

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
TOWNS & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
1 July 2014 (7.30 - 10.05 pm)**

Present:

Councillors Lawrence Webb (Chairman), Linda Hawthorn (Vice-Chair), Michael Deon Burton, Steven Kelly, Frederick Thompson, Jason Frost, Robby Misir, Alex Donald and Jody Ganly

There was no declarations of interest.

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

1 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Committee noted its membership.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8 April 2014 was agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

3 AN INTRODUCTION TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Principal Committee Officer gave the Committee a presentation giving an insight into how Overview and Scrutiny worked in Havering. It was important that the Committee understood the difference between Executive decisions and those made by the Council. We were informed that Council functions were explicitly the responsibility of the full Council and/or its Committees or staff on their behalf. Whereas Executive functions, were the responsibility of the Executive, meaning the Cabinet or individual Cabinet Members, or staff on their behalf. The principal interest of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) was the Executive decision making function.

Overview and Scrutiny was the function by which Council decisions, or indeed any actions taken in connection with Council functions, could be reviewed and/or scrutinised. Overview and Scrutiny Committees were able to make reports and/or recommendations to each of full Council, Cabinet or any policy committee. These reports could be in connection with the discharge of any functions.

The Committee noted that the former local government minister, Nick Raynsford MP, once stated *“Scrutiny is a powerful tool to help identify weaknesses in existing policy and practice, as well as driving improvement”* In Havering there were seven overview and scrutiny committees, five dealt with various aspects of Council services and were aligned with the overall goals of the Council. They were:

- Children and Learning
- Environment
- Individuals
- Towns and Communities
- Value

The other two Committees – Crime & Disorder and Health were principally outward looking and scrutinised local crime and disorder-related issues and local health services respectively.

The Committee noted that only non-Cabinet members could sit on an overview and scrutiny committee, however there was nothing to prevent a Committee meeting with or questioning a relevant Cabinet member in order to aid aspects of scrutiny. Overview and Scrutiny meetings were open to the public and anyone, including Cabinet Members, could attend.

Each overview and scrutiny committee consisted of between six and nine members. Under the political breakdown rules, the political breakdown of the seats reflected, as far as was practicable, the make-up of the Council as a whole.

The Committee was informed that a major part of their work would be undertaking Topic Groups, either as part of an agreed work plan, or because a specific issue had arisen that needed investigation. The Committee itself would approve the terms of reference and the scope of its Topic Groups and could set parameters within which they would work. A recent change was that Council had agreed that Topic Groups could include – or indeed be wholly comprised of – members who were not actually members of the parent OSC. Therefore if a member not on a particular OSC had expertise or an interest in an area being investigated by a Topic Group, he or she could take part if the committee agreed to their inclusion as a member of the Topic Group.

The factors for successful scrutiny carried out by Topic Groups were outlined to the Committee. The more tightly and realistically framed that the recommendation was, the more likely they were to be adopted/implemented. Members were encouraged to look at various aspects of Council services, by meeting Council officers, holding discussions with the public and community groups and undertaking site visits both within Havering and other local authorities to gain an understanding of the situations in other Councils.

The Committee was informed of the call-in process and how this would be dealt with by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The officer explained that often a special meeting of the OSC would be called to deal with the matter.

The Councillor Call for Action (CCA) was a power that allowed any Member to bring a matter of concern to an OSC. The issue could not relate to planning, licensing, health and crime and disorder issues, as separate powers covered these areas. Members must have attempted to resolve the issue directly with the department concerned prior to bringing them to scrutiny in this way.

The Committee was informed that one change, enacted by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, was the requirement of each Council to nominate a Statutory Scrutiny Officer. This person was required to promote the role of Overview and scrutiny in the authority as well as support all Members and officers in their work and dealings with Overview and Scrutiny. In Havering the Statutory Scrutiny Officer was Andrew Beesley, Committee Administration Manager.

