Cllr Saima Ashraf – supplementary evidence

Introduction: A Changing Borough

The sheer scale and pace of the demographic change which has taken place within Barking and Dagenham over recent decades have put unprecedented pressure on our resident communities. Over the past 5 years, migration has resulted in nearly 11,000 more residents arriving in the borough than leaving during the same period. Overall population figures show an increase from 163,944 residents in 2001 to 206,460 in 2016 (ONS mid-year estimate). Population growth is also projected to continue, with 2016 GLA forecasting a population of 290,417 for Barking and Dagenham by the 2050 horizon (2016 based population projections, central trend).

The social and cultural diversity of new migrants is worth noting. Barking and Dagenham has had the fifth largest growth in residents born outside the UK and Ireland between 2001 and 2011 (333.66 percent), compared with other local authorities in England and Wales. Evidence suggests that outward migration is also significant. Between 2013 and 2015, approximately 33,000 new residents came to the borough, and roughly 30,000 left, meaning that the ‘turnover’ was almost a quarter of the borough’s population. The 2011 census recorded a population of 49.5 percent White British ethnicity in the borough, compared with 80.9% a decade earlier (2001 figure). The largest non-white British ethnicities were Black (20 percent), Asian (15.9 percent) and White Other (7.8 percent). English was not the first language for almost a fifth (19%) of residents at the time of the 2011 census.

The reported religion of residents within Barking and Dagenham also changed during the decade between the two censuses. In 2001, 69% of residents stated their religion as Christian. This dropped to 56% by 2011. During the same period, the proportion of Muslims rose from 4.4% to 13.7%, and the proportion of Hindus doubled (1.1% to 2.4%). The proportion of residents stating that they had no religious belief also increased from 15% to 19%.

As well as the huge demographic change the borough is highly deprived, with the 5th highest housing deprivation score (which focuses on issues such as affordability, homelessness and overcrowding) in both London and England. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (which deals with issues such as income, employment and housing) ranks Barking and Dagenham as 12th nationally and 3rd most deprived borough in London. This is owed, in part, to the sustained legacy of
deindustrialisation which has impacted the borough since the late 1970s. As long-term, large-scale employers such as Fords and May & Bakers downsized or left the borough, residents were made unemployed and found themselves without the education and skills necessary to compete in the post-industrial economy.

Surveys carried out since 2008 have systematically ranked LBBD below the national average on questions related to community cohesion in the borough. The 2016 Resident’s Survey found that just about 7 in 10 (72%) residents agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. This is significantly lower, by 17 percentage points, compared to the national average (89%). Established residents, particularly the White British Ethnic group, are less likely to be satisfied with their local area as a place to live than in other parts of England (Overall 64% compared to 83% nationally). Overall, 1 in 7 residents have no intention of staying in the borough.

Introduction: A Changing Council

These challenges intervene in the midst of unprecedented pressure on local governments’ resources. The politics of austerity are expected to lead the Council to a shortfall of £63 million, a third of its 2010 budget, by the horizon 2020. Having to respond to increasing needs with a reduced budget, the Council has had to find new ways of delivering services to achieve its vision of becoming an inclusive, prosperous and resilient place, in which all communities have the opportunity to achieve their potential. An Independent Growth Commission was established to examine options for development, regeneration and transformation, and the impact of pursuing those options, for the future of the borough and its residents.

The findings of the Growth Commission were published in February 2016, in a report titled: “No one left behind: In pursuit of growth for the benefit of everyone”\(^i\). In this report, the Commission outlined 109 recommendations covering all aspects of the borough’s economic growth including housing, business, transport and infrastructure, culture and heritage, urban design, educational attainment, and skills and employment.

The report of the Growth Commission recommended more inclusive policy and strategy making, as well as implementation, as a way of building and engaging civil society, empowering communities, and fostering social cohesion. Following this, an extensive public consultation was launched to help produce the Borough Manifesto, a 20-year vision for the borough. This exercise translated in an
unprecedented level of engagement with members of the community, which included interviews with local residents, businesses and partners, totalling over 3,000 responses, on their priorities for the future.

