

Members' Briefing



**Barking &
Dagenham**



Brand new Women's Museum opens in Barking

The Women's Museum is a new space celebrating the stories and experiences of women and girls in Barking and Dagenham and beyond. It's a place for coming together, chatting and reflecting on important issues. And, for people of all identities, abilities and backgrounds, trans and non-binary. Everyone is welcome.

The doors to the Women's Museum opened for the very first time on International Women's Day, with its very first exhibition 'An Idea of a Life' curated by Nephertiti Oboshie Schandorf.

The free Museum is open every Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 11am to 5pm and visitors do not need to book.

You can find out more at www.newtownculture.org/womens-museum/



Council pledges support for local businesses

The council has joined forces with the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) as a Local Leadership Partner to elevate its support for local businesses.

Through the collaboration, the council is embracing FSB's five key pledges,

designed to further the relationship between the council and local businesses.

By becoming an FSB Local Leadership Partner, the council promises to continue its development of policies that support small businesses, maintain a focus on small businesses alongside the needs of residents as they create jobs and are at the heart of communities. The council has appointed Councillor Sade Bright to be its Small Business Champion.

For information on the range of business support programmes in Barking and Dagenham, visit www.lbbd.gov.uk/business/business-support-and-advice



Meet the Dagenham pupils taking charge of battery recycling in their community

Children at Henry Green Primary School in Dagenham have collected a whopping 5,000 batteries in a bid to recycle them and prevent fires.

The school's Green Team, who lead on environmental projects, were shocked to learn that a battery was the cause of a fire in one of the council's bin trucks

and sprang into action.

The council's [Cleaner, Greener campaign](#) calls on residents to recycle batteries and never put them in the bin.

Henry Green pupils have gone one step further, by collecting batteries as part of Duracell's Big Battery Hunt and then recycling them through Cancer Research UK to raise vital funds for the charity.

Councillor Kashif Haroon, Cabinet Member for Public Realm and Climate Change, met the team to thank them for their hard work.

The school earned a Green Flag with Distinction in the summer for their sustainability work, which also includes a pre-loved school uniform bank, growing their own food, composting and swapping second-hand books.



Local businesses team up with council to tackle underage vaping

In a bid to crack down on the sales of vapes to young people and prevent them from smoking, we have launched a Responsible Retailer scheme.

Our Trading Standards team have run a number of operations where they have caught businesses selling vapes to children hence our determination to stamp out the practice.

So far, 31 businesses have signed up to the scheme and agreed to sell vapes responsibly.



Heathway Day of Action

A day of action involving the police and council Enforcement Officers took place on 12 March and yielded a number of positive results including the execution of a drug warrant which led to the discovery of a cannabis factory in Broad Street and the arrest of a male suspect.

The team conducted weapons sweeps around Millard Terrace and Blackbourne Road and also actioned seven stop and search incidents, which resulted in one person caught in possession of cannabis. Another was arrested for possession of a point and bladed article and has been remanded to attend court.

On the day there was also a stall set up to talk to residents about Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

