

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
26 November 2025 (7.00 - 8.45 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	Dilip Patel and Nisha Patel
Havering Residents' Group	Ray Morgon (Chairman), Stephanie Nunn, Barry Mugglestone and Reg Whitney
Labour Group	Keith Darvill and Matthew Stanton
East Havering Residents Group	Martin Goode
Residents' Association	John Tyler
Independent Group	

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 Gillian Ford and Viddy Persaud (Dilip Patel substituting).

2 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 May 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 INDIVIDUAL POLLING PLACE REVIEW

Officers advised that, following the closure of Gidea Park Library, it had been proposed to locate a polling station at Squirrels Heath School. This location was considered to be more convenient for residents and had been approved by the local ward Councillors. No other comments had been received from Members.

Efforts were made to try and provide parking spaces at polling places but residents were often living within walking distance of the location or had resident parking permits.

The School Streets scheme would remain in operation on election days. It was confirmed that several local churches were already being used as polling stations for different districts. Fewer schools were now used overall as polling stations but this was felt to be the best option in this instance. In the case of a by-election with the associated lower turnout, it was hoped that schools being used as polling stations could remain open.

It was **AGREED**:

That the Governance Committee endorse the changes to the Polling Place for Polling District SQ3 (Squirrels Heath Ward).

That it be noted that all other Polling Districts and polling places remain unchanged.

That full Council, at its meeting on 21 January 2026, be asked to approve the decision of the Governance Committee.

5 CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW AND GOVERNANCE MATTERS

The Monitoring Officer presented a list of the work on the Constitution that had been undertaken as well as sections of the Constitution currently being looked at and to be reviewed over the next year. Whilst Planning Procedure Rules changes had been delayed due to revisions expected nationally, the Contract Procedure Rules were due to be ready for review in February.

The Access to Information Procedure Rules had been reordered for clarity and a revised Member Complaints Process had been drawn up, including a new viability stage. A Member suggested that the Council and Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rules should be reviewed prior to the local elections. The Monitoring Officer agreed to see what could be reviewed in the Council Procedure Rules prior to the elections. This could include areas such as motions & voting and the use of prayers and refreshment breaks although these latter two items were not covered by the Constitution at present. Issues such as starting meetings earlier or retaining the singing of the National Anthem could also be considered. Rules around the wording of motions and amendments could also be reviewed.

A further suggestion was that the answers to Council questions could be circulated to Members 1-2 days before the meeting with only supplementary questions asked at the meeting. These could have a brief introduction section but be limited to 30 seconds per question overall. All these areas could be considered by the Constitution Working Party as could the treatment of condolences for former Members who had passed away. It was

suggested that perhaps a Group Leaders meeting could discuss who would offer condolences at the meeting.

It was accepted that training on the Member Complaints Process could be arranged for all Members. Governance Committee reviewing an anonymised sample of complaints would also be considered by the Monitoring Officer.

It was AGREED that the revised Constitution sections as attached to the report and subject to the comments and recommendations shown above, be submitted to Full Council for consideration and adoption.

6 PENSIONS COMMITTEE - STAFF MEMBER VOTING RIGHTS

The Monitoring Officer presented a report that gave more detail on the procedure for the election of a staff representative to the Pensions Committee. This followed a previous decision by Governance Committee to establish such a process.

The Monitoring Officer would confirm if the new voting member would have to disclose an interest at each meeting or if this could be covered in another way. In order to secure a diversity of applicants, it had been suggested that nominations be rejected if candidates had not completed the requisite training on pensions.

Details would be checked on the proposed term of office for such members and the mechanism for removing them if necessary.

Subject to the comments shown above, it was AGREED that the Monitoring Officer be asked to make the necessary amendments to the Constitution so as to allow voting rights for a duly elected staff representative.

The revised section of the Constitution to be submitted to Full Council for approval.

7 MERCURY LAND HOLDINGS GOVERNANCE

The Monitoring Officer gave a presentation on the governance of Mercury Land Holdings (MLH). This followed, but was not directly related to, the passing of a recent Council motion that the company should focus on social housing.

MLH was established as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Council. The company received loans from the Council to buy land and, once units had been built and sold, would repay the loan to the Council, with interest. MLH was established in May 2015 and had no set term of office. The company currently had six areas for which it had charges or mortgages and the MLH

Business Plan was required to be approved by Cabinet on an annual basis. This was subject to scrutiny and call-in if required.

The company was not able to expand operations outside of Havering and major expenditure was strictly controlled. It was suggested that an additional director of MLH could be appointed in addition to the Council Chief Executive. The new director could report on a regular basis to the Audit and Governance Committees. It was not recommended to have a Councillor as a director as this could lead to a conflict of interest. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy had reviewed MLH governance and had found this to be satisfactory.

It was noted national targets for the percentage of affordable housing had recently been reduced. If developments were designed to make a profit, it was a legal requirement for the Council to establish a company such as MLH. A Member suggested that directors should have a fixed term of office and be appointed by Cabinet or the Appointments Sub-Committee.

It was AGREED that a Members Briefing on the governance and direction of travel of MLH should be arranged.

Chairman