Part A

A Summary of

the Council’s Constitution
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1 Introduction

We are here to provide essential services across the borough and, working with local agencies like the police and the health service, to meet the needs of everyone who lives here.

So the decisions that we make on your behalf are really important. We want to encourage you to have more say in how our organisation is run, the types of services we provide, and our plans for the future.

This guide is a summary of our Constitution. It explains how the different parts of the Council work together, how we make our decisions and how you can have your say. You can see our full constitution at the Dagenham Civic Centre, Barking Town Hall or on our website (www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk).

2 Community priorities

The Community Priorities, which will define the work of the Council and its Partners over the coming years, are set out below:

- **Safe** – a safer borough where the problems of antisocial behaviour have been tackled and all your people have a positive role to play in the community.

- **Clean** - a clean, green and sustainable borough with far greater awareness of the actions needed to tackle climate change, with less pollution, waste, fly-tipping and graffiti.

- **Fair and respectful** – a stronger and more cohesive borough so that it is a place where all people get along, and of which all residents feel proud.

- **Healthy** – a healthy borough, where health inequalities are reduced with greater knowledge of lifestyle impacts on health.

- **Prosperous** – an ambitious and prosperous borough that supports business, jobs and skills, attracting new business with economic, social and environmental resources harnessed for the good of all.

- **Inspired and successful young people** - a borough of opportunity for all young people so that they can play an active economic role for the good of all.

3 The people on your council

Councillors

Our organisation is made up of 51 councillors who you elect at the local elections every four years. There is an up-to-date list of councillors in local libraries, at the Civic Centre, at the Town Hall and on our website (www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk).
The Borough is divided into 17 areas called ‘Wards’ (see the map in part 6). Each Ward elects three councillors. To stand for election, councillors have to live or work in the borough or be on the electoral register.

Councillors have two main roles. They must:

- represent the whole community by making decisions about our policies, services and finances; and
- represent the interests of the people in their ward.

Councillors are your main link to us and will give you advice and help if you need it. Councillors also hold ‘surgeries’ where you can talk to them face to face. Or you can phone, e-mail or write to your councillor. Their contact details are on our website or you can ask the Member Support Officer for their details by telephone on 020 8227 2116, or by e-mail to iris.buffoni@lbbd.gov.uk

Staff

We have about 8,000 staff who are responsible for putting our decisions into action and delivering our services. Our staff are led by the Chief Executive and their management team.

Our services are spread across the following departments

- **The Chief Executive** has overall responsibility for the corporate and operational management of the Council, including acting as the Council’s principal adviser on all matters of policy and for promoting community leadership. Corporate Policy and Public Affairs, Legal and Democratic Services and Human Resources and Organisational Development all report to the Chief Executive.

- **Housing and Environment** is responsible for many of the Council's frontline services bringing together housing strategy, the management of housing and neighbourhoods and environmental and enforcement services.

- **Adult and Community Services** provides adult care facilities, community and neighbourhood services, leisure and arts, libraries and heritage, community cohesion and equalities, as well as delivering the community safety strategy and preventive services and overseeing public and mental health in partnership with the Primary Care Trust and North East London Foundation Trust respectively.

- **Children’s Services** promotes the wellbeing of children with the key objectives of improving education outcomes for all children and safeguarding children who are at risk, as well as delivering skills, learning and employment.

- **Finance and Resources** is responsible for leading the sound administration of the Council’s financial affairs including corporate and strategic finance, audit and risk. It also oversees regeneration and economic development, asset management and capital delivery alongside the management of Barking and Dagenham Direct, the contact centres and performance and improvement.
4 Council meetings

Our main Council meetings aim to:

- involve people more in their communities and the way that they are run;
- involve the community more fully in our work;
- act on our views more effectively;
- make it clear where decisions are made and who is responsible for them; and
- improve joint working arrangements between the Council and its partners.
We make major decisions about our business at meetings. The meetings are open to the public and we advertise the details beforehand. Everyone has the right to attend these meetings (although we will ask you to leave when we are considering personal or confidential matters).

