CULTURE AND REGENERATION
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

AGENDA

7.30pm Tuesday 10 November 2009 Havering Town Hall
Main Road, Romford

Members 6 : Quorum 3

COUNCILLORS:

Robert Benham (C) Lesley Kelly
Linda Hawthorn (VC) Ray Morgan
Georgina Galpin Lynden Thorpe

For information about the meeting please contact:
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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 typically consist of between 3-6 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 review 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:

- Leisure, art and culture
- Social and economic regeneration
- Social inclusion
- Adult Education
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. **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**

   To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 22 September 2009 and to authorise the Chairman to sign them.

5. **HAROLD HILL AMBITIONS PLAN – Presentation/ update.**

6. **LIBRARIES TRANSFORMATION PLAN – Report attached**

7. **BIODIVERSITY IN PARKS AND OPEN SPACES – Report attached**

8. **COUNCIL CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME**

   The Committee is asked to consider the schedule of Cabinet decisions and to decide whether to review those where the review date will shortly occur.
9  FUTURE AGENDAS

Committee Members are invited to indicate to the Chairman, items within this Committee's terms of reference they would like to see discussed at a future meeting.

Note: it is not considered appropriate for issues relating to individuals to be discussed under this provision.

10  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.

Cheryl Coppell
Chief Executive
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CULTURE AND REGENERATION
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Havering Town Hall, Romford
Tuesday 22 September 2009 (7:30 – 8:30pm)

Present:

Councillors Robert Benham (Chairman), Georgina Galpin, Linda Hawthorn, and Lesley Kelly

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lynden Thorpe and Ray Morgan

There were no declarations of interest

The Chairman announced the arrangements to be followed in the event of the building needing to be vacated as the result of an emergency

9. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 9 June 2009 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

10. CABINET RESPONSE TO REPORT OF REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL’S COMMITMENT TO THE THAMES CHASE COMMUNITY FOREST TOPIC GROUP

The Committee were informed that Cabinet had accepted the recommendations as set out in the Thames Chase Community Forest Topic Group report.

The Committee noted the response from Cabinet

11. HAVERING MUSEUM UPDATE

The Committee received an oral update from the Head of Culture and Leisure on the progress made with the Havering Museum.

The Committee was informed that the project was proceeding well, and the main contract had now completed. The exhibition fitters were now commencing and the Museum was on schedule to open in February 2010.

The Committee was informed that there had been Heritage Lottery Funding for the project, which was originally for £1 million, however the project may go over which would have to be underwritten by the Council, this could be by as much as £130,000 over 5 years. This would be underwritten with conditions. The Committee were concerned
that the Council would have to underwrite the overspend, and asked for clarification of the conditions linked to the underwriting.

The Committee was informed that recruitment of a Curator was now taking place, with applicants from all over the country. This would provide a professional officer at the Museum.

The Committee were provided with a summary of the process that had been carried out by the Museum Business Plan:

- Review of income and customer feedback
- Review of other income sources
- Opportunities and Threats Analysis i.e. volunteers to run parts
- Potential actions
- Fees and Charges (no evidence to made changes at the present time)

At the present time the charge will be £2.50 per adults, they have plans in place to review the fees in the future if necessary. The Committee asked for information on what is happening at other museums in the country.

The Committee discussed the information that had been circulated on the fees and footfall of other museums in the country. Out of 17 Museums, only 5 charged and there was a clear trend that there was a higher footfall for those that were free.

The Committee raised concerns about the fees of the Havering Museum, and that it would be mainly a local based exhibition. The Committee was informed that there was an additional room that could be used for specialist exhibitions.

The Head of Culture and Leisure informed the Committee that Romford had the advantage of having 25 million a year, however this also included the nightlife economy figures.

The Committee was concerned about the room hire charges between £20 and £100 depending on the organisation. The Committee asked for an update on the policy for commercial and community organisations

The Committee noted the update and asked for an update in 12 months time.

### 12. HAVERING HERITAGE BOOKLET UPDATE

The Committee was happy with the overall booklet, however there were a few inaccuracies and typographic errors. The Head of Culture and Leisure stated that they had received a lengthy letter of complaint from
Laurie Ford. They had consulted with the Historic Environment Forum on the booklet, however Mr Ford had not attended any of this meetings.

The Committee asked that clarification be sought on 22 The Chapel as to whether Samuel Hammond had been involved in the building, as it was thought to be built by James Noakes.

