

Members' Briefing



**Barking &
Dagenham**



Leader's borough update

In his video this week, the Leader talks about the flag raising to launch our ninth annual Women's Empowerment Month and all the programme of activities celebrating the fantastic contribution women and girls make to the borough.

The Leader also mentions the budget for the coming year which protects services, with more money for social care, and spending more on improving people's homes and keeping our streets clean.

He ends with a mention of the difficult decision to raise Council Tax and

reminds residents who are struggling through the cost of living crisis to visit our Community Hubs where they can get help with money, energy, food and advice about looking after themselves.



Council agrees finances for 2023/24

Measures to protect services, extra support for people struggling with the cost of living crisis, more money to provide social care, further spending on improving residents' homes and keeping the streets clean were agreed in the council's 2023/24 budget.

The financial plans, approved on Wednesday 1 March, outline how residents on a low income could be eligible to pay just 15% of their total Council Tax bill – the figure had previously been 25%.

Other help includes an extra £500,000 to be added to the council's hardship fund as a way of supporting people most affected by the rising cost of living, and a commitment to keep rent and service charge rises below inflation.

The new measures follow the launch of eight community hubs across the borough, designed to bring a range of vital support and council services to residents' doorsteps as well as continuing to invest in improvements to online services which residents can access at any time.

The 2023/24 budget doesn't include cuts to services as the council continues to protect the services residents need.

As part of the budget announcement, Council Tax will increase by 4.99% (excluding the GLA element) - 2.99% towards the general fund and 2% ringfenced for the adult social care precept. This works out as an additional £69.33 for the year – around 19p a day – on a Band D property.

You can find out more about the 2023/24 budget [here](#).



Borough again top in London for awarding young people first preference school

Over three quarters of young people in the borough will attend their first preference secondary school from September.

Figures released on National Offer Day, last Wednesday 1 March, show that out of 3,409 applications, 2,784 (81.67%) of 10 and 11 - year-olds have been offered their first preference, far exceeding the London average of 69.78% and outperforming every other borough in the capital.

This is the second consecutive year that Barking and Dagenham has come out top in London.

The borough also performed above the London-wide average for top three preferences. 94% of applicants received an offer on a school in their top three, compared to 89% London-wide.

Overall, 96% of applicants in the borough were offered one of their preferences compared with the London average of 94%.



How well do you know your borough?

We previously shared the 2021 census data for the borough with you on subjects such as age, country of birth, ethnicity, household size, living arrangements, migration and religion.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has now released more data and you can now find out how life has changed between the last two censuses (2011 and 2021) for people living in the borough in terms of disability, health, housing, unpaid care and working hours. You can find out more about the changes [here](#).

You can also create your own profile for your local area using Census 2021 data. [Build a custom area profile](#) allows you to get data by different area types, for example your neighbourhood, ward, local authority or parliamentary constituency. And if it doesn't have the geography you want, you can draw your own on a map.

Training updates for councillors

This week we have included details of LGA and LGiU courses and events. For details on how to access the courses, please see the Members' Training section below.

Borough News



Council marks the start of Women's Empowerment Week

Barking and Dagenham Council is proud to announce the start of the ninth annual Women's Empowerment Month.

To kick off the month-long celebration, there was a flag-raising ceremony outside Barking Town Hall today (Wednesday 1 March), attended by councillors, staff and members and the public, who gathered to show their support.

Following the flag-raising ceremony, a discussion panel followed to address issues affecting women in the community. The discussion focused on ways to support women in the workplace and the importance of gender equality.

Throughout the month of March, the council will be hosting a series of events and activities to promote women's empowerment. These include workshops, talks, and networking events aimed at encouraging and supporting women in various areas of their lives.

