need across the borough. We have the second lowest household incomes in London (CACI social data supplier 2009), and the local unemployment rate, which was higher than the rest of London even before the recession began, continues to rise.

The Council, working with its partners, has delivered many services to support local people to gain skills and jobs. However, the difficult economic circumstances are proving a challenge to narrow the gap of socio economic figures of the Borough compared to London averages.

### Our priorities

This statement supports the delivery of the Barking and Dagenham Partnership's aim of *'working together for a better borough that is safe, clean, fair and respectful, prosperous and healthy and where our young people are inspired and successful'*, and sets out the Council's aims for the coming year, and what we will achieve within our budget. We are leading the community and tackling the challenges we face in a range of ways and setting out what we will do and what you will see as a result.

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Despite the challenging economic climate, we are determined to continue to focus on our aims for the Borough, which are:

### **Raising household incomes**

We will:

- Deliver the Barking Town Centre Strategy to encourage investment and bring jobs to the town through improvements to Barking Station, the town centre's roads, pedestrian areas and green spaces, additional commercial space and 4,000 new homes by 2025.
- Redevelop Dagenham Dock as a sustainable industrial development with improvements to infrastructure and 'green links' between businesses and transportation creating new employment opportunities, to be delivered in phases up to 2040.
- Improve industrial areas, promote the borough to businesses and opportunity sites to developers, and work with partners to deliver a wide-ranging programme of activities to stimulate the creation of 10,000 new jobs by 2026.
- Open the Technical Skills Academy in September 2012 to improve access to training and raise skill levels and confidence of the local community to get quality jobs. Work with partners to provide advice, guidance and support to help local people find and compete for jobs

### **Improving standards in school and post-16 education**

We will:

- Invest £18million in the borough's primary schools and allocate £27million for investment in secondary schools and other programmes to provide additional places.
- Continue to improve GCSE results aiming to match national levels for pupils gaining A\*-C including maths and English by August 2012.
- Ensure there are ways to support all young people to remain in education and maximise their opportunities such as through the apprentice scheme.

### **Housing and estate renewal**

We will:

- Complete the estate renewal programme to demolish 1,790 non-decent homes and provide 1,200 new Council and mixed-tenure homes in 2015.
- Deliver a major regeneration programme providing 1,100 new homes on key sites such as Academy Central and Lymington Fields by 2016 and 10,000 new homes on Barking Riverside.
- Establish a new and innovative Housing Local Education Partnership to deliver 472 new and affordable homes in 2014.

The aims are underpinned by the theme, **a well-run organisation**. We will continue to provide a range of day to day services and effective behind the scenes support to ensure we meet both our legal responsibilities and the needs of the community.

In 2012/13 we will focus on ensuring that we implement innovative ways of working through our IT strategy enabling quicker and easier access to our services for customers and more efficient ways of working for our staff. We will also implement the budget savings agreed for the coming year, completing restructuring in services and management teams.

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As well as our overall aims we also have four priority themes. These are listed below with the main issues we will be focusing on in 2012/13 which reflect some of the other core services we provide.

- **Better together – we will:**

- Continue to work with the Police and community to reduce crime and solve local problems such as anti-social behaviour.
- Provide more positive things for young people to do such as opening a new outdoor BMX facility at Becontree Heath Leisure Centre by December 2012.
- Continue to empower local communities to take over and run local community facilities and to develop vibrant local communities.
- Continue to ensure the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) and other third sector organisations have a strong local voice through the Barking and Dagenham Partnership with other public and private sector organisations, and specific projects such as Olympic volunteers.
- Continue to help communities keep children and adults safe.

- **Better homes – we will:**

- Continue to invest in and implement our programme of housing and estate renewal.
- Continue to improve services such as refuse and recycling collections, street cleaning and environmental health services such as pest control so that we have a clean borough with low levels of litter and graffiti.
- Complete our programme of road and footpath repairs by March 2013.

- **Better health and well-being – we will:**

- Work with the NHS to transfer public health services to the Council so that we can work together to support local people to live healthier lives.
- Work with partners to develop and implement the Health and Wellbeing Strategy to ensure services are focussed on the needs of local people.
- Work with GPs and local providers to improve joined up services delivered through children's centres and schools to improve children's health and give them the best possible start in life.
- Continue to campaign for and support improvements to Queen's hospital.
- Support older people to be fit and active by providing free leisure activities.
- Provide social care services to meet people's needs.