13. LIVING AMBITIONS TOPIC GROUP – DRAFT TERM OF REFERENCE

The Committee approved and noted the terms of reference.

14. COUNCIL CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

The Committee noted that the Harold Hill Ambitions Plan – Agreement of Proposals following Community Consultation was due for review and noted that this would be included on the next agenda.

15. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

The Committee were informed that there were no performance information available at the present time.

16. FUTURE AGENDAS

The Committee agreed that they would like the following items on the next agenda:

- Libraries Transformation Programme
- Biodiversity in Parks and Open Spaces
CULTURE & REGENERATION
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
10/11/09

Subject Heading: Biodiversity in Parks and Open Spaces

Report Author and contact details: Simon Parkinson

Policy context: Protect and Improve the Environment

SUMMARY

This report outlines how biodiversity in parks is managed. It covers the main areas of interest and the benefits of diverse landscapes in both urban and country parks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members to note report.
1. Introduction

1.1 Biodiversity may be defined as the variety of life on earth, and includes all species of plants and animals and the natural systems that support them.

1.2 Havering is an important Borough for Biodiversity in the London context. There is a substantial area of green belt (60km$^2$), three Sites of Special Scientific Interest six designated Local Nature Reserves, 82 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, and over one hundred parks and open spaces, including 2 Country Parks. Habitats contained within the Parks range from large areas of woodland, particularly in the north of the Borough through to important wetlands and watercourses including the Rivers Rom, Ravensbourne and Ingrebourne. These valuable habitats support many nationally protected and Biodiversity Action Plan species such as the great crested newt, adders and water voles. As such, conservation of Biodiversity is one of the core components of the management of all Havering’s parks and open spaces.

1.3 Conserving biodiversity includes restoring and enhancing species populations and habitats, as well as protecting them. Conservation of biodiversity is vital to the successful use and development of parks and open spaces in Havering, after all biodiversity is one of the contributing factors that makes a place so special to visit as well as delivering other key ecosystem services such as flood management, pollination and the provision of clean air and water for example. Through the management of its parks and open spaces, the Council therefore has a key role to play in conserving biodiversity.

1.4 Havering’s parks are managed by the Parks and Open Spaces department with input from other key partners. Some sites, for example the Local Nature Reserves, are worked on in partnership with the Environmental Strategy Group based in Regeneration and Strategic Planning; Hornchurch Country Park benefits from a unique partnership project with two dedicated Ingrebourne Valley Project staff from Essex Wildlife Trust. Technical help is provided by Streetcare Engineers and the Environment Agency whilst day to day management of sites such as Hornchurch and Havering Country Parks is undertaken by our dedicated ranger service. This is not to mention that many of our sites have involvement from local community volunteers especially where Friends Groups have become established.

2. Green flag

2.1 Over the last 3 years London Borough of Havering has been successful in achieving Green Flag status for 6 sites. These are Bedfords Park, Upminster Park, Lodge Farm Park, Hylands Park, Cottons Park and Harold Wood Park. One of the award criteria is the conservation of natural features, flora and fauna. With the exception of Bedfords Park, which already had a rich and diverse nature
conservation interest, new areas beneficial to wildlife have been created on these Green Flag sites in order to contribute towards the award. New wildflower meadows have been created providing additional species and structural diversity beneficial to a range of native fauna. ‘Butterfly Borders’ have been planted using a mix of colourful shrubs and herbaceous species attractive to butterflies, bees and other invertebrates. In some established trees bird and bat boxes have also been installed to help encourage local species to frequent the Parks.

2.2 New entrance signage and interpretation boards provide information on the particular park’s ecology

2.3 The principles from the Green Flag process are now being applied to other parks across the Borough. In recognition of the importance of grassland habitats in Havering, existing areas of long grassland and also areas previously cut regularly on sites such as Haynes Park, Cranham Brickfields, Harrow Lodge Park, Rise Park, Raphael Park and Bretons and Hornchurch Country Park are now being cut and cleared on an annual basis, dependent on species, either by hay cutting or using a recently purchased Forage Harvester. The principle being to allow the grassland to grow and set seed before cutting, with the arisings being removed to promote the growth of wildflowers. Hay cutting regimes are also well established at Hornchurch Country Park, Havering Country Park, Bedsfords Park and Dagnam Park which is having a beneficial effect on the native flora at these important sites.

2.4 All park Management Plans have a dedicated section on nature conservation. Potential improvements are identified in the SWOT analysis and then fed into the action plans.