During a brief debate Members noted that delegated decision can also be "called in".

Members also discussed the nature of the scrutiny carried out and previous update of Cabinet decision.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

4 **INTRODUCTION TO SERVICE AREAS WITHIN THE COMMITTEE'S REMIT - PRESENTATIONS BY HEADS OF SERVICE**

The Committee received presentations on the services within the remit of Committee. These included all services covered by Culture and Leisure, Regulatory Services, Homes & Housing and Community Safety.

The Head of Services presented outlined their respective services objectives and how the services operated in order to meet these objectives.

The Head of Service, Culture & Leisure explained that the services main objectives were to transform lives through participation in, and enjoyment of culture".

The following seven areas were detailed to the Committee:

The Library Service was responsible for the management and development of 11 libraries, 10 physical branch libraries and the new 11th branch, virtual library. The libraries provided a lending and integrated online reference

services, online training, a full events programme, extensive outreach work in the community and opportunities to encourage reading for pleasure.

The service also comprised a Reader Development Team (adults and children), a Housebound Service, a Schools Library Service and a Local Studies and Family History service which were all supported by a joint stock manager (with Enfield Council). The Committee was informed that a programme of building refurbishments was well under way with nine buildings already completed.

The Parks and Open Spaces service was responsible for the management and improvement of approximately 100 parks and open spaces; the management and improvement of Havering's two Country Parks (Havering and Hornchurch); the management and improvement of 27 allotment sites.

The Committee noted that several capital projects were underway such as Raphael Park, Langtons Gardens, Broxhill, Central Park, Hornchurch Country Park Visitors Centre, Bedfords Park Walled Garden, Upminster Windmill restoration.

The Heritage Buildings and Landscapes service was responsible for the management, maintenance and promotion of Havering's historic buildings and landscapes, the provision of advice and support to other Council officers and community organisations. The service also undertakes the management of events relating to historic buildings and landscapes, partnership working with heritage and history groups (including the Upminster Windmill and Upminster Tithe Barn), support to the Historic Environment Forum and securing external funding including applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Arts Service was responsible for managing Fairkytes Arts Centre, managing the relationship with the Havering Theatre Trust (the Queens Theatre), managing a programme of community based seasonal programmes (including The Four Seasons and The Season for Summer programmes), co-ordinating various one-off festivals and events (e.g. the Langtons Concert, and the Hornchurch Arts and Heritage Festival), working in partnership with Havering Music School.

The Youth Services Facilitation Team work with young people across the borough through a range of targeted initiatives in order to support young people to be 'safe, social and successful'. Activities include running youth clubs, providing information & advice service, delivering street work, consulting with and developing the voice of young people, promoting positive images of young people, and working with a range of partners to deliver work and develop young people's 'personal assets'.

The Committee was informed that Havering Music School was the lead partner in the Havering Music Education Hub - a partnership of local and national organisations delivering music activities, projects and events.

Member noted that the Health and Sports Development service was responsible for providing a sports development programme at various

venues across the borough delivering a sports and physical activity programme in conjunction with Public Health, including the delivery of an Physical Activity Referral Scheme (PARS), MEND programme (Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do It) and Healthy Walks programme. The service was also responsible for organising and entering sports events including London Youth Games, working with sports clubs and Schools Sports.

The Corporate Policy and Community Manager detailed the following responsibilities of her service area to the Committee:

The Committee was informed that the Corporate Policy & Diversity team provided support to the new administration in developing the Council's priorities and strategic plans for the future. The team's responsibilities also included maintaining the corporate performance framework and developing the 'Corporate Brain' intelligence function.

The Committee noted that the Corporate Complaints, including Member Enquiries and Equality and Diversity was also the responsibility of the team. The Committee was informed that the Community Safety team was responsible for preventing crime through partnership working (Havering Community Safety Partnership) and ensuring the Council's statutory responsibilities are discharged under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and other legislation. The Community Safety team also provided an Annual Strategic Assessment and regular intelligence reporting. They also engaged in Multi-agency case management work relating to Domestic Violence and Anti-Social Behaviour. It was noted that this team reported to the Committee.

