

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Electoral Review

Council Size Proposal Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

1. Introduction

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) commenced a review of Barking & Dagenham's ward boundaries in March 2020, the result of which will take effect from the next Local Elections in May 2022. The review forms part of a statutory periodic review, the last one having taken place in Barking and Dagenham in 1999.

Based on the electorate as of 24 January 2020 there is currently an electoral imbalance in four of the seventeen wards (24%) where the elector to councillor ratio is more than 10% from the average ratio for the Borough. A further four wards have an elector to councillor ratio of 9%, just outside the 10% threshold.

The eligible electorate as at January 2020 was 141,874 as compared to 114,000 when the last review was conducted. This represents an increase of 25% of the total eligible electorate which has incrementally increased year on year. The only exception to this trend was in 2014 when the system of Individual Electoral Registration resulted in the electoral register reducing by nearly 6,000 compared to the previous year. This was due to the Xpress registration software system used by the Council automatically removing names that did not match dates of birth/national insurance numbers (*a requirement of the Cabinet Office in line with IER legislation*), as opposed to an actual reduction in the size of the local population. Consequently, the electorate grew by nearly the same number within two years.

The Council currently has 17 wards and 51 councillors with each ward represented by three councillors. At the time of the last review in 1999 each councillor represented an average of 2,235 eligible electors which had been forecasted to increase to 2,385 by 2003. As at January 2020 each councillor represented, on average, 2,782 eligible electors.

2. Council Size

During the first stage of the current electoral review, based on a proposal from the Authority, the LGBCE will for the purposes of public consultation recommend a council size (the total number of elected Councillors) which in their opinion will allow the Authority to take decisions effectively, manage the business and responsibilities of the Council successfully and provide effective community leadership and representation.

This document puts forward Barking and Dagenham Council size submission with supporting evidence across the following three broad areas, in line with LGBCE guidance:

Governance and decision making – determining the role of councillors in decision making, and how work and responsibilities are distributed across the Council.

Scrutiny functions – the role of councillors in holding decision makers to account and to ensure that the Council can discharge its responsibilities to outside bodies.

□ **Representative role of councillors** – assessing how councillors represent and provide leadership in their communities and how this affects workload and responsibilities.

The report also presents a technical assessment of the Council's future plans and its implications for the size of the local electorate predicted 6 years ahead of the final Review decision due to be published in 2021/2022.

3. Background

In July 2014, the Local Government Association (LGA) was invited to carry out a Corporate Peer Challenge of the Council, to assess the organisation's ability and capacity to deliver on its plans, proposals and ambitions. Following on from that in 2015 the Council commissioned an independent Growth Commission to review the Council's ambition to be London's growth opportunity and make recommendations how to maximise the contribution of the borough to the London economy; generating growth in Barking and Dagenham in a way that benefits all residents including the establishment of a radical transformation programme entitled Ambition 2020.

In the light of the above a councillor led Transformation Task Group was established to consider how Councillors' roles would change by 2020. Consequently, a number of recommendations arose from the Review and said pieces of work which related to the Council's governance arrangements which were subsequently adopted by the Council.

These included:

- Reducing the cost of democracy by reducing the frequency and overall number of Committees, through the deletion particularly of the number of scrutiny committees as well as combining the functions of others, as well as the 'slimming down' of other meetings
- The need for clearer councillor and officer roles through a revision the Council's scheme of delegation,
- Enabling councillors to spend more time in their communities through the reduction in Council meetings, and
- Aligning the Council's work programme with the Ambition 2020 transformation programme and Growth Commission recommendations through the establishment of councillor led Policy Task groups to assist and advise the Leader and the Cabinet in the development of policy, strategies, and plans as well as providing succession planning for councillors aspiring to become future Cabinet members.

The Growth Commission which reported in February 2016 put forward over 100 recommendations, covering all aspects of the borough's economic growth including:

- housing
- business
- transport and infrastructure
- culture and heritage
- urban design
- educational attainment
- skills and employment
- civic culture

One of the Growth Commission's recommendations was the development of a long-term vision for Barking and Dagenham that could harness the energy, creativity and ambition of residents. Nearly 3,000 residents helped to create [Barking and Dagenham Together – Borough Manifesto](#) which outlines the Council's vision of **one borough, one community with no-one left behind**.

The development of the first [Social Progress Index \(SPI\)](#) at a community level gives Barking and Dagenham a unique tool that allows the Council and other key bodies to monitor and drive the experiences of people living in the borough. The SPI helps to ensure that life is improving for residents regardless of which part of the borough they reside in and that they are able to flourish as individuals and families, choose to stay in the borough and be able to afford to do so.

In the light of the above in 2017, the Council approved a budget and a medium-term financial strategy with significant implications for the Council and the Borough more broadly. Baked into both and building on the recommendations of the Growth Commission were a set of proposals that, in the years to follow, would lead to the creation of an entirely new kind of council, one capable of meeting head on the fiscal, demographic and political challenges facing the Borough.

It was stated at that time that Barking and Dagenham had one of the fastest growing and fastest changing populations in the country. Section 5 details those population changes which over the period has significantly increased demand for services. At the same time reductions in funding imposed by central government meant it would not be possible to meet those demands. It was predicted that by 2020, projected cuts in funding would mean that in real terms the Council would have roughly half the amount of money that was available to spend in 2010. At the same time, the pressures caused by the growing population and more complex needs meant that an estimated additional £50 million would be required to meet rising demands. The 2017 budget report estimated that, if the Council did nothing, it would suffer a shortfall of £71 million by 2020/21. This of course did not include or take account of the additional unprecedented financial pressures on the Council brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Government in 2017 were in the process of implementing reforms to national policy and legislation that would have a major impact on council services, residents and local businesses. These changes included welfare reform, such as a reduction in the cap in household benefits, and a freeze on working age benefits; reform of adult social care, and health and social care integration; the promotion of 'devolution deals' at regional or sub-regional levels; and changes to government funding for schools and continued government.

