

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD
Havering Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
7 October 2015 (7.00 - 9.15 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	John Crowder, Steven Kelly, Dilip Patel, Viddy Persaud, Carol Smith and Linda Trew
Residents' Group	June Alexander, Nic Dodin and Barbara Matthews
East Havering Residents' Group'	+Alex Donald and Gillian Ford (Chairman)
UKIP Group	Ian de Wulverton and Lawrence Webb (Vice-Chair)
Independent Residents' Group	David Durant and Graham Williamson

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillors Robby Misir and Linda Hawthorn.

All decisions were taken with no votes against.

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

25 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2015 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Chairman advised that she had been in discussions with the Chief Executive regarding the "Call-In" procedure and exemption of items.

The rule stemmed from the 2012 executive arrangements regulations which provided:

11. Cases of special urgency

(1) Where the date by which a key decision must be made, made compliance with regulation 10 impracticable, the decision may only be made where the decision maker had obtained agreement from—

(a) The Chairman of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee; or

(b) If there was no such person, or if the Chairman of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee was unable to act, the Chairman of the relevant local authority; or

(c) Where there was no Chairman of either the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee or of the relevant local authority, the Vice-Chairman of the relevant local authority, that the making of the decision was urgent and could not reasonably be deferred."

Under this rule the Chairman could deal with the business and then feedback to the Board at a later date.

There had recently been two examples of when this rule had been applied the first being the Local Implementation Plan for Crownfield Nursery which had been dealt with by the Vice-Chairman and the Corporate Complaints Review which the Chairman had been involved with.

In response to a question regarding the previous exempted call-in of the executive decision regarding the proposed Romford leisure Centre, the Chairman advised that the matter had been passed to the Chairman of the Towns and Communities Sub-Committee to consider whether a review of the decision was required.

27 SICKNESS ABSENCE UPDATE

The Chairman advised that she and Councillor Hawthorn had recently met with representatives of Human Resources to receive an update on sickness absence.

An officer present at the meeting gave Members a further update on the current situation.

There had recently been a downward trend in the amount of sickness absence due to Human Resources working closely with managers, timely reviews and Occupational health interventions.

Members noted that the two main areas of sicknesses were those of a mental health nature or muscular skeletal.

Members were also advised that Havering was becoming more Dementia friendly. Seventy percent of Havering's employees lived within the borough

and Havering had over 1800 people on the dementia register. Members noted that similar support was also available for other carers.

Recently there had been 14 dismissals, 8 resignations and 1 ill health retirement due to sickness absence. There were also 6 third stage reviews due to take place in the next quarter.

Members noted that the pattern of sickness absence had changed from long term absence to more occurrences of short term absences. Trigger levels remained the same (3 instances in six months/4 instances in twelve months) before action was taken.

Members were advised that HR were now working with internal services such as the Public Health Team as these services were in-house and free.

Managers were now a lot more focussed on following procedures and managers were now assessed on how they followed the measures and if they failed to follow the correct procedure it would be highlighted at their next performance review.

In response to a question regarding timeframes and dismissals, officers advised that these were part of the national terms and conditions as set out in the Green Book.

Members were also advised that in some instances occupational health could overrule a GP if they felt the patient had been misadvised or a sickness certificate issued wrongly.

Return to work interviews were carried out, following periods of sickness absence, in every case.

Members asked that they were provided with departmental levels of sickness absence in the form of exact numbers and not percentages with clear narratives and the number of return to work interviews that had been carried out.

Officers agreed to provide this information to Members at the earliest opportunity.

28 VOLUNTARY SECTOR STRATEGY REVIEW

The report before Members outlined the progress that had been made in respect of the Voluntary Sector Strategy Action Plan since it had been approved by Cabinet in June 2015.

Members were reminded that in October 2014, the Council published a draft Voluntary Sector Strategy for consultation. An independent consultant was appointed to lead the consultation process which comprised workshops, focus groups, one to one meetings and an opportunity to submit comments

directly either to the Council's consultant or to the Council itself. Over 116 people attended the workshops from a wide range of groups and the feedback was quite diverse in nature, reflecting the different levels of experience, needs and views in the sector.

Despite this diversity, however, there were a number of ideas for action that were supported by a wide range of groups. Organisations saw the potential for real improvements in relationships between the Council and the sector and, to that end, wished to see a small number of realistic, clear and achievable actions on the part of the Council to achieve this. Following the review, the Council, taking into account the feedback received, revised the strategy and developed an action plan to address a number of the issues raised by the voluntary and community sector.

In June, the Council hosted a Crowdfunding Workshop, showing voluntary organisations in the borough a new way of raising money. Crowdfunding involved funding a project or venture by raising contributions from a large number of people, via the internet. For many organisations it offered a new way to finance their activities, while giving ordinary people a new way to donate to good causes. Those organisations attending learnt how to run a successful fundraising campaign including how to deliver a successful pitch, how to communicate this and build a network of supporters. Nineteen people attended the event and five people received a 1-1 session with the facilitator.

Voluntary sector organisations had been engaged in discussions and preparations for the introduction of the Care Act. Engagement had been achieved through attendance at Care Act provider forums; attendance at a workshop for bidders that were interested in the advice and information tender (which would establish 3 Community Hubs) and through engagement in the development of the Market Position Statement which was aimed at existing and potential providers of Adult Social Care and Support.

Family Mosaic secured the advice and information contract and currently operated from Holgate House, Romford whilst establishing three community hubs across the borough.

Members noted that over forty volunteers had been engaged in Community clean-ups around the borough and a calendar of clean-ups had been developed which was appended to the report for Member's perusal.

During the debate members commented that a central office that organisations could all work from would be a more suitable idea as often organisations were "choked" by initial start-up costs.

