



Haverling

LONDON BOROUGH

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD AGENDA

7.00 pm

Tuesday
17 March 2026

Council Chamber -
Town Hall

Members 12: Quorum 5

COUNCILLORS:

Conservative Group (2)

Dilip Patel
David Taylor

Haverling Residents' Group (5)

Philippa Crowder
Laurance Garrard (Chairman)
David Godwin
Bryan Vincent
Julie Wilkes (Vice-Chair)

Labour Group (2)

Jane Keane
Matthew Stanton

East Haverling Residents (1)

Martin Goode

Residents' Association Independent Group (0)

For information about the meeting please contact:
Anthony Clements 01708 433065
anthony.clements@haverling.gov.uk

Please would all Members and officers attending ensure they sit in their allocated seats as this will enable correct identification of participants on the meeting webcast.

Under the Committee Procedure Rules within the Council's Constitution the Chairman of the meeting may exercise the powers conferred upon the Mayor in relation to the conduct of full Council meetings. As such, should any member of the public interrupt proceedings, the Chairman will warn the person concerned. If they continue to interrupt, the Chairman will order their removal from the meeting room and may adjourn the meeting while this takes place.

Excessive noise and talking should also be kept to a minimum whilst the meeting is in progress in order that the scheduled business may proceed as planned.

Protocol for members of the public wishing to report on meetings of the London Borough of Havering

Members of the public are entitled to report on meetings of Council, Committees and Cabinet, except in circumstances where the public have been excluded as permitted by law.

Reporting means:-

- filming, photographing or making an audio recording of the proceedings of the meeting;
- using any other means for enabling persons not present to see or hear proceedings at a meeting as it takes place or later; or
- reporting or providing commentary on proceedings at a meeting, orally or in writing, so that the report or commentary is available as the meeting takes place or later if the person is not present.

Anyone present at a meeting as it takes place is not permitted to carry out an oral commentary or report. This is to prevent the business of the meeting being disrupted.

Anyone attending a meeting is asked to advise Democratic Services staff on 01708 433076 that they wish to report on the meeting and how they wish to do so. This is to enable employees to guide anyone choosing to report on proceedings to an appropriate place from which to be able to report effectively.

Members of the public are asked to remain seated throughout the meeting as standing up and walking around could distract from the business in hand.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Under the Localism Act 2011 (s. 9F) each local authority is required by law to establish an overview and scrutiny function to support and scrutinise the Council's executive arrangements.

The Overview and Scrutiny Board acts as a vehicle by which the effectiveness of scrutiny is monitored and where work undertaken by themed sub-committees can be coordinated to avoid duplication and to ensure that areas of priority are being reviewed. The Board also scrutinises general management matters relating to the Council and further details are given in the terms of reference below. The Overview and Scrutiny Board has oversight of performance information submitted to the Council's executive and also leads on scrutiny of the Council budget and associated information. All requisitions or 'call-ins' of executive decisions are dealt with by the Board.

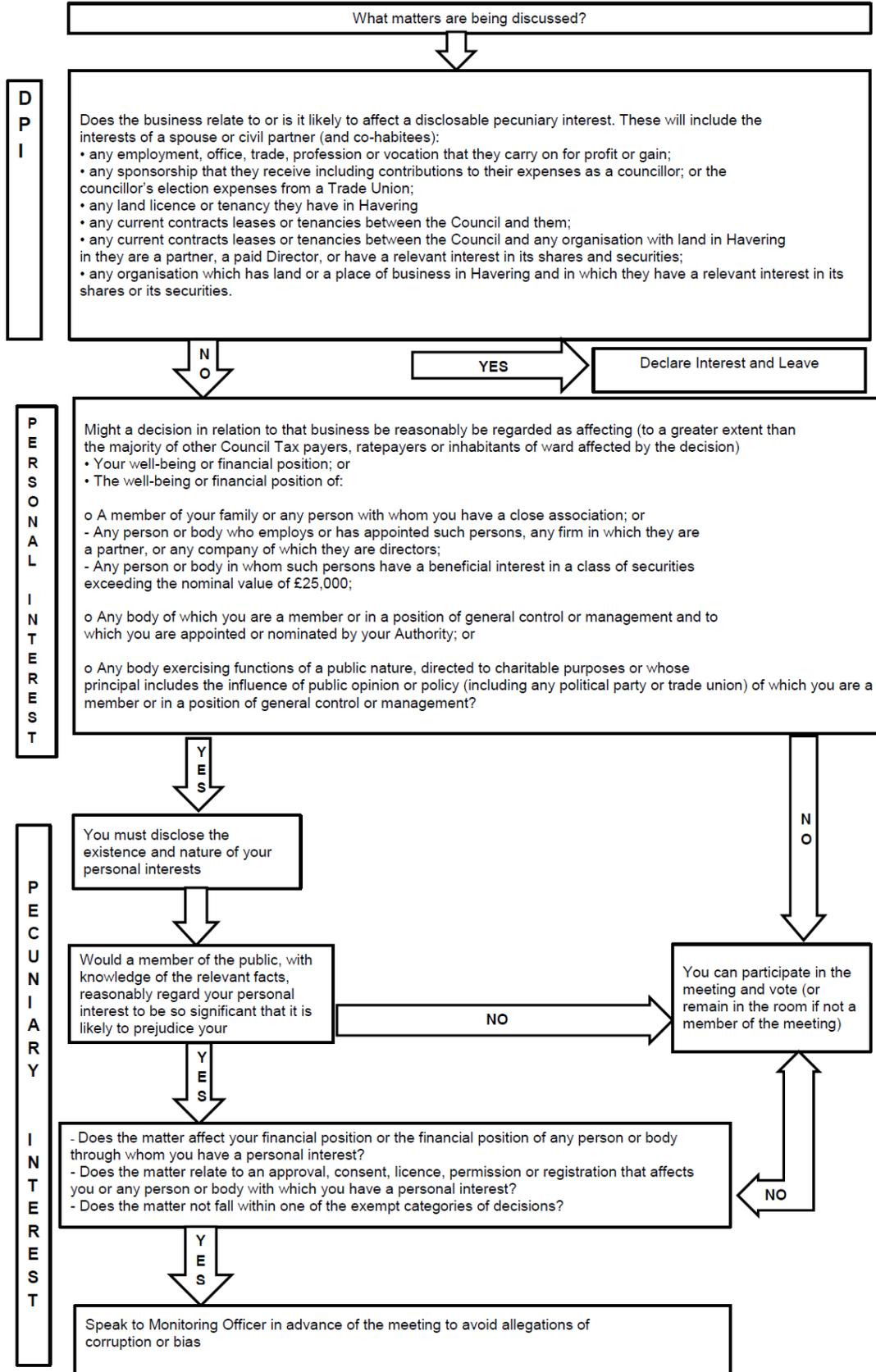
The Board is politically balanced and includes among its membership the Chairmen of the six themed Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committees.

Terms of Reference:

The areas scrutinised by the Board are:

- Strategy and commissioning
 - Partnerships with Business
 - Customer access
 - E-government and ICT
 - Finance (although each committee is responsible for budget processes that affect its area of oversight)
 - Human resources
 - Asset Management
 - Property resources
 - Facilities Management
 - Communications
 - Democratic Services
 - Social inclusion
 - Councillor Call for Action
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-

DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF



Principles of conduct in public office

In accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011, when acting in the capacity of a Member, they are committed to behaving in a manner that is consistent with the following principles to achieve best value for the Borough's residents and to maintain public confidence in the Council.

SELFLESSNESS: Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

INTEGRITY: Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

OBJECTIVITY: In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

ACCOUNTABILITY: Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

OPENNESS: Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

HONESTY: Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

LEADERSHIP: Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

AGENDA ITEMS

1 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman will announce details of the arrangements in case of fire or other events that might require the meeting room or building's evacuation.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

(if any) - receive.

3 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members are invited to disclose any interest in any of the items on the agenda at this point of the meeting.

Members may still disclose any interest in an item at any time prior to the consideration of the matter.