3. Ingrebourne Valley Project

3.1 The Ingrebourne Marshes is the largest continuous stretch of freshwater reedbed in London and provides a habitat for a huge diversity of wildlife including the rare over wintering bird the bittern. The importance of the Marshes is recognised in its designation by Natural England as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

3.2 In 2008 the Ingrebourne Valley Project, a new initiative set up to take the development of the site further, was awarded a significant Heritage Grant of £483,000 by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). This was matched by funding from the Veolia ES Cleanaway Havering Riverside Trust, Essex Wildlife Trust and the Council.

3.3 The Ingrebourne Valley Project, which encompasses Hornchurch Country Park along with the Ingrebourne Marshes, Parklands Open Space, Abby Wood Open Space, Hacton and Sutton Parkways is a unique 3 year project aimed at improving local awareness and involvement with the Valley. The project, which is managed in partnership with Essex Wildlife Trust who employ a dedicated project manager and project officer will provide a number of improvements aimed at enhancing biodiversity, including tree planting, grassland management and lake restoration. There will also be improved public access to the site, new signage, benches, litter
bins and gates, all serving to greatly enhance the Ingrebourne Marshes and their place within the landscape of Havering. A diverse program of free heritage and wildlife themed events and activities to engage local residents in the site’s rich cultural and natural heritage is already well underway with the majority of events fully booked.

4. Local Nature Reserve Declaration

4.1 The Borough now has six designated Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) amounting to 321.5 Hectares, which are The Manor including Dagnam Park and Duck Wood, The Ingrebourne Valley which includes Hornchurch Country Park and Ingrebourne Marshes SSSI, The Chase at Rush Green, Cranham Marsh and Cranham Brickfields and most recently Bedfords Park. Local Nature Reserve management plans have been produced for each site.

4.2 Cranham Marsh is currently leased to the Essex Wildlife Trust for a nominal rent. They manage the site for access and nature conservation helping to maintain the sites diverse mixture of species rich grassland, sedge fen and ancient wet woodland. Cranham Brickfields is managed by the Parks and Open Spaces department and a new management regime for the site, in line with its status as a Local Nature Reserve, is currently being implemented. A successful funding bid for £50k to the Veolia ES Cleanaway Riverside Trust will help implement projects such as access improvements, events and habitat management to realise the full potential of these sites.

4.3 Rainham Marsh SSSI is the next site to be declared as a Local Nature Reserve under stretch targets set for the Local Area Agreement. The process will start with a report presented to the Local Area Committee. This will be followed by consultation with all stakeholders including local residents, friends groups, potential site users and Natural England. This site declaration will contribute effectively towards the delivery of Wildspace: London Riverside Conservation Park which aims to provide a 640Ha area of land dedicated to ecology and leisure including improvements to access, interpretation and nature conservation.

4.4 The Local Nature Reserve Declaration process continues to be led by the Environmental Strategy Group in partnership with Parks and Open Spaces. As part of the Local Area Agreement (1) the Council received funding to employ a Countryside Projects Officer to declare further LNR’s. Ultimately, by 2010, over 400 hectares of land in Havering will have been declared as Local Nature Reserves since 2004 which will amount to almost 2 Hectares for every 1,000 head of population.

4.5 The future management and involvement of the local community at these sites and existing LNR’s in the Borough will play a crucial role not only in the contribution to local, regional and national targets for biodiversity but also other statutory duties such as the NERC Act (see below), Access to Natural Green Space Standards – Naturals England’s criteria for quality green space provision, Access to Nature – Part of the Mayor’s Biodiversity Strategy for reducing the deficiency in access to biodiversity across London not to mention the health benefits associated with being
able to access green space and the role they play in natural processes such as flood attenuation.

5. Havering Local Biodiversity Action Plan

5.1 In 2003, led by the Havering Wildlife Partnership, the Havering Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) was adopted. The purpose of the Action Plan, which currently prioritises 6 habitats and 16 species specific to Havering, is to contribute towards targets to conserve biodiversity set at a Regional and National Level.

The overarching aims and objectives of the Action Plan is to:

- Promote awareness and knowledge of the species/habitat and in the Borough
- Protect, maintain and enhance current populations of the species/biodiversity of the habitat within Havering
- Increase the monitoring and knowledge of the species/habitat within Havering

5.2 As the BAP process has evolved it has become increasingly important to set achievable targets for nature conservation. Where Biodiversity Action Plan species and habitats occur within parks and open spaces in the Borough this will help to inform management to ensure a more targeted approach.

