



## ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Subject Heading:**

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL  
REPORT 2012/13

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**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.

### 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 compare performance year to year.

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

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Committee note the 2012/13 Annual Report and refer to full Council

**REPORT DETAIL**

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

**1. SCORES ON THE DOORS UPDATE**

At its meeting in October 2012, the Committee received a presentation on the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. The Committee was informed that the scheme had gone live in June 2012, and had replaced the original “Scores on the Doors” scheme. The Food Standards Agency had paid for a central mail out of all letters informing businesses of the scheme together with certificates and stickers in the week before the launch.

The scheme comprised six tiers from 0-5, with 0 being urgent improvement needed and 5 being very good. These tiers were based on three areas: hygiene and safety procedures, structure and cleaning and confidence in management.

**2. BLUE BADGE CRITERIA**

At its meeting in October 2012, an update on the Blue Badge Assessment process was given to the Committee. The Committee was informed that the issuing of Blue Badges had been outsourced by the Department for Transport to Northgate. There were two criteria for obtaining a blue badge, one by automatic qualification and the other by assessment. The Council had received between 70 to 100 applications a week. Whilst there had been a backlog during the high demand and the changes due to outsourcing, a second assessor had been employed and the backlog had been cleared.

At its second meeting in October, the Committee received an update on the Blue Badge Scheme. The Committee was informed of the criteria for applicants. If an applicant qualified for the higher level of disability allowance, then that was automatic qualification. All other applications were the subject of an assessment. This could be a paper assessment, where the application and supporting documents are assessed, however in some cases it was necessary to carry out a physical assessment. These were done by Adult Social Care Occupational Therapists.

**3. HIGHWAY CLAIMS**

The Committee received a presentation at its meeting in October 2012 on Highway Claims. The Committee noted that under section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 the Highway Authority is responsible for “highway maintainable at the

public expense” and has a statutory duty to maintain that highway. For Havering this included all roads and pavements currently defined in the Highway Register, which was updated by Legal Services and is a graphical representation of the adopted highway.

The Committee noted that anyone who wished to make a claim could do so up to 3 years from the incident date in the case of personal injury and up to 6 years for property damage.

#### **4. SERVICE PERFORMANCE INFORMATION**

At its meetings in June 2012, October 2012, March 2013 and April 2013 the Committee received details of service performance information. These included information regarding flytipping, recycling and waste collections, graffiti and noise service requests.

During the update at the April 2013 meeting the Committee discussed the issues around a food inspection case, which had an effect on the performance information, following ongoing investigations.

#### **5. HAVERING FRIENDS OF THE EARTH**

The Committee invited representatives from Havering Friends of the Earth to its meeting in October 2012, following a letter received by all Councillors. They raised concerns in relation to recycling in flats and energy saving measures that Friends of the Earth felt the Council needed to address. The representatives stated that there was no doorstep collection of recycling and refuse from residents of flats. Officer and the Committee explained that a lot of work on this issue had been carried out and that there was a doorstep collection which had started in 2005/6.

#### **6. RIVER ROM MAINTENANCE**

The Committee received an informative presentation on Flood and Water Management in Havering at its meeting in October 2012. The Flood and Water Management Act provided for better, more comprehensive management of flood risk for homes and business, and helped safeguard community groups from unaffordable rises in surface water drainage charges, as well as protecting water supplies to the consumer.

Havering was a lead local flood authority and therefore had a number of duties. These included:

- Producing preliminary flood risk assessments in conjunction with Planning.
- Producing flood risk and flood hazard maps
- Producing flood management plans

- Co-ordination of flood risk management at a strategic level
- Improve public participation in flood risk management
- Co-ordination of flood risk management with Water Framework Directive.
- Asset Management Register (Designation of structures).
- Consent body for ordinary watercourses (Environment Agency for main rivers).
- Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) and SuDs Approval Body for development works, the latter which would be in late 2013.

## **7. UPDATE ON THE CARBON REDUCTION COMMITMENT AND ENERGY SAVING MEASURES**

The Committee received an update report at its October meeting on the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) and the actions which the council had taken to improve its energy efficiency over the last year.

The Committee was informed that the CRC was a mandatory scheme aimed at improving energy efficiency and cutting emissions in large public and private organisations. Organisations with over 6 million kWh emissions were obliged by law to report their energy consumption figures back to the Department for Energy and Climate Change.

For Havering, the total emissions in 2011/12 were 23,000 tonnes which came from the 2012/13 budget and was £280,000. The Committee raised concern about 60% of the consumption being attributed to schools, some of which were Academies and were therefore out of the Council's control.

The Committee was informed of the energy efficiency measure that had been carried out in the last year. The main focus had been on lighting, as that had accounted for approximately 45% of the Council's total electricity.

## **8. THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

In January 2013, the Committee met jointly with the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees in order to scrutinise aspects of the Council's Financial Strategy for the coming year. The meeting, chaired by the Chairman of Children and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee, scrutinised several issue of relevance to this Committee

## **9. WINTER MAINTENANCE**

At the meeting in January 2013, the Committee received a presentation on the Winter Maintenance Programme 2012/13. It noted that there was a new salt storage facility at Central Depot which could store up to 2,500 tonnes of salt. The Committee noted that the service receive a five day forecast and was therefore able to assess and plan whether gritting was needed.