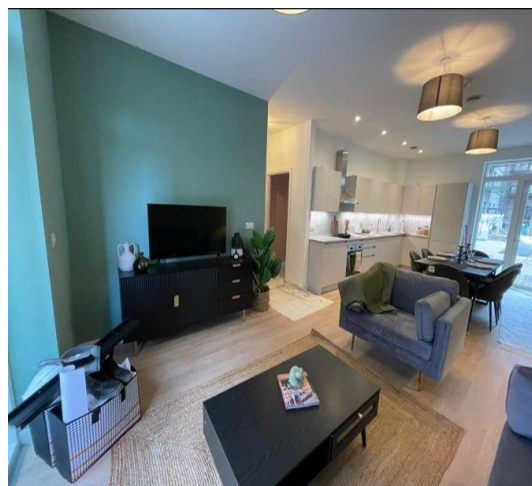
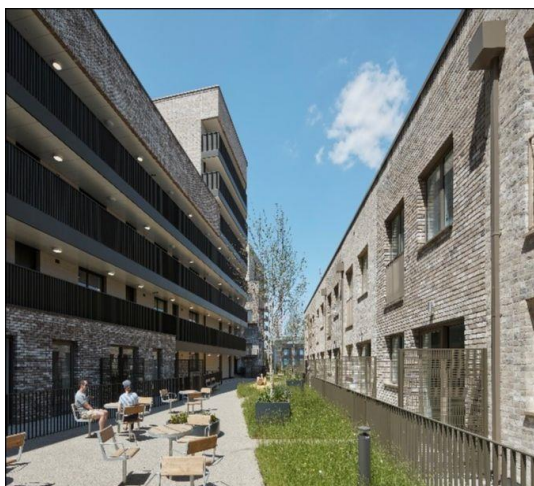
The full programme can be viewed online at www.lbbd.gov.uk/wem to find out more about the events and activities taking place during Women's Empowerment Month.



Bin bags fly-tipped on latest Wall of Shame

Bag to life, bag to reality as bin bag fly-tippers are caught in our grime-busting series which returns with a filthy new episode.

Please watch the latest episode carefully and get in touch if you recognise anyone. You can catch up on the show so far on the [Wall of Shame page](#).



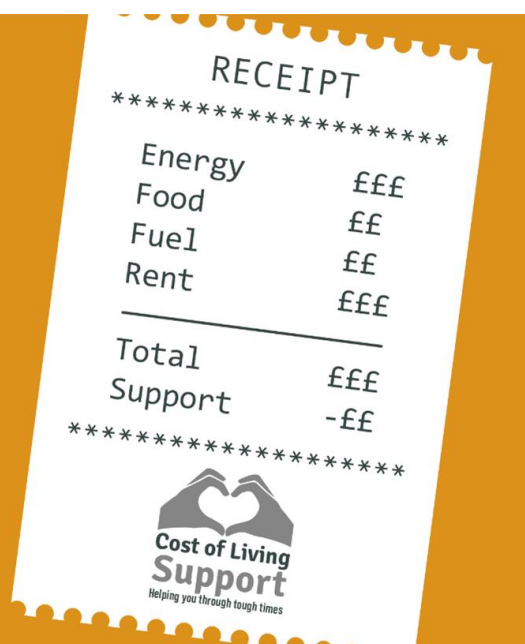
Know anyone who is looking for somewhere to live?

Why not look at what Barking & Dagenham Reside have to offer. Check out the website bdreside.org where there is a range of 1, 2 and 3-bedroom homes starting from as low as £1,000 per calendar month.

Whether they are looking to rent at affordable rates or interested in shared ownership then get in touch at enquiries@bdreside.co.uk

Around the council

Cost of Living Support



Giving residents a helping hand through the cost of living crisis

We've been sharing lots of ways residents can get help with money, food, energy, wellbeing and more.

If you know someone who could benefit from this support, please do help us spread the word. There's lots of information available online, or if they prefer, residents can speak to staff at one of our Community Hubs or partner buildings. They can also take a look at where these are located [here](#).

While we might not have the answer to everything, residents can reach out and we'll do our best to connect them to the support they might need.

And as temperatures continue to drop, residents are reminded that there are lots of [warm spaces](#) across the borough that they can visit so they don't have to put the heating on at home.

More information on the cost of living support available can be found at www.lbbd.gov.uk/cost-living-support



Residents invited to open a savings account today through Barking and Dagenham Money

The Council has partnered with Leeds Credit Union to bring more affordable loans options and saving accounts to residents through Barking and Dagenham Money (BD Money).

The aim is to help local people become more financially resilient, keep more money in their pockets and access appropriate services to meet their financial needs and ambitions. This is not-for-profit, with all benefits staying in the

community.

Since its launch earlier this month we've racked up hundreds of new members. For residents considering opening a savings account through BD Money, it's straight-forward, hassle-free and there's also a wide range of trusted, low-interest loans available.

More information can be found at www.BDMoney.co.uk



Help and support available for residents through the Household Support Scheme

Residents who may be struggling with their finances or to make ends meet are being encouraged to get in touch.

Funding is available to vulnerable residents to support them with essentials over the coming months.

Residents can [apply online](#) or email benefits@lbbd.gov.uk.

