

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD
Havering Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
30 March 2023 (7.30 - 9.57 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	Timothy Ryan, Christine Smith and David Taylor
Havering Residents' Group	Laurance Garrard, Gerry O'Sullivan (Chairman) and Bryan Vincent
Labour Group	Mandy Anderson and Katharine Tumilty
East 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.

Note: Action points shown in bold below.

35 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillors Philip Ruck, Natasha Summers and Damian White.

36 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

37 MINUTES

The position regarding the referral of recommendations and comments by the Board to Cabinet would be clarified by officers. A request for a list of actions to be included in subsequent minutes was noted.

The minutes were otherwise agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

38 **PARKING - PENALTY CHARGE NOTICES**

The parking manager explained that there were three types of parking penalties issued – those fixed to windscreens, issued by post and bus lane or moving traffic violations which were also issued by post.

The recovery process allowed for a discount if fines were paid within 14 days or full payment was required if paid within 15-28 days. Challenges to Penalty Charge Notices could be informal, formal or by representation. Informal challenges could be by post or on-line with the appeal decision binding on both sides. The statutory timeframe for responding to formal representations was 56 days. In total in 2021/22, of around 120k penalties issued, approximately 7,900 were cancelled.

Future developments could include moving Havering into a higher Band A level for parking charges. Members raised that many pay and display machines were not working and that many older people may not be able to use a mobile phone or the parking app. It was also pointed out that the parking policy on the Council's website did not mention the RingGo app. In response, officers confirmed that, if no parking machines were working, free parking would be allowed although a maximum stay period would still apply.

Whilst some old parking machines would be replaced, any App-only parking spaces would also have Paypoint facilities nearby. It was not currently the policy in Havering that people had to use the app and penalties would be cancelled if there were no working machines available in area. The use of the app would be addressed during training for parking officers. Havering was within the London average for parking tickets issued **and officers could supply further details of this.**

A rationalisation of pay and display machines was being carried out but only underused machines would be removed and local Paypoint facilities would be available as an alternative to the app. Members had received many reports of parking machines not working but it was clarified that it was not planned to reduce the number of parking machines in the Hilldene area.

Staff were trained on how to check for Member permits. The need to update their location if for example officers moved into a car park area would be addressed through training. It was clarified that an extra seven days would be allowed for the receipt of penalty payments made by post.

Complaints re the parking service were dealt with by the Neighbourhoods Business Support Team and **officers could supply information on the reasons for complaints.** All complaint responses were reviewed by team leaders although relatively few complaints were received about parking officers. **The St Edwards ward not being on the parking system would be addressed by officers.**

Any cancellations of charges at the informal stage could be dealt with more quickly but responses were often only received at the formal stage. Every

case lost was reviewed and training on the issues raised would take place if necessary. **Information on targets for levels of cancellations could be brought to a future meeting.**

The increase in income from the whole of the borough moving into band A was not known at this stage. **Data on the introduction of this in other boroughs could be provided.** Disabled residents receiving tickets could seek advice using the automated phone line service although appeals had to be on-line and could not be taken over the phone. Specific details of issues encountered by disabled residents could be forward by Members to officers who would investigate.

Enforcement of parking around residential dropped kerbs would only take place if the resident requested this. It was accepted that parental parking around schools was often problematic. Instances of trees obscuring parking signs were reported to Highways for adding to their programme of works.

There had been a slight increase in moving traffic penalties in School Streets areas but compliance was now improving. **Officers could supply figures on this.**

It was **agreed** that a task and finish group on the appeals process be established although officers advised that it was important to consider what outcomes were desired from the review and to ask Members to give feedback and volunteer to be on the task and finish group.

39 **RISK REGISTER**

Oversight of the risk register was carried out by the Governance and Assurance Board which was chaired by the s. 151 officer. The risk scores shown on the register were based on impact and likelihood of the event and had been reviewed recently.

IT investment had been earmarked in the cyber resilience programme and **the date of the next IT Plan refresh could be confirmed.** The forthcoming disaggregation of the Havering and Newham IT departments was likely to accelerate decisions on IT investment. A Cabinet report on IT was expected in April 2023 which could also go to Overview and Scrutiny.

The impact of the ULEZ expansion on care staff was not specifically in the corporate risk register although this area was addressed in the Adult Social Care risk register. A Member felt that the climate emergency was not fully reflected in the corporate risk register even though a motion on this had been recently agreed at Council. It was also felt that instability in the financial sector should be higher in the register. Members also felt that the risks to workforce culture from issues such as the Onesource split and working from home should be reflected on the register. Officers responded that workforce risk was included in the register but this could be revisited. **Officers would confirm the proportion of leaving interviews conducted with staff.** The workforce strategy had been agreed by Cabinet and a

consultation on the Target Operating Model had recently begun. Regeneration risks in the register did reflect the position with the financial markets.

The risk of issues such as a shortfall in available housing were likely to be contained on the housing risk register. **Further details of processes around the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) could be provided. Clarification would also be provided regarding what information went out with Council Tax bills regarding payment difficulties.** Council Tax bills had already been sent out and officers confirmed that these did include advice for residents who were struggling to pay.