Training updates for councillors

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

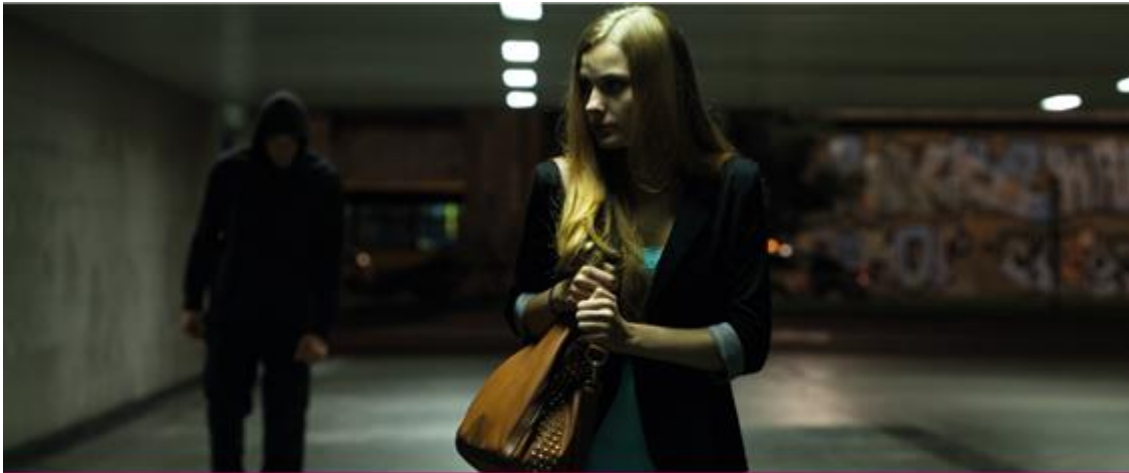
Borough News



Ramadan Mubarak

The holy month of Ramadan is a time for Muslims all over the world to fast between sunrise and sunset. It's also a time for spiritual reflection, prayer, doing good deeds and spending time with family and friends.

If you're observing this special time of year, we'd like to wish you and your loved ones a very peaceful and blessed Ramadan.



Women's Safety Forum

Tuesday 26 March,
6pm to 7.30pm

If you would like to join
email csp@lbbd.gov.uk

In partnership with



Residents invited to join our Women's Safety Forum

Making sure women and girls feel safe when out and about in the borough is key for us. Our Women's Safety Forum allows residents to raise issues and have their say.

Residents are invited to the next one on **Tuesday 26 March** at 6pm. To register to attend, email csp@lbbd.gov.uk for an invite.



You HAF got to see this year's Easter Programme

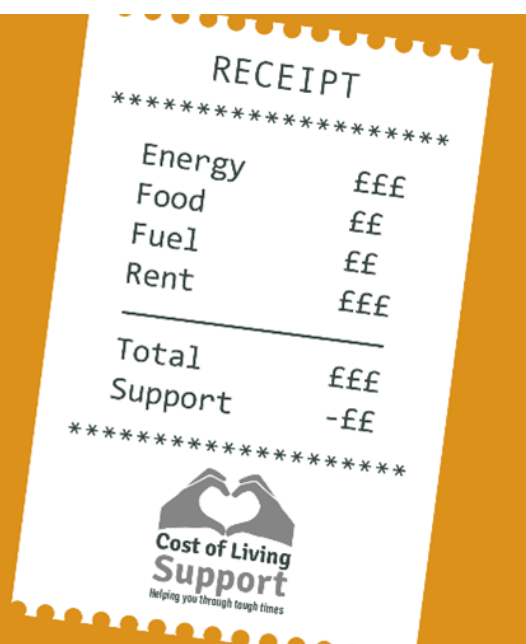
Our Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Easter programme is here, and residents HAF to be crazy to miss it!

There's plenty of food, footy and fun activities to keep the kids entertained.

Free spaces are available for those eligible for free school meals as well as paid places - everyone is welcome to join the fun!

Residents can check out the HAF Easter Programme schedule [here](#).

Cost of Living Support



We are still supporting residents with the cost of living

Now more than ever, some residents will be feeling the pinch with sky high energy prices and the cost of food and shopping.

That's why we're sharing easy ways for residents to access help if they need it - from benefits and low-cost loans, through to income maximisation and signposting them to food banks, warm spaces, and wellbeing support.

There's lots of help available and it's really important that we can all talk about it.

Residents can take a look at the latest cost of living support guides which bring together the support we offer, alongside our partners in one place.

[View the Cost of Living Information Support Guides here.](#)

Residents can also drop into [Community Hubs](#) across the borough to access support face to face.



Hung out to dry – clothes horse dumped in latest Wall of Shame

We're back with more [fly-tip action](#) caught on camera in the latest [Wall of Shame](#).