Other services within Corporate Policy and Community Manager Team included the Community Engagement and Energy Strategy Team. The Committee was informed that Community Engagement Team had responsibility managing the council's relationship with core funded organisations. This also involved maintaining key relationships and programmes of work with faith, community and other voluntary organisations.

The Committee noted that the team also had responsibility for the review of voluntary sector strategy and funding and ensuring the delivery of the 'Active Living' Over 50s volunteering and social inclusion programme.

The Head of Homes and Housing presented on her service area to the Committee.

Members were informed that Homes & Housing Services comprised of 256 permanent staff and an additional 40 agency staff. The service had a Housing Revenue Account budget of about £65million and a Housing General Fund (£44K).

The Committee noted that the service had the responsibility to manage all Council homes that consisted of:

- 9,938 social rented homes
- 2,260 leasehold properties
- Let 616 homes last year
- Spent £31m capital programme

Within the service, there was the Rent and Leasehold Service charge collection team that managed the following revenue:

- £45m rent income
- £4.8m tenant annual service charges
- £1.5m leasehold annual service charges
- Impact of Welfare Reform

The Committee noted that the service provided a Supporting Elderly residents team that catered for:

- 4,483 clients of Telecare
- 1,872 Adult Social Care clients
- Average response time 23 minutes
- 15 response staff + manager
- 6 Mobile support staff + manager
- New Befriending scheme starting

The Committee was informed that within Homes & Housing, there was a strategy to meet the Community Engagement targets for 2014- 2015 that included:

- Engage with 300 young people.
- To set up 5 Job Clubs, sign post residents to apprenticeships and NVQ training.
- To set up a befriending service and activity programme for sheltered housing
- To set up a social media network and SMART phone application.
- To set up a mystery shopping programme
- To obtain £90K in external funding for our resident projects.
- To consult with residents on environmental improvements and decent homes work.

The Head of Regulatory Services presented on his service area to the Committee.

Members were informed of the various teams that comprised the service. They included:

- Planning Control
- Projects & Compliance

The Committee was informed that the team had responsibility for considering major applications and undertaking Building Control and taking Enforcement action when necessary.

- Strategic Planning & Transportation Policy

The Committee also noted that the Public Protection that comprised of the following units reported to Regulatory Services.

- Environmental Health
- Trading Standards
- Licensing

The other teams with the service included the following:

- Emergency Planning & Business Continuity
- Bereavement Services & Registrars

The Committee was informed that the operational framework of the Regulatory Services was to emphasis:

- Most of the work carried out were statutory based duties and powers
- Most of the work had strong legal bases to support activities of the respective teams
- The teams provided an advisory, operational and enforcement functions
- The teams work were mostly demand led
- The work of the teams had performance regimes

The Head of Regulatory Services detailed the various people who sought required the services of the various team within his area:

- Public
- Business
- Members

- Organisations and agencies
- Supporting LBH Customer channel shift
- Operating principles

Members noted from the presentation that officers within the various teams in Regulatory Services carry out their role in a professional manner, which also makes them approachable to any enquiries. Most importantly, teams within the service were outcome oriented rather than process.

The Committee **NOTED** the following presentations.

5 **COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman suggested that since there had been a number of presentations on the remit of the Committee that Members think about suggested topics for the work programme and inform the Committee Officer in due course.

The Committee agreed to set up the following two Topic groups:

1. Social Inclusion in relation to future development to meet the needs of the diverse community
The Group comprised Councillors Alex Donald, Steven Kelly and Linda Hawthorn.
2. Landlord Accreditation Scheme
The Group was to be led by Councillor Jason Frost with Councillors Jody Ganly and Linda Hawthorn as members.

Chairman