

Members' Briefing



**Barking &
Dagenham**



Leader's borough update

In his video this week, the Leader talks about the fire that took place in Barking in the early hours of last Tuesday morning in which a resident sadly lost their life.

The Leader also mentions the number of properties affected by the fire and support provided by the council to those affected, including accommodation where needed and ongoing help.

He ends by thanking the London Fire Brigade, other emergency services and

council staff who were on the scene for all their hard work in very difficult circumstances.



Council announces new plans for Women’s Museum

Last Wednesday, 8 March, on International Women’s Day, the council announced the next steps in the development of a Women’s Museum at 4 - 5 Barking Wharf.

Linked to the borough’s accredited local history programme at Valence House Museum and Archives - the space will serve as a platform to showcase the history, heritage, stories and role of women from the local area and beyond.

Set to open in late 2023, it will showcase exhibitions, learning opportunities,

events and workshops. The Women's Museum will be a new place for conversation and gathering, and a place to explore issues relevant to the collective and diverse experiences of women.

The museum will build on our work to support the empowerment of women and girls, such as work being led through local organisations like Arc Theatre and Excel Women's Centre, as well as the recently opened We Rise Hub at Barking Learning Centre which provides support, activities and events led by and for survivors of domestic abuse.

Upcoming programme highlights include:

- An inaugural artist commission by designer Claire Mason covering the façade of the future Women's Museum space, installed for Women's Empowerment Month until Autumn 2023.
 - An inaugural exhibition focusing on the radical history of the Abbesses of Barking Abbey conceived by curator and artist Nephertiti Schandorf, opening in late 2023.
 - A newly commissioned girl's empowerment programme led by Arc Theatre aimed at local young people aged 11 years and older and launching in November 2023.
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Borough hosts London Fire Brigade's high rise fire safety exercise

Residents of the Gascoigne estate have been alerted to an ongoing training exercise between the London Fire Brigade (LFB) and the council at Fiske Court in Barking.

The purpose of the exercise is to implement and practise lessons learnt following the Grenfell tragedy. This exercise is to practice the LFB's tactics for keeping residents safe in high-rise buildings in case of a fire.

Fiske Court is a decanted council tower block and will serve as a training facility for a period of approximately 9 months until demolition works commence as part of our estate regeneration programme.

There will be four planned exercises every month until July and the other dates for this month are Monday 27 and Tuesday 28 March.

Residents may see lots of fire engines and cosmetic smoke in the area between these times. If they have a genuine emergency, they should still call the emergency services on 999 as normal.



Thames View Skate Park given new £40,000 lease of life

A local skatepark has been given a £40,000 revamp, funded by one of our partners, Clear Channel and delivered by their sub-contractors JCS. The Council also contributed two new activity boards and plants.

Thames View Skate Park re-opened on Friday 10 March ready to serve the local community.

Working with the council and local residents, Clear Channel's upgrade to Thames View Skate Park has seen new eco-friendly benches made from reclaimed wood and planters fitted at the site, with the area also given a thorough clean and a fresh, vibrant new lick of paint.

The work carried out by Clear Channel is part of their Social Value commitment with funding for the project being awarded to the skate park through a competitive application process in partnership with Barking and Dagenham Giving.

The council's social value policy requires that any organisation working with the council to provide goods or services over a £100,000 threshold must set out in their tender application how they can deliver wider economic, social or environmental benefits for our residents.

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



Women's Empowerment Month continues with a Broadway Premiere

Events to mark the ninth annual Women's Empowerment Month continued last week with the screening of [Marianne – The Movie](#) last Thursday at the Broadway Theatre.

The premiere also included a panel discussion and Q&A, which featured the film's director Valentina Canavesio, award-winning Franco-Irish journalist and filmmaker Dr Myriam Francois, Opera singer Narimene Bey, and Deputy Leader, Councillor Saima Ashraf, who also features in the film.

Events last week also included an International Women's Day with the BEC which featured guest speaker, Bernadette Thompson OBE and a BDYD 'Mums can Dance too' free dance session.

Throughout the month, there are 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.

To find out more about the events and activities taking place during Women's Empowerment Month, visit www.lbbd.gov.uk/wem.



Supporting our residents through the cost of living crisis

As part of our efforts to support residents through the cost of living crisis, Cllr Sade Bright, Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills & Aspiration, joined colleagues from DABD, one of our partners in the Cost of Living Alliance to hear about the help and support they are providing to local people to help them through the crisis.

There's lots of other support available and residents can find out more by heading to our [Cost of Living webpage](#).

Around the council



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

Women's Rough Sleeping Census

Last Wednesday (8 March) was International Women's Day and London Councils are proud to have supported the first London-wide Women's Rough Sleeping Census.

Led by the Single Homeless Project, the Women's Development Unit, and St Mungo's, the census is the first of its kind on a pan-London scale and is designed to improve understanding of the extent and nature of women's rough sleeping in the capital.