The residents’ responses were aggregated into 10 overarching aspirations, such as making Barking and Dagenham a place people are proud of, and where they want to live, work, study and stay; a place where everyone feels safe and is safe; and a place where everyone is treated fairly and has the opportunity to succeed. In particular, one of the themes makes it a priority to address the residents’ fears and aspirations in a rapidly changing place, arguing that social cohesion and community spirit are vital to the success of the borough. It sets a priority in ‘making Barking and Dagenham a friendly and welcoming Borough with strong community spirit’, through various priorities:

- To celebrate our history and heritage, through events and activities;
- To tackle extremism and hate crime wherever it occurs;
- To help different groups in the community to come together and integrate, understanding that diversity is a strength and that we can all learn from one another;
- To come together and support residents and communities to be more resilient so that they are able to do more for themselves, and;
- To start acting as equal partners, doing our bit across sectors and organisations for the benefit of the Borough.

Recognising the complexity, interdependence, and immediacy of the challenges faced by Barking and Dagenham, the Council is exploring a new approach to civic engagement, democratic engagement, social cohesion and integration, citizenship and identity. Our new approach positions the Council as a facilitator, enabling the community, rather than as a paternalistic provider of traditional services. Detailed below are responses to the questions posed by the Select Committee on 29 November 2017, outlining this new approach and its wider implications for citizenship and civic engagement.

Question 1: What do you think is the current state of civic engagement in the UK? Do you feel that the area you work in has better or worse than average engagement?
We face a crisis of civic engagement both locally in Barking and Dagenham and across the United Kingdom. This has manifested nationally with, for instance, the division caused by the June 2016 EU Referendum, and the reported rise in hate crime which followed.

In Barking and Dagenham, we face the same challenge as the rest of the UK, though it likely presents more acutely than many other areas of the country. This is due, in part, to the population and demographic change and churn which has taken place over the past 15 years:

- Between 2001 and 2016 the population rose from 164,000 to 206,500, and is projected to reach 275,000 by 2037
- Between 2012 and 2014 one quarter of the population moved into and out of the borough, representing significant population churn
- Between 2001 and 2011 those members of the community identifying as White British fell from 79% to 49%, while those identifying as BME increased from 15% to 50%

It is also due to the deprivation our community faces:

- A male healthy life expectancy of 59.8 years, below the London average of 64.1
- A female healthy life expectancy of 58.5 years, below the London average of 64.1
- 14.7% of residents with no qualifications, above the London average of 6.6%
- 7.5% unemployment, above the London average of 5.8%
- 67.1% employment, below the London average of 73.8%
- 13.3% of residents claiming DWP benefits, above the London average of 9.4%

This deprivation – a cumulative result of deindustrialisation and austerity – has affected residents in their sense of identity, belonging and power, at the same time that globalisation is rapidly changing the makeup of the community. Many feel ‘left behind’ by the state, at all levels.

One consequence, and most importantly for civic engagement, is that just 22% of residents formally volunteered in 2016, compared to the national average of 42%. However, the lack of civic engagement has had a range of direct and indirect consequences in this borough:

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1 We understand civic engagement as the act of working to make a difference in the civic life of the community. Acts big or small, from formal volunteering to informal community groups, from democratic participation to befriending one’s neighbours, constitute and contribute to civic engagement.
• In 2016 we found that 72% of residents believe Barking and Dagenham is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together, compared to the national average of 89%.
• White British residents have found to be consistently less likely to be satisfied with the area as a place to live, less likely to feel safe, and less likely to believe Barking and Dagenham is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.
• One in seven residents want to leave the borough, while 64% are satisfied with the local areas as a place to live, compared to the national average of 83%.

Question 2: What role should local authorities play in encouraging volunteering? How could they be more effective? What examples are there of best practice?

