



Havering

LONDON BOROUGH

TOWNS & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA

7.30 pm

Thursday
20 October 2011

Town Hall, Main Road,
Romford

Members 9: Quorum 3

COUNCILLORS:

Conservative Group
(5)

Residents' Group
(2)

Labour Group
(1)

**Independent
Residents' Group**
(1)

Frederick Osborne
(Chairman)
Wendy Brice-
Thompson
Osman Dervish
Garry Pain
Keith Wells

Linda Hawthorn
(Vice-Chair)
Ray Morgon

Paul McGeary

Michael Deon Burton

**For information about the meeting please contact:
Richard Cursons (01708 432430)
E-mail: richard.cursons@havering.gov.uk**

What is Overview & Scrutiny?

Each local authority is required by law to establish an overview and scrutiny function to support and scrutinise the Council's executive arrangements. Each overview and scrutiny committee has its own remit as set out in the terms of reference but they each meet to consider issues of local importance.

They have a number of key roles:

1. Providing a critical friend challenge to policy and decision makers.
2. Driving improvement in public services.
3. Holding key local partners to account.
4. Enabling the voice and concerns of the public.

The committees consider issues by receiving information from, and questioning, Cabinet Members, officers and external partners to develop an understanding of proposals, policy and practices. They can then develop recommendations that they believe will improve performance, or as a response to public consultations.

Committees will often establish Topic Groups to examine specific areas in much greater detail. These groups consist of a number of Members and the review period can last for anything from a few weeks to a year or more to allow the Members to comprehensively examine an issue through interviewing expert witnesses, conducting research and site visits. Once the topic group has finished its work it will send a report to the Committee that created it and it will often suggest recommendations to the executive.

Terms of Reference

The areas scrutinised by the Committee are:

- Regulatory Services
- Planning and Building Control
- Town Centre Strategy
- Licensing
- Leisure, arts, culture
- Housing Retained Services
- Community Safety
- Social and economic regeneration
- Parks
- Social inclusion

AGENDA ITEMS

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

(if any) - receive.

2 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Members are invited to declare any interests in any of the items on the agenda at this point of the meeting. Members may still declare an interest in an item at any time prior to the consideration of the matter.

3 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman will announce details of the arrangements in case of fire or other events that might require the meeting room or building's evacuation.

4 **MINUTES** (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve as a correct record

(a) the minutes of the meeting of 5 July 2011

(b) the minutes of the meeting of 5 July 2011 that included certain exempt information not available to the public or Press

and to authorise the Chairman to sign them.

5 **OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT SERVICE**

Presentation to the Committee

6 **SHELTERED HOUSING IN HAVERING**

Presentation to the Committee

7 **QUEENS THEATRE**

Presentation to the Committee

8 **COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12** (Pages 5 - 8)

Report attached

9 NAPIER & NEW PLYMOUTH HOUSES

Discussion on the possibility of a scrutiny visit to Napier and New Plymouth tower blocks.

10 URGENT BUSINESS

To consider any other item in respect of which the Chairman is of the opinion, by reason of special circumstances which shall be specified in the minutes, that the item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

**Ian Buckmaster
Committee Administration and
Member Support Manager**

Agenda Item 4

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TOWNS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday 5 July 2011 (7:30pm – 10:30pm)
Havering Town Hall

Present:

Councillors Fred Osborne, (Chairman), + Clarence Barrett, Wendy Brice-Thompson, Osman Dervish, Linda Hawthorn, Paul McGeary, Garry Pain, + Jeffrey Tucker and Keith Wells.

+ Clarence Barrett substituted for Councillor Barbara Matthews.

+ Jeffrey Tucker substituted for Councillor Michael Deon Burton.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barbara Matthews and Michael Deon Burton.

Also present were Councillors Keith Darvill, Denis O'Flynn, and Michael White.

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chairman announced the arrangements to be followed in the event of the building needing to be vacated as the result of an emergency

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. HOMES IN HAVERING/HOUSING RETAINED SERVICES

The Committee received two presentations, firstly from Sue Witherspoon – Head of Housing and Public Protection and secondly from Kevin Hazelwood, Director of Property Services of Homes in Havering (HiH).

The first presentation outlined how the current allocations system worked and explained how the Government's Localism Bill would change how allocations were managed in the future.

Members noted that at present the Council operated using open waiting lists which had limited exclusions on the persons that could apply.

New proposals would allow local authorities to decide on who could register on waiting lists and authorities could exclude on published criteria such as residency or financial ability.

Members were also advised that at present the Council had a statutory duty to investigate and make decisions on homelessness. Under the new proposals the Council would have a discharge of duty into the private rented sector where minimum twelve month tenancies would be given to applicants.

Members were advised the Localism Bill was currently going through the House of Lords and was expected to become law in November with the powers in place in April 2012.

The second presentation detailed the Council's Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) and its current work.

Members were advised that the ALMO was created as a delivery mechanism to improve service standards, oversee property upgrading and meet the government Decent Homes Standard.

The local authority remained the property owner, legal landlord and normally sole shareholder. The housing management functions were contracted to the ALMO which was meant to operate with a significant degree of autonomy from Council control and was the most popular and fastest route to accessing funding for the provision of decent homes.

Areas covered by the Management Agreement included

- Housing management.
- Rent collection, repairs, voids, tenancy management.
- Leasehold Management.
- Environment & estate services .
- Decent Homes/Stock Investment.