4 MINUTES (Pages 9 - 14)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 4 February 2026 (attached) and to authorise the Chairman to sign them.

5 CORPORATE HR METRICS (Pages 15 - 24)

Report attached.

6 CORPORATE METRICS - AGENCY WORKERS (Pages 25 - 28)

Report attached.

7 WELLBEING ANNUAL REPORT 2025 (Pages 29 - 48)

Report attached.

8 HEALTH & SAFETY TRAINING AND SICKNESS ABSENCE (Pages 49 - 50)

Report attached.

9 COMMERCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE (Pages 51 - 56)

Report attached.

10 RESPONSE OF CABINET TO CALL-IN OF EXECUTIVE DECISION - FUTURE PROPOSALS FOR FORMER LIBRARY SITES (Pages 57 - 58)

Report attached.

11 SELF-EVALUATION OF BOARD'S WORK 2025/26 (Pages 59 - 80)

Report and presentation attached.

Zena Smith
Head of Committee and Election Services

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD
Havering Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
4 February 2026 (6.31 - 9.30 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	Dilip Patel and David Taylor
Havering Residents' Group	Philippa Crowder, Laurance Garrard (Chairman), Robby Misir (In place of David Godwin), Bryan Vincent and Julie Wilkes (Vice-Chair)
Labour Group	Jane Keane and Matthew Stanton
East Havering Residents' Group	Martin Goode
Residents' Association Independent Group	Philip Ruck

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

18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillor David Godwin, with Cllr Robby Misir attending as his substitute.

19 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interests.

20 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 9th October 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

21 OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS 2024/25

The Board received an update on Ombudsman complaints for 2024/25.

Officers explained that there was a statutory requirement to report for HRA-funded services and social care and explained there were two separate Ombudsmen involved. Performance was in line with national rates, at around 80%, with statutory timescales largely being met. Officers highlighted that, while the estimated direct budgetary impact of Ombudsman activity was in the region of £35k–£40k, reputational impact was often greater.

Members noted that 3,420 complaints had been lodged in the 2024/25 reporting period and 3,649 had been recorded to the end of December 2025.. Housing accounted for the majority of complaints with around 80% of Housing complaints assessed as service failures. Officers explained that weekly “pre-complaints” reviews with contractors were taking place and confirmed an impending Housing inspection in the following year. Members noted that around 80% of Ombudsman-referred cases reportedly found the Council at fault. Officers outlined that reporting was going to ELT and portfolio holders and regular contractor engagement including two “deep-dive” days had also taken place. The roll-out of customer-service objectives in appraisals alongside work with the Customer Service Institute had boosted performance. The complaints system had been used to drive efficiencies and explore AI-supported improvements as, in particular, damp and mould cases were bound by the code’s strict timescales. Fines were not separately budgeted for and would be met as costs arise. The Board noted that the People OSSC received separate complaints reports on social care and children’s services.

Members queried whether Cabinet Members should attend the Board for this item in future. Officers noted prior discussions and existing regular portfolio-holder meetings had occurred and agreed it could be explored if the added value was clear.

The board recommended that the rulings of cases were included in the report. Officers explained there were attached as a link in the report but could be circulated if the Board needed them to.

22 CONTRACTS PROCEDURE RULES

The Board received an update on Contract Procedure Rules.

Officers briefed the Board on the changes that had arisen from the Procurement Act 2023, noting the complexity of the legislation. It was emphasised that published tender award values reflected only the values and not actual out-turn spend. The three largest contract areas were Waste, Labour and Highways, with each subject to strict governance as part of the Council constitution and internal rules. For procurements over £240k including VAT, formal legal processes commenced under legislative requirements. Contract management arrangements included scheduled performance meetings with the suppliers, dispute-resolution routes within top contracts and re-procurement of a multi-disciplinary works company to

take care of elements of a number of major contracts. Savings were both cashable and non-cashable (efficiency) in nature and a significant social-care framework was being established with potential for cost reduction.

Officers confirmed that contract management capacity had been strengthened in key teams and would be reviewed post-implementation of the new regime. Lessons had been learned and information had been gathered from members and groups. For high-value contracts, structured monthly and annual reviews were in place with under-performance routes, including remedial steps and potential termination, also in place where appropriate. Members noted a new Social Value Strategy had recently been agreed by Cabinet.

The Board **recommended** incorporating an annual performance review checkpoint for major contracts (in addition to the existing frequent reviews) with outcomes reported back to the Board

23 THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET 2026/27

The Board received an update on the 2026/27 Budget and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

Board members noted the Budget and MTFS was to be presented to Cabinet on 18th February 2026 with a Section 25 statement on the robustness of estimates and reserves and that the Treasury Management Strategy being presented to Audit on 24th February 2026. The Board noted the Budget and MTFS would be presented to Full Council on 4th March 2026.

Officers outlined that the Council would require a Capitalisation Direction/Exceptional Financial Support (CD/EFS) to set a balanced budget with an indicative mid-case figure being £73m and a worst-case figure of £84m . This would be in addition to the requirement for the General Fund after savings, the Fair Funding outcome and the maximum Council Tax increase. Officers explained that the Council's financial position was not sustainable on current trajectories as they had projected a £90m gap across years 2 and 3 of the MTFS, implying ongoing need for exceptional financial support. Monthly discussions with MHCLG were ongoing. Compound debt could exceed £200m by the end of the MTFS with borrowing costs roughly £28m per annum. Officers described ongoing work to reduce costs, review demographic pressures, particularly in People services and Temporary Accommodation, and pursue invest-to-save capital schemes. Members noted the Treasury Strategy would reflect CIPFA Code requirements, noting that the current level of borrowing associated with exceptional support was not sustainable and that full code compliance was therefore not achievable. A bid to MHCLG had been submitted on 13th December 2025 and a response was expected ahead of Full Council on 4th March 2026.

Officers confirmed that the MTFS was not financially sustainable beyond 2026/27 without further support and structural change. A significant high needs deficit within the school needs grant of roughly £65m by year end was forecast however the statutory override would not allow for any overspend to occur. About £18m of capital receipts were expected which was insufficient to fund the CD/EFS. The 2023/24 overspend of £18m had used capital receipts, while the 2024/25 overspend of £34m had been financed by borrowing. Members discussed separating EFS indicators from the capital programme to reflect that. It was noted that while the capital programme was affordable with risks, EFS-related borrowing was not. Regeneration, affordable housing delivery and viability were discussed, along with the wider national context of many councils seeking EFS and the limitations of the Fair Funding Review in addressing social-care pressures. Officers also updated members on the £10m proposed savings, the Assurance Board's work, and specific operational proposals. Early-help initiatives and data-sharing constraints with partners, specifically the NHS and Police were noted, as was the decision to not have fixed "trigger points" for a s114 report. Officers outlined the NI funding shortfalls of about £200k and the approach to business-rates changes within budgeting.

Further service-level points were discussed and covered areas such as pre-application planning , bulky-waste collection pilots to which members suggested a single-item, area-based approach subject to sufficient demand, Green Flag status communications with residents and exploration of alternative adult-social-care arrangements while prioritising family settings. Officers confirmed there were no current proposals to join services with other councils, noting the historic OneSource arrangements with Newham. Officers explained there was a continued pursuit of JV regeneration as a route to affordable housing with public realm benefits and members questioned if there was potential for licensed individual collectors to support fly-tipping removal, subject to proper disposal controls.

The Board **recommended**:

1. That Officers explore aligning the Improvement and Transformation Plan with the Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
2. That Officers undertake alternative modelling on the impact of reducing street-trading licence fees
3. That Officers review the wording within the Discretionary Fees and Charges section to ensure it reflects a compassionate approach to sensitive issues
4. That the Board be provided with information on the cost implications of extending 30 minutes free parking across all areas of Havering
5. That Officers confirm to the Board the value of the shortfall created by the National Insurance increase
6. That Officers explore a pilot scheme delivering a single, coordinated bulky-waste collection within a defined geographical area given sufficient bulky-waste demand exists
7. That Officers consider the feasibility and potential benefits of introducing individually licensed fly-tipping collectors

8. That Officers explore opportunities to enhance communications with residents regarding Green Flag status and achievements within local parks.