We write agendas which list the issues we will consider at each meeting and you can see them on our website five days before each meeting (www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk).

The two main decision-making meetings are the Assembly and the Cabinet.

**Assembly**

- The Assembly is responsible for:
  - agreeing main Council policies; and
  - setting our yearly budget and the Council Tax.
- All 51 councillors are members of the Assembly.
- The meetings are held every two months on a Wednesday at Barking Town Hall, starting at 7pm.

**The Cabinet**

- The Cabinet is responsible for:
  - developing main policies and budget proposals for the Assembly’s agreement;
  - making decisions about our strategies, services and finances, based on the policies set by the Assembly;
  - making sure all our departments work well together in delivering quality services to local people; and
  - making sure we work well with other local organisations, such as the police and health services, for the benefit of the community.
- Between three and ten councillors make up the Cabinet as determined by the Leader of the Council who chairs the meeting.
- The meetings are held on Tuesday evenings at Dagenham Civic Centre, starting at 5 pm.

You can find out, from our ‘Forward Plan’, the main decisions the Cabinet and the Assembly are due to make in the coming months. The Plan also tells you who we will consult about the various matters. You can look at the Forward Plan on our website (www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk).
Scrubtny - checking, challenging and monitoring decisions

- The overview and scrutiny function of the Council is managed through five standing Select Committees, which report directly to the Assembly. Four Select Committees are themed, and the fifth Select Committee addresses cross-cutting issues and also has responsibility for the audit function.

- Each Select Committee has a defined remit, which is aligned with Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) structures and Council and LSP priorities. Each Select Committee has responsibility for scrutinising issues falling within their remit, and the Select Committee remits combined cover all aspects of LSP work.

- The five Select Committees are as follows:
  - Children’s Services Select Committee (themed)
  - Health and Adult Services Select Committee (themed)
  - Living and Working Select Committee (themed)
  - Public Accounts and Audit Select Committee (cross-cutting)
  - Safer and Stronger Community Select Committee (themed)

- The four themed Select Committees will be made up of nine councillors, with the PAASC made up of six councillors.

- The meetings are held every six weeks between Mondays and Wednesdays, split between the Civic Centre and Town Hall, starting at 6 pm.

- In addition to monitoring and in-depth review work, each Select Committee has responsibility for
  
  (i) Call-Ins,
  (ii) Councillor Calls for Action; and
  (iii) Considering petitions in accordance with the Council’s Petition Scheme which can be found on the Council’s website at:

  [http://www.lbld.gov.uk/CouncilandDemocracy/Information/Pages/Petitions.aspx](http://www.lbld.gov.uk/CouncilandDemocracy/Information/Pages/Petitions.aspx)

- A Call-in process allows councillors to question Cabinet decisions and, if necessary, change them before they are implemented.

- Councillor Call for Action (CCfA): CCfAs can be initiated by any Councillor in order to raise a persistent problem that affects a significant number of local residents and has failed to be resolved through the other channels available. CCfAs will be considered by the relevant Select Committee.

- Petitions: Considering (i) petitions requisitioning a Senior Officer to provide evidence in respect of those services which fall within the remit of the relevant Select Committee, and (ii) public representations from a lead petitioner, where in their opinion a petition has not been dealt with adequately at the Assembly.
Other Meetings

All meetings are open to the public unless stated otherwise.

Development Control Board (DCB)

The DCB considers planning applications.

The meetings are usually held every four weeks, generally on a Monday at Barking Town Hall, starting at 6 pm.

Interested parties including applicants and objectors may speak at the meeting.

Licensing and Regulatory Board

The Licensing and Regulatory Board deals with licensing and other regulatory matters. The Board is open to the public (except when we are discussing confidential matters).