- **Better future – we will:**

- Provide ongoing support to residents through tough times by ensuring people get the benefits they are entitled to and by providing targeted schemes and programmes with our partners.
- Continue to provide support to families most in need to ensure that children and young people have the best chance to succeed.
- Take advantage of the opportunities of the Olympics and Paralympics, promoting inward investment and development opportunities creating employment.

Our Policy House (available on the Council's website

<http://www.lbbd.gov.uk/CouncilandDemocracy/Documents/council-plan-11-12-policy->

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house.pdf) sets out the three overall aims and the outcomes we want to achieve under each of the four priority themes.

To track how we are doing towards achieving these aims we monitor a range of performance measures, some of which are listed below. We are also working hard with other host Olympic boroughs to close the gap between our performance and the average across London.

- Overall, 64% of residents are satisfied with the local area as a place to live (2011). This has increased by 10% from the previous year and our target is to increase this further in 2012/13.
- We are aiming to reduce the time it takes to process Housing benefit and Council Tax benefit change of circumstances from 16.5 days (December 2011) to a provisional target of 15 days by March 2013, and process new claims within 21 days.
- The percentage of pupils achieving 5 A\*-C GCSEs (including English and Maths) continues to increase from 51.7% in 2010 to 56.6% in 2011. The target across the Olympic host boroughs is to narrow the gap against the London average by increasing performance by 3-4% annually.
- In the borough the percentage of 16 to 18 year olds who are not in employment, education or training is reducing, from 7.9% in 2009/10 down to 6.9% in 2010/11.
- In 2010/11 there were 25.48 violent crimes per 1,000 population. This was a reduction from 30.40 the previous year. Across the host Olympic boroughs our target is to reduce this by another 3-4% by 2014/15.
- In 2010/11 24.3% of school children in year 6 (age 10-11) were obese. The host Olympic boroughs target is to reduce this to 22.6% by 2014/15.

### **How we will fund our plans - our Medium Term Financial Strategy**

The Council's net budget in 2012/13 is £177.4 million. In 2011/12 our budget was £183.4 million and in 2010/11 we spent £167.3 million.

This reduction in the Council's budget is due to reduced resources from Government. Our financial analysis shows that we are facing a reduction of £20.2m (13.7%) over a two year period, including reductions on Formula Grant, Specific Grant and Area Based Grant. These grants account for approximately 18% of the Council's overall gross budget. Other funding comes from Council Tax (8%), dedicated schools grant (23%) and the remainder from income from services and other third party payments (51%).

While we try to influence Government decisions in the interests of local residents, the Council has no choice about how much money it is given from them. There is still no official notification of our level of grant funding for future years. The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) prudently estimates further reductions in 2013/14 and 2014/15.

We do however have the ability to choose how we spend our money and how much money we raise from local residents – and have chosen, again, to freeze Council Tax which enables us to take advantage of the Council Tax freeze grant from Government equivalent to a 2.5% increase. Members decide the priorities for the Council and where

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to focus spending by listening to local people through their surgeries, ward activity, annual Residents' Survey and from their own policy perspective.

The Council has listened to the views of local people in setting its budget for 2012/13. Residents were able to share their views on the budget proposals through a series of meetings, Leader's Question Time, on Facebook and Twitter, and through the Council's website. In response to the feedback, changes were made to several proposals. Residents played a valuable part in the process ensuring the budget has gone through a robust challenge process before Councillors made their final decisions.

The financial principles the Council will follow are:

- A balanced budget
- Budget decisions based on Members' priorities
- All employees, partners and contractors are required to "treat every pound spent as though it is the last pound in your purse"
- Managers are responsible and accountable for their budgets
- Robust but not excessive levels of reserves and contingencies
- Strong financial systems and processes
- Effective commissioning
- Affordable investments to improve services and maintain assets
- Income maximisation
- Continued efficiency, elimination of waste and value for money

We manage the risks associated with the achievement of our priorities and the management of the Council and its budget through a robust risk management process, with headline risks summarised in the Corporate Risk Register.

In conclusion, the Council is trying to improve the lives of local people, particularly at a time when economically things are tough.

### **Comments, ideas or questions?**

If you have questions about this statement, or you require this information in another format e.g. in large print or in a language other than English, please contact the Council's Policy & Performance team on 020 8227 2343.

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