

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
VALUE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
24 November 2011 (7.30 - 8.20 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group Robby Misir (Chairman), Ted Eden, Sandra Binion and Frederick Thompson

Residents' Group Ray Morgon (Vice-Chair) and Ron Ower

Labour Group

**Independent Residents
Group**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Billy Taylor and Damian White.

+Substitute Member: Councillor **Frederick Thompson for Councillor White and Councillor Sandra Binion for Councillor Billy Taylor.**

The Chairman reminded Members of the action to be taken in an emergency.

14 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 October 2011 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2011/12 - QUARTER 2

The Committee considered a report that set out the Council's performance against the Living Ambition Goal - Value for Quarter 2 of 2011/12.

The report informed the Committee that following the abolition of the national performance framework -the requirement for local authorities to report on a statutory set of National Indicators at the end of 2010, the Council undertook a comprehensive review of all indicators on Havering Performs and, in consultation with services, rationalised the number that would continue to be collected locally.

This resulted in a much revised list of indicators, including a core set of 85 indicators that would be reported quarterly, where possible, and at the end of the

year to CMT and Members. A copy of the reported indicators was appended to the minutes.

Twelve indicators were listed under the Goal for Value, nine of the indicators had been given a RAG (Red/Amber/Green) rating this quarter.

Following the presentation of the report the Committee was reassured by the Corporate Policy & Community Manager and the Head of Customer Services that for various reasons the indicators had under performed but quarter three would show an improvement.

The Committee **noted** the report.

16 **HAVERING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP - PRESENTATION**

As part of the Committee work programme, Member received an oral presentation on the status of the Havering Strategic Partnership (HSP).

The Corporate Policy & Community Manager informed the Committee that following a review of the HSP, partners were of the view that the success of partnership working in Havering over the last decade had meant that it was now embedded throughout everything they do. They also recognised that there were a few services that were not delivered in partnership with other agencies.

The Committee was informed that the 'sub-groups' of the HSP, including the Community Safety Partnership, were now well established partnerships in their own right. It was felt that since the Local Area Agreement was abolished, the HSP Board's role had diminished and it was felt to be adding little value to strengthening partnership working.

The Leader therefore wrote to HSP board members to inform them that all board meetings scheduled for 2011/12 were to be cancelled. That the Council remained committed to the Havering Strategic Partnership, however, and from now planned to hold an annual HSP conference, so that all partners from across the HSP will have the opportunity to come together and discuss the challenges and opportunities facing Havering over the coming year, as well as showcasing examples of best practice in partnership working in Havering.

The Committee **noted** the presentation.

17 **PRESENTATION ON BUSINESS RATE RELIEF**

At the Committee's meeting on 11 October 2011, a Member was of the opinion that many small businesses were either not aware of what they could claim in terms of business rate relief or the appropriate information was not getting through to them.

As such the Committee had requested a presentation on Small Business Rate Relief and how it was administered in Havering to be given at this meeting.

The Head of Customer Services provided the Committee with the following information:

That Small Business Rates Relief was available where the following apply:

- That the sole or main property occupied which had a rateable value of less than £25,500 in Greater London or
- If the ratepayer occupied any additional properties, each of the additional properties must have a rateable value of less than £2,600, and the total rateable value of all of their properties must be less than £25,500 in Greater London and the relief was applied to the main property based on the total rateable value.

A business had to apply to the Council and confirm that they met the conditions for the relief.

There were two different element of relief available:

- **Reduced poundage** - If the rateable value of a property was below £25,500 a small business multiplier was used of 42.6p as opposed to the standard multiplier of 43.3p.
- **Relief Level** - The Government had announced that they would continue to assist small businesses by providing additional relief against the Business Rate to 30th September 2012

The current relief level was detailed:

- Eligible businesses with a rateable value of up to £6,000 will be entitled to 100% relief on their bill.

If the rateable value was between £6,001 and £12,000, entitlement will be a sliding scale between 100% and 0%.

- After the 1st October 2012 the relief will revert to 50% reduction for properties up to £6000 Rateable Value and between £6,001 and £12,000 the entitlement will again be reduced between 50% and 0% on a sliding scale

The Committee was informed of the Business Rate Relief caseload:

- 1344 cases currently in receipt of a reduction totalling £2.4million
- A further 758 applications were to be considered.

The presentation also detailed the various options to promote the scheme using the following:

- **Havering and Barking & Dagenham websites** – details and application form available on line
- **Mailshots** – Regular mailshots to businesses of significant giving details of changes to the scheme.
- **Telephone promotion** – at the point customers contact Council offices
- **Visits** – application forms provided at relevant premises

There were also plans to promote the scheme further using the following:

- New mailshot to identified Rateable Values
- Promotion to relevant service areas (trading standards, licensing, planning)
- The Leader's Business Networking event on 30 November 2011
- Article for the next edition of Business Focus
- Ward Councillors to promote through surgeries and general ward work

The presentation also informed the Committee that the Localism Act 2011 would result in the following changes:

- Proposal to bring changes into force in time for the 2012/13 financial year (full details were awaited).
-
- Removal of the legal requirement for ratepayers to submit an application in order to claim Small Business Rate Relief.

- Previous legislation would be amended to remove the single occupancy criteria for ratepayers to have their bills calculated using the small business multiplier in 2012-13 and onwards.

The Committee **noted** the presentation.

18 **WORK PROGRAMME/TOPIC GROUPS UPDATE**

1. Council Tax Collection
2. Voluntary Sector Grants distribution mechanism

1. The Committee discussed the scope for the Council Tax Collect Topic Group. A Member offered to share some issues that would assist in developing the terms of reference with other members of the Committee via email.
2. The Committee was informed by the Corporate Policy & Community Manager that she was currently leading a review of voluntary sector funding and the development of a new voluntary sector strategy for Havering. That this was part of the Cabinet Member for Culture, Towns and Communities' Community Action project.

That It was likely that this piece of work would make recommendations to Cabinet. The Corporate Policy & Community Manager was of the opinion that it might be more appropriate and reduce duplication of effort, to allow Cabinet to consider the decisions and then Value Overview and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise at that point.

Chairman