



# Havering

LONDON BOROUGH

## TOWNS & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA

7.30 pm

Tuesday  
1 May 2012

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](mailto: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 - 6)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of 15 February 2012 and to authorise the Chairman to sign them.

### 5 **AGEING WELL REPORT** (Pages 7 - 10)

### 6 **HAVING MUSEUM**

Presentation to the Committee by the Head of Culture and Leisure Services

### 7 **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE 2011/12** (Pages 11 - 18)

Attached is a report on work carried out in the last municipal year.

The Committee are asked to agree the content and authorise the Chairman to sign off.

### 8 **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**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
TOWNS & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford  
15 February 2012 (7.30 - 9.05 pm)**

**Present:**

Councillors Frederick Osborne (Chairman), Wendy Brice-Thompson, Osman Dervish, Paul McGeary, Ray Morgon, Garry Pain and Keith Wells

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Linda Hawthorn and Councillor Michael Deon Burton

Councillor Frederick Thompson was also present for the meeting

**19 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 14 November and 21 December were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

**20 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - BUSINESS PLAN 2012-2042**

Committee members received a presentation from Tony Huff, Director of Finance & Resources, of Homes in Havering (HiH).

The presentation detailed how the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was due to become self financing by April 2012.

Members noted that the current HRA was a ring-fenced 'landlord' account that looked after the day-to-day running expenses and income for council housing and was separate from Council Tax. It was also noted that no other services within the council to compete with but the Council was competing for resources with other councils.

The present system involved rental income that was paid by tenants and leaseholders being paid to Central Government who then in turn gave a subsidy back to the Council.

Members were advised that debt interest determined whether positive or negative subsidy was given to a council. If a council was in negative subsidy then excess cash was used to cover debt costs of councils where rent income was not sufficient to cover interest payments. The present system meant councils had no real control over rental income as rents were set by a national rent restructuring formula.

The current funding arrangement was unfair to tenants as a whole mainly due to the following reasons

- Future rental surpluses not necessarily spent on services
- Lacked transparency – who really knew what happened to their rents
- Did not support long term planning and efficiency
- Under-funded basic maintenance of the stock in the long term
- Anti-community empowerment – very difficult to have meaningful engagement on spending priorities locally
- Lack of accountability

Members were advised that plans were in place to abolish the current national HRA housing subsidy system by April 2012 and to replace it with a devolved, self financing system. All HRA authorities would retain all rent and capital receipts (excluding those from Right to Buy sales for at least 4 years) plans were in place to develop a single national one-off adjustment in which housing debt was redistributed between HRAs locally which would provide resources to ensure adequate management and maintenance of the stock including communal areas and which would provide resources to meet the backlog of stock investment Decent Homes Funding had missed.

Members noted that Havering's share of the national debt was likely to be just over £243 million which equated to roughly £16,000 - £17,000 per property.

Members were advised that Central Government released bonds that were lent to the Public Works Loans Board who then lend the money to councils who then paid it back over a long term period almost equivalent to a mortgage. Calculations carried out had shown that the Council would be debt free in 19 years.

Members thanked the officer for his presentation.

## 21 **LOCALISM ACT 2011**

Committee members received a presentation from the Council's Corporate Policy and Performance Manager, Claire Thompson.

The presentation detailed the impact that the Localism Act 2011 would have on local communities.

Members noted that the Act was central to the Government's agenda of promoting its key themes of Big Society, localism, decentralisation and empowering local communities.

Key parts most relevant to Local Government were:

- Local Government (Part 1) / NNDR (Part 4)

- Community Empowerment (Part 5)
- Planning (Part 6)
- Housing (Part 7)
- London (Part 8)

During the discussions the following topics were discussed

### **Local Government**

The general power enabled local authorities to do “anything that individuals generally could do” that was not expressly prohibited by law. It gave more freedom for local authorities to work together in new, and more innovative, ways. However local authorities could not use the power to delegate or contract out their functions nor alter governance arrangements. They also could not use the power to avoid limitations on them that were already in legislation, e.g. formulate a new form of taxation.

### **Community Empowerment**

The Act made changes to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 in respect of council tax. It placed a duty on local authorities to determine whether their relevant basic amount of council tax is excessive, based on a set of principles determined by the Secretary of State and approved by the House of Commons. If a local authority proposed to raise council tax above the limit (determined by the principles) a referendum would need to be held asking the local electorate to choose between the proposed rise and a 'shadow budget' which would be under the given ceiling (so basically to approve or veto the rise).

### **Planning**

The Act provided for the abolition of the regional planning tier, incorporating regional authorities and regional development agencies, and existing regional strategies. However, it did not change the Mayor of London's statutory planning functions.

It placed a duty on local planning authorities and other public bodies to co-operate and work together on the preparation of development plan documents, and to consider joint planning approaches.