Chairman

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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD 17th March 2026

Subject Heading:	Corporate HR Metrics – Sickness Absence
ELT Lead:	Andrew Blake Herbert – Chief Executive
Report Author and contact details:	Joanne Budden joanne.budden@havering.gov.uk +441708434343
Policy context:	This report provides an update on the levels of sickness absences for the directly employed staff in the corporate workforce.

An update from HR&OD, following the Overview & Scrutiny meeting held on 9th October 2025.

HR Metrics

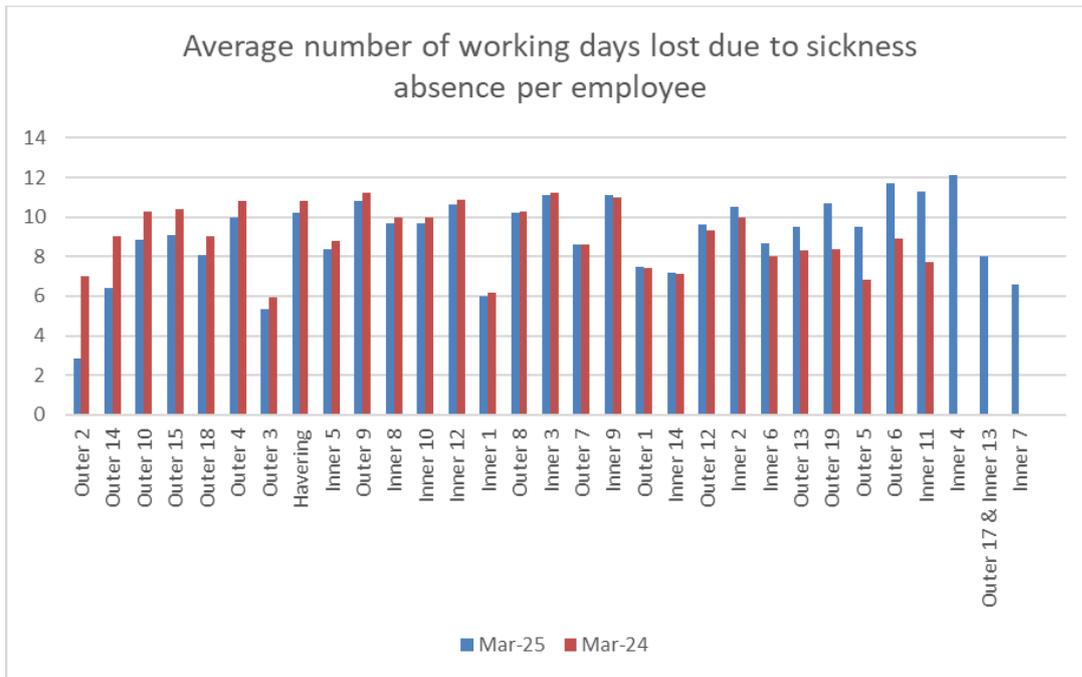
Sickness Absences

This report is in response to a specific request to provide the latest London comparisons.

Benchmarking information/dashboards are sourced from London Councils using the Infinistats metrics subscription service, for all London boroughs who recently completed the “Human Capital Metrics” survey for the financial year ending 31st March 2025.

1. Average number of days lost per employee

Havering's average number of days lost per employee has fallen from 10.8 in 2023/24 to 10.2 in 2024/25. In comparisons with 28 other London Boroughs, who presented data for both years, Havering's improvement ranked them 9th in improved rates. The below data shows that Outer London Boroughs have lowered their sickness levels the most and the chart shows the comparison between 2023/24 and 2024/25. Havering's good performance is despite the median for this period raising from 9 to 9.5 average number of days lost.



2. Average days lost per employee to short term sickness

Short-term sickness is defined as absences of up to 19 days' duration.

Havering's short-term sickness absence rate of 3.30 days sits precisely at the median of all London councils, indicating typical performance. This is marginally higher than the Outer London average of 3.24 days (excluding the outlier Outer 2 at 8.76 days) but below the Inner London average of 3.45 days. Notably, Havering shares identical figures with three other councils: Outer 12, Inner 10, and Outer 19.

Among neighbouring East London boroughs, Havering performs better than Outer 1 (2.75) but worse than Outer 3 (2.32). Outer 14 shows the lowest absence rate (2.10), potentially offering best practice insights.

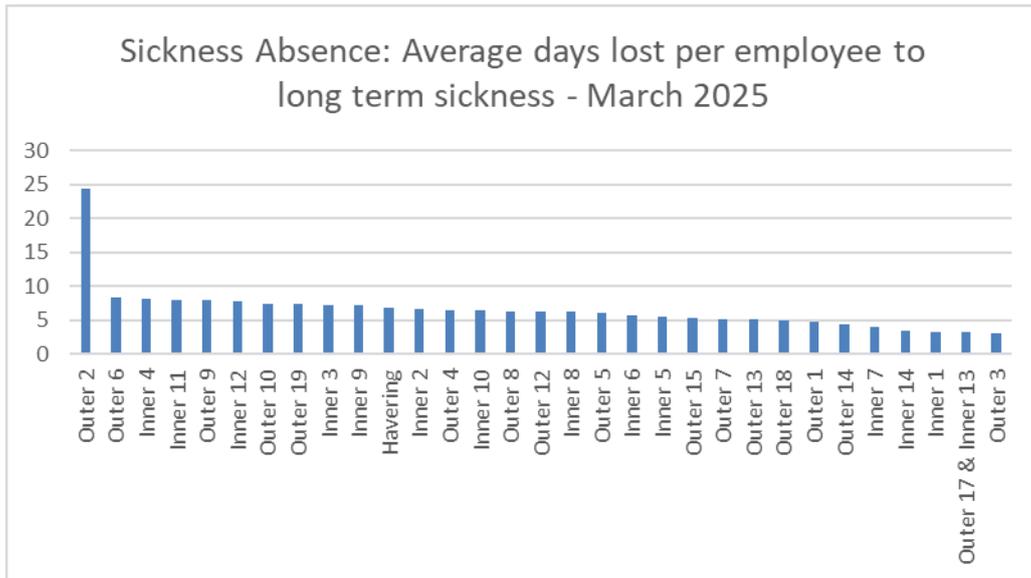


3. Average days lost per employee to long term sickness

Long-term sickness is defined as absences of 20 or more days' duration.

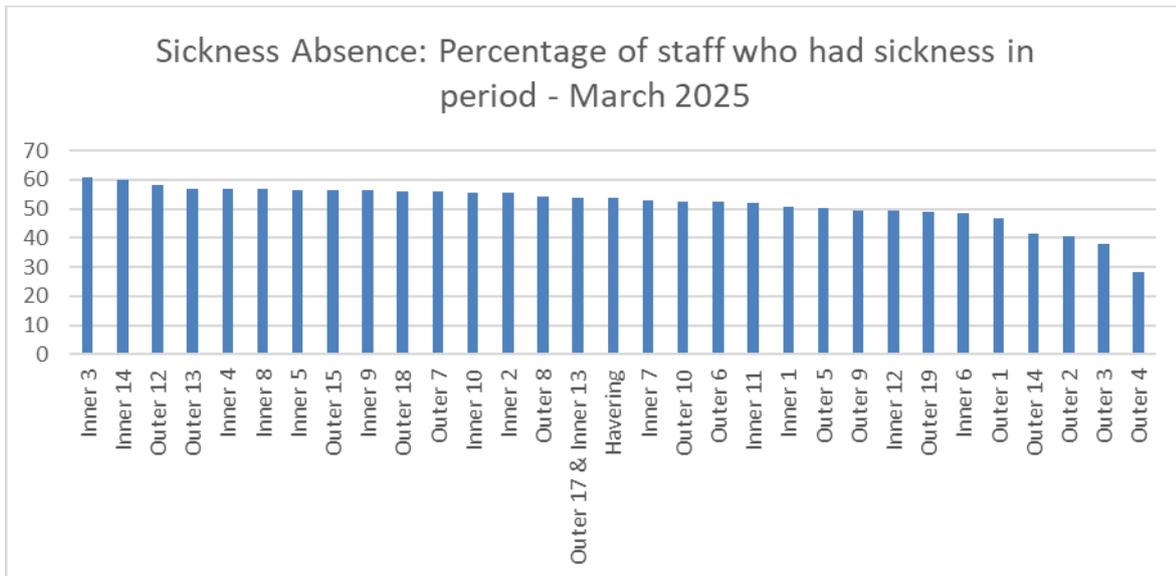
Havering's long-term sickness absence (6.9 days) sits slightly above the London average of 6.4 days, placing it in the upper-middle range among Outer London boroughs. Excluding Outer 2's significant outlier value (24.3 days), Inner London councils generally show higher absence rates than Outer London, with Inner 11 (7.92 days) and Inner 12 (7.74 days) recording the highest non-outlier figures.