Barking and Dagenham were at the bottom of too many London league tables. People in the borough died earlier, had poorer health, and lower levels of education and skills than in most other London boroughs. Too many were insufficiently skilled. Too many were in low paid work, and too many struggled to find suitable accommodation to live in.

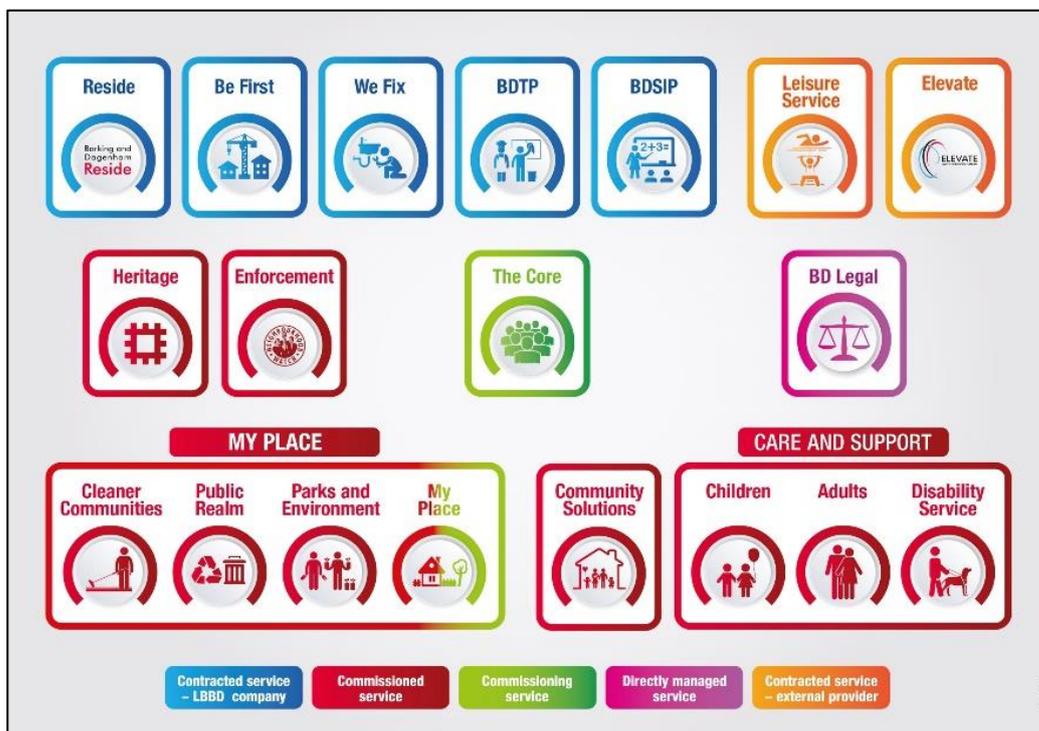
At that time it was clear that the combined impacts of austerity, population change and government policy meant that the Council could no longer afford to meet the needs of the residents by spending more money on the kinds of services that had been provided in the past. Instead the task was to re-focus what the Council does and in doing so to identify the root cause of need and tackle it, so that people had a better chance of living more independently. The focus was therefore to build resilience so that people were better able

to help themselves.

At the same it was clear that the Borough had enormous and unfulfilled potential, in part due to our proximity to central London and the availability of land in the Borough. It was estimated that over the next 20 years there is the potential for up to 50,000 new homes and over 10,000 new jobs in the borough. The Borough Manifesto set out the community's long- term vision, and through Ambition 2020 the ability to create an organisation capable of making it happen.

Core to the changes that were proposed in 2017 - as part of Ambition 2020 - was a new operating model for the Council, moving away from an organisation designed around professional service silos, to one that is designed around what we need to achieve for the residents. Between 2010 and 2014 the Council managed cuts in funding by reducing spending by department, however as for the range of reasons stated that situation could not continue. Other local authorities had outsourced or privatised services and dramatically reduced the size of their workforce. However, Barking and Dagenham had no desire to take those paths. The new arrangements which are now being implemented no longer have separate functional departments or directorates.

The organisation is now being shaped around the needs of local residents, the place, and the Borough's goals with the delivery of services now being undertaken by a range of 'Service Delivery Blocks', some of which are in-house, and some acting at arm's length, so that they are able to generate the income to become self-funding and to reinvest. These Service Delivery Blocks as described in the graph below have largely been operational since the Autumn of 2017. The implementation of these new services, the changing nature of how they operate and their potential to generate more income now drives much of the Council's ability to respond to the significant fiscal challenges.



This operating model has been designed to enable the organisation to excel across five areas:

- **Being commercially minded and financially self-sufficient**
- **Providing consistently outstanding customer service**
- **Shaping a place that people choose to live in**
- **Building public engagement, greater responsibility and civic pride, and**
- **Reducing service demand**

Vital to putting the Council on a secure and stable financial footing is the performance of the Council-owned companies. The expectation is that the companies will become self-sufficient by 2022 delivering outcomes by working with the flexibility of the private sector and the ethos of the public sector and being accountable to the elected members through the Council's governance arrangements.