There are also [a number of other support services](#) including:

- Our Community Food Clubs which are free of charge and can provide £20 worth of food per week for a period of either three or six months at www.lbbd.gov.uk/community-food-clubs
- Our money and debt webpages provide an income and expenditure calculator and budgeting tools that will help people understand how much money they have coming in and how much is going out, helping them look at areas where they can make savings at www.lbbd.gov.uk/money-and-debt
- Residents who are worried about their finances and need help to tackle debt can now get advice and support from our local Barking and Dagenham Money website at: www.bdmoney.co.uk
- People struggling with increasing energy costs should contact their energy supplier about possible funds they may be entitled to, to help them through difficult periods. They can also access the Warm Homes Grant at www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme
- People with disabilities who aren't claiming specific disability benefits may be able to take advantage of a number of benefits available, including Personal Independence Payments, Disability Living Allowance (for children), and Universal Credit. For those caring for someone with disabilities they may be able to claim Carer's Allowance although this is means tested, at www.gov.uk/financial-help-disabled/disability-and-sickness-benefits
- People with a water meter who are experiencing financial difficulties may want to look into the Watersure scheme at www.ofwat.gov.uk/households/customer-assistance. Most water companies also have a fund to help those who are struggling, and it might be worth contacting their water provider.
- People who are out of work and looking to get into employment can get help and support from our Job Shops at www.lbbd.gov.uk/help-finding-work
- Anyone worried about a lack of skills can find courses and support on the Adult College website at <https://adultcollege.lbbd.gov.uk/>

- Residents who need help with emergency living expenses for food, fuel (gas and electric for customers who pay via a key meter), travel expenses and household appliances and/or clothing in exceptional circumstances can apply for help from our Hardship Fund (Individual Assistance Payment) at www.lbbd.gov.uk/hardship-and-covid-support-schemes.

Residents can also contact our Homes and Money Hubs which are open for a drop in at Barking Learning Centre Community Hub and Dagenham Library Community Hub from 9am to 4pm, Monday to Friday or via email at: homesandmoneyhub@lbbd.gov.uk.



Jobs and training opportunities available from our Job Shops

Residents who need help and support to get into work can visit our Job Shops.

Jobs and training opportunities are advertised on the website every Monday,

and residents can register with the service by completing the [online form](#). They will then be contacted by a member of staff.

Alternatively, residents can contact the shops by telephone: Dagenham Job Shop – 020 8724 8877; Barking Job Shop – 020 8724 8870.

For details of jobs available every week, residents can visit www.lbbd.gov.uk/help-finding-work.

For more information about help and support, residents can visit the Barking and Dagenham Working Together campaign page at www.lbbd.gov.uk/working-together.

Local Government News

London stands with Ukraine

Friday 24 February was the anniversary of the launch of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia. To mark the anniversary and reiterate their unwavering support for the people of Ukraine, London Councils Chair Cllr Georgia Gould, and Vice Chairs Baroness O’Neil of Bexley OBE; Cllr Ruth Dombey OBE; and Deputy Chris Hayward, issued [a joint statement](#):

“London boroughs and Londoners stand with the people of Ukraine.

“One year on from the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we mourn the lives lost and communities torn apart by this brutal war.

“We pledge to continue showing our support by opening our homes, our schools and our hearts to Ukrainians arriving in the capital.”

Last Wednesday (1 March) marked the anniversary of the launch of the Homes for Ukraine scheme and a [Westminster Hall debate](#) took place on the same day.

Using data to better understand rough sleeping in London

The London Office of Technology and Innovation (LOTI) is exploring ways that data can be better used to help London boroughs tackle rough sleeping by identifying pathways into and out of homelessness and addressing ‘blind spots’ in understanding rough sleeping.

LOTI is working with London Councils, the Greater London Authority and Bloomberg Associates to develop and deliver a data tool that can support the aims of the [London Life Off the Streets Programme](#) to make rough sleeping in the capital “rare, brief and non-recurring.”

You can read more about the project and its development in this [blog post](#) by LOTI’s Data, Smart Cities and Cyber Security Programme Manager, Jay Sagar.

Funding and sharing power

London Funders – the cross-sector membership network for funders and investors in London’s civil society – will host an event on 22 March (6 – 8pm) to explore the issue of what ‘sharing power’ actually means for those making decisions about where funding goes.

The panel, which will include Paul Formosa (Trustee at the Cripplegate Foundation), Kamma Muralidharan (Chair of the Institute for Voluntary Action Research) and Juliet Campbell (Lewisham’s Cabinet Member for Communities, Refugees & Wellbeing) will be chaired by Yolande Burgess (Trustee of London Funders and Strategy Director at London Councils) and will take place at the Impact Hub in Kings Cross.

Please note that this is a member-only event. Trustees of London Funders members and elected members of London’s councils are very welcome to attend. [You can find out more here.](#)

This week's coverage in the national and regional media

Public Sector Executive, 1 March – [Review led by local government peers heaps praise on City Council](#). Mentions Cllr Darren Rodwell.