Members also recommended that the contract include seedbed, hot desk opportunities for start-up and small groups.

Members noted that HAVCO had now disbanded but some of their former staff had expressed an interest in providing a social enterprise service. The

Council had been approached regarding finding suitable premises for the service.

Members enquired as to whether the service would need to provide public liability insurance. Officers advised that this was often a condition of receiving grant funding.

Officers were considering whether a Community Voluntary Sector Service or direct funding would be more suitable for the borough.

Members noted that the Council would continue to monitor delivery of the action plan through its Voluntary Sector Steering Group and through the Community Engagement Team. Key actions for the Council were being built into service plans delivery of which would be monitored corporately.

Members questioned the future provision of the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) checks that were previously carried out by HAVCO. Members agreed that the DBS checks should be brought back in-house and carried out by the Council.

In reply to a question regarding the make-up of the Steering group officers confirmed that the group would comprise of the Group Director of Communities and Resources, Head of Business & Performance, a member of the Community Engagement Team and representatives from Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and Learning & Achievement.

Members felt that there was already in-house staff employed by the Council that could administer the service with the help of some administration staff.

The report made reference to the fact that Havering needed new models and organisations to emerge that were to fill gaps in the market and in response to a question in how the gaps would be filled officers suggested through the Market Position Statement for Adult Services and for children through the Commissioning Strategy. It was suggested that the Chairmen of the relevant Sub-Committees be made aware of these pieces of work.

The Board **reviewed** the report and **noted** its content, it was also **agreed** that a further update report be presented to the Board in six months time.

29 **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT Q1 2015/16**

The report before Members set out the Quarter 1 Performance Report 2015/16 that had previously been considered by Cabinet.

Also appended to the report was the Quarter 1 2015/16 Demand Pressure Dashboard which illustrated the growing demands on Council services and the context that the performance levels set out in the report had been achieved within.

As had been mentioned previously each Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee would now receive a report covering performance areas that were bespoke to the Sub-Committee's terms of reference.

It had not been possible to take the latest report to all of the Sub-Committee meetings this year due to the timetabling of meetings however, future timetabling would allow for the Sub-Committees to consider the very latest reports.

Members noted that the tolerances for RAG ratings had been changed whereas each rating had previously had a tolerance of ten percent each rating would now have an individual tolerance.

Members requested that cross hatching be used in future reports as at present the reports showed various confusing shades of grey when printed in black and white.

In reply to a question as to why public satisfaction was on the increase officers advised as more information was made available to the public and people became aware of funding restrictions etc then residents had more realistic expectations and believed that the Council was achieving its long term goals and objectives.

Members advised that the complaints procedure, in particular the online complaints portal, was not dealing with complaints in a timely way leading to frustration from complainants.

Several Members felt that Councillor's complaints needed to be dealt with in a quicker timescale as constituents were often waiting on replies and sometimes officers were re-directing Councillor's complaints to the portal when they should be dealing with them direct and providing a quicker resolution to the problem. Councillor complaints were often complex issues that were not suitable for the complaints portal.

Members **reviewed** the performance set out in Appendix 1 and **noted** the content of the Demand Pressures Dashboard in Appendix 2.

30 **ANNUAL OMBUDSMAN LETTER**

The Board **considered** the contents of the LGO's Annual Letter along with its accompanying statistics and **agreed** no further action was necessary.

**31 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEES/TOPIC GROUPS
UPDATES**

Environment Sub-Committee

The Chairman advised that the Topic Group looking at waste minimisation had met and was currently gathering information for another meeting in the near future.

Health Sub-Committee

The Chairman advised that the Topic Group looking at appointment cancellations had now concluded and a report was being prepared to update the Sub-Committee at its next meeting in January 2016.

Children & Learning Sub-Committee

The Chairman advised that a report had been prepared for Governance that would allow the Cabinet Member for Children & Learning to be a member of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Meetings had taken place between the representatives of the Sub-Committee and Head Teachers to discuss the Pupil Premium and how it was being used in schools.

Towns & Communities Sub-Committee

The Chairman confirmed that the Private Rented Sector (PRS) Landlords Licensing Topic Group investigative work was now completed with the result that there was sufficient evidence and a rationale to support a recommendation to the Towns & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee to agree, subject to consultation, the initial introduction of a Selective Licencing Scheme in the wards of Brooklands, Gooshays and Heaton. This would be followed by a Selective Licencing Scheme for other identified wards or the remainder of the borough, subject to consultation and the necessary Secretary of State Approval.

The Chairman also confirmed that two new Topic Groups were looking at Anti-Social behaviour and one that would scrutinise and better understand the process involved in Green Belt land designation within the local planning system.

Individuals Sub-Committee

The Chairman advised that both the Dementia and Diagnosis and Learning Disabilities and Support Topic Group reports were due to be considered by Cabinet at its next meeting.

A new Topic Group looking at Mental Health in the borough was currently being set up.

Crime & Disorder Sub-Committee

The Chairman advised that an evening site visit to Romford and Hornchurch town centres had taken place on a Friday evening in September to observe how the Police and their partners were tackling the problems of the night-time economy.

A Topic Group had been established to look at the way the criminal justice system dealt with offenders with mental health issues.

Debt Recovery Topic Group

Members advised that a further meeting had taken place with the Head of Exchequer & Transactional Services, Council Tax Manager and the Council's Debt Management Project Manager. The meeting had given members a further insight into the collection of outstanding Council Tax debts and what the constraints were that prevented higher collection rates. The Debt Management Project Manager was currently preparing a report that looked at the Council's debt management as a whole and a copy of the final report was to be made available to the Topic group members for their consideration once completed. The Topic Group hoped to move on shortly to scrutinising NNDR.

Chairman