Among neighbouring East London boroughs, Havering's rate exceeds Outer 3 (3.0) and Outer 1 (4.8) but remains lower than Outer 19 (7.4).



4. Percentage of staff who had sickness in period

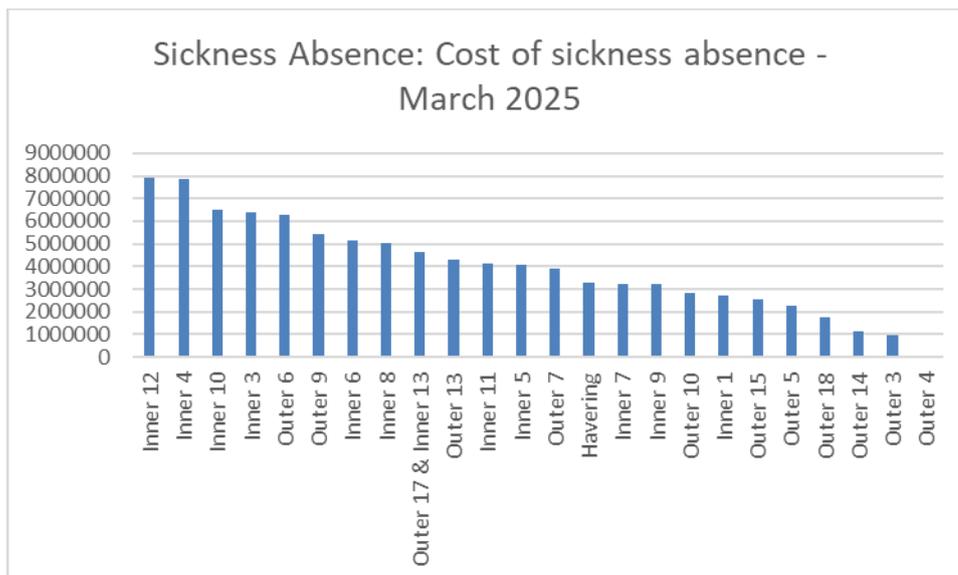
Havering's percentage of staff who recorded sickness for 2024/25 was 53.8% and falls in the third quartile of all the London boroughs, and for outer London. It has risen by 2.6% since the last survey in 2023/24, when it was 52.5%. This compares with a median average change of +3.7% for outer London since 2023/24.



5. Cost of sickness absence

Havering's sickness absence cost (£3.29M) sits favourably below the overall London average (£3.95M), positioning it as a mid-performer among the 24 councils analysed. While significantly lower than highest-spending Inner 12 (£7.92M) and Inner 4 (£7.87M), there remains room for improvement compared to better-performing Outer London peers like Outer 14 (£1.11M) and Outer 18 (£1.76M).

A clear Inner/Outer London divide exists, with Inner London boroughs averaging £4.71M compared to £3.35M for Outer London councils, likely reflecting higher wage structures. Notably, Outer 4's figure (£28,070) appears anomalously low and warrants verification.

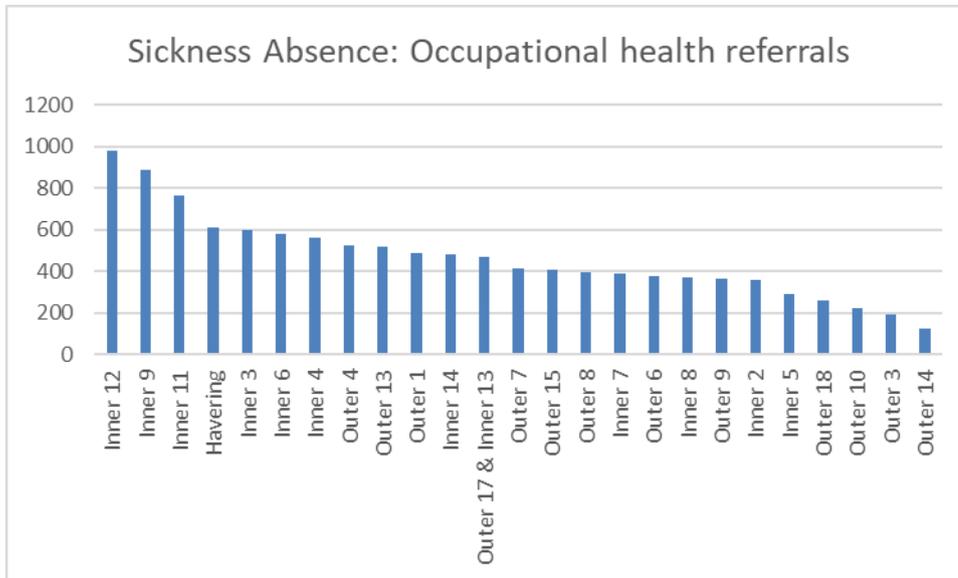


6. Occupational health referrals

Havering's 612 occupational health referrals position it as the 4th highest among all councils surveyed and the 3rd highest among Outer London boroughs. This significantly exceeds both the London-wide average of 506 referrals and the Outer London average of 432.

Notably, Havering's referral rate is 42% higher than neighbouring Outer 16 (not included in this dataset) based on historical trends. The borough's aging workforce demographic likely contributes to this elevated figure, as approximately 31% of Havering's council employees are over 50. This high referral rate may indicate proactive occupational health management.

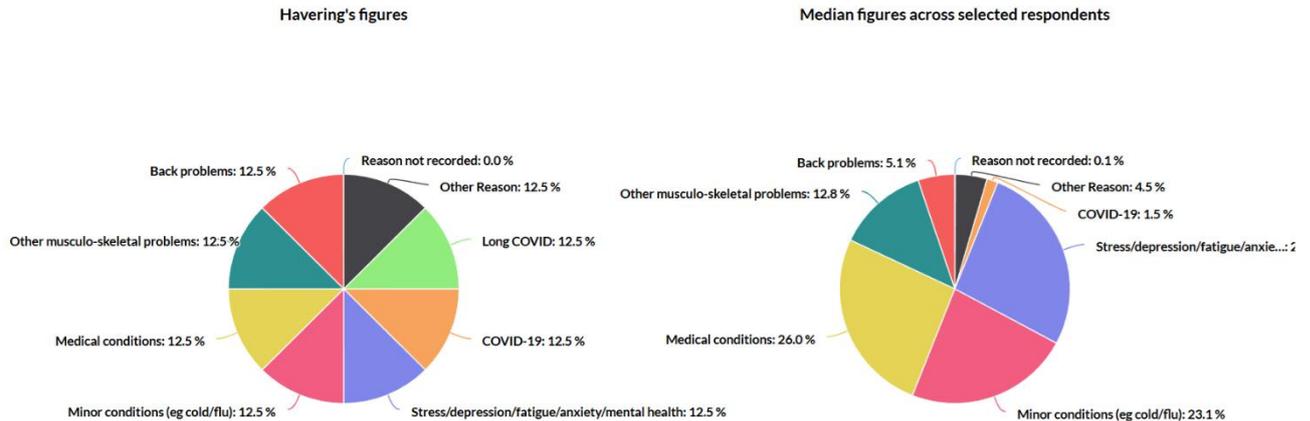
N.B. The occupational health referral numbers slightly differ in the more detailed wellbeing report due to this being a 2025 calendar year report.