Evening Standard, 1 March – [Third of London pupils miss first pick of school as 'heavy demand' leaves many parents disappointed](#). Mentions Barking and Dagenham.

Techtoday News, 1 March – [The UK areas with the fastest broadband speeds](#). Mentions Barking and Dagenham.

Evening Standard, 1 March – [Futuristic digital displays to be trialled on London 63 bus route](#). Mentions Barking and Dagenham.

Evening Standard, 28 February – [London house prices: sellers now discount homes by around £29,000 on average in bid to secure sales](#). Mentions Barking and Dagenham.

The Irish News, 28 February – [Rough sleepers in England in autumn 2022, by local authority](#). Mentions Barking and Dagenham.

Daily Mail, 27 February – [More Brits believe ULEZ schemes are designed to raise taxes and make people buy new cars than cut pollution – amid furious backlash at mayor Sadiq Khan over plan to extend reach of £12.50 daily charge in London](#). Mentions Barking and Dagenham.

Metro, 27 February – [Teachers' strike: Is your school closed today? How to check if you're affected](#). Mentions Barking and Dagenham.

Media Releases

['One of the most challenging budgets we've ever had to set': council agrees finances for 2023/24](#).

[National Offer Day: Barking and Dagenham again top in London for awarding young people first preference school.](#)

[Council marks ninth Women's Empowerment Month.](#)

[Jo Richardson School unveils Jodie Chesney's Memorial Bench.](#)

[Dodgy landlord and estate agent ordered to pay thousands in court.](#)

Members' Training

Training from the Local Government Information Unit (LGiU)

The LGiU are offering the following training:

Speed Reading – Tuesday 21 March, 10am to 3pm (online)

Learn fun ways to train your brain to remember lots of information and understand specific techniques to improve your ability to process and absorb written information using different reading techniques.

Project Management – Thursday 23 March, 10am to 3pm (online)

From large, intimidating workloads to the multitudes of smaller tasks that we face daily, projects are part of both our work and personal lives. Set yourself up for success with helpful tools like key questions to ask and a simple project framework to apply to the work currently on your docket. Fight, overwhelm and improve your communication skills in this interactive online session.

Training from the Local Government Association (LGA)

The LGA are offering the following sessions:

Sustainability in council services – Show and Tell – Thursday 16 March, 10.30am to 12 noon.

The LGA has commissioned the Zero Carbon Britain team at the Centre for

Alternative Technology (CAT) to undertake an exciting project to develop draft route maps for councils across England to understand how to embed sustainability across some service areas, through an Innovation Lab.

The lab consisted of a series of workshops bringing together voices from across councils to contribute expertise in how service areas and operations work in reality. Participants were from all levels, from officers to senior management and CEOs. This approach enables a whole system understanding of councils to inform the outputs of the lab.

In this webinar, funded by Government, we will be hearing from the CAT team, as well as some of the lab's participants, about how they found the experience and what the next steps are for the project. There will also be ample time for questions and feedback from attendees.

Annual Public Health Conference 2023 - Tuesday 21 March to Thursday 23 March 2023, 9.30am to 1pm

This key annual public health conference will offer delegates the opportunity to hear from leading experts on the very latest thinking in national public health policy issues, as well as gaining insights from those delivering on the ground. It will provide a much-needed opportunity for the public health community to come together, share learning, take stock and plan for the future.

Over three half - day virtual sessions, delegates will be able to put their questions and comments to a line-up of speakers and will have the opportunity to participate in sessions sharing good practice from local areas and to discuss issues that matter to them.

One to One Development Sessions

The LGA are offering councillors the opportunity to have one-to-one development conversations with one of the Leadership Academy Facilitators. This will be available to councillors in leadership positions for the next three months. These sessions are not political and will be provided by tutors from the LGA's Leadership Academy programme who a number of councillors might

have met from participation on the programmes. They will be focussed on helping councillors adapt their personal leadership style through three structured coaching calls. For more information, please contact Leanna McPherson at: leanna.mcpherson@lbbd.gov.uk

If you are interested in joining any or all of these courses, please email: leanna.mcpherson@lbbd.gov.uk or lois.taylor@lbbd.gov.uk

The LGA also offers help for new Councillors via the New Councillor Hub, which can be found [here](#).

And finally...

The Members' Briefing is intended to keep you up to date with what is going on in the council, in the borough and in the world of local government. Please let us have your suggestions on items for inclusion in future bulletins and any feedback you may have on how it can be improved.