As a local authority, our aim is to improve civic engagement in all forms. We believe that high levels of civic engagement will improve the resilience of the community, and positively affect a range of socioeconomic outcomes for residents. The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBBD) is working with partners across statutory and community organisations to enable civic engagement. In doing so we are innovating the role of the local authority, together with wider civil society, in policy regarding engagement and volunteering, as well as the variety and forms of engagement and volunteering available to residents of the borough.

Every One Every Day

On 25 November 2017 we launched the ‘Every One Every Day’ initiative, a five-year project aiming to reinforce social cohesion and individual wellbeing by creating new forms of collaboration between residents, civil society organisations and the private sector. The initiative emerges from a unique collaboration between three funding bodies, LBBD and Participatory City Foundation. It aims to pull together essential components for co-producing society: a shared vision of the future, new methods of co-creating value, cost savings and mechanisms for collective investment. It is based on the assumption that ‘doing things together’ – engagement – can improve the everyday life of residents, and foster cohesion in a borough where formal volunteering has been lagging behind national averages for a number of years.

The project proposes to facilitate the creation of a network of 250+ citizen-led projects and 100 new businesses over five years, working with over 25,000 people in the borough. These include
activities which are intrinsically appealing to people, such as cooking, learning, making, trading, sharing, and growing. They provide an experience of co-producing something tangible as a group of equal peers.

Every One Every Day is resident-led, as they drive the development of activities themselves, and participate in those local initiatives with which they relate. It focuses on the skills, ideas and assets possessed by residents, with ultimate objective of building a ground-up culture of participation.

Every One Every Day is an innovative example of how local authorities can broaden their approach to civic engagement and volunteering by turning away from traditional, paternalistic policy and adopting an enabling, ‘facilitator’ position within the community. It truly relies upon the initiative and energy of the community itself.

(https://www.weareeveryone.org)

Crowdfund Barking and Dagenham

Earlier in 2017 LBBD launched its own crowdfunding platform for the borough, in partnership with Crowdfunder UK. The platform and accompanying support provided by the Council and the Barking and Dagenham Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) – through advice and matchfunding – enables civil society organisations to diversify their funding efforts by tapping into the potential of the ‘crowd’ and information and communication technologies. For residents, crowdfunding is a step to empowering them to take positive action to improve their community without being dependent on funding institutions to finance projects or ideas. In the first six months of the platform, five different projects have benefitted from the Council’s matchfunding (small grants fund) and we are looking to further extend our reach in 2018. Crowdfund Barking and Dagenham empowers the community to support and finance the local causes which matter to them, no one else.

(http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/funds/lbbd-community)

Local Lottery

The Barking and Dagenham Lottery, the first of its kind in London, launched to good causes in August 2017 with the aim of enabling the community to raise money for local good causes; charities and community groups identified by residents themselves.
The lottery is already funding 16 local good causes, including the Liberty Credit Union, the Disablement Association of Barking and Dagenham, a community-run growing space for people with limited access to gardens and facing health inequalities, and the Huggett Women’s Centre in Dagenham.

(https://www.lotterybd.co.uk)

Supporting Community Initiatives

A wide range of thriving voluntary and community organisations operate in Barking and Dagenham, providing essential support to residents, supporting volunteers and ensuring no one is left behind. According to the Charity Commission, Barking and Dagenham has approximately 555 charities working within its boundaries. The role of these partners, and the CVS, as the local infrastructure provider is key. It is vital for the Council, CVS, independent funders and other partners to support as wide a variety of such initiatives as possible. By doing so, we can widen the forms of volunteering and activities available to, and benefiting, residents of the borough. Current examples include:

- **Barking and Dagenham Council for Voluntary Service (CVS):**
  The CVS provides a range of services in supporting civil society in its widest sense. It is funded in part by LBBD, and with a long-term lease on a recently refurbished community building. As part of its remit, and with other, larger VCS organisations, the CVS promotes and supports volunteering opportunities across civil society.
  The CVS provides space for a wide-range of community groups within its building ‘The Ripple Centre’, at low cost. This acts as a source of income for the CVS but also capacity builds groups.
  The CVS also brings together partners on a range of issues such as LGBTQI+ network, migrant rights and strategic third sector priorities. It has a weekly newsletter highlighting opportunities for funding, training and collaboration opportunities.
  The CVS has made a number of comments with regard to the specific additional requests for information made of Cllr Ashraf. These are summarised below, but do not necessarily represent the Council’s view:
    - Reports from the Runnymede Scorecard project indicate that all communities are equally affected by traditional poverty indicators.
• There is a palpable feeling of alienation expressed through political and community discourses by the white working class (as seen in the local Brexit vote).