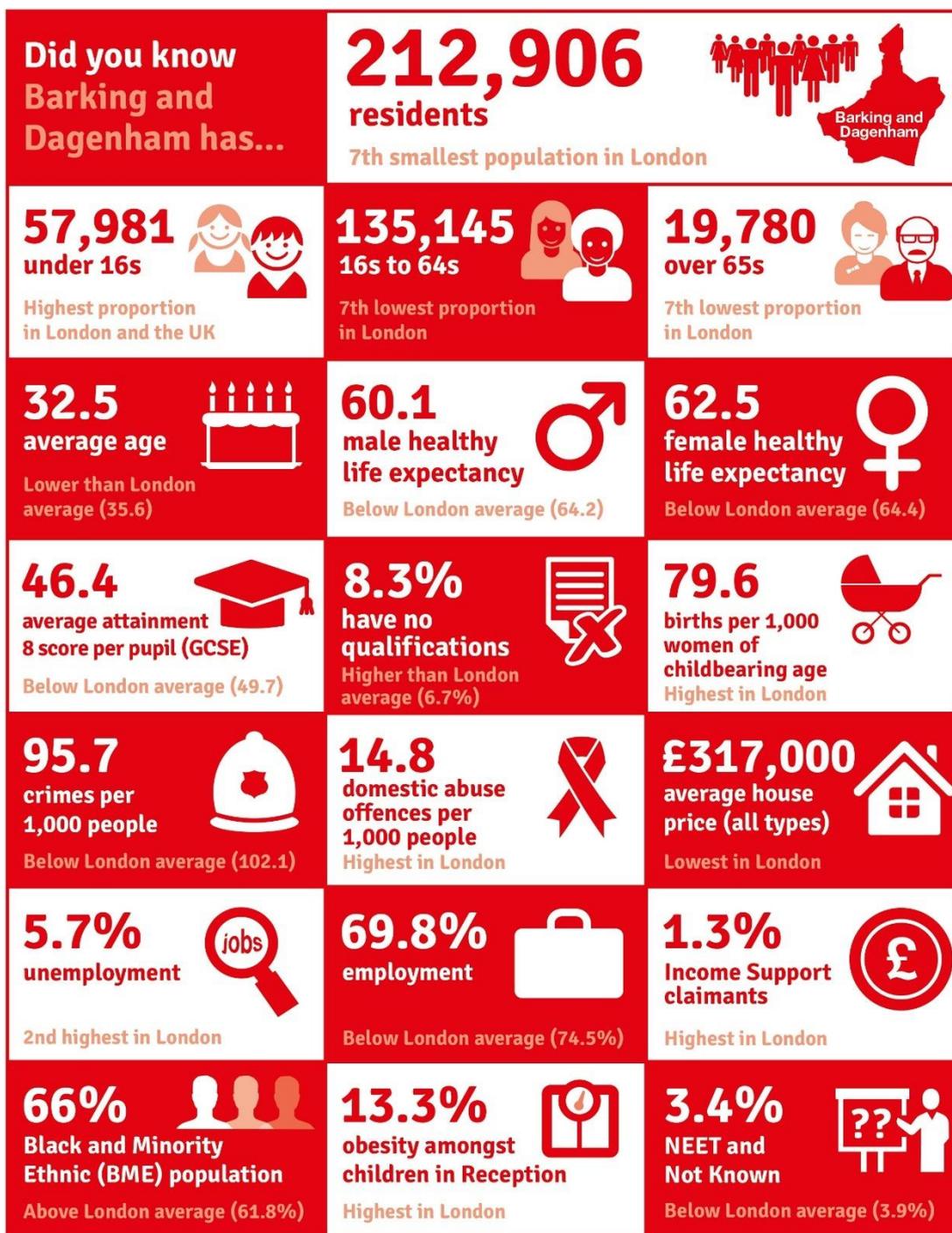
4. Councillors Survey

Forming an integral part of the review and to support and validate the case made for the council size proposal all current councillors were requested to complete a survey focusing on the average time spent each month on council business, details of their workloads relating to governance and decision making, responsibilities for scrutiny and their representative role, as well as assessing the way each councillor communicates with their constituents, and how this has changed over time with the advent of social media. It also provides a qualitative analysis of councillors' own views on how their personal workloads and that of the wider Council has changed over time. All 51 councillors responded to the survey and its findings are referenced in the submission with the full survey analysis set out in **Appendix 1**.

5. Barking and Dagenham Population today

During this century Barking and Dagenham has become one of the fastest-changing communities in Britain:

- Between the 2001 and 2011 censuses the population rose from 164,000 to 186,000 and is projected by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to rise to 228,000 people by 2043. The most recently available provisional population estimate from ONS is 212,906 as at 30 June 2019.
- The age of the community is changing with the highest birth rate in London, and a large number of young people – Barking and Dagenham has the highest proportion of under 16-year olds in the UK.
- The borough becomes more diverse each year – the proportion of the population identifying as coming from black and minority ethnic backgrounds increased from 19.1% to 50.5% between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, whilst those identifying as White British reduced from 80.9% to 49.5%. Ethnic projections available from the GLA forecast 66% of the borough population identifying as coming from black and minority ethnic backgrounds in 2020 compared to 34% identifying as White British.
- People in the borough die earlier, have poorer health and lower levels of education and skills than across London whilst too many residents are in low paid work and struggle to find suitable homes they can afford. Barking and Dagenham had the highest overall deprivation score in London according to the 2019 indices of deprivation published by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).



Barking & Dagenham

Similar population and demographic facts are [available for each of our wards.](#)

6. Governance and Decision Making today

(i) Context

Councillors are elected every 4 years, with the last elections taking place in May 2018. Labour has always been the overwhelming majority party and at the last elections a clean slate of 51 Labour Councillors were returned. All decision making is taken in accordance with the published Council [Constitution](#)

(ii) Meeting structures

Full Council (All 51 Councillors)

There are three types of Full Council meetings (*Assembly as it is known locally*), namely Annual, Ordinary and Extraordinary.

The Annual Meeting in May deals with the various appointments with the exception of the Mayor who is appointed at the Ceremonial Council meeting (*see below*). Ordinary meetings are held 6 times a year. The budget meeting to set the Council Tax is in February. The remaining 4 meetings, taking into account the Summer, Christmas & New Year holiday periods, are usually held in July, September, November and January. Extraordinary meetings are arranged as required such as for the appointment of a Chief Officer.

