

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD
Havering Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
26 April 2016 (6.30 - 7.00 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

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

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Graham Williamson.

All decisions were taken with no votes against.

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

43 INTERIM REPORT OF THE DEBT RECOVERY TOPIC GROUP

The report before Members detailed the interim findings of the Debt Recovery Topic Group.

The topic group representative present advised that a sum of £19.8 million of Council Tax arrears remained uncollected.

During scrutiny of the collection process topic group members had felt that once the pre-set target for collection had been met then the pressure slowed down on further collection and this had led to the accumulation of the arrears.

Members were advised that the correspondence sent to debtors was often lengthy and only suggested that legal action might be taken when chasing the debt rather than promising to take legal action against non-payers.

At the current time there were over 8.300 debtors who owed outstanding Council Tax.

The topic group report recommended the creation of a task force to specifically target debtors and chase outstanding debts.

During a brief debate Members discussed the issue of encouraging more residents to sign up to direct debit payments, poor IT systems throughout the authority and how the Council would ensure that vulnerable residents were treated fairly.

Members also agreed that the published collection rate for Council Tax should be 100% and not a lower target.

The Board **noted** the report and **agreed** to refer the recommendation set out in section 4 of the report of the topic group to Cabinet.

44 **OTHER BUSINESS**

Following concerns raised by another Councillor it was **agreed** that the Board would set up a topic group or review of the Council's procurement of contracts in the new municipal year.

Chairman