The meetings are held fortnightly on Tuesdays, at the Civic Centre, starting at 5 pm.

Interested parties who have made relevant representations to an application will be allowed to address the Board.

Personnel Board

The Personnel Board deals with issues about individual council employees. The Board deals with confidential matters and is not open to the public.

The meetings will be held where practicable on either Tuesdays or Thursdays at the Civic Centre at a time to be determined.

Standards Committee

The Standards Committee promotes and maintains high standards of behaviour by councillors and employees and is responsible for dealing with allegations of breaches of the Members Code of Conduct, for which Sub-Committees are appointed to discharge those functions.

The Standards Committee meetings are held every two months usually on the second Thursday, at the Civic Centre, starting at 3pm. The Sub-Committees meet as required.

Ceremonial Council

The Ceremonial Council includes all 51 councillors and meets to carry out ceremonial and public functions such as Freedom of the Borough awards. The Ceremonial Mayor is chair of the Ceremonial Council.

The meetings are held at Barking Town Hall, usually on a Friday, starting at 7 pm.
Joint arrangements and partnerships

We have set up a number of joint arrangements and partnerships with other local authorities and associations. There are more details in the full Constitution.

5 Your rights and how you can get involved

- **Contact a councillor about any matter you are concerned about.**
  There is information about councillors on our website. You can also phone the Member Support Officer on 020 8227 2116 or e-mail us (iris.buffoni@lbkd.gov.uk).

- **Look at the full Council Constitution.**
  You can see a copy of the full Council Constitution at the Civic Centre, at the Town Hall or on our website ([www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk](http://www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk)).

- **Come to Council meetings**
  We will advertise the dates, times and places of council meetings beforehand. You can get more information from our website ([www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk](http://www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk)).

- **Licensing & Regulatory & Development Control Boards**
  Interested parties including applicants and objectors can, under certain circumstances address both Boards in respect of licensing and planning applications. For details of how to do this, phone Democratic Services on 020 8227 2135.

- **Inspect agendas and minutes for formal meetings and see reports and background papers (except confidential ones)**
  You can see public agendas, minutes and reports on our website ([www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk](http://www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk)).

- **Look at the Forward Plan to find out and have your say on the key decisions councillors and officers are due to make**
  You can look at this on our website ([www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk](http://www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk)).

- **Complain to us if you think that we have failed to deliver a service that we promised or that we have not treated you politely and fairly**

  **To make a complaint:**
  - fill in the on-line complaint form on our website ([www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk](http://www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk));
  - e-mail your complaint to: complaints@lbkd.gov.uk;
  - fill in a complaint form which you can get from Council offices and libraries;
  - write to Corporate Complaints, 2nd Floor Roycraft House, Linton Road, Barking IG11 8HE, or
  - visit a Council office.
• Complain to the Monitoring Officer if you have evidence which you think shows that a councillor has not followed our Code of Conduct for Members (the Code is in the Constitution)

To make a complaint:
• write to The Monitoring Officer, London Borough of Barking & Dagenham, Civic Centre, Dagenham RM10 7BN
• phone – 020 8227 2638
• e-mail your complaint to Tasnim.shawkat@lbud.gov.uk; or
• fill in an on-line complaints form on the website at http://www.lbbd.gov.uk/CouncilandDemocracy/Complaints/Pages/CouncillorComplaint.aspx

• Have your say on our proposals

So that we can provide the right services and plan for the Borough, we need to know what you think about our services and priorities. We regularly consult local people. If we ask you for your views, please take the time to give them to us.

People who live in the Borough also have the right to:

• Vote at local elections (as long as you are on the electoral register)
If you would like to register or apply for a postal vote for future elections, please phone Electoral Services on 020 8227 2945, e-mail us (electoral.services@lbud.gov.uk) or fill in the on-line forms on our website (www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk).
6 Map of wards
The map below shows an outline of each of Barking and Dagenham’s electoral ward boundaries.