7. Sickness Absences by Sickness Reason

The specific sickness reason categories vary between Councils. However, the survey groups the reasons most commonly recorded.

Days lost by sickness reason for the 12 months up to 31st March 2025



Median figure for London for sickness reason: Stress/depression/fatigue/anxiety/mental health = 26.8%

Work done by HR&OD to help reduce sickness levels.

A review of the Sickness reason categories in Fusion was undertaken, with the aim of updating and simplifying the categories to assist Managers when recording sickness. This resulted in some sickness reasons being removed (e.g. Other), some being added and some renamed. The revised list provides more meaningful categories which helps to facilitate early signposting to further health and wellbeing resources and support.

The HR Advice & Consultancy team held a series of surgeries with Managers to explain the changes and to remind them on how to manage sickness effectively and the tools available throughout the process to best support employees to return to work, and more referrals to our Occupational Health provider.

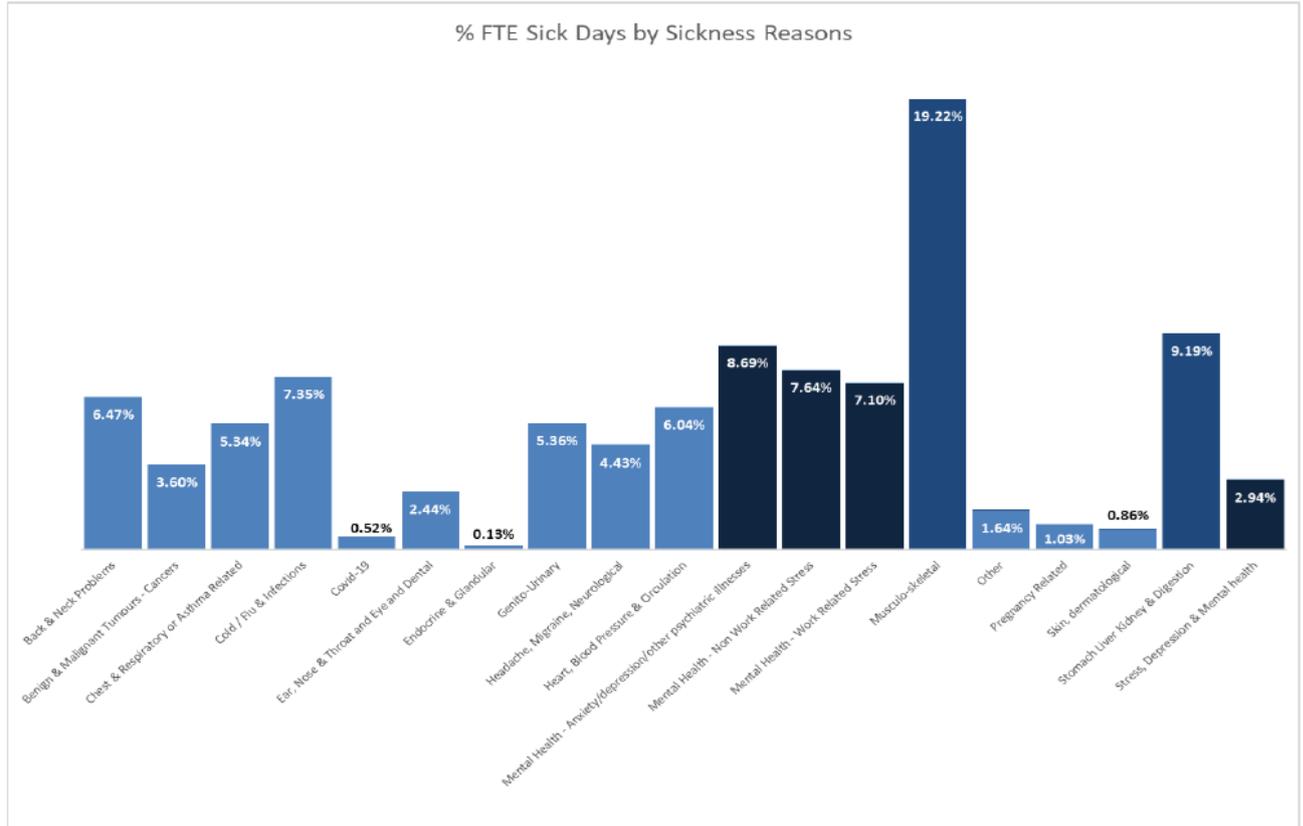
A range of Health and Wellbeing initiatives have been delivered throughout the years, emphasising how employees can utilise resources such as EAP.

All that hard work has contributed to achieving sustained lower levels of sickness absences.

The below extracts from Havering's workforce information report for month end December 2025 highlights the progress made in reducing sickness absences over the rolling 12-month (R12m) period:

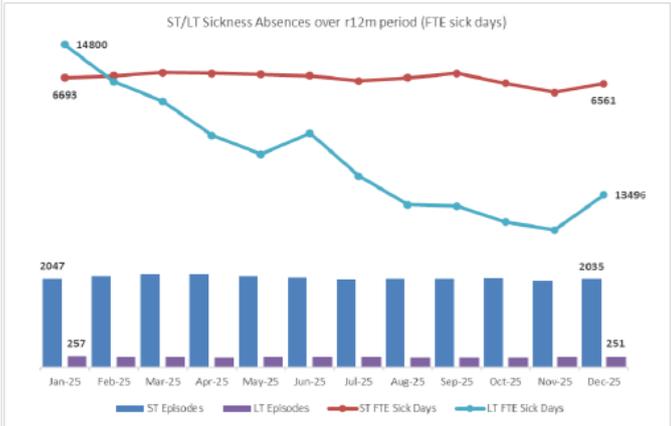
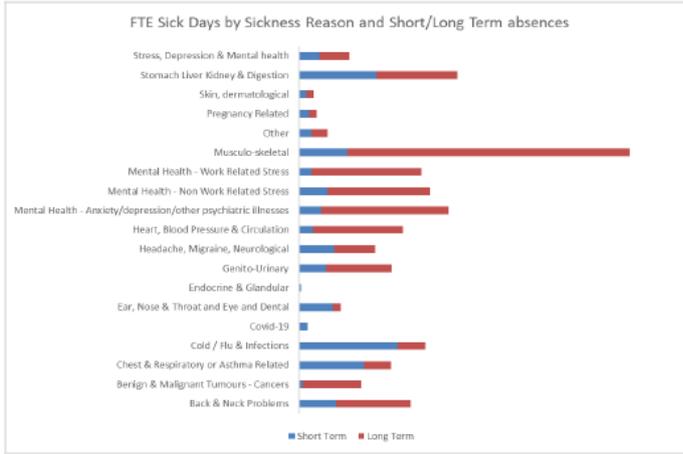


Appendix 1a - Sickness Absences (in r12m period ending 31st December 2025)

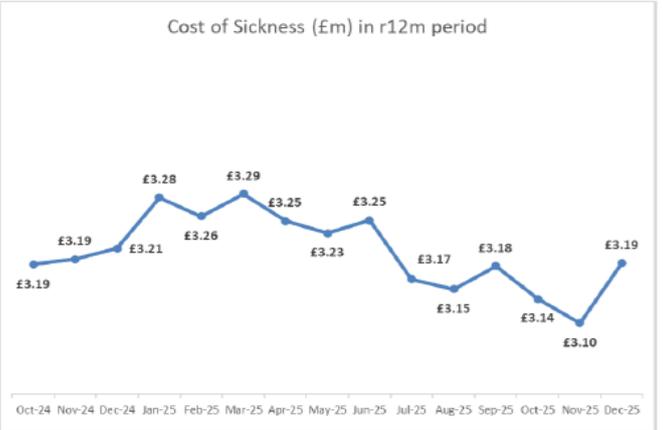


The new sickness reasons came into effect from 1st April 2025, with "Other" and "Stress, Depression & Mental Health" both no longer in use from that date. The introduction of the new Mental Health reasons highlight the underlying causes of the absence, enabling more tailored support to be given. Almost 26.5% of all FTE Sick Days are recorded as being related to poor Mental Health