Assembly meetings are well attended by councillors. Prior to the onslaught of COVID-19 and the move to virtual Council meetings public attendance was traditionally poor. That said then and now all Council meetings are webcast, providing the public the opportunity to watch meetings live online and the ability to access an archive [here](#) for up to 12 months.

Ceremonial Council (All 51 Councillors)

The Ceremonial Council meets at least once a year to elect the Ceremonial Mayor and Young Mayor. It has the following additional responsibilities:

Awarding the Freedom of the Borough.

Awarding the status of Honorary Alderman

Making any other special awards.

The awarding of the Freedom of the Borough and status of Honorary Alderman take place at extraordinary meetings called for that specific purpose.

Leader and Cabinet (10 Councillors)

The Council operates the strong Leader/Cabinet model of decision-making with the Leader of the Council appointed by Annual Assembly every 4 years following the Local Elections. The Leader in turn appoints a Cabinet which is made up of ten councillors (including the Leader), two of whom have been assigned as Deputy Leaders. Each Cabinet Member has responsibility for a cross-cutting portfolio. The number of portfolios has remained consistent, but the areas of responsibility have varied over the years in response to the Council's priorities.

Taking account of the Summer, Christmas and New Year holiday periods the Cabinet meets monthly with ten scheduled meetings a year together with corresponding agenda planning meetings and regular portfolio meetings with respective Strategic and Corporate Directors.

The Cabinet has responsibility for the following functions:

All “key decisions” and other major issues affecting the Council, particularly strategic, financial, policy related and corporate management matters, within the overall policy framework set by the Assembly.

Setting the Council Tax Base.

Setting rents in respect of Council dwellings and related properties.

Assessing and determining charges and fees.

Making policy regarding all employees in respect of pay and conditions of service and disciplinary matters, subject to the provisions of the respective National Conditions of Service and any appropriate legislation.

Making Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) and confirming unopposed CPOs.

Considering recommendations from other Member meetings, on issues which are the Cabinet’s responsibility.

Determining the scope and programme and agreeing the outcomes of all Best Value Reviews.

Making appointments to any committees, sub-committees, joint committees and other bodies within the remit of the Cabinet.

Resolving and determining, on advice from the Chief Executive, any disputes of Chief Officers in respect of any delegated authority.

Naming of buildings and roads for which the Council is responsible, except for those delegated to the Chief Executive.

Receiving reports on corporate performance monitoring information.

Approving procurements and awarding of contracts in accordance with the Contract Rules set out in the Council Constitution.

Approving financial matters in accordance with the Financial Rules set out in the Council Constitution.

Approving land matters in accordance with the Land Acquisition and Disposal Rules set out in the Council Constitution.

Reviewing corporate policies and strategies as appropriate.

Appointing the Discretionary Business Rate Relief Appeal Panel which shall consist of three Cabinet Members, one of whom shall be the Cabinet Member with portfolio responsibility for finance, to determine appeals against decisions in respect of applications for Discretionary Business Rate Relief.

To approve business plans and other strategic plans and strategies for council owned companies.

Receiving reports on the performance of council owned companies.

Considering recommendations from the Shareholder Panel and Investment Panel on other strategic matters pertaining to council owned companies, which are the Cabinet’s responsibility.

Receive periodic reports on the Council’s Investment and Acquisition Strategy, and to approve investment programme and schemes, which are the Cabinet’s responsibility, and Approving the investment budget and the land and property acquisition budget to support the delivery of the Investment and Acquisition Strategy.

Barking and Dagenham operates collective decision making through the Cabinet. The individual Cabinet Member posts are as follows:

- **Leader of the Council**
- **Deputy Leader & Portfolio Holder for Finance, Performance & Core Services**
- **Deputy Leader & Portfolio Holder for Community Leadership and Engagement**
- **Employment, Skills & Aspiration**
- **Educational Attainment & School Improvement**
- **Regeneration & Social Housing**
- **Public Realm**
- **Community Safety & Enforcement**
- **Equalities & Diversity**
- **Social Care and Health Integration**

Full details of the responsibilities of each Cabinet Member can be found at [Cabinet portfolio responsibilities](#)

The Role of Cabinet (Executive) Members

Cabinet Members sit on a wide range of internal, boroughwide and regional Committees. The Leader of the Council plays a significant role on both the Local Government Association serving as a member of the City Regions Board and London Councils in the capacity as an Executive Member for Housing and Planning.

Cabinet Members sit on the relevant combined Authority or partnership meetings within their portfolios. Additionally, they attend a range of ad hoc meetings with officers, community organisations and businesses and partners. The Assembly also appoints members to serve on a wide range of outside bodies, the majority of whom are the respective Portfolio holder, although not exclusively.

In addition, the Leader and Cabinet Members make a series of appointments to outside bodies which do not require the Assembly's approval.

The role of the Leader in particular, as well as that of the other nine Cabinet Members is considered to be full time positions, although some do have other jobs. The expectation is that the number of hours worked by individual Cabinet Members on their portfolios is significant and consequently a dedicated officer unit was established in 2014 to provide the Leader and Cabinet Members with support for amongst other things diary management and portfolio work.

Member Champions and Policy Task Group Chairs

The Council's Constitution makes provision for the Leader to appoint up to five Member Champions as well as Policy Task Groups made up of back benchers, the former to support portfolio holders and the latter to examine and promote the development of new and existing Council policies. To date the Leader has established a Policy Task Group to examine and comment on the merits of various Cabinet proposals as well as appointing Member Champions for Mental Health and Quality in Care. The first Annual report of the Members Champions was presented to Assembly in January 2020 and can be viewed in the attached link under item 47:

<https://modgov.lbbd.gov.uk/Internet/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=179&MId=10439&Ver=4>.

A third Member Champion addressing climate change was appointed by the Leader in May 2020.

