

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA

7.30pm

Tuesday
19 June 2007

Havering Town Hall
Main Road, Romford

Members 6: Quorum 3

COUNCILLORS:

Robby Misir (C)
Robert Benham
David Charles
Fred Osborne

Ray Morgon (VC)
Linda Hawthorne

For information about the meeting please contact:
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NOTES ABOUT THE MEETING

1. HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Council is committed to protecting the health and safety of everyone who attends meetings of its Committees.

At the beginning of the meeting, there will be an announcement about what you should do if there is an emergency during its course. **For your own safety and that of others at the meeting, please comply with any instructions given to you about evacuation of the building, or any other safety related matters.**

2. MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS DEVICES

Although mobile phones, pagers and other such devices are an essential part of many people's lives, their use during a meeting can be disruptive and a nuisance. Everyone attending is asked therefore to ensure that any device is switched to silent operation or switched off completely.

3. CONDUCT AT THE MEETING

Although members of the public are welcome to attend meetings of the Committee, they have no right to speak at them. Seating for the public is, however, limited and the Council cannot guarantee that everyone who wants to be present in the meeting room can be accommodated. When it is known in advance that there is likely to be particular public interest in an item the Council will endeavour to provide an overspill room in which, by use of television links, members of the public will be able to see and hear most of the proceedings.

The Chairman of the meeting has discretion, however, to invite members of the public to ask questions or to respond to points raised by Members. Those who wish to do that may find it helpful to advise the Committee Officer before the meeting so that the Chairman is aware that someone wishes to ask a question.

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT THE CHAIRMAN MAY REQUIRE ANYONE WHO ACTS IN A DISRUPTIVE MANNER TO LEAVE THE MEETING AND THAT THE MEETING MAY BE ADJOURNED IF NECESSARY WHILE THAT IS ARRANGED.

If you need to leave the meeting before its end, please remember that others present have the right to listen to the proceedings without disruption. Please leave quietly and do not engage others in conversation until you have left the meeting room.

AGENDA ITEMS

1 **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.

2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS** (if any) - receive.

3 **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.

4 **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 3 MAY 2007**

To agree as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 3 May 2007 and to authorise their signature.

5 **COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

That the Appointment of the Chairman and Vice Chairman and the Committee membership be noted.

6 **FAIR TRADE**

To receive an oral report and update with regards the outcome of the mini-customer survey and consider options for progressing this .

7 **PERFORMANCE MONITORING INFORMATION PACKS**

To discuss what information Members would want to see contained within the Performance pack.

7 URGENT BUSINESS

Other business may be considered at the meeting if the Chairman agrees that the circumstances justify consideration on the grounds of urgency. The reasons for this will be recorded in the minutes.

Cheryl Coppel
Chief Executive

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Havering Town Hall, Romford
Thursday 3 May 2007 (7.30pm – 8.35pm)**

Present: Councillors Robby Misir (Chairman), Clarence Barrett, Robert Benham, David Charles, +Lesley Kelly, and Ray Morgon

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Melvin Wallace

+Lesley Kelly substituted for Melvin Wallace

No Member declared an interest in the business considered.

The Chairman advised those present of action to be taken in the event of emergency evacuation of the Town Hall becoming necessary.

21 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8 March were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

22 MATTERS ARISING – PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Members received a written report concerning the Performance Information packs. Members were advised that there were two sections devoted to financial monitoring (revenue and capital). The Chief Executive's covering report also contained some Human Resources data, and the Performance Graphs also included financial and Human Resources data.

Members were concerned that the information contained in the performance packs gave them no opportunity to conduct a thorough scrutiny.

It was **RESOLVED** that at the next meeting the Committee discuss what information Members would want to see contained within the Performance pack.

23 CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Draft Annual Report of the Committee was received and approved. The Chairman expressed thanks for the hard work that had been undertaken in producing the annual report and in supporting the Committee during the last year.

24 EMERGENCY PLAN TOPIC GROUP REPORT

The Committee received a report which contained the findings and recommendations of the Emergency Plan topic group.

The topic group was tasked with the function of scrutinising the Borough's Major Emergency Plan in the context of its preparedness to deal with a major emergency such as an emergency on the scale of the Buncefield Oil storage depot fire.