Appendix 1b - Sickness Absences (in r12m period ending 31st December 2025)



Sickness Reason	r12m Cost of Sickness	%
Back & Neck Problems	£206,249	6.47%
Benign & Malignant Tumours - Cancers	£125,794	3.95%
Chest & Respiratory or Asthma Related	£163,451	5.13%
Cold / Flu & Infections	£232,986	7.31%
Covid-19	£18,026	0.57%
Ear, Nose & Throat and Eye and Dental	£79,330	2.49%
Endocrine & Glandular	£5,956	0.19%
Genito-Urinary	£173,869	5.45%
Headache, Migraine, Neurological	£155,319	4.87%
Heart, Blood Pressure & Circulation	£192,426	6.04%
Mental Health - Anxiety/depression/other psychiatric illnesses	£270,746	8.49%
Mental Health - Non Work Related Stress	£246,767	7.74%
Mental Health - Work Related Stress	£260,411	8.17%
Musculo-skeletal	£559,056	17.54%
Other	£53,075	1.66%
Pregnancy Related	£38,528	1.21%
Skin, dermatological	£24,828	0.78%
Stomach Liver Kidney & Digestion	£282,746	8.87%
Stress, Depression & Mental health	£98,267	3.08%
Grand Total	£3,187,829	100.00%



**Cost of Sickness is an indicative cost only*

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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD 17th March 2026

Subject Heading:	Corporate Metrics – Agency Workers
ELT Lead:	Andrew Blake Herbert – Chief Executive
Report Author and contact details:	Euan Beales – Head of Procurement and Contract Management Euan.beales@havering.gov.uk
Policy context:	This report provides an update on the level of spend on Contingent Workers (agency staff) engaged by the Council.

An update from Procurement, following the O&S meetings held on 16th December 2025.

Procurement Metrics

Matrix/Adecco Contingent Workers

The percentage of Adecco ¹Contingent Workers in the Total Corporate Workforce has continued to fall from 15.4% (489) on 31st March 2025, to 14.3% (460) on 31st December 2025.

The spend on Matrix/Adecco Contingent Workers for the last 3 months of 2025 were as follows:

Period	Spend	Period	Spend	% Decrease
Oct 2025	£1,917,603	Oct 2024	£2,133,115	10.10
Nov 2025	£1,654,000	Nov 2024	£2,161,706	23.49
Dec 2025	£1,403,622	Dec 2024	£2,144,761	34.56

*** please note the figures include the 2025/26 pay award, which was implemented in October 2025.*

The spend figure for October 2025 is artificially high due to the backdated pay award being completed. In addition, the spend figure for December 2025 is lower than it would normally have been due to 2-week seasonal closedown being provided. This gave the contingent workforce the same opportunity to take a

¹ Adecco is a Master Services Provider (MSP) that helps organisations streamline and automate the process of engaging agency, temporary, and contingent staff, offering services like technology, processes, and people and can also act as a providing agency in its own right. Service commenced 26/07/2025, Matrix provider the service prior to this date.

wellness break and to recharge for the new year. This was provided to all contingent staff unless agreed with the responsible officer for critical services.

which represents a reduction of £1,464,357 (22.74%) across the same 3-month period, please note the December 2025 figures may be lower due to Contingent worker seasonal leave.

*A breakdown of the Adecco and Matrix Contingent workers over the rolling 12 months is attached. See **Appendix 1***

To continue to map the data in regard to the extent that contingent workers are used to cover “long term sickness absence” as required by Cabinet (January 2025), the following table sets out the list of categories for engagement and the numbers reflected in the period.

Since the last report and the contract “Go Live” and using the data from 01 September 2025 to 31 December 2025 there have been 103 Contingent workers onboarded, and the engagement reasons are set out below. Please note that this will not represent the whole figure due to the transfer of data between Matrix and Adecco during July/August 2025.

Engagement Reason	Number	%
Project Conversion	0	0
Permanent Recruitment	1	0.97
Holiday Cover	0	0
Sickness/Absence Cover	6	5.83
Internal Expertise unavailable	7	6.80
Project/Additional Work	69	66.99
Secondment Cover	2	1.94
Maternity/Paternity Cover	1	0.97
Restructure	9	8.73
Seasonal Work	0	0
Other	8	7.77
Total	103	100

*** please note the “reason for engagement” types have been expanded as part of the new contract*

Conclusion

It is clear from the information provided by managers that:

- cover for long term sickness absence is a low driver for the engagement of Contingent Workers
- the most significant driver for the engagement of Contingent Workers is cover for Project or Additional work.

Off-Framework Agency Workers

A transaction listing and purchase order (PO) report from Fusion was run, for the date range of 1st October 2025 to 31 December 2025 and has been reviewed

against the agency (Contingent) and consultancy fees subjective codes. This resulted in two suppliers being identified (a reduction of 1 from the previous quarter) and accounted for 5 Contingent workers (this is an increase of 2 from the previous quarter).

In terms of a financial value the spend across both suppliers totalled £22,797.92, which is a reduction of £61,393.76 from the previous quarter. The off contract spend accounts for 1.23% a reduction of 0.46%.

Procurement will continue to investigate and discuss the spend with the responsible officers and where possible will seek to onboard into the Adecco supply chain and move the workers to minimise risk of disruption to the service.

Responsible officers will continue to review, monitor and take action on the use of off contract agencies.

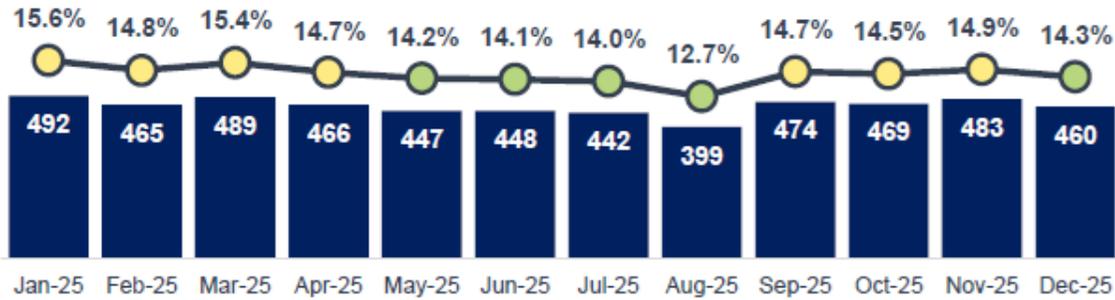
Senior Agency Worker volumes and Tenure above 2 years

The number of Contingent workers above the £75k threshold has increased to 67 (of which 4% reside in the Borough), from the historical low figure of 50 in August 2025. Work is commencing with Adecco and the responsible officers to review the Contingent worker and to agree a way forward that seeks to reduce the number, *a breakdown can be seen in Appendix 1.*

Likewise, the number of Contingent workers that have over 2 years' tenure has increased to 114, from the historical low figure in August 2025. The tenure of the contingent worker will be discussed with the responsible officer with the aim of reducing the number or procuring the needs in a different way, *a breakdown can be seen in Appendix 1.*

Adecco Agency Workers - 12 Month Overview

% of the Total Workforce



RAG Rating



14.3%

Target ≤12%

London Average 11.8%

No. of Adecco Agency Workers earning more than £75k*

*annualised figure based on hourly rate



No. of Adecco Agency Workers engaged for more than 2 Years



Wellbeing Annual Report

2025

Prepared by
ROSS MARSHALL

Prepared for
HR SLT



Welcome to the **Wellbeing Hub**



Psychological



Physical



Financial



Social

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OH and EAP



Optima Health

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Following a procurement exercise Optima Health UK Limited were awarded the OH and EAP contract and Havering launched with Optima Health in May 2025.
- Data for 2025 is from both Optima and our previous provider People Asset Management (PAM)