Health and Wellbeing Board (4 Councillors)

A separate Health and Wellbeing Board (*effectively an executive meeting for health-related issues*), is chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Social Care and Health Integration with a wide-ranging membership of local and regional health providers. The Board has six scheduled meetings per annum. The Board has responsibility for the following:

Promote and advance the health and wellbeing of the people of Barking and Dagenham, and work to secure improvements in the health, social care and health-related services available to them.

Encourage all agencies who arrange the provision of health and social care services, or who provide those services, to do so in an integrated manner.

Encourage and support the making of arrangements under Section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006 for the joint commissioning and provision of health and social care services between relevant bodies. To authorise the signing of those agreements on behalf of the Council, where the resources have already been allocated by Cabinet or Assembly for the purposes described in the agreement.

Work with those agencies who provide, or arrange provision of, health-related services (being those services that are not directly health services, but which may impact on health, to include housing, environmental services and education, amongst others).

Approve the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on behalf of the Council and to authorise its publication on behalf of the Council and partnership.

Approve the Health and Wellbeing Strategy on behalf of the Council and to authorise its publication on behalf of the Council and partnership, and to receive reports on performance and work with responsible agencies to ensure delivery of the Strategy.

Ensure that the commissioning and policy priorities of the member agencies of the Board, in particular the Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group, have due regard to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and prior decisions of the Board.

Approve the Council's tender documents for the provision of local Healthwatch and to receive reports on its performance as deemed appropriate.

Approve contracts as delegated to Cabinet where the funding streams are principally the Public Health Grant or from within social care budgets, as determined by the relevant Chief Officer in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member(s), to include the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Approve the Council's Local Account for Adult Social Care, and any related annual reports to the local community on performance, and

Report annually to Assembly on progress against established priorities and objectives and on the discharge of these terms of reference.

Non-Executive Committees

The Council has established a range of committees to discharge non-executive functions. The terms of reference/responsibility for functions for each meeting are set down in the Council Constitution as detailed as follows:

Audit & Standards Committee (8 Councillors)

The Audit and Standards Committee deals with highly complex and challenging financial matters as well as at times sensitive standards related items, all of which requires detailed analysis by Members. The Committee meets quarterly with an additional meeting, if necessary, to approve the publication of the Council's Statement of Accounts prior to 31 July each year. It has the following responsibilities:

Audit functions

Internal Audit

Considering regular update reports concerning the work of Internal Audit, including progress on delivering the annual programme of work, emerging themes, risks and issues, and officer responsiveness in implementing recommendations and responding to Internal Audit.

Considering and agreeing an Annual Audit Report from the Chief Financial Officer and a summary of Internal Audit activity (actual and proposed), and the level of assurance it can give over the Council's corporate governance, internal control, and risk management arrangements.

Considering summaries of specific Internal Audit reports as requested

Considering reports dealing with the management and performance of the providers of Internal Audit services.

Statutory and External Audit Functions

Considering the Annual Governance Report (both main and pension) and other relevant reports.

Considering the Annual Audit Letter, and other relevant reports.

Considering the Summary of Grant Certifications.

Considering other specific reports as agreed with the external auditor.

Governance

Receiving reports and making appropriate recommendations concerning corporate governance, risk management, decision-making and information governance and ensuring compliance with best practice.

Receiving reports and making appropriate recommendations concerning customer complaints and Local Government Ombudsman enquiries.

Considering regular updates concerning Council policies relating to internal governance (including whistleblowing, bribery and anti-fraud) and ensuring the implementation of relevant legislation relating to governance, fraud and corruption.

Approving the Council's Annual Governance Statement which accompanies the Annual Statement of Accounts.

Considering proposed changes to the Council's Financial Regulations and Rules as they relate to audit functions.

Finance

Considering and approving the Annual Statement of Accounts and all related documents.

Standards functions

Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Members and Co-Opted Members of the authority.

Appointment of a Hearing Sub-Committee with a membership of three members drawn from the membership of the Committee to hear and make recommendations to the Monitoring Officer concerning complaints about Members and Co-opted Members referred to it by the Monitoring Officer.

Receiving periodic reports from the Monitoring Officer on dispensations granted / refused, complaints received against Members, complaints resolved informally, complaints resolved after an investigation by the Hearing Sub-Committee and assessing the operation and effectiveness of the Members' Code of Conduct.

Advising on training or arranging to train Councillors and Co-opted Members on matters relating to the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

Assisting Councillors and Co-opted Members to observe the Councillors' Code of Conduct; Receiving referrals from the Monitoring Officer into allegations of misconduct, in accordance with the Council's assessment criteria.

Advising on the contents of and requirements for codes / protocols / other procedures relating to standards of conduct throughout the Council.

Maintaining oversight of the Council's arrangements for dealing with complaints.

Informing the Assembly and the Chief Executive of relevant issues arising from the determination of Code of Conduct complaints.

On referral by the Monitoring Officer, granting dispensations pursuant to S33(2) (b), (c) and (e) of the Localism Act 2011 to enable a Councillor or Co-opted Member to participate in a meeting of the Authority.

Hear and determine appeals against refusal to grant dispensations by the Monitoring Officer pursuant to S33(2)(a) and (d) of the Localism Act 2011.

Pensions Committee (7 Councillors)

The Pensions Committee which is made up of councillors and other non-voting members of interested parties (Trade Unions, Admitted Bodies, pensioners etc) meets quarterly and has the following responsibilities:

To exercise on behalf of the Council all the powers and duties of the Council in relation to its functions as Administering Authority of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Pension Fund, and in particular the following:

To approve all policy statements required or prepared under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Regulations 2013 (as amended).

To be responsible for the overall investment policy, strategy and operation of the Fund and its overall performance, including taking into account the profile of Fund liabilities.

To appoint and terminate the appointments of the Fund Actuary, Custodian, professional advisors to, and external managers of, the Fund and agree the basis of their remuneration.

To monitor and review the performance of the Fund's investments including receiving a quarterly report from the Chief Operating Officer.