If you know any of the dumpers featured, email our Enforcement Team now at grimecrime@lbbd.gov.uk

Around the council



Residents interested in a career in construction invited to get in touch

Residents interested in a career in the construction industry are being invited to get in touch with the Barking Riverside Innovation in Construction Centre (BRIC).

The BRIC training centre in Barking Riverside is offering construction training and qualifications plus brand-new test centre facilities where interested residents can book for their CITB Health, Safety and Environment tests. They will also be able to gain a Level 1 Health and Safety in Construction qualification.

On successful completion of the course, participants will gain the green CSCS labourer card which will allow them to work safely in the construction industry. Staff at the BRIC will also assist participants in gaining other industry related construction cards.

To find out more please contact bric@lbbd.gov.uk or telephone 020 8227 2777/07977 017133.

You can also visit the website at: www.lbbd.gov.uk/BRIC



Over £250,000 in loans handed out to residents through BD Money partnership

Over £250,000 in affordable loans have so far been handed out to borough residents through our partnership with Leeds Credit Union.

The partnership aims 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.

Households across the borough have saved an estimated £62,500 in interest since the partnership launched in October 2022.

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 <https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/benefits-and-support/discretionary-hardship-support/discretionary-financial-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.

Local Government News

London Elects

Following the passing of the Elections Act, London Elects is reminding Londoners of some important changes to the way they will vote, including the need to show photo ID at polling stations and a change from supplementary voting (indicating a first and second preference) to 'first past the post' in Mayoral elections.

[You can read more on the London Elects website here.](#)

Right to Buy rule change

London Councils has expressed "extreme concern" at the government's decision to stop letting local authorities keep all money raised from council house sales, warning that it will undermine efforts to deliver desperately needed replacement homes.

Last Monday the government confirmed that its policy of allowing councils to retain 100% of Right to Buy sales receipts will not be extended beyond this month into the 2024-25 financial year. This means potentially 20-25% of the funds generated from a council home sold under Right to Buy will instead go to the Treasury.

Following the announcement, London Councils' Executive Member for Regeneration, Housing & Planning, Cllr Darren Rodwell, said: "With London's homelessness crisis worsening and boroughs' temporary accommodation costs posing a critical risk to their financial stability, it's more important than ever to invest in new social housing.

“In the capital we have over 300,000 Londoners on waiting lists for a social home, but we’re also struggling with immense pressures on boroughs’ social housing budgets and viability challenges making housebuilding increasingly difficult.

“We’re therefore extremely concerned that the government will stop letting councils keep 100% of the money raised through Right to Buy sales. This will undermine boroughs’ resources for delivering desperately needed social housing and replacing stock lost through Right to Buy. The government should be doing everything it can to boost boroughs’ ability to invest in new social homes – but instead we could see our funding reduced.”

Spring Budget

Parliamentarians have been debating the Spring Budget announced by the Chancellor a couple of weeks ago. To help inform those debates, London Councils briefed MPs and Peers on the main issues from the London local government perspective.

Boroughs are particularly concerned by the Budget’s lack of action on homelessness. London faces the most severe homelessness pressures in the country. One in 50 Londoners is currently homeless, with boroughs collectively spending £90m each month on temporary accommodation.

While the outlook for borough finances remains challenging, London Councils welcomes the extension of the Household Support Fund at existing levels. The fund was due to end this month and its continuation was a top priority for London Councils, due to ongoing cost-of-living pressures. However, the decision to extend the fund for only six months will reduce support for vulnerable Londoners just as winter approaches.

[You can read the briefing in full here.](#)

Survey finds dramatic spike in refugees sleeping rough in London

Hundreds of refugees are sleeping rough in the capital after leaving Home Office hotels, according to new research from London Councils.

A survey organised by London Councils found 311 refugees were forced to sleep rough after eviction from Home Office accommodation in January 2024 – an increase of 234% compared to September 2023, when London Councils began its survey work.