It set out the role of local planning authorities in respect of local development schemes. Local planning authorities would be required to publish up-to-date information direct to the public on the scheme, including compliance with the timetable for preparation or revision of development plan documents. For London Boroughs, the scheme would no longer need to be submitted to the Mayor of London.

All development plan documents must be submitted for independent examination to a planning inspector, who would produce a report determining whether or not it was suitable for adoption. Unlike

arrangements before the Act, the inspectors' report would no longer be binding on the local authority.

### **Assets of Community Value**

The Act required local authorities to maintain a list of assets it considered to be of community value, both publically and privately owned, that have been nominated by the local community. These might include the village shop, local pub, community centre or library. When listed assets come up for sale or change of ownership, the Act then gave community interest groups the time to develop a bid and raise the money to bid to buy the asset.

A building or land is defined as being of 'community value' if it furthered the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community. The owner of any listed asset can only dispose of the asset where the specified conditions were satisfied. These conditions provided for notification to the local authority of the intention to dispose of the asset, and for a six week interim moratorium (for community interest groups to express an interest), a six month full moratorium (for community interest groups to put a bid together). If the owner meets these conditions the asset would not be subject to any restriction on disposal for a further 12 months.

The Secretary of State was authorised to provide advice or assistance to any community interest group in connection with bidding for the asset or in connection with bringing the asset into affective use. This included financial assistance, such as grants or loans.

The Government had made clear the Act did not restrict who the owner of a listed asset can sell to or at what price and does not confer a right of first refusal to community interest groups.

### **Social Housing**

The Act placed a new duty on local authorities to prepare a tenancy strategy setting out matters to which all registered providers of social housing should have regard to in framing their tenancy policies. It also provided for the social housing regulator to set a standard on tenure, and for the local housing authority, when formulating its homelessness strategy, to have regard to its current allocations scheme, tenancy strategy and London housing strategy

The Act allowed for more flexible arrangements for people entering social housing in the future. Social landlords would now be able to grant tenancies for a fixed length of time (but not less than 2 years).

The Act removed the statutory right of those other than spouses and partners to succeed to a secure tenancy but provided discretion for landlords to grant succession rights. Existing tenancies were not affected.

Members thanked the officer for her presentation.



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**Chairman**

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**REPORT TO ALL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEES, MARCH-MAY 2012**

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	Potential Work Programme Themes Arising From Ageing Well Event
<b>CMT Lead:</b>	Ian Burns, Acting Assistant Chief Executive, Legal and Democratic Services
<b>Report Author and contact details:</b>	Anthony Clements, Principal Committee Officer Tel: 01708 433065 anthony.clements@havering.gov.uk
<b>Policy context:</b>	The Council's overview and scrutiny powers and the need to ensure an effective overview and scrutiny process.
<b>Financial summary:</b>	No implications arising directly from this report.

**The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives**

Ensuring a clean, safe and green borough	<input type="checkbox"/>
Championing education and learning for all	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing economic, social and cultural activity in thriving towns and villages	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Valuing and enhancing the lives of our residents	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Delivering high customer satisfaction and a stable council tax	<input type="checkbox"/>

**SUMMARY**

Following the recent Ageing Well event considering priorities for older people in the borough, this report details some themes arising from the event that could be used as components of the overview and scrutiny committees' work programmes.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That Members consider the themes raised by the Ageing Well event and decide which, if any, should be added to the work programme of their Committees.

## REPORT DETAIL

1. Members will be aware that, in January 2012, an event was held considering the implications for Havering of the growing elderly population and the Ageing Well agenda generally. The event was well attended with a number of Members and other stakeholders present. Groups and organisations dealing with the elderly who were represented included Age Concern, Havering Police and local NHS organisations.
2. The event produced a great deal of discussion and ideas from the delegates about what were considered the priority areas for older people (a number of members of the Havering Over-50s forum also attended and gave valuable input to the discussions). The results of these sessions are summarised in the appendix to this report.
3. Shortly after the event, several of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen, assisted by officers, met informally to consider the outcomes from the event. A number of general themes emerged and these, along with some further suggestions, are listed below. It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list and Members are welcome to use any of the information below or in the appendix to consider what items could be added to the Committees' work programmes.
  - Security and fear of crime including data protection issues
  - Lifestyle and social inclusion
  - The impact of housing and planning on older people
  - Accessibility and transport
  - Bereavement support
  - The impact on young carers
  - Safeguarding issues
4. Issues affecting older people are often wide ranging and it is likely that many of the issues listed above (or any others chosen by Members) may cover the remit of more than one Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This should not be seen an obstacle to undertaking the work but Members may wish to give consideration to co-opting members from appropriate other committees onto any topic group set up in response to the Ageing Well work. For example, a review of security and fear of crime led by the Crime & Disorder committee may find it useful to co-opt a member from the Towns & Communities overview and scrutiny committee in order to more fully consider the security aspects of housing design and related areas.

## IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

### **Financial implications and risks:**

None arising directly from this report. Any financial implications arising from individual reviews would need to be considered as part of the report of the specific topic group.

### **Legal implications and risks:**

None.

### **Human Resources implications and risks:**

None, this work would be supported within the existing committee administration team.

### **Equalities implications and risks:**

The ageing well event was specifically focussed on issues affecting older people and hence sought to improve scrutiny of an area (age) that is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Further scrutiny work in this area will assist in meeting the Council's equalities obligations.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix: Feedback from Ageing Well Event Breakout Sessions, 19 January 2012, Havering Town Hall

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MEETING	DATE	ITEM
<b>TOWNS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	<b>1 MAY 2011</b>	<b>7</b>

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## REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**SUBJECT: ANNUAL REPORT, 2011/12**

### **SUMMARY**

This report is the annual report of the Committee, summarising the Committee's activities during its year of operation ended May 2012.

It is planned for this report to stand as a public record of achievement for the year and enable Members and others to have a record of the Committee's performance.

There are no direct equalities or environmental implications attached to this covering report. Any financial implications & risks from reviews and work undertaken will be advised as part of the specific reviews.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. That the Committee note the 2011/12 Annual Report and authorise the Chairman to agree the final version for Council.
2. That the Committee agree the report be referred to full Council.

**Staff Contact:** Richard Cursons  
Committee Officer

**Telephone:** 01708 432430

**Cheryl Coppell**  
Chief Executive

**Background Papers** - None



# **TOWNS & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

# **REPORT**

1 May 2012

**Subject Heading:**

Annual Report 2011/2012

**CMT Lead:**

Ian Burns  
Acting Assistant Chief Executive  
01708 432442

**Report Author and contact details:**

Richard Cursons  
Committee Officer  
01708 432430  
richard.cursons@havering.gov.uk

**Policy context:**

Under the Council's Constitution, each Overview and Scrutiny Committee is required to submit an annual report of its activities to full Council.

**Financial summary:**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **SUMMARY**

This report is the annual report of the Committee, summarising the Committee's activities during the past Council year.

It is planned for this report to stand as a public record of achievement for the year and enable members and others to note the Committee's performance.

There are no direct equalities or environmental implications attached to this covering report. Any financial implications from reviews and work undertaken will be advised as part of the specific reviews.



## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the Committee note the 2011/2012 Annual Report and authorise the Chairman to agree the final version for Council.
2. That the Committee agree the report be referred to full Council.

## **REPORT DETAILS**

During the year under review, the Committee met on five occasions and dealt with the following issues:

### **1. 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.

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

### **2. PROPOSED ROMFORD LEISURE CENTRE**

In July the Committee considered a requisition of the Cabinet decision to develop detailed proposals for the provision of a new leisure centre in Romford town centre.

The reasons for the requisition were as follows:

- To examine the 5-year revenue stream model and how the figures had been arrived at.
- To consider the accuracy of the capital project cost against rocketing inflation rates in the construction industry.
- To consider how the design of the leisure centre would fit into a limited area.
- To consider how adequate car parking facilities would be provided and the impact on traffic management in the locality

- To consider contingencies in the event the £2m funding gap proved insufficient to meet the full costs.
- To consider the budgetary impact of prudential borrowing should the projected revenue streams not cover the cost.
- To enlarge on the extent of consultation with the current operators of the Romford Ice Rink.
- To demonstrate the priority given to a new leisure centre in Romford from recent surveys/polls.
- To demonstrate, through market research, that demand was sufficient to justify the costs of building the leisure centre.
- To expand on how alternative provision would be provided to ice hockey users during construction.

The requisition was not upheld.

### **3. OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF HOUSING MANAGEMENT SERVICES**

Committee members received a presentation on the future of Homes in Havering (HiH) from Paul Ryrie, Interim Consultant for Housing and Public Protection.

Members were advised that Cabinet had taken the decision to consult with tenants and leaseholders on the future of HiH.

Members noted that the Council was now consulting with tenants and leaseholders for two main reasons: firstly the new Government had changed the rules on council housing finance. Money for Decent Homes works could now be provided to councils both with ALMOs and to those without and it was also five years since the Council last asked tenants how they wanted their housing service to be provided.

### **4. QUEENS THEATRE**

Committee members received a presentation on the work of the Queens Theatre from Thom Stanbury, Stage Manager of the Queens Theatre.

Members noted that the theatre was owned by the Council and operated as a charity, the Havering Theatre Trust Limited, which was established in 1953.