To receive actuarial valuations of the Fund.

To monitor the LGPS Regulations, Codes of Practice or guidance issued by the Pensions Regulator and the National Scheme Advisory Board as they apply to pension benefits and

the payment of pensions and their day to day administration and to be responsible for any policy decisions relating to the administration of the scheme.

Selection, appointment and termination of external Additional Voluntary Contribution (AVC) providers and reviewing performance.

To consider any recommendations made or views expressed by the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Pension Board which is made up of officers and Pension Scheme member representatives (no councillor representation).

The role of the Board is defined by regulation 106 (1) of the LGPS Regulations 2013 (as amended) to:

Secure compliance with the LGPS Regulations and any other legislation relating to the governance and administration of the Scheme and requirements imposed in relation to the LGPS by the Pensions Regulator (“the PR”), and

Ensure the effective and efficient governance and administration of the Fund.

Personnel Board (three Councillors from a pool of nine)

The Personnel Board meets as and when required and is responsible for the following in respect of all staff except JNC (Chief and Deputy Chief Officers):

Appeals against the following decisions taken in respect of employment matters, other than those matters which are either reserved to other Member meetings or Strategic Leadership Directors (or their nominees):

Dismissal on the grounds of redundancy, gross misconduct, capability and sickness absence, and

Final written warnings on the grounds of misconduct.

In 2019 the Board met four times. The nature of the hearings means that meetings tend to take at least a half day or up to a full day to conclude and involve a significant amount of supporting evidence which requires in depth analysis and significant preparation by Members.

Regulatory Functions

The Council has established a range of committees to expedite the Council’s regulatory functions as follows:

Planning Committee (10 Councillors)

The Planning Committee meets monthly has responsibility for determining the following functions of the Council as the Local Planning Authority:

Any application recommended for approval with five or more objections from local residents other than an application for prior approval which may be agreed by the Director of Inclusive Growth in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair.

All major applications from the Council or a council owned company.

Applications which are recommended for approval and are considered by the Director of Inclusive Growth to be contrary to any material aspect of the Local Plan.

Applications for the mining and working of minerals or the use of land for mineral working deposits.

Applications which are recommended for refusal and are considered by the Director of Inclusive Growth not to be contrary to any material aspect of the Local Plan.

Applications submitted by or on behalf of a Councillor or by any employee (or their spouse/partner) of the Council’s Inclusive Growth section and Be First.

Applications which any Councillor requests in writing to the Director of Inclusive Growth within 21 days from the date of validation of the application subject to agreement of the Chair.

Any other application or issue which, on advice from the Director of Inclusive Growth, the Chair decides should be determined by the Planning Committee, by reason of its scale, impacts upon the environment or the level of public or likely Councillor interest.

Reports on new, or amendments to existing, statutory provisions and guidance covering planning matters.

Revoking and hearing opposed Tree Preservation Orders, and

All other functions set out in column (1), paragraph A of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, as amended, and all legislation appertaining to planning contained in the Planning Acts. This includes changes introduced by the Localism Act 2011 and the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013 and any delegated legislation made pursuant to the Planning Acts.

The work of the Committee is particularly demanding for Members, with often large and complex planning applications to consider. The meetings generate significant public interest and participation. In addition to the meeting itself, monthly Planning briefings are organised for the members giving them an insight and opportunity to comment on planning applications due to come before the Committee for determination.

The Committee also appoints:

Visiting Sub-Committee - consisting of the Chair and Deputy Chair and three other Members of the Committee, to undertake inspections of buildings and sites as directed by the Committee and to make recommendations to the Committee arising from these inspections, unless otherwise empowered to act by the Committee. The relevant Ward Councillors shall also be invited to attend meetings in a non-voting capacity.

Performance Review Sub-Committee - consisting of the Chair and Deputy Chair and three other Members of the Committee, to consider and report back to the Committee on an annual basis in respect of:

A random sample of up to 20 delegated decisions on a range of applications and examine and evaluate between 5 and 10 of them to assess whether relevant planning policies and criteria were applied in each case, and

Planning appeal performance and scrutiny of overturned decisions.

Licensing & Regulatory Committee (10 Councillors)

The Licensing and Regulatory Committee meets quarterly and is responsible for:

Exercising all of the Council's licensing and regulatory duties, functions and powers permitted under the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005, except those which are the responsibility of the Assembly, the Cabinet or other committee or those delegated to officers.

Appointing a Licensing Sub-Committee to deal with the functions which are the responsibility of the Committee as referred to above.

Monitoring and reviewing the discharge of the Council's functions as a Licensing Authority.

The Committee also appoints:

Licensing Sub-Committee - meets as and when required to undertake its functions, including its determinations, except where the function has been delegated to an officer or where the matter has been referred to the Committee for a decision. The Sub-Committee consists of three Members of the Committee, one of whom shall, in most cases, be the Chair or Deputy Chair (or both). The remaining membership shall be drawn from the Members of the main Committee on a rota basis. A Member who is also a Ward Councillor for an application is not permitted to serve on the Sub-Committee. In 2019/20 the Sub-Committee met nine times. Like Planning the meetings generate significant public interest and involvement and require a high level of preparation from Members.

Overview & Scrutiny

The scrutiny role of councillors is a high priority for Barking and Dagenham and the process is designed to ensure that decision makers (Cabinet and Health and Wellbeing Board) are held accountable for their decisions. The purpose of scrutiny is to act as a 'critical friend', ensuring that the decision-making process is carried out correctly in an open and transparent manner. The role of scrutiny in Barking and Dagenham includes:

Advising the Cabinet on decisions the Executive body is due to take (pre-decision scrutiny).

Holding the Cabinet and the Health & Wellbeing Board to account by reviewing their decisions before they are implemented (this is called the 'call in process').

