

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD
Havering Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
12 September 2017 (7.00 - 9.30 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	Robby Misir, Dilip Patel and Viddy Persaud (Vice-Chair)
Residents' Group	Barbara Matthews, Ray Morgon and Barry Mugglestone
East Havering Residents' Group'	Gillian Ford (Chairman) and Darren Wise
UKIP Group	Ian de Wulverton and Lawrence Webb
Independent Residents' Group	Graham Williamson
Labour Group	Keith Darvill

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillors John Crowder, Steven Kelly, Linda Trew and Michael White.

All decisions were taken with no votes against.

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

26 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 3 May and 24 May 2017 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

27 VOLUNTARY SECTOR STRATEGY REFRESH

The report before Members detailed progress in implementing the Voluntary Sector Strategy 2015-18.

The report set out updates to the six key themes which were as follows:

Strengthening joint working arrangements between the Council and the sector

The Havering Compact was going from strength to strength and was now eighteen months old following its relaunch in November 2015. The Compact operated through an independently chaired managing steering group.

In October 2016, a pilot “health check” was sent out by the Council to 45 voluntary and community sector organisations working in Havering, in order to ascertain how best the Council could help and support the sector. Based on the results of this survey, several initiatives had been introduced.

As the Council had created links and built relationships with more voluntary and community groups operating in the borough, this year’s health check had been extended to around 150 local voluntary and community sector organisations and results were being evaluated at the current time.

Improving communications and access to information

The Compact e-bulletin continued to promote external funding opportunities, training and support services and good news stories of joint working / funding bids to share across the sector. Subscriptions currently sat at 1,804.

The Active Living e-bulletin also continued to be circulated monthly and was aimed at the 50+ audience in Havering. The purpose of the bulletin was to promote activities, events and opportunities to combat social isolation, encourage physical and mental health and wellbeing, and increase volunteering amongst older residents. The readership figure was just under six thousand

Between January and May 2017, the Voluntary and Community section of the Council’s website received 4,772 visitors, 3,258 of whom were unique visitors. The most popular section of the VCS website was the volunteering section, with 1,800 visitors in 5 months.

Increasing volunteering

The Havering Volunteer Strategy 2016-2021 had been agreed by the Cabinet in December 2016. The Strategy set out five target outcomes and five objectives.

The 2016/17 financial year was the first full year of operation for the Havering Volunteer Centre (HVC), having (with the support of the Council) become the first Volunteer centre to open in London for six years.

The report included a summary of volunteer hours submitted to the HVC by various public, voluntary and community organisations across the borough.

Officers advised that they would be carrying out a community benefit assessment to assess the value of volunteers to the Council.

In response to a question relating to the recruitment of younger volunteers, officers replied that there were currently strong levels of support from the elderly and uniformed groups however the Council needed to be more active in promoting the wide range of opportunities to other groups possibly including visits to schools.

Commissioning processes and market positioning

During the last year, the Council's Voluntary Sector Steering Group had agreed a standard approach to grant monitoring to be used by all services grant aiding voluntary and community sector organisations with £5,000 or more. This was designed to improve the consistency and robustness of monitoring, whilst not being disproportionately onerous for voluntary sector organisations.

Monitoring procedures in respect of the Council's largest funding agreements with the voluntary sector have been strengthened. Quarterly meetings now take place with all grant funded organisations and performance is evaluated against Key Performance Indicators and reported to both the Voluntary Sector Steering Group and the Lead Member.

Access to learning and development opportunities

Procurement training for voluntary and community sector organisations took place throughout the last financial year. In total, approximately 30 voluntary and community sector organisations were given advice by the Council's procurement and commissioning units. The training was evaluated by participants, for the most part, to be excellent.

The strategy and action plan had been updated for 2017/18 to reflect progress made to date; the Council's new corporate vision and Corporate Plan, and its plans and priorities for the future. The refreshed strategy and action plan were attached as Appendix 1 and the Equality Impact Assessment as Appendix 2 to the report.

Members **Noted** the progress made to date and endorsed the proposed updates to the Voluntary Sector Strategy 2015-18.

28 QUARTER 1 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD PERFORMANCE REPORT 2017/18

The report before Members set out Quarter 1 performance reporting as requested by the Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committees.

For 2017/18, the Board had previously decided to scrutinise a selection of more operational performance indicators, determined by the six overview and scrutiny Sub-Committees. To this end, each of the Sub-Committees were tasked by the Overview and Scrutiny Board (at its meeting in May) with identifying two to three performance indicators they wished to track

over the course of the year. The report provided an overview of how the Council was performing in relation to each of the indicators selected by the six Sub-Committees, with greater detail being provided within each of the Sub-Committee reports.

Members noted that Children and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee had felt unable to identify the three highest priority performance indicators currently within its remit, feeling that they are all of equal importance. The Sub-Committee had therefore asked that the matter be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Board for decision.