The theatre's mission was to transform lives by producing and presenting high-quality professional theatre at affordable prices for audiences from Havering and from outer East London and Essex.

The theatre's producing work was complemented by an extensive Education

and Outreach programme for all ages, by a diverse guest programme including professional promotions and hires to community groups, and by programming in the foyer space.

## **5. NAPIER/NEW PLYMOUTH HOUSES**

Members were advised that officers were drawing up costings to either refurbish or possibly demolish Napier and New Plymouth Houses in South Hornchurch.

Members noted that both blocks were in need of major re-investment to bring them up to Decent Homes standard.

A site visit took place in December 2011, during which both Committee members and officers inspected both blocks internally and externally.

Following investigations it has since been decided to refurbish both blocks.

Officers are currently still negotiating with contractors as to the exact costs of the works to the blocks.

## **6. COMMUNITY HALLS MANAGED BY CULTURE AND LEISURE SERVICES/APPROVAL OF PREFERRED DEVELOPMENT PARTNER FOR THE BRIAR ROAD ESTATE**

In November the Committee considered two requisitions of Cabinet decisions.

Firstly the Committee considered a requisition on Community Halls that were managed by Culture and Leisure Services.

The requisition had requested further information on the following

- A) That the Cabinet Report dated 26 October 2011 did not provide adequate and detailed information to facilitate an informed opinion on the proposals for the future of Community Halls referred to in the report. The report should have set out in detail inter alia the following:
- 1) the capital cost of refurbishing each hall (paragraph 1.5 of the report alluded to this but failed to explain);
  - 2) the current income and expenditure budgets for running each of the halls;
  - 3) the breakdown as to how the proposed revenue budget savings (£60k in 2012/13 and £107k in 2013/14) would be achieved;
  - 4) the approximate market value of capital receipt should Dukes Hall be sold and information as to whether the proposed sale included the adjoining car park;

- 5) the future plans for the Old Windmill site and the approximate resale value of the land upon which it was sited;
- 6) the future of Cottons Hall should a lessee not be found;
- B) There was an absence of information about the consideration given (if any) to an alternative strategy of refurbishing the Halls without having to sell Dukes Hall.
- C) There was an absence of information about the past and possible improved/alternative marketing strategy that could be adopted to promote the use of Community Halls.
- D) There appeared to be little or no consultation with the existing users regarding the proposals and a lack of information about the timescales involved.
- E) There remained uncertainty about the future of New Windmill and Tweed Way if lessees were not identified and contractual arrangements entered into. Recommendations 4 and 5 of the Report stated that a further report will come back to Cabinet if lessees were not found, but paragraph 4.1 stated that the halls would close if no lessees were found.
- F) There appeared to be inadequate support and planning and an absence of assurances provided to the existing user groups at Dukes Hall who may have to relocate.
- G) Recommendation 7 in the Report indicated that existing bookings would be protected –however it did not state whether this protection extended to regular bookings as well as one-off bookings.

The requisition was not upheld

Secondly the Committee looked at a requisition that concerned the approval of a Preferred Development Partner for the Briar Road Estate.

The requisition had requested the following information

- A) The decision to proceed with the preferred partner should not be made without a general understanding of the design and location proposals relating to the development of 164 new homes within Briar Road Estate;
- B) To give greater consideration to the impact on the public services infrastructure of increasing the population of the Briar Road Estate by an estimated 500 people (12.5%) including the implications for education and health services.
- C) The Cabinet Report and initial consultation had not identified the location within the estate of:-
  1. the development proposals;

2. the number of garage/parking spaces to be lost and the consequent implications of the displacement of vehicles on the estate roads; and
3. the amount of green space to be lost as a result of the development proposals

The requisition was not upheld.

## **7. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT – SELF FINANCING/LOCALISM ACT**

In February the Committee received a presentation on How the Housing Revenue Account would become self financing in April 2012.

A presentation on the Localism Act was given to members explaining how the Act would impact on day to day activities of residents.

## **8. TOPIC GROUIPS**

The Living Ambitions Topic Group completed its scoping work and a report detailing the group's findings and recommendations was submitted to Cabinet in March 2012.

The Planning Enforcement Topic Group also completed its scoping work and a report outlining the group's findings was circulated to Cabinet for its noting.

**Staff Contact:** Richard Cursons  
Committee Officer

**Telephone:** 01708 432430

**Background Papers** – None.

**The following comments have been submitted by members of staff:**

### **Financial implications and risks:**

Narrative Report Only – not applicable.

### **Human Resources implications and risks:**

Narrative Report Only – not applicable.

### **Legal implications and risks:**

Narrative Report Only – not applicable.

### **Equalities and Social Inclusion Implications and Risks:**

While issues and the work of the Committee can impact on all members of the community, there are no implications arising from this specific report which is a narrative of the Committee's work over the past year.

