

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD
Council Chamber - Town Hall
4 September 2019 (7.30 - 9.30 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	John Crowder, Philippa Crowder, Judith Holt, Dilip Patel, Nisha Patel, Bob Perry and Christine Smith
Residents' Group	Ray Morgon and Barry Mugglestone
Upminster & Cranham Residents' Group'	Linda Hawthorn and Christopher Wilkins
Independent Residents' Group	
Labour Group	Keith Darvill
North Havering Residents' Group	Darren Wise (Chairman)

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillors Natasha Summers and Graham Williamson.

All decisions were taken with no votes against.

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

3 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 6 February, 5 March, 2 April and 28 May 2019 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

5 COMBINED CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER 4 AND REVIEW OF 201/19 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEES

Members considered the Corporate Performance Report which provided an overview of the Council's performance for each of the strategic goals set out in the 2018/19 Corporate Plan and highlighted good performance and potential areas for improvement. As agreed in the Overview and Scrutiny Board terms of reference, the Corporate Performance report was presented for information as **Appendix 1**.

Also included, was **Appendix 2**, which was an overview of the performance indicators that had been reviewed by the six Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committees throughout 2018/19, some of which were also included in the Corporate Plan.

The Board **reviewed** the performance set out in the appendices and **noted** the corrective action that was being taken to improve where necessary.

6 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (LGA), CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE 2019: REVIEW OF THE AGREED IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN.

Members considered a report that detailed the Council's Action Plan to implement the improvements identified in the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge.

The action plan was agreed at Cabinet on 9 July 2019 as well as also agreeing that Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Board would review progress of the delivery of the actions plan on a six monthly basis.

The peer team considered the following five questions which formed the core components looked at by all Corporate Peer Challenges:

- Understanding of the local place and priority setting: Did the Council understand its local context and place and use that to inform a clear vision and set of priorities?
- Leadership of Place: Did the Council provide effective leadership of place through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
- Organisational leadership and governance: Was there effective political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-making arrangements that responded to key challenges and enabled change and transformation to be implemented?

- Financial planning and viability: Did the Council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and was there evidence that it was being implemented successfully?
- Capacity to deliver: Was organisational capacity aligned with priorities and did the Council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?

In addition to these questions, the Council asked the peer team to consider its approach to social care improvement, housing and regeneration.

The peer team gave a short presentation before they left Havering and produced a report for the Council in May,(Appendix A). The peer challenge was a snapshot in time and acknowledged that some of the feedback may be about things the Council was already addressing and progressing.

One of the areas highlighted was that support should be given to scrutiny to allow it to be more effective and play a more positive role in policy development.

Members noted that the Council's existing scrutiny arrangements were atypical with seven Sub-Committees. A cross-party review of scrutiny had been undertaken in 2018 but its findings did not appear to have been taken forward. Whilst many stakeholders identified the potential for scrutiny to improve, there had not been a clear consensus on the best approach. The Council should consider all options including the importance of officer support, Member development and an enabling culture, as well as structural governance changes.

Members were advised that although the peer challenge team had only been in Havering for four days, the peer challenge report had been formulated over a period of six months and was a robust and accurate record of the Council's position.

The Board **noted** the LGA peer review and **reviewed** the action plan attached.

7 STATUTORY GUIDANCE ON OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY IN LOCAL AND COMBINED AUTHORITIES

The Board considered a report which detailed the Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities.

The 'Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities on Overview and Scrutiny', had been published in May 2019 by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and clarified the role and benefits of scrutiny to local authorities.

Although it was statutory guidance, it recognised that local authorities should identify how best to make scrutiny work within their own political structures and that there wasn't a "one size fits all" approach.

The guidance highlighted examples of best practice across the sector in delivering the scrutiny function.

During the debate Members suggested the possibility of incentivising councillors that wished to participate in scrutiny and also for the need of administration members not being whipped into always making decisions that were in favour of the administration.

Members also felt that by reducing the number of scrutiny sub-committees there would be a resource improvement and that it was important that the council was aware of councillor's areas of expertise so they could be used more effectively in specific areas.

On the subject of the large number of call-ins that the Board had previously considered there was a consensus that if members were allowed to ask more than one question at Cabinet then this would assist in negating many of the call-ins.

Members were reminded that they could inspect the Corporate Forward Plan and if there was an item that they wished to scrutinise in further detail then that item could be brought to officer's attention before the item went before Cabinet or was implemented by officers.

Members felt it would be useful to look at other authorities and see what scrutiny arrangements they had in place and whether Havering could learn from them.

Members felt it would be useful to re-visit the cross party review carried out in 2018 and see if there was scope to having a discussion around that.

The Council's Head of Democratic Services and Assistant Director of Policy Performance & Community, Policy & Performance Management undertook to support the review with Members.

The Board **noted** the contents of the report.