During the debate members agreed that the following three indicators continue to be monitored by the Sub-Committee:

Total number of in-house foster carers.

Percentage of looked after children placed in the Council's foster care.

Percentage of young people leaving care who are in education, employment or training at ages 18-21.

During the debate members questioned why the number of complaints relating to housing repairs completed within target had fallen significantly in quarter 1

Officers advised that the team that dealt with the complaints had been down 1 post (25%) during most of quarter 1 also during the same period the Grenfell Tower fire had taken place and the same team that dealt with complaints also dealt with freedom of information (FOI) requests, Member enquiries and MP enquiries and what had taken place at Grenfell Tower had generated a significant increase to their workload.

Members noted that officers were also looking at improving efficiencies around the repairs service. Part of these efficiencies would be complaints officers working more closely with contractor's complaints officers.

Members commented that there needed a clearer distinction as to what was considered a service request and what was considered a complaint. It was agreed that a more in-depth breakdown of complaints should be presented to the Towns & Communities Sub-Committee.

Several members commented that Member's enquiries were not being dealt with within the agreed timescale and that resident's service requests and complaints, if handled outside the official complaints procedure, were not monitored or dealt with in a timely manner.

Members also commented that they had concerns that when officers left the employment of the Council issues were not being passed onto other officers to deal with and resolve, which lead to residents then, contacting their ward Councillors for assistance.

Members also commented about the significant drop in police response times and questioned whether the decrease was linked to the new tri-borough arrangement.

Officers advised that all calls for the three boroughs had been put through using one channel but it had now been decided to revert back to the original three channels that would serve individual boroughs.

Officers also advised that a number of officers had been abstracted out of the boroughs to assist in dealing with investigations following the terrorist events that had taken place in London. The abstractions had led to a backlog of work and officers were coming onto shifts and having to deal with the work of the previous shift. A dedicated team had now been put in place to clear the backlogs.

Members also sought clarification as to whether the Council's emergency response team telephone operators had been outsourced to another part of the country. There had been incidents of members and residents phoning the emergency number and the operatives having little or no knowledge of the area of Havering. Officers undertook to investigate and report back.

The Board **Reviewed** the performance set out in Appendix 1 and the corrective action that was being taken, and **Determined** which of the performance indicators currently tracked by the Children and Learning Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee it wished the Sub-Committee to continue monitoring going forward.

29 **PARTNERSHIPS WITH BUSINESS UPDATE**

The report before Members provided an update on the recent and planned activity of the Council's approach to developing partnerships with business, which was led by the new Development Service.

Members noted that there would be a refresh of the Economic Development Strategy to achieve clarity as to where the Council's focus should be on economic development.

Business development

Business development fell under the new Development Directorate. There was a small team focused to deliver a number of activities that aimed to encourage investment, private sector job growth, enterprise and enhance the borough's competitiveness. The majority of project activity supported delivery of the Opportunities theme of the Havering Vision and 2017/18 Corporate Plan.

Support to small businesses

The borough currently had just over 9,000 businesses, of which, 92% were micro-sized businesses with up to 9 employees.

In terms of economic performance, the direction of travel for Havering was strong. In May 2017, Havering was rated top of the London boroughs for its business survival rate and also came top specifically for having the highest survival rate for technology businesses.

In terms of business partnerships and engagement, the Council's Business Voice Board of 22 local businesses met quarterly and was chaired by one of the Council's largest employers, Neopost. The aim of the Board was to enable the Council to work in partnership with the businesses to help shape support provided and create the conditions that would generate economic and job growth.

Members noted that the Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment, Regulatory Services and Community Safety sat on the Chamber of Commerce Executive which met on a monthly basis.

Significant investment was also taking place to facilitate and enable the development of business-led partnerships across the Council's seven town centres. The Council was working closely with the Romford Town Management Partnership (RTMP) to develop a Romford BID (Business Improvement District) proposal and deliver a ballot campaign.

A Hornchurch Town Team had been established and was currently holding workshops to develop its own town brand and marketing campaign to encourage a higher footfall in the town, as well as digital connectivity support, to help businesses to market themselves and trade online.

Consumer and business consultation exercises had recently been completed in Elm Park, Upminster, Harold Hill and the Council was awaiting the research results in order to determine specific needs in each area. Collier Row and Rainham consultation exercises had both commenced and will continue until October.

The Council received recognition for its wide range of support to develop the micro and small business community in March 2017 by being Highly Commended for the award of Best All Round Small Business Friendly Borough at the Local London Small Business Friendly Awards.

Links with business rates

There were approximately 6,000 properties in Havering that were liable for National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) and the underlying value of these properties were normally re-assessed every 5 years.

The 2017 Business Rates revaluation came into effect on 1 April and the majority of Havering businesses had experienced an increase.

