

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE
Appointment Centre Room 10 & 11, Town Hall, Romford
3 April 2025 (7.00 - 9.04 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group Jason Frost (Chairman) and Jacqueline McArdle

Havering Residents' Group Christine Smith and Julie Wilkes

Labour Group Frankie Walker (Vice-Chair)

12 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillor Robby Misir and Co-optees Julie Lamb and Ian Rusha

14 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interests.

15 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 11th February 2025 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

16 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS STRATEGY - PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY

The Sub-Committee received the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy for pre-decision scrutiny.

Members were pleased to note that Domestic Abuse (DA) included a wide range of family members under the definition, including children and family who are carers. Officers explained the VAWG annual report was presented to the community safety partnership which comprised of all statutory services, such as the Police and the voluntary sector.

The Sub-Committee questioned officers on the perpetrator programme and noted it was mostly for male perpetrators. Male victims of DA had access to the DRIVE programme.

Members then raised concerns of the increase of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) country-wide to which officers explained that health professionals have a duty to report instances of FGM and have strict guidelines they adhere to. In Havering, there had been only 1 conviction for FGM.

The Sub-Committee discussed the increasing prevalence of VAWG in the Borough's nightlife. Members noted 'Ask Angela' was a national scheme which allows victims to discreetly alert staff of an issue and to be escorted away from a potentially dangerous situation. Havering also have night marshals who are trained to support victims and intervene if necessary. Officers explained that regular training and awareness is needed due to new waves of young people entering the night-time economy. Members recognised that social media had caused an increase in stalking and VAWG with DA becoming more 'normalised' in relationships.

Members expressed concern that DA can start or worsen while a woman is pregnant but were pleased to hear that midwives have private conversations with pregnant women, and without their partner, during the first visit following the birth of the baby. Midwives are also trained to notice any flags of DA.

GDPR laws had made data and information sharing between the Police and the Council much more difficult which had raised some issues. Officers clarified that data is heavily anonymised however the Council did have regular meetings with the Police at tri-Borough VAWG meetings. Data sharing was improving but was still proving to be difficult due to the laws.

The Sub-Committee recommended to Cabinet that they:

- 1) Recognise that Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) training is essential for all members and agree to include it in new member induction training
- 2) Agree to include WAVE training as part of the Licensing Chair's training

Chairman