The Topic Group considered how a major emergency disrupting the community would be dealt with and how the provision and continuation of council services would be delivered. It was also considered that if such a major emergency were to occur the plans and procedures outlined within the major emergency plan would address all the eventualities of that incident.

The Topic Group sought to take account of examples of good practice to include in the review. To this end it had met and talked through the way that Dacorum District Council dealt with the Buncefield disaster as the Council were now held up as exemplars of best practice when it came to major emergencies.

The Topic Group considered how the Major Emergency Plan of the London Borough of Havering (LBH) would deal with the issues identified by Dacorum District Council.

In conclusion, the Topic Group determined that generally Havering would be able to confront those issues that Dacorum faced with a degree of certainty in its ability to deal with them; however, whilst at the visit to Dacorum District Council it became apparent that the Emergency Control Centre (ECC) provision in Havering would benefit from a fundamental review as it was clear that the LBH provision has some weaknesses in it. A major concern was Havering's ability to more effectively manage a major incident without an expanded and properly equipped ECC, and to revise the Council's Communications Strategy for Major Emergencies.

Members were requested to defer consideration of the recommendations outlined in the report to allow Officers more time to conduct a thorough review of the ECC provision in Havering and revise the Communications Strategy for Emergencies.

It was **RESOLVED** that a further report be presented to a future meeting of the Committee which addressed the matters as outlined in the previous paragraph.

25 REVIEW OF COUNCIL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE TOPIC GROUP REPORT

The following report was submitted with the agreement of the Chairman as an urgent report as it was necessary to obtain Committee authorisation at the earliest opportunity.

The Committee received a report which contained the findings and recommendations of the Council Complaints Procedure topic group.

The topic group was tasked with the function of scrutinising the Council's complaints handling and monitoring procedure. The review sought to improve the production of complaints monitoring information for Councillors and to make the complaints process more visible and transparent through the use of new technology.

The Topic Group sought examples of good practice to include in the review. To this end it drew upon a broad range of information sources in order to enhance its understanding of current strategies and innovative approaches to improve the procedure for handling and monitoring complaints in the Council. This had included visits to London Borough of Barking & Dagenham and to Thurrock District Council in order to meet with officers and Members involved in their respective complaints processes.

Members were advised that information from the Residents Survey 2006 indicated that the Council performed poorly in managing complaints. Only 25% of residents were satisfied with how the Council dealt with complaints. This compared to a London average of 31% and an Outer London Borough average of 31% also.

The group also conducted a review of best practice in dealing with complaints. This was supplemented with visits by the Panel to Thurrock Council and the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. An officer also visited the London Borough of Newham in order to see what could be learned from their complaints system. All visits were very helpful in identifying areas for improvement and good practice. Members were particularly impressed by the openness of the Thurrock system to both staff and customers and by the emphasis placed by that Council on learning from complaints.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following recommendations be approved for consideration by Cabinet:

1. it was noted that a detailed officer response to this report is being prepared.
2. the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) functionality to deal with complaints was adapted to more closely

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replicate the Thurrock system and was rolled out across the Council by 31 October 2007. The group noted that CRM was already part of the Council's preferred organisation-wide computer solution.

3. detailed procedures for dealing with complaints are developed and these set out the different roles and expectations of those dealing with complaints. This should identify clearly within Groups who was responsible for dealing with complaints about particular services. This information should be made available to all members.
4. A monthly complaints monitoring report was developed for members by 1 January 2008.
5. A single centralised complaints team be established to receive, log and chase all telephone complaints from a single complaints number for the Council. The initial aim should be to achieve this via existing resources. Should this not be possible, a bid for appropriate additional funding should be made through the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
6. A training programme to promote the better handling of complaints should be developed for all staff.
7. Formal procedures should be put in place to ensure that learning from complaints does occur.
8. For all recommendations adopted by Cabinet, the relevant head of service report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its first meeting after three months have elapsed since Cabinet adoption, giving an update on the implementation of these recommendations. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee to decide if further updates are needed beyond this.

The Committee thanked Officers for the very positive approach displayed during the review.