Occupational Health Referrals

Total Referrals in 2025	535 (PAM 80) (Optima Health 455)
Top reasons for referral (Both)	1.Mental Health 2.MSK 3.Other known causes
Mental Health Referrals	28 (PAM) & 53 (Optima Health)
MSK	27 (PAM) & 59 (Optima Health)
Other	7 (PAM) & 56 (50 non work related, 6 work related) (Optima Health)

Employee Assistance Programme

Total calls recieved	144 (PAM 10) & (Optima Health 134)
PAM Breakdown	7 individuals made 10 calls, all calls for counselling 80% identify as Female, 20% as Male at birth, 60% of those calls made by those born between 1980 - 1994 (Millennials)
Top 3 reasons (PAM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Anxiety – 2 ·Depression – 2 ·Low mood - 2
Follow on support	Of the calls received (10) 3 were referred to structured therapy, totalling 18 sessions.
Optima Health Breakdown	39 female callers, 8 male and 5 prefer not to say. Highest age group - 40-49 (19), joint second - 30-39 & 50-59 (13 respectively) 18-29 - (3) and 60+ (2)
Top 3 reasons (Optima Health)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Mental Health (stress/Anxiety/Depression) – 42 ·Work related stress – 22 ·Personal relationships - 14
Counselling referral (Optima Health)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Referred to face to face counselling - 0 · Referred for telephone counselling - 14 · Passed for computerised CBT - 5 · Referred for video counselling - 13



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Celebrated our 1 year anniversary with Vivup May 2025
- Havering won the Perkbox Value Awards 'Together We Thrive' Award.

Vivup	
New registered users/total registered	271/1,162 (49.6%)
Total logins	783
Accepted orders (Salary Sacrifice Schemes)	78/103
Gift cards purchased	511
Active users	783
Active users rate	67.40%
User access breakdown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Desktop – 663 ·Mobile – 306 ·Tablet - 7
Accepted spend	£43,045
Average order value	£552
Employee Saving	£1,355
Total value (Gift Cards)	£59,672
Total price (Gift Cards)	£56,653
Total saved	£3,019

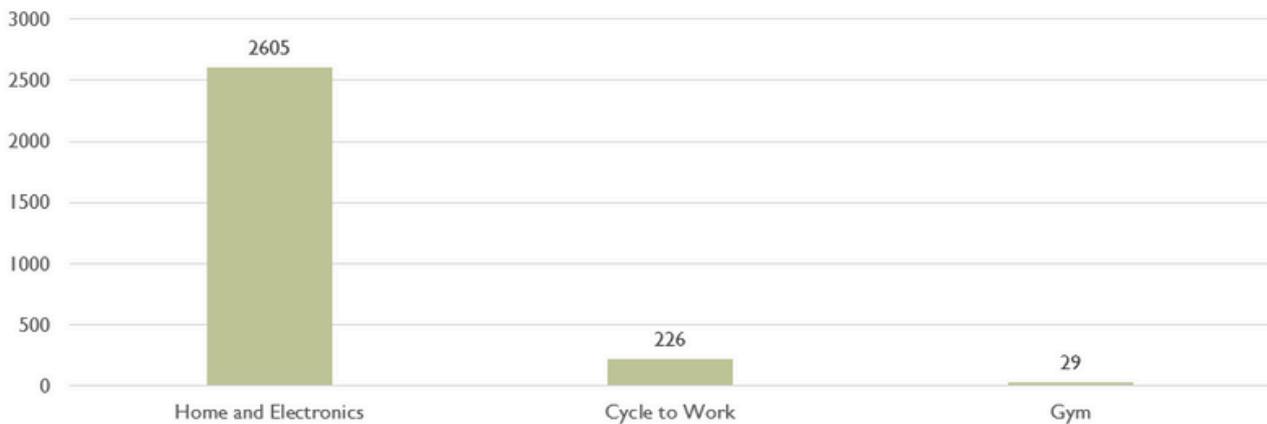
Gift Card Savings

Avg Savings per Day

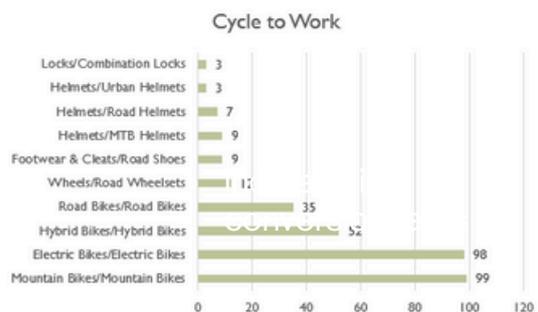
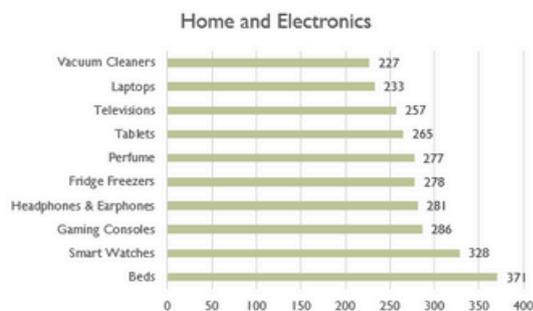
£8.27

Product	Gift Cards Purchased	Total Value *	Total Price *	Total Saved *	Avg Employee Savings per Gift Card *	Employee Savings per Day *
Tesco	★ 154	£16,234	£15,585	★ £649	£4.22	£1.78
Asda	67	£7,396	£7,100	£296	£4.41	£0.81
Sainsbury's	59	£6,142	£5,849	£293	£4.96	£0.80
M&S	58	£4,178	£3,907	£272	£4.68	£0.74
Argos	32	£4,597	£4,321	£276	£8.62	£0.76
Morrisons	22	£2,096	£2,009	£87	£3.94	£0.24
Ikea	17	£3,957	£3,720	£237	£13.96	£0.65
Currys	13	£4,582	£4,275	£307	£23.61	£0.84
Boots	11	£770	£730	£40	£3.61	£0.11
B&Q	10	£1,162	£1,104	£58	£5.81	£0.16
John Lewis & Waitrose	9	£1,459	£1,401	£58	£6.49	£0.16
Airbnb	8	£2,904	£2,737	£168	£20.97	£0.46
Just Eat	6	£243	£230	£12	£2.02	£0.03
B&M	4	£176	£165	£11	£2.72	£0.03
Costa Coffee	4	£152	£138	£14	£3.41	£0.04
Total	511	£59,672	£56,653	£3,019	£5.91	£8.27

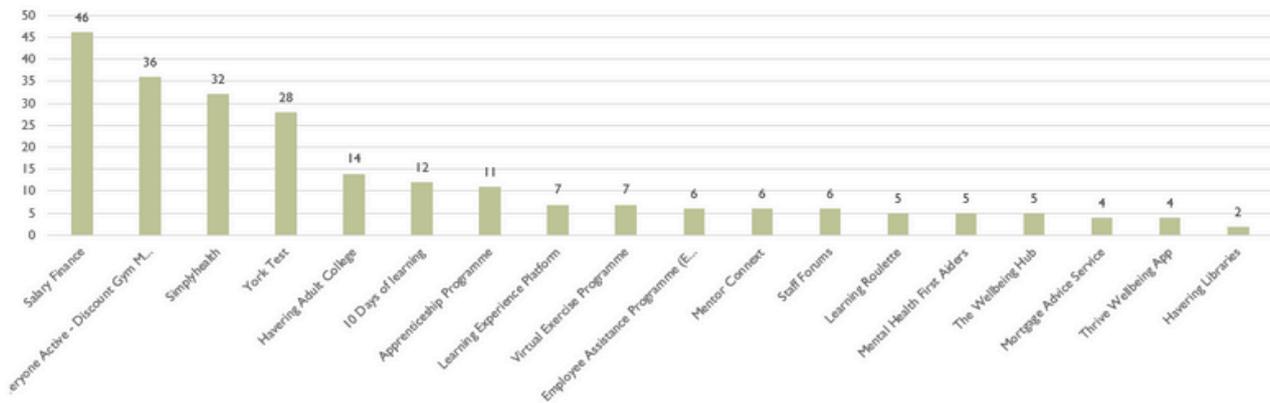
VIVUP CLICK DATA



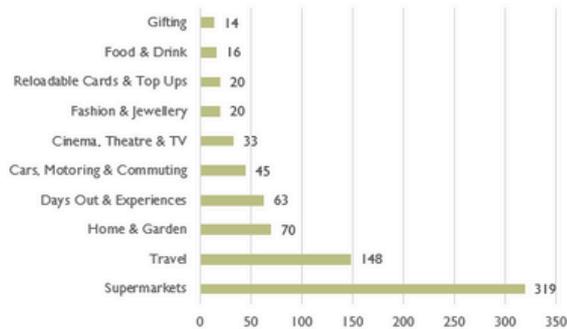
Top 10 (Google Analytics)