5.3 The Council continues to host the Havering Wildlife Partnership who meet quarterly. The Partnership is made up of dedicated local naturalists, members of Friends of Groups, representatives from the Essex Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Environment Agency, Natural England and London Biodiversity Partnership together with the Council’s Park and Open Spaces department and the Environmental Strategy Group. The focus of the partnership is essentially on biodiversity within Havering. The group are able to provide advice on the management of Havering’s parks and open spaces.

5.4 Biodiversity is promoted within parks through various methods. New entrance signage includes a section on providing information on the particular park’s ecology. Through advice and the Parks Management Plans, the Parks and Open Spaces department are able to offer advice to Friends Groups on the nature conservation interest in their parks and relevant management techniques. Attendance at the Havering Wildlife Partnership is an effective method of promoting the work carried out in parks and open spaces and has lead to the development of two new draft action plans including one for grasslands and one for parks.

5.5 In 2008 the Parks and Open Spaces department along with the Council’s Planning department and the Environmental Strategy Group subscribed to a Service Level Agreement provided by Greenspace Information for Greater London (GiGL). GiGL are a data service provider and this agreement provides the Council with a useful method of collating records on all aspects of biodiversity from
individual species records to changes in the area of particular habitats including those contained within the Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation.

6. National Indicator (NI) 197 Improved Local Biodiversity

6.1 This new national indicator, introduced in 2009, measures the Council’s performance on biodiversity by assessing the implementation of positive conservation management on Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (Local Sites). The indicator relates to the influence the Council has on the Local Sites system and the measures and procedures involved in ensuring effective conservation management is introduced to, and acted upon, by Local Site owners and managers.

6.2 In order for sites to “score” there has to be evidence that positive conservation management has been or is being undertaken in the last five years. To show that positive conservation management is being undertaken on a Local Site, there also has to be documented evidence of management that contributes to maintaining or enhancing the features of interest for which a site was originally selected and designated.

6.3 Havering has a total of 2,297 Hectares of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, just under half of which are under Council ownership. 20% of Sites within Havering scored positively for this indicator in 2009. In order to show improvement it will be essential to show how these sites are being positively managed for nature conservation. The assessment and implementation of this Indicator will obviously require close co-operation between the Environmental Strategy Group and the Parks and Open Spaces department along with the help of a Local Sites Partnership.

7. NERC Act (Biodiversity Duty)

7.1 The Council has a statutory responsibility under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) Act 2006 to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in exercising all of its functions.

7.2 Effective conservation of biodiversity requires its integration into all activities across the Council. This is a key theme of the England Biodiversity Strategy.

7.3 The Council plays a key role in any number of issues that impact upon biodiversity including the management of public open space and nature reserves. The management of these sites has important impacts on biodiversity, both indirectly providing habitats for wildlife, and in generating environmental impacts on other wildlife sites.

7.4 In order to demonstrate that the Council is fulfilling its duty to have regard to biodiversity, it should be able to show that it has identified and taken opportunities to integrate biodiversity considerations into all relevant service areas and functions, and ensured that biodiversity is protected and enhanced in line with current statutory obligations. This could take the form of raising awareness of staff,
managers and elected members with regard to biodiversity issues using available
guidance, integrating biodiversity into staff training, using in-house ecological
expertise or seeking advice from colleagues and external bodies, and, where
necessary, providing specific training. The Council should also be able to
demonstrate a commitment and contribution to key local biodiversity initiatives,
such as Local Biodiversity Action Plans, Local and/or Regional Records Centres
and Local Site systems and Demonstrate progress against biodiversity indicators
and targets.

8. Events

Events are a good forum to create interest and educate members of the public on
biodiversity. The ‘Wacky about Wildlife’ programme, run by the Parks and open
Spaces department, offers fun environmental education sessions in the Easter,
summer and autumn school holidays. ‘Playfest’ which is held during national play
week in August includes a nature zone. This includes interactive displays on nature
conservation and insect identification. Various events are taking place to promote
the Ingrebourne Valley Project which include bug hunts, nature trails, bird
watching, bat walks and craft skills. At Bedfords Park the Essex Wildlife Trust who
manage the visitors centre provide a comprehensive programme of activities within
the park.

Financial implications and risks:

The cost of the existing biodiversity management and maintenance activities are
met from existing budgets. There are no additional cost pressures arising from this
report.

Legal implications and risks:

There are no legal implications

Human Resources implications and risks:

There are no human resources implications

Equalities implications and risks:

There are no equalities implications

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Havering Biodiversity Action Plan