• Engagement by the white working-class community has centred upon local political discourse and can be seen to be centred geographically in specific communities.

• Engagement from the white working class has therefore been through tenants and resident’s associations, political affiliations, and community safety engagement structures like the ward panels. This resonates with feelings of insecurity and feeling under threat.

• There is an over representation of white working-class communities in some specific types of formal community organisations. Within the post-industrial epoch, families have sought to support what they perceive to be ‘their community’.

• The insular nature of some charities, can be seen to reflect fears of ‘the other’. There is also a particular tendency for the white working-class community to also cluster around the needs of disabled communities locally. This is less controversial than support for other specific groups.

• **Grown in Dagenham:**
  Funded by the Big Lottery and established on Dagenham Farm in January 2016 through a targeted tendering process by the Council, the project works to involve local people in the farm and get more people benefiting from learning to grow food. They run weekly school food-growing and cooking sessions, an after-school club and holiday club for local school children, during which activities include planting out, harvesting soft fruit and learning to cook farm produce. They teach local unemployed lone parents in food-growing and food-production, with participants also learning the basics of marketing and retailing. They run food-growing sessions for people in recovery from alcohol abuse, and host a weekly communal lunch for staff and volunteers to enjoy together.

• **Community Resources:**
  Grow creative solutions to local issues – solutions provided ‘By the community, for the community’. They are a group of volunteers from all walks of life who want to bring people together to realise that they can make a positive contribution to their community. They support local volunteers to start up and run projects that address needs they have identified in the local area. One Community Resources project is The Hub at Castle Point, which offers
English conversation classes, parent and toddler groups, family learning sessions, a drop-in community café and ante-natal programmes, amongst other programmes. Another project is Community Connect, an LBBD-funded online resource designed to assess the issues facing an individual, and identify a personalised list of relevant support and services available in the local area. Peaced Together is a creative arts course for women. The course consists of five craft projects completed over ten weeks, each helping the group to explore a different topic and support women in recovery of various forms.

- **Company Drinks**:
  An arts project and community drinks enterprise that links East London’s history of ‘going picking’ – hop picking – with a full drinks production cycle: from picking to bottling, branding to trading and reinvesting. They run a year-round, borough-wide and intergenerational programme in Barking and Dagenham, with the venue provided by the Council of Barking Park. So far, 36,000 people have engaged with Company Drinks, including 2,400 Barking and Dagenham residents. More than 1,000 young people have been involved in making and mixing drinks. More than 30 monthly Hopping Afternoons for former hop-pickers and 120+ weekly volunteers’ sessions have taken place. Company Drinks have run trips to Aarhus in Denmark, Warsaw in Poland, Leipzig in Germany and Colombes in France.

- **Barking and Dagenham Somali Women’s Association**
  Established in the mid-1990s in response to a rapidly growing ethnic minority population, the Somali Women’s Association is a locally-based health, wellbeing, training and employability organisation committed to providing support to ethnic minority women and their families from its resource centre in Barking. Their vision is to set up an information and resource centre which has community café facilities, offers services to improve the health and wellbeing of women, and tackles the many problems and issues raised by health inequalities, FGM, unemployment and poverty. The Association is actively involved in a range of wider community activities, including those coordinated by the Council, such as our social cohesion hackathon and Big Conversation, described below.