Custom Benefits (Google Analytics)



Lifestyle Savings (Google Analytics)

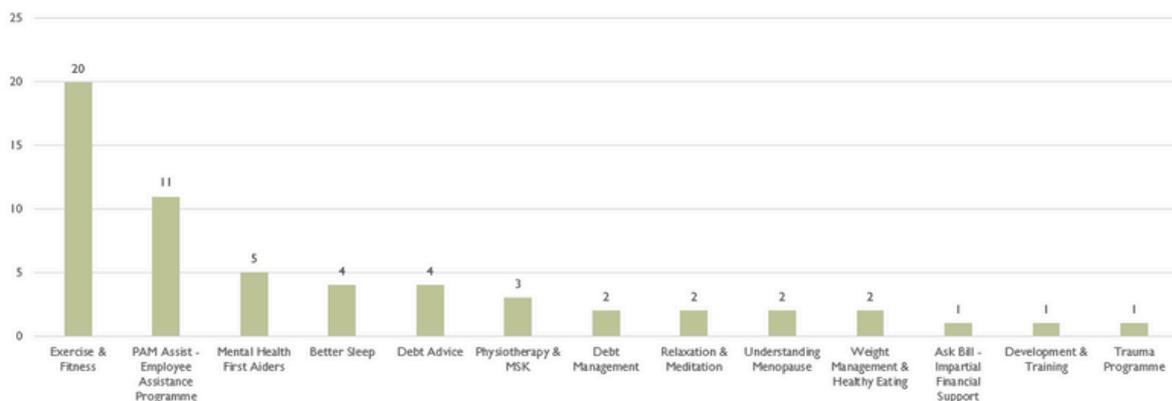


lifestyle pages visits 9,389

Top Brands

brand_name
Tesco - eGift Card
ASDA - eGift Card
Cineworld
Vue
Sainsbury's - eGift Card
M&S - eGift Card
M&S eGift Card
Odeon
Airport Parking With Us
Morrisons - eGift Card - Supermarket Use Only

Health and Wellbeing (Google Analytics)



Salary Finance



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Salary Finance sponsored the Team of the year Award 2025
- Since launch 215 loan applications have been submitted with 117 being approved valuing - £1,022,400.00

Salary Finance	
Number of applications	69
Value of loan applications	£297,000.00
Total approved applications	33
Declined (Debt advice signposted)	34
Decline reasons:	Affordability - 41.2%, Score - 2.9% and Policy Rules - 55.9%
Number of loans issued	27
Full loan issued	13
Starter loan issued	14
Value of disbursed loans	£57,400.00
Avg Value of disbursed loans	£2,125.93
Value of disbursed loans (inc. TUL)	£57,400.00
Repaid Loans (inc. TUL)	20
Average Age	40
Average Income	£38,616.70 (Grade 6 SP27)
Average Tenure (Months)	63

Salary Finance



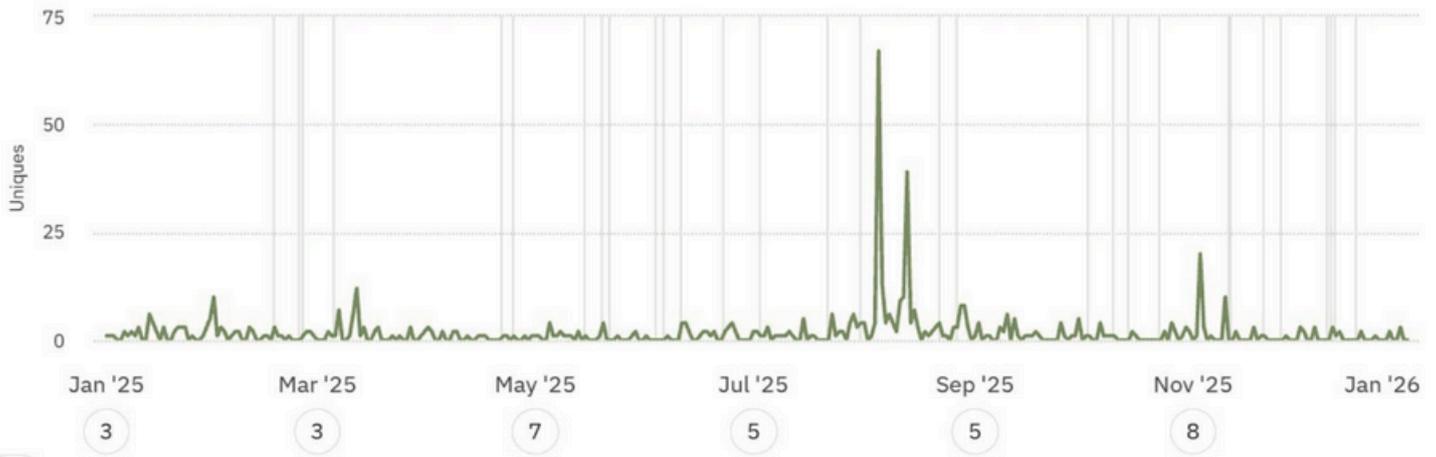
Reasons for Loan:	-
Debt consolidation	4
Home	9
Car	4
Other	10
Age profile:	18-25 5.9% 26 - 35 21.6% 36 - 45 33.3% 46 - 55 27.5% 55+ 11.8%
Income profile:	<10k 0.0% 10 - 20k 1.0% 20 - 30k 26.5% 30 - 40k 47.1% 40 - 50k 16.7% 50 - 60k 6.9% 60 - 70k 2.0% 70k + 0.0%
Tenure profile:	< 6 months 0.0% 6 - 12 months 8.8% 1 - 2 years 12.7% 2 - 3 years 16.7% 3 - 4 years 5.9% 4 years + 55.9%

Salary Finance



Engagement Jan-Dec 2025

SF



Definitions

Full loan offered	Where SF can evidence repayments are affordable in line with FCA guidelines.
Starter loan offered	Where smaller SF loan than requested is offered, as full loan repayments are not deemed affordable, but a smaller amount is.
Debt advice signposted	Non profit debt advice is signposted where a loan application does not meet FCA affordability guidelines.
Number of loans issued	Number of loan offers made AND employee accepted the loan (excludes loan offers made where employee did not take-up offer).
Decline reasons:	Affordability - Customers declined for this reason have insufficient disposable income each month to afford a loan from Salary Finance. This is a regulatory requirement. Disposable income is the amount of income left at the end of the month (from sources like salary and overtime) minus essential living expenses (e.g. rent, mortgage, groceries, utility bills) and also minus debt repayments (e.g. loans, credit cards, car finance).
	Score - Customers declined for this reason are too high risk, even for our business model or have 0 credit footprint.
	Policy - Customers declined for this reason are showing signs of financial difficulty and lending to them would breach regulation and would not be in the customer's best interest.

York Test



yorktest

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- York Test provided a a Premium Food Intolerance and Health Bundle as a gift for the Employee Benefits Roadshow.
- Change in account manager lead to