With a new report on the census due out, boroughs are committed to working with partners across London's homelessness sector to increase safety and

improve outcomes for women sleeping rough.

Michelle Binfield, London Councils' Rough Sleeping Programme Director, said: "Rough sleeping is particularly dangerous for women. The census is a vital tool for helping us understand the scale of the challenge and for targeting resources for successful prevention and frontline support work.

"Boroughs are proud to be part of the pan-London partnership tackling this issue and doing everything we can to help women off the streets and into safe accommodation."

[More details on the Women's Pan-London Rough Sleeping Census is available here.](#)

Secondary School Offer Day 2023

Wednesday 1 March was National Secondary School Offer Day 2023, when children due to start secondary school in September found out which school they'd be attending. There were 92,641 applications for secondary school places in London. Of these, 94 per cent were offered a place at one of their preferred schools, figures published by the Pan London Admissions Boards show.

[London Councils Executive Member for Children and Young People, Cllr Ian Edwards](#), said: "It is positive that once again the overwhelming majority of children have an offer from one of their preferred schools. Boroughs have worked diligently with schools to ensure there are sufficient places to meet the high demand for school places across the capital.

"London is an incredibly high-performing region at GCSE level with 90 per cent of schools rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted, which means local families can be confident that their child will receive an excellent education.

"We remain keen to work with Government to respond to pressures surrounding secondary school places and to support the growing demand for development of specialist SEND provision at a local level, ensuring that all

London pupils have the best start in life.”

The Future of Local Government Finance and Fiscal Devolution

It is now a decade since the London Finance Commission (LFC) highlighted that London enjoys considerably less financial autonomy than other world cities – pointing out, for example, that just 7 per cent of the tax generated in the capital was retained in the capital, compared with over 50 per cent in New York.

While London and the UK have changed considerably since 2013, both the logic that underpinned the original LFC and the recommendations it put forward are just as valid today, argues Paul Honeyben in a new collection of essays from Localis exploring where local government finance might be in 2030. [You can read all the essays in Moving Through the Gears here.](#)

This week’s coverage in the national and regional media

Landlord Today, 9 March – [HMO House of Horrors landlord hit with fine.](#)
Mentions Barking and Dagenham.

HomeStart, 9 March – [New homelessness report shows ‘appalling’ measures forced on families.](#) Mentions Cllr Darren Rodwell.

Evening Standard, 8 March – [Mother rescued children from Barking fire that killed boy, 11, by dropping them from window, says neighbour.](#)

Evening Standard, 8 March – [How an architect and local schoolgirls redesigned an east London estate as a female-friendly public space.](#) Mentions the Gascoigne Estate and Greatfields School.

Daily Mirror, 7 March – [Barking fire: Boy, 11, dies in horror blaze as two adults and two other kids flee.](#)

Housing Ombudsman Service, 6 March – [Quarter of complaint handling](#)

[failure orders not compiled with](#). Mentions Barking and Dagenham.

Evening Standard, 3 March – [300 new Ulez cameras rolled out – but none in rebel boroughs](#). Mentions Barking and Dagenham.

Media Releases

[Statement on Stern Close fire](#).

[East London council continues to crack down on businesses selling vapes to children](#).

[“House of Horrors” landlord ordered to pay thousands of pounds after serious safety failings](#).

[Muslim women challenge stereotypes in powerful new documentary](#).

[Women’s only gym celebrate International Women’s Day](#).

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

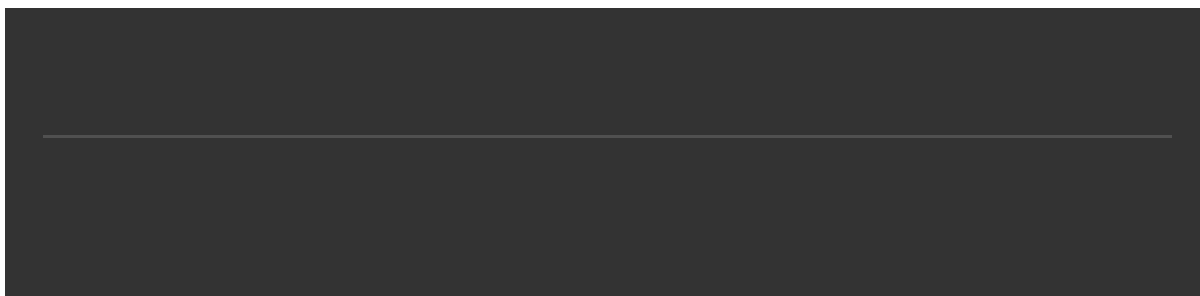
The LGA are offering councillors the opportunity to have one-to-one development conversations with one of the Leadership Academy Facilitators. This will be available to councillors in leadership positions for the next three months. These sessions are not political and will be provided by tutors from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



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