On average 16 tonnes of salt was spread a night at a rate of 10 grammes per square metre. This was generally from 6:30pm through to 11:00pm. This avoided the “rush-hour” traffic and the vehicles could continue moving. All Street Cleansing and Civil Enforcement Activities were suspended in snow down conditions and operatives were deployed onto local footways, shopping areas, schools and bus access points to distribute salt, to maintain the safety of pedestrians.

## **10. REUSE AND RECYCLING CENTRE CONTROLS**

At its meeting in March 2013, the Committee received a presentation from the Head of Operations at East London Waste Authority (ELWA). The Committee were given the background to how ELWA was set up and who sat on the ELWA Board from Havering.

ELWA was responsible for the Reuse and Recycling Centres (RRCs) throughout the region and for the disposal of the waste. Shanks Waste Management was contracted to carry out the operation.

The Committee was informed that new controls had been put in place so that people using the RRCs who did not live in the ELWA area were charged. These charges covered any additional costs of the disposal of waste.

## **11. COLD CALLING CONTROL ZONE**

The Committee receive a presentation at its meeting in March 2013 on the Cold Calling Control Zones in Havering. The zones were limited to six areas; these were:

- 2 in Gooshays Ward
- 1 in Heaton Ward
- 1 in Elm Park Ward
- 1 in Wennington Ward
- 1 in Mawneys Ward

The zones were popular with residents within them, the Police and the Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT). However the zones had no legal basis and therefore were just a preventative measure.

The Committee was informed of other developments that had been successful. These include the Banking Protocol, the Buy with Confidence Scheme, the Bogus Callers Working Group and assistance in the Operation Scaffold with the police. This was operated twice a year, checking on 2-3 wards each day to ensure that all builders working at the time were properly registered.

The Committee noted that the Consumer Protection for Unfair Trading Regulations established an offence of “conducting personal visits to the consumer’s home ignoring the consumer’s request to leave and not to return”. Many trading standards service have used this legislation as backing for a door sticker, referred to as a “super sticker”. The Committee noted that this was something officers were looking to adopt and to distribute as widely as possible.

## **12. CONSUMER LANDSCAPE PROJECT**

The Committee received a presentation at its meeting in March 2013, from the Chief Executive of Havering Citizens Advice Bureau. In 2011 the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, issued a consultation paper on the future of the “Consumer Landscape” in England. The intention was to “transfer National responsibility for consumer advice, information and advocacy to Citizens Advice, with the handover of the Consumer Direct national advice services to Citizens Advice from April 2012”.

In anticipation of these proposals, Havering Citizen’s Advice Bureau entered into an agreement with Havering’s Trading Standards Service in December 2012 to provide consumer advice, information and education. The project had been recognised as an excellent example of a local response to the national policy.

Officers informed the Committee that since the partnership was the first in London, they were entering the Consumer Landscape Project into the MJ Achievement Awards 2013.

## **13. ADOPTION OF THE LONDON PERMIT SCHME FOR ROAD WORKS AND STREET WORKS**

At its March 2013 meeting, the Committee were updated on the cabinet report which had been agreed at Cabinet on 21 March 2012. This was in line with the Council Continuous Improvement Monitoring. The Committee was informed that the Council had entered into the London Permit Scheme for Road Works and Street Works. This scheme would allow for greater control over roadworks across the borough and reduce congestion. It was estimated that the scheme would save £2.7 million in congestion costs across London as a result of better collaboration and more joint working.

## **14. ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS**

At its meeting in April 2013, the Committee received details of complaints and compliments received by services within its remit. The Committee were

impressed with the very little number of complaints given the number of people who resided in the borough. The Committee noted that the majority of complaints were in relation to the noise services, which was no longer a reactive services outside of office hours. Officers explained that there were 1.6 FTE allocated to the noise service, however there were other responsibilities that needed to be dealt with including input into planning application and licensed premises noise issues.

The Committee noted the complaints about the Streetcare services, however officers stated that this was due to the recent restructure which had affected service delivery. It was agreed by Committee that the services delivered by Streetcare were what residents saw most of and therefore complaints would be higher. The Committee were informed that there were some compliments, but these were not logged as effectively as complaints. The Committee felt that these should be logged as they were important to staff.

#### **15. REQUISITION OF EXECUTIVE DECISION - HILLDENE SHOPPING AREA PARKING REVIEW**

At its special meeting in May 2013, the Committee considered the requisition of the Executive Decision on Hilldene Shopping Area Parking Review. The Committee noted that the reasons for the requisition, and heard from the Head of Streetcare the reasons for the decision.

The proposal that the requisition be upheld (and therefore that the matter be referred back to Cabinet for further consideration) was LOST (by 3 votes to 2) and it was therefore **RESOLVED:**

**That the Executive Decision taken on 25 April 2013 not be upheld.**