

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
8 March 2022 (7.30 - 8.23 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group Robert Benham, Damian White (Vice-Chair),
Viddy Persaud, Ciaran White (Chairman),
John Crowder and Christine Smith

Residents' Group Reg Whitney

**Upminster & Cranham
Residents' Group**

**Independent Residents
Group**

Labour Group

**North Havering
Residents Group** Martin Goode

All decisions were taken with no votes against.

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

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE & SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillors Joshua Chapman (John Crowder substituting) Roger Ramsey (Christine Smith substituting) Ray Morgon (Reg Whitney substituting) Barry Mugglestone, Linda Hawthorn and David Durant.

2 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Agenda Item 4. APPOINTMENTS TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS 2022/23.
Councillor Damian White, Personal, Formerly a director of Hornchurch Housing Trust.

3 APPOINTMENTS TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS 2022/23

A report asked the Committee to note the new Constitution of the Hornchurch Housing Trust and to agree the appointment of one Trustee to the Trust until February 2026.

It was unanimously **AGREED** that:

The new Constitution of the Hornchurch Housing Trust be noted and that Councillor John Mylod be appointed as a Trustee of the Hornchurch Housing Trust until February 2026.

4 **MEMBER INDUCTION PROGRAMME 2022**

A report gave details of the proposed Member Induction Programme following the May 2022 local elections. This included an additional training offer compared to the 2018 programme.

The Committee made a number of suggestions for additional Member training including on community safety (public protection, licensing, Houses of Multiple Occupation) and more in-depth, workshop style training on finance issues. It was also suggested that Member training should be delivered over a longer period of time and that the Member Development Group should be re-established with representatives from each political group.

Members also felt it was important to maximise the support available from the Local Government Association. Some Members felt a list of contact details for officers would be useful but it was pointed out that issues such as pothole repairs or missed refuse collection should be reported via the Council website or the Members' portal. This would empower Members to resolve more issues themselves. The CRM system would provide this but it was accepted that the system needed to be more user friendly.

It was suggested that weekly training or Member Briefing sessions should be restarted on Tuesdays following the election. Members could be asked to nominate areas to be covered in the briefings. A separate training programme would be required for Cabinet Members, possibly lasting 2-4 weeks following the election. The sessions could be used to give training to Members on how issues such as missed refuse collections etc could be reported on-line.

Current Members had been asked for their views of the existing Member training and it was agreed that it was important that Group Leaders took responsibility for encouraging their Members to attend training. It was clarified that some training was compulsory for e.g. licensing, pensions and planning committees.

It was suggested that a handbook be given to all candidates, detailing the training commitment required. The political parties also offered training that could be accessed by Members. Members were concerned about wellbeing and mental health issues of Councillors and felt that information on this should be included in the Member Handbook. The Leader suggested that

key dates e.g. Remembrance Day and Holocaust Memorial Day should also be listed in the handbook.

It was also suggested that perhaps the limit above which gifts and hospitality needed to be reported should be raised from £25 to £100. Members expressed some confusion about the position with Councillor parking and the Chief Executive would clarify this and arrange for details to be put in the handbook.

It was noted that money saved on printing agendas, the Member courier run etc could increase the budget for Member training. A paper on this could be brought to a future meeting of Governance Committee. Some Members did raise concerns about the stopping of hard copies and felt it was important to get the technology right. It was confirmed that an electronic copy of the Member Handbook would be sent to all Members.

It was **AGREED** that the Member Development Group be restarted and that the comments made by the Committee as outlined above be considered. The report and programme of training sessions was otherwise noted.

Chairman