In total, 1,087 refugees approached London homelessness services for help in January following Home Office evictions, a rise of 78% in the four months since September. These includes those rough sleeping but also those who were ‘hidden homeless’ – for example, sleeping on the floor of someone still accommodated in a Home Office hotel, or in a church, or elsewhere off the streets.

London Councils’ lead for asylum seekers and refugees, Cllr Grace Williams, said: “The dramatic spike in refugees rough sleeping in the capital is deeply alarming.

“London is already grappling with a severe homelessness crisis. Rough sleeping among refugees puts extra pressures on already-stretched local services, but much more could be done to prevent it occurring in the first place. We are urging the government to listen to boroughs’ concerns and work with us in tackling this challenge.”

Among its policy priorities for preventing rough sleeping and homelessness, London Councils is calling on the government to commit to a 56-day ‘move-on-period’ for refugees and asylum seekers leaving Home Office accommodation, so local authorities have more time to assist with housing arrangements and reduce the risk of homelessness.

Opportunity London Prospectus

Last week saw the launch of the first [Opportunity London Prospectus](#) promoting nine capital projects with £9.6 billion of investible opportunities across inner and outer London.

London Councils is a founding member of Opportunity London, a public-private partnership aimed at driving capital investment in new homes, net zero infrastructure and economic growth.

London Councils Deputy Chair Cllr Claire Holland and Vice Chair Chris Hayward spoke at the launch, with Trade and Investment Minister Lord Johnson and Deputy Mayor for Business Howard Dawber.

London Borough of culture

Congratulations to the London boroughs of [Wandsworth](#) and [Haringey](#) who were last week announced as London Boroughs of Culture for 2025 and 2027 respectively. Each will receive £1.35 million in funding from City Hall to support a year of cultural activities.

Three other boroughs – [Barnet](#), [Merton](#) and [Greenwich](#) – were named as the Mayor’s Cultural Impact Award winners and will receive up to £200,000 to deliver cultural projects.

This week’s coverage in the national and regional media

The Guardian, 14 March – [Boundary changes may reduce access to MPs in UK’S poorest areas research finds](#). Mentions Barking.

Big Issue, 13 March – [Local authority funding crisis ‘putting future of council housing under threat’](#). Mentions Cllr Darren Rodwell.

Evening Standard, 13 March – [London travel news LIVE: Severe delays on A13 in with congestion of up to six miles](#). Mentions Barking and Dagenham.

Evening Standard, 13 March – [Jah Wobble: “The cockney is dead and the](#)

[East End is full of hipsters now](#). Mentions Barking and Dagenham.

Museums Journal, 12 March – [The new Women's Museum in Barking bucks the trend for reduced public spaces](#).

BBC London, 11 March – [Major award pulled after balcony flaws exposed](#).
Mentions Barking and Dagenham.

London Daily News, 11 March – [Boroughs concerned by decision on Right to Buy rules and emphasise 'desperate need for' replacement homes](#). Mentions Barking and Dagenham.

Local Authority Building and Maintenance, 8 March – [Sector responds to Spring Budget](#). Mentions Barking.

Asian Standard, 8 March – [Care worker ordered to pay back over £40k](#).
Mentions Barking and Dagenham.

Media Releases

[Persistence pays off – Landlord ordered to pay almost £100,000 for illegally converted property](#).

[Eyesore garden costs Ilford business thousands of pounds](#).

[Local businesses in Barking and Dagenham sign up to council's Responsible Retailer scheme](#).

[Barking and Dagenham Council opens doors to brand-new Women's Museum on International Women's Day](#).

And finally...

The Members' Briefing is intended to keep you up to date with what is going on in the council, across the borough and in the world of local government. Please email von.edomi@lbbd.gov.uk if you have any suggestions on items for inclusion in future bulletins and any feedback you may have on how it can be improved.