Members noted that the following services were retained and managed by the Council Housing Register

- Homelessness
- Lettings
- Strategy & policy
- Affordable Housing development
- Mobile support service
- Adaptations for owner occupiers
- Private rented housing enforcement

Members were advised that the ALMO was currently reviewing housing related services including

- Service charge review
- Review of tenancy conditions
- Resident consultation arrangements
- The management agreement
- The Councils regeneration programmes i.e. Harold Hill Ambitions; Rainham Compass

Members noted that Decent Homes was a standard to be achieved for all public sector landlords. The works involved a complex relationship between building components condition and or age to achieve a decency rating.

In November 2010 the Government had changed the rules relating to backlog funding which meant that money was available to all local authorities with more than 10% non-decent homes. All Councils expected to deal with 10% non decency through their own resources. There was also no longer a requirement for any stars to be awarded to an ALMO to secure funding.

The Committee noted that the funding was now available to all local authorities, not just those with ALMOs. £1.6 bn had been made available over four years to make 150,000 homes decent, however this figure had been reduced from £3.2bn.

It was noted that funding was back loaded – and only monies agreed for the years 2011/12 & 2012/13 were secure.

The Council had bid for £67 million in back funding but had only secured £62 million.

Officers advised that the opening position for non decent homes 2010/11 was 5831 - 57.1% of the Council's stock. During the year 442 homes were made decent (4.34%)

In 2011/12 the amount of newly arising non decent homes was 885 (8.75%) meaning that the opening position non decent homes for 2011/12 was 6339 (62.1%).

Members were advised that the current national Housing Revenue Account (HRA) housing subsidy system was due to be abolished in April 2012 and be replaced with a devolved self-financing system which would allow authorities to retain all rent and capital receipts (excluding right to buy sales). This would enable a single national one-off adjustment in which housing debt was redistributed between HRAs locally. In the longer term this would provide resources to ensure adequate management and maintenance of the Council's stock.

Self financing would lead to an increase in both the Management and Maintenance Allowance and the Major Repairs Allowance The main advantage of self financing was that the Authority was no longer reliant on the annual subsidy settlement and could plan future spend easier.

Members were advised that a detailed service improvement plan covering responsive repairs had been drafted and a formal review of the ALMO's Partnership Agreement with its maintenance contractor Morrison Facilities had been carried out.

During discussions Members reported that there were delays in updating Councillors on the progress of repair works which sometimes caused difficulties when updating residents who had complained to their Councillor. Officers agreed that they would pass the Committee's concerns back to the ALMO Management Team.

The Committee **noted** the presentations and thanked the officers for their input.

3. REPORT OF THE TOWNS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – LIVING AMBITION TOPIC GROUP.

Members noted the report of the Towns and Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee topic group and agreed that the recommendations be referred to Cabinet for discussion.

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

The Committee decided on the motion of the Chairman that the public should be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the ground that it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information within the meaning of paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

**TOWNS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**
20 October 2011

| | |
|---|---|
| Subject Heading: | Committee's Work Programme 2011/12 |
| CMT Lead: | Ian Burns, Acting Assistant Chief Executive – Legal and Democratic Services |
| Report Author and contact details: | Richard Cursons Tel: 01708 432430 richard.cursons@havering.gov.uk |
| Policy context: | To agree the Committee's work programme for the 2011/12 municipal year. |

SUMMARY

At this stage of the municipal year, the Committee needs, so far as is practicable, to agree its work programme for the forthcoming year. This applies to both the work plan of the Committee as a whole and to the subject of any topic group run under the Committee's auspices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee agree its work programme for the 2011/12 municipal year.

REPORT DETAIL

Shown in the schedule at the end of the report is a draft work programme for the Committee's five meetings during the municipal year (this does not include the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held in January to consider the

Council's budget). This has been drawn up by officers following initial discussions with the Chairman.

Members will note that a significant proportion of the work plan has been left blank at this stage. This is to reflect the fact that Members may wish to select further issues for scrutiny in light of the briefings they are given by officers during the year. In addition, previous experience has shown that is beneficial to leave some excess capacity in order to allow the Committee to respond fully to any consultations or other urgent issues that may arise during the year.

Additionally, the Committee may wish to select an issue for more in depth scrutiny as part of a topic group review. Council has recommended that, in view of limited resources, only one such topic group is run at any one time. The Committee is therefore requested to consider what should be the subject of its next topic group review, if any.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

None – it is anticipated that the work of the Committee can be supported by existing staff resources and minor budgets within democratic services.

Legal implications and risks:

None

Human Resources implications and risks:

None.

Equalities implications and risks:

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

SCHEDULE: PROPOSED TOWNS AND COMMUNITIES OSC WORK
PROGRAMME 2011/12

| Meeting 1 (5 July) | Meeting 2 (20 October) | Meeting 3 (21 December) | Meeting 4 (9 February 2012) | Meeting 5 (3 May) |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|--|------------------------------|
| Presentation on the Introduction to Overview and Scrutiny | Overview of ALMO management agreement | Overview of Regeneration/ Town Centre Strategy | Review of Security in Parks | Annual Report |
| Housing Retained Services Overview | Sheltered Housing | Overview of Culture and Leisure | Heritage Buildings update | |
| Committee's Work Programme | Queens Theatre | Community Halls | | |

This page is intentionally left blank