In the March 2017 Budget, the Chancellor announced £300m to support those business most adversely affected by the recent revaluation of commercial properties. Havering would receive total funding of £1.69m over a 4 year period.

Attracting large businesses

There were currently only 20 businesses with more than 250 employees across Havering. This equated to 0.2% of the Havering business profile and was slightly lower than the London figure of 0.4%.

As a result, an increased focus was now being taken to attract large businesses to relocate to the borough and a new Corporate Performance Indicator had been introduced for 2017/18 to reflect this.

The Development Service Plan outlined a number of actions, including developing a clear and ambitious Inward Investment offer for Havering, with a delivery plan for attracting enquiries and conversion.

Officers advised that the Council continued to present to commercial property agents and the Council was keen to find out from the agents what it needed to do to attract larger businesses.

Market management and support with diversification

In terms of operational performance, since May 2017, there had been a 3.5% increase in licenced traders (from 70 to 75), 21 additional casual traders (totalling 48 new casual traders this year to date) and 10 new casual catering traders, which had improved the food offer and provided a more varied range. The aim was to continue this upward trend, culminating in a market which felt vibrant and busy, with an improved choice of quality products.

In terms of diversification, although the physical transformation project, the Market House, became cost prohibitive, it was stressed that the principle activities of the Romford Market Transformation Programme, as set out in the November 2015 Cabinet Report, remained and alternative proposals were being developed.

In August 2017, a proposal was submitted to Historic England to designate Romford as a Heritage Action Zone. If successful, it would enable increased investment, particularly in the public realm and build the capacity of local people and visitors to understand and engage with local heritage.

During the debate Members commented on several issues including:

Concerns regarding the closure of banks and post offices in town centres and the effect it had on businesses left in the area.

Members also had concerns about Romford town centre and the fact that there were two large retail units vacant within the town centre.

In response officers advised that most town centres were struggling due to the impact of internet shopping and Romford town centre was actually quite vibrant compared to some areas.

Concerns were raised about the impact the proposed Lidl store in Hornchurch would have on existing smaller businesses in the town centre. Officers agreed to forward Members concerns to the Town Centre Manager.

Members noted that Councillors Frost and Patel met on a monthly basis with small businesses/shopkeepers in the Collier Row area.

There was general agreement that wider consultation of all Members take place regarding any development of town centres as all Members had constituents that shopped in various parts of the borough.

Members reviewed the report and **noted** the progress.

30 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE/TOPIC GROUP UPDATES

The report before Members invited Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee Chairmen to verbally update Board members on the current work of their Sub-Committees and associated topic groups.

Crime & Disorder Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The topic groups were continuing to look at mental health issues relating to prisoners being released from prison and unlawful traveller incursions.

The Board requested that the Sub-Committee look at the Community Safety Plan. The Chairman undertook to arrange for the Sub-Committee to scrutinise the Community Safety Plan.

Towns & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The Chairman advised that the discontinued project for the Market House in the Market Place had cost the Council £228,000 in consultancy and associated fees. Another project was planned for the market and the Sub-Committee had asked for a detailed business plan detailing costs and what benefits financially it would bring to the market. The Sub-Committee also

had concerns that Romford had an above average number of vacant shops. The topic group looking at housing repairs was due to begin in October. The topic group would focus on the disparity between what the Council was being charged for works and what repairs were being received.

Health Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The Vice-Chairman advised that the Sub-Committee had approved the joint topic group report on delayed referrals to treatment. This had proven to be a good example of joint working with Healthwatch Havering. Went through responses received to report this week and discussed with chief operating officer, BHRUT.

Members had received Healthwatch reports on Queen's Hospital in-patient meals and NELFT street triage service.

The Sub-Committee had received an update on the East London Health and Care Partnership covering services across the whole of North and East London.

Members had also scrutinised with the Director of Public Health the public health budget and how this was spent.

Following the Last meeting of the Board, Members had Selected performance indicators for scrutiny covering childhood obesity, public satisfaction with primary care and delayed transfers of care.

Sub-Committee Members (Cllrs White, Patel and Dodin) had attended the first JHOSC meeting of municipal year. This had covered safety of BHRUT services and plans by NELFT to improve their CQC rating.

Children & Learning Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The Chairman advised that the Sub-Committee had received the annual report of Healthwatch Havering.

Members had received a presentation on child protection looking at vulnerable victim and serious crime.

The Sub-Committee had also been given an update on the School Expansion Plan. The plan detailed that 3,500 places were being created across 21 primary schools.

Members had also been discussing trading services, due to academisation school improvements were falling due to cuts in funding cuts from local authorities.

Environment Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The Chairman advised that the Sub-Committee had received a presentation on parks and open spaces.

Members had also received a presentation on Food and Feed Service and Plan 2017/18.

Chairman