- **Established volunteering schemes**
  Many of the contracts for social care in particular that the Council tenders, are with local VCS providers. One of the key elements of those contracts is the role of volunteers from the community supporting residents. Organisations like Carers of Barking and Dagenham, DABD, and ILA have well designed and developed volunteering programmes.
Cultural Connectors:
Creative Barking and Dagenham is a six-year project (2014 – 2019) for people living, working and socialising in Barking and Dagenham. Its mission is to enable local people to create, commission and curate outstanding arts and creative activities in their areas, and to promote the borough as a place where exciting art – of all forms – is made and shown. A part of this project is the Cultural Connectors network; an ever-expanding group of adults living locally, who are making decisions about the Creative Barking and Dagenham Programme. The Cultural Connectors work with partners across the borough to curate festivals, arrange trips and visits, commission artists and projects, participate in funding panels and spreading the word about Creative Barking and Dagenham.

Community initiatives such as those thriving in Barking and Dagenham are critical because they are born out of local priorities and empower the community to take action. As a local authority, we believe it is our duty to do everything possible to encourage and enable initiatives such as these.

Question 3: To what extent are local communities involved in the provision of nationally run volunteering schemes like the National Citizens Service? Do communities feel they have a say or that these schemes are imposed from the outside? Should community projects be prioritized over national schemes?

In Barking and Dagenham, as across London and beyond, the National Citizens Service (NCS) is delivered by ‘The Challenge’.

As a Council we have a strong working relationship with The Challenge. We agree to exchange a range of regular data, including the number of participants, organisations working in collaboration, and the number of volunteering hours given. We support The Challenge in contacting and working with local schools. We have rental arrangements for several Council-owned buildings. Each year a number of Councillors participate in a ‘dragons’-den-style’ event, allowing participants to present their community projects, and providing a unique insight into the priorities of local children. The Challenge are also responsive to the Council’s recommendations of suitable local organisations with which to collaborate, which in the past has included Carers of Barking and Dagenham, Brighter Steppings and the Ab Phab Youth Club.
Nationally run volunteering schemes such as the NCS could, however, be further improved by ensuring that it is better informed by and constructed around the makeup and priorities of each local community. Too often such schemes are delivered at regional, rather than borough, level, and reflect a broad, generalised understanding of those individuals and groups they are trying to engage. For example, The Challenge reports to regional, rather than borough, targets. As a result, local performance of the scheme is difficult to assess, and is not responsive of local needs. It is also true that, while participation rates remain high, it is not always the most disadvantaged and hard-to-reach pupils who take part in the scheme. Indeed, it is frequently the more high-achieving pupils. Increased subsidiarity would improve the local knowledge informing the scheme, and help to reach the most disadvantaged pupils.

Greater responsibility and decision-making power at a local level, for design and delivery of such schemes, would improve their responsiveness. This could mean local authority involvement, community organisation control, or a combination of both.

**Question 4: What role should local authorities play in encouraging democratic engagement? How could they be more effective? What examples are there of best practice?**

The fiscal austerity imposed by successive national governments since 2010 means that by 2020 LBBD will have two thirds of the money to spend as it did in 2010. This has forced LBBD, and local government around the country, to re-imagine its role within the 21st century public sector. Councils must transform to ensure they continue to improve outcomes for residents. This has only increased the importance for local authorities of listening to their constituents, and has caused LBBD to adopt a more enabling position as a community ‘facilitator’, turning away from its more traditional, paternalistic role as a provider of services to users.

In practice, this means improving democratic engagement by improving the means by which we consult, engage and co-produce with residents.

**The Borough Manifesto Consultation**

Launched in July 2017, the Borough Manifesto is a 20-year vision for the future of Barking and Dagenham, shared across all the borough’s partners. Before developing this vision, during the summer of 2016, the Council undertook the most extensive engagement exercise ever conducted in
the borough. We spoke to over 3,000 residents about what they liked about the borough, what they disliked, and what they hoped Barking and Dagenham would be like 20 years from now. We analysed these responses both qualitatively and quantitatively, and the results formed the foundation of the Borough Manifesto. The Borough Manifesto is an example of how consultation and engagement can and should be at the heart of strategy development, rather than – as is still so often the case – an afterthought.