Allowing for councillors to refer matters of concern within the community to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The aim of this measure is to provide councillors with additional powers that enable them to respond to local community concerns which have proved difficult to resolve. (This process is called Councillor Call for Action (CCfA)).

Investigating and reviewing public services where Councillors have concerns about the way services are being delivered.

Ensuring decisions are being implemented in a way which meets residents' different needs, and commenting on the work of other public services, individually and in partnership.

Scrutiny Committees

Statutory scrutiny is undertaken by two overview and scrutiny committees as follows:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (10 Councillors)

The Committee meets monthly although additional meetings are arranged to deal with specific issues such as the Cabinet budget proposals, Call-In's, Councillor Call for Action (CCfA's), petitions etc. Informal meetings of the Committee such as Task & Finish groups and site visits are also held although only one Task & Finish Group may be convened at any one time so it can be properly resourced and supported and to allow Members to focus on the task at hand. The Committee has the following responsibilities:

Act as the Crime and Disorder Committee within the meaning of Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006.

Review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions.

Make recommendations to the Cabinet and/or Assembly with respect to any matter which is a local crime and disorder matter in relation to a Member of the authority.

Consider any crime and disorder matters referred by any Member of the Council.

Request information and scrutinise the local flood risk authority's plans to mitigate flooding.

Scrutiny of matters relating to the provision of services to children and young people living or using services within the borough.

Working with the Council and other partners to secure the continuous improvement of services for children and young people and assisting in improving outcomes for the borough's young people.

Scrutiny of the provision, planning, management and performance of services relating to adult social care.

Scrutiny of the provision, planning, management and performance of housing, regeneration, economic development, public realm and transport matters.

Scrutiny of matters relating to the provision of business, jobs and skills within the Borough.

Scrutiny of the provision, planning, management and performance of public services related to culture, libraries, heritage, arts and community safety.

Scrutiny of issues relating to social inclusion, equalities, cohesion and faith; engaging with the community and voluntary services operating in the Borough and, where appropriate, holding them to account for their performance.

Review and scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's functions.

Assist the Assembly and the Cabinet in the development of the budget and policy framework by in-depth analysis of policy issues, as required.

Review and scrutinise the performance of the Council, other public bodies and partner organisations in the area, invite them to address the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and prepare reports about their initiatives and performance.

Conduct pre-decision scrutiny to test the robustness and impact of budget savings and other key decisions to be considered by the Cabinet.

Engage with and represent local people and create opportunities to involve them in the scrutiny process.

In all of the above, make reports and recommendations to the Cabinet and/or Assembly and/or any Committee in connection with the discharge of any functions; and

Produce an annual report which the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee shall present to the Assembly.

Health Scrutiny Committee (6 Councillors)

This Committee which is scheduled to meet six times a year has been established to deal with the Authority's statutory health scrutiny functions in accordance with Section 244 (and regulations made under that section) of the National Health Services Act 2006 (as amended by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007). It deals with call-ins and Councillor Call for Actions (CCfA's) relating specifically to health matters. Similarly, informal meetings of the Committee such as Task & Finish groups and site visits may be held although again for the reasons outlined above only one Task & Finish group may be convened at any one time.

The Committee has the following responsibilities:

Scrutiny of the work of the NHS bodies serving Barking and Dagenham in accordance with the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and associated Regulations and Guidance.

Scrutiny of the planning, provision and operation of the health service in the borough or accessed by Barking and Dagenham residents.

Request available information from NHS bodies and any health service provider.

Request attendance from any member or employee of a relevant NHS body or health service provider to attend before it to answer any questions.

Acting on behalf of the Council as the statutory consultee where NHS bodies propose substantial developments or variations in the provision of services and thus have a duty to consult with the local authority before taking a decision.

Acting on behalf of the Council to make all arrangements for establishing and participating in Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees, including the appointment of three Members to the membership of the JHOSC. Any such JHOSC shall have such terms of reference and shall exist for so long as the appointing authorities may agree.

Receiving referrals from the local Healthwatch on matters relating to the planning, provision, and operation of health services in the borough.

Holding to account the Health and Wellbeing Board for the delivery of its functions, and in doing so, having particular regard to the robustness of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Health and Wellbeing Strategy as effective documents to ensure commissioning of health and social care services is reflective of local need.

Monitoring progress of implementation of recommendations in accordance with the Council's agreed processes, ensuring that decision-makers have due regard to findings and recommendations arising from scrutiny investigations.

Representing local people and bringing local concerns and feedback about health and social care services to the attention of leaders within the local health and social care economy, and formally advising the Health and Wellbeing Board of any such concerns in the process.

Monitoring of performance indicators that fall within the remit of the Health Scrutiny Committee.

Review and scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of the Council's functions in relation to health.

Assist the Assembly and the Cabinet in the development of the budget and policy framework by in-depth analysis of policy issues, as required.

Review and scrutinise the performance of the Council, other public bodies and partner organisations in the area, invite them to address the Health Scrutiny Committee, and prepare reports about their initiatives and performance.

Conduct pre-decision scrutiny to test the robustness and impact of health-related key decisions to be considered by the Cabinet.

Engage with and represent local people and create opportunities to involve them in the scrutiny process.

In all of the above, make reports and recommendations to the Cabinet and/or Assembly and/or any Committee in connection with the discharge of any functions.

Produce an annual report for the Assembly.

Where the Health Scrutiny Committee produces a report and/or makes recommendations on health services, it will provide a copy of the report to the relevant responsible authorities, notifying them of their duty (under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007) to:

Consider the report or recommendations.

Respond to the Health Scrutiny Committee in writing within 28 days indicating what (if any) action it proposes to take and have regard to the report or recommendations in exercising its functions.

The latest Annual Scrutiny report was presented to the [Assembly - Item 19](#) in July 2019.

Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC)

Local authorities are required to establish a mandatory joint health overview and scrutiny committee (established and conducted in accordance with the Local Authority (Public Health, health & wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013), which meets quarterly to consider any proposal for a substantial variation of existing health service provision or substantial development of a health-related service, where such a proposal affects more than one local authority. On that basis the Council has formed a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee together with three neighbouring boroughs. (Havering, Redbridge and Waltham Forest) to which three Members are appointed.

Membership of Committees and other Internal / Outside Bodies

Aside from the Cabinet and Health and Wellbeing Board, committee membership is agreed by the Assembly at the AGM in May each year. All 51 councillors are appointed to serve on at least two committees (Assembly and Ceremonial Council), with 39 out of the 41 non-executive councillors serving on at least three committees/sub-committees, and 30 councillors serving on four or more committees/sub-committees. Details of the membership of Council committees for 2020/21 is set out in **Appendix 2** and the representation on other internal and outside bodies for 2020/21 is shown in **Appendix 3**.

In the past 12 months (2019/20), on average each of 51 councillors attended 17 Council meetings with the most attended being 34 meetings and the least 6 meetings. The breakdown (member by member) is shown in **Appendix 4**.

(iii) Council Scheme of Delegation

The Council's Constitution contains a Scheme of Delegation defining which functions/responsibilities have been delegated to officers. The basis of the Scheme is that except for matters reserved to the Assembly, to the Cabinet or to a committee, all decisions are delegated to the appropriate Chief Officer as defined in the [Officer Scheme of Delegation - Part 3](#)

Community Leadership & Engagement

Councillors are required to have a visible community leadership role, focusing on partnership working, engaging with residents, creating a shared vision for their communities and ensuring the delivery of joined-up high quality local services.

Effective engagement with the public and individual constituents remains a key element of councillor's community leadership role. Although new technology has had an increasing

influence on the way councillors communicate with constituents, the value of face to face engagement through surgeries and public meetings as well as the use of the telephone remains the most common methods of communications. All councillors have at least one surgery a month (*excluding the holiday months of August and December*) at venues situated in their respective wards. The overwhelming majority of councillors spend up to 5 hours per month in a surgery.

7. Member Development and Training

The [Councillor Learning and Development Plan](#) provides a framework of good practice for elected Members in LB Barking and Dagenham. The Plan aims to ensure learning and development supports the vision for the borough, develops Members in their various roles, is cost effective and meets the highest standards. When they are first elected (*every 4 years*) Members are required to participate in an induction programme which forms part of a wider Member Development Programme (MDP). There is induction training for the Council as a whole and for each Board and Committee. Members on the Planning & Licensing Committees and the Personnel Board receive training which is a requirement to serving and taking an active role on those meetings.

A Member Development Group is formed after each election which meets quarterly. This Group, chaired by the appropriate portfolio holder, currently has a membership of twelve councillors, the Director of Law & Governance and the Member Development Officer. The Group oversees the MDP which aims to ensure Members are equipped with the skills, knowledge and confidence required to lead the Council, engage effectively in partnerships and represent their communities.

The Programme includes Cabinet induction, development of councillors through mentoring and leadership programme courses, conference attendance and an extensive internal training programme to inform and support Members including Code of Conduct, Equality and Diversity, Scrutiny, Public Speaking and Personal Safety. An on-line Members' App provides detail on the Borough and Council, meetings, learning opportunities, media, ward information, support available and councillor role. Role descriptions outline requirements and training to assist Members to prepare and benchmark their performance. There are weekly electronic Member briefings. A Personal Development planning process analyses individual strengths and creates a bespoke learning plan to equip Members for current and future roles.

London Councils awarded the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham the Charter Plus standard for Elected Member Development in April 2017. This was reconfirmed at an interim assessment in November 2018 when the Council's work training and supporting Members was highly commended. The strategic focus of the Member Development Group was praised, together with the sustainable member development budget. The commitment to a strategic approach to Member Development and support is key to equipping Members to lead the Council through what is a period of significant change in local government. The full three-year accreditation reassessment is due to take place in September 2020.

8. Member Allowances

Member's allowances are set and considered in the context of London Councils Independent Remuneration Report produced every 4 years. All Members receive a basic allowance of £11,000 per annum (as of May 2020), in addition to which they are entitled to claim standard travel and subsistence expenses and where appropriate a dependants'

carers' allowance to perform their duties, attend external training etc. A special responsibility allowance (SRA) is payable to those members who hold special responsibilities in relation to the Council. Only one SRA is payable to a Member. A copy of the current Members Allowance Scheme can be viewed in **Appendix 5**.

9. Technical Report

The Technical report including the methodology which has been accepted by the LGBCE and which forecasts the Borough's electorate in six years' time (2026), is attached as **Appendices 6 and 7**. The forecast reflects the electorate/adult population ratio and the impact of planned housing development during the period.

10. Conclusion and Recommendation

The council size proposal put forward demonstrates that since the last review in 1999 the workloads for councillors has increased significantly, brought about by the range of factors as outlined, and which has led to the major transformation programme as detailed. The rise of social media is making councillors far more accessible. As stated, the growth as well as the change in the make of communities is unprecedented, and with highest overall deprivation scores in London the workloads as well as the nature of such for councillors is both demanding and challenging.

A case could therefore potentially be made to increase the number of councillors serving the Authority as a way of addressing this pressure. However, given the context of a reducing Council budget amidst a backdrop of continuing austerity and now the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the significant changes made to the Council's governance arrangements in the light of Ambition 2020, the Council is confident to recommend that a council size remaining at 51 councillors can be justified to enable each to deliver/fulfil their responsibilities and duties as elected ward representatives.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 - Councillor survey results

Appendix 2 - Committee membership 2020/21

Appendix 3 - Other Internal / Outside Body membership 2020/21

Appendix 4 - Councillor attendance statistics 2019/20 Municipal Year

Appendix 5 – Members Allowances Scheme 2020/21

Appendix 6 - Technical Report

Appendix 7 - Electoral arrangements