As regards housing, officers could provide more details on service delivery and the housing risk register as well as whether the risks of joint ventures with external partners were also included.

Members felt that the Board could usefully scrutinise the Council's transformation agenda such as the split of some services from Onesource, IT provision and workforce culture. The cost of capital programmes and the interest costs on e.g. regeneration projects could also be looked at. It was noted that some of these issues were monitored by the Audit Committee and the Governance Assurance Board.

A Member raised concerns about a possible shortfall in social housing should any Joint Ventures or other capital programmes not go ahead. This could be considered by the Places Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee if needed.

40 **OVERALL COMPLAINTS ISSUES**

Changes to the Council's complaints policy had been proposed across three workstreams – policy, team and system with the aim of having a consistent, easy to understand complaints policy, bringing all Council complaints teams together.

A new IT system had been purchased covering complaints, Freedom of Information requests and Member enquiries. The first unit, covering Freedom of Information complaints was due to go live in May 2023. Consultation had been undertaken on the new policy, an All Member Briefing arranged and initial Cabinet sign-off completed. Discussions had also been undertaken with complainants, the Local Government Ombudsman and other parties.

It was planned to simplify the complaints process to one or two stages. Staff engagement had taken place in January 2023 and a Cabinet report on the new complaints policy was expected in June with the new system being delivered by October 2023.

Overall complaints data was shared with the Board but more detailed data on complaints outcomes etc would be available under the new system. New performance indicators would be developed in line with the Target Operating Model which would provide better outcomes for residents.

Officers could provide details on the position with Subject Access Requests to the Council and information on the outcomes of stage 3 complaints. It was confirmed that stage 2 recommendations were followed up but there was not any national requirement to have a third stage of the process.

No cost benefit analysis of defending complaints had been undertaken as such and officers agreed that it was important to take learning from complaints rather than just settle. Guidance from the Ombudsman was also used. Members felt it was important to join up the different Council complaints systems as complaints allowed for judging the efficiency of an organisation. The need for strict Service Level Agreements with service providers was also important.

Feedback was given to the service at stages 2 and 3 but it was important to seek to obtain a clear set of actions for improvement by the service. The Ombudsman Annual Letter was considered by the Governance Committee and **officers would confirm when this was due.** The Monitoring Officer would decide when a complainant was considered vexatious and **details of this could be given at a future meeting of the Board.** The number of residents considered as vexatious was very low.

Members welcomed the new approaches and the plans to bring complaints teams together under a proposed new Director of Customer Service. **Updates on progress could be given to the Board in due course.**

41 **WASTE COLLECTION COMPLAINTS**

The current waste contract with Serco would move to a new provider – Urbaser from October 2022. Complaints about the service were monitored by the business support team and then passed to the contract manager’s team. Targeted monitoring could take place of areas where complaints were made. Feedback was given to the contractor where immediate action was required.

In-person monitoring would take place on a number of issues including frequently missed properties, crew compliance, health and safety and ensuring that correct tipping took place at Frog Island. Desktop monitoring covered areas such as Key Performance Indicators, the number of complaints and the use by crews of in-lab technology.

It was accepted that there was a lack of refuse complaints data for 2021 although the corporate complaints process was suspended during the

pandemic period. More complaints had been received in 2022, partly due to a shortage of refuse drivers. Complaints often ran parallel to the number of missed collections. These were required to be rectified within 24 hours.

Financial penalties of up to £25k could be applied to the current contractors if Key Performance Indicators were not met. Underperforming crews would also be identified with the contractor. The new contract would integrate waste and street cleansing and a larger monitoring team would be introduced as part of the Target Operating Model. Increased use of technology would allow better reporting of issues by the public. Data would also be used to work more closely with the enforcement team with measures such as the use of GPS or cameras on vehicles.

Targets for the clearance of flytips were being met in nearly every month. Key Performance Indicators would be reviewed in order to have more positive data also reported. The service was aware of the risk of digital exclusion and difficulties with reporting missed collections by phone were a corporate issue.

It was clarified that collection days would remain the same for the first six months of the new contract. The contractor would be able to request changes after this point if necessary. The flow of information from the contractor to residents was expected to be better under the new contract. Any reduction in collection frequency would be a decision for the Council, the contractor would be unable to do this unilaterally.

It was confirmed that the separate tipping of recycling and general waste was monitored at Frog Island. A Member noted that only 1% of general waste at Frog Island went to landfill and felt this message should be publicised more widely. **A visit to Frog Island could be arranged for Members and a presentation on how waste was dealt with could be circulated to the Board.**

Enforcement of people for example putting refuse bags out too early was now more complex as it was necessary to prove a detriment to the local environment. Levels of financial penalties would be included in the new contract but this had to reflect the level of Council intervention. **Officers would confirm the mechanism for calculating penalties in the new contract.** Some leeway was given to the contractor at the start of the pandemic but poor collection performance was penalised. **The level of fines issued under the current contract could also be confirmed.**

Chairman