(https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/council/priorities-and-strategies/borough-manifesto/overview/)

Social Cohesion Hackathon

We are exploring the use of participatory design techniques as a means of increasing the involvement of residents in solving some of our most pressing issues. For instance, in identifying and designing solutions to challenges of social cohesion. On 30 September and 1 October, we held the UK’s first social cohesion hackathon in partnership with local social innovation company DigiLab. The hackathon brought together 25 programmers and software developers with members of the community, of all ages and backgrounds, to identify, respond to and tackle the issues and concerns of local residents. Given the success of the exercise and the interest it generated amongst participants and community groups, we are now looking to reproduce the format in the near future.

Community Amplifiers

We are planning to recruit and train a group of community ‘amplifiers’ to help facilitate a conversation between seemingly differing views and perspectives, using inclusive methods and techniques. The role of the ‘amplifiers’ will focus on achieving increased harmony within the borough through allowing individuals and groups to appreciate the value of different worldviews and practices, and to improve democratic engagement as a result.

Improving, innovating and broadening the methods by which we consult, engage and co-produce with residents is beneficial for several reasons. Firstly, it ensures our work is truly responsive to and led by the will of the community. Secondly, it places residents at the heart of the policy development process and empowers them. Finally, improving our practices of consultation, engagement and co-production empowers residents to democratically engage with the Council, the community and wider society.
Question 6: What opportunities are there for local communities to be a site of democratic innovation? Should local authorities trial participatory budgeting and citizens juries? Should local authorities have the ability to allow votes at 16 for local elections?

Local authorities have significant capacity to act as sites of democratic innovation, trialing initiatives responsively to local priorities, but with potential for nationally valuable insight. Beyond the examples of such schemes named in the question, all of which enjoy increasing levels of support across the public sector, LBBD is developing a new local giving model with significant potential for democratic innovation.

Much like participatory budgeting, our new local giving model implements participatory financing as a means of empowering civil society. In particular, both Crowdfund Barking and Dagenham and the Barking and Dagenham Lottery – described above – use models of participatory financing to fundraise for local good causes chosen by the community itself. This empowers residents with choice, and further encourages them to donate resources, be it finance, time or personal energy to their community.

This is just one means by which local authorities may act as sites of democratic innovation, but as the appetite for such experimentation grows local authorities around the country will discover the potential for innovation of this kind, and the variety of initiatives being undertaken will grow.

Question 7: What role should local authorities play in integration? How could they be more effective? What examples are there of best practice?

One of the duties of local authorities is to enable effective integration by creating a welcoming community with a strong, coherent sense of civic pride. In turn, we see civic pride as a form of shared understanding within the community, constituted of three elements:

- An appreciation for the culture and history of the community.

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2 Integration is the process by which the conditions are created for the inclusion of new residents into a community. The product of effective integration is social cohesion. Social cohesion is a common sense of belonging to, and inclusion within, a community.
• An understanding of the rights and responsibilities which accompany membership to the community.
• Positive participation within the community.

As a borough, we are working to enable integration by fostering a strong sense of civic pride through a variety of means.

The Summer of Festivals

Each summer, the Council hosts a programme of over 10 free events across the borough, celebrating the community’s heritage, history and culture. These events foster civic pride and enable integration by providing a space for residents from different backgrounds to meet, interact and widen their social networks. The events also improve the community’s shared understanding of and pride in our heritage, history and culture.

Following the 2017 programme:

• 91% of residents agree that the events should continue next year.
• 92% agree these events are a good way for people of different ages and backgrounds to come together.

The Summer of Festivals Programme is run in partnership with local businesses and civil society groups, giving participants excellent opportunities to understand and engage with the rich diversity in the borough.

History and Heritage

LBBD are working to improve our shared understanding and appreciation of the heritage and history of Barking and Dagenham through several projects over the coming years:

• The East London Industrial Heritage Museum – a new facility of regional significance, on the site of the former Ford Stamping Plant in Dagenham, the Museum will tell the story of the area’s industrial heritage, but also support the development of new sustainable creative industries in the borough.
• The East End Women’ Museum – a permanent resource to promote women’s history that will record, share and celebrate women’s stories and voices from East London’s history.

• The Abbey: Unlocking Barking’s Past, Securing its Future – a capital improvement programme to the landscape at Abbey Green, accompanied by a programme of promotion and interpretation of the history of the former Abbey.

• Valence House – described by the Museums’ Journal as ‘one of the best local history museums in London’, Valence House is an accredited local history museum with locally, regionally and nationally significant collections. It provides a high-quality and extensive programme of events and learning for school groups and the wider community, including collection ‘masterclasses’ and family history help sessions.

• However, it is not just the Council who have an important role in maintaining the history and heritage of our borough. Initiatives such as Company Drinks, described above, are vital to engaging the community and encouraging people to take an active role in sharing our past. Local authorities should encourage and enable such community initiatives wherever and whenever they emerge.

The Good Neighbour Guide

An important element of civic pride is an understanding of the rights and responsibilities which accompany membership of the community. Consultation and engagement over the past several years, such as through the Borough Manifesto Consultation, and other qualitative research conducted with members of the White working-class population earlier in 2017, has identified that this is an issue of great concern for residents.

Many residents believe that the rapid population and demographic change which has occurred in the borough, and particularly the rate of population churn we experience, has caused a loss of understanding of the rights and responsibilities which accompany membership of the community. Residents frequently argue that these rights and responsibilities were better understood in those decades preceding deindustrialisation, and particularly the 1920s – 1970s.

Earlier this year, led by a series of engagement events, the Council developed The Good Neighbour Guide. To be sent to all residents, and then to all residents arriving in the borough, the Guide aims to articulate the rights afforded to every member of the community, including which public services
are available and how they may be accessed. It also outlines the responsibilities expected of all residents, including being friendly and welcoming to those around them, appreciative and respectful of our culture, history and environment.

**Faith in the Community**

To better understand the role of faith in the community, and its implications for integration, we have commissioned an extensive study by the Co-Operative Advisory Group Consultants to assess current and future needs for religious premises in the borough. The study notes the changing faith landscape in the borough, and the increasing importance of certain faith groups. It also suggests that faith premises are already in short supply and looks at new opportunities to respond to the local and future demand for faith spaces.

One of the recommendations of the report is the creation of multi-faith premises. Whilst it is still at an early stage of development, the Council is looking to explore this option in partnership with faith organisations across the borough. We believe that this would solve the problem of the shortage of space, but might equally create a new space for mutual understanding and collaboration between various faith groups. This will enable easier inclusion of new residents within the community, improving integration and, in turn, social cohesion.

**The Big Conversation**

Important to our efforts to foster civic pride and enable integration is our belief that a cohesive community must share a common vision for its future.

Further to the Borough Manifesto, described above, which sought to articulate this vision, on 13 November 2017 LBBD and Lankelly Chase Foundation co-facilitated an event called ‘The Big Conversation’. A representative spread of 71 residents from all backgrounds within the community took part in the event. Through an exploration of participants’ own personal stories, ‘The Big Conversation’ sought to generate a reflection on what people want for their life, what they value in their community and what prevents them from achieving their needs. Through finding common ground, the event will help to foster civic pride and enable integration.

It is the belief of the Council that its work will foster a strong, shared sense of civic pride. In so doing, it may ensure Barking and Dagenham is a welcoming community, capable of including new
residents in its economic, social and culture life. This is the means by which local authorities can promote integration and, as a consequence, improve social cohesion.

Al-Madina Mosque

Again, it is not just a matter of what the Council is doing or can do, but what action local government can encourage and enable by groups and organisations within the community. A good example of such activity is the excellent community work undertaken by the Al-Madina Mosque in Barking. Earlier in 2017 the Mosque won the Spirit of 2012 Connecting Communities Award from the British Ethnic Diversity Sports Awards, for their excellent sports programme which works to bring local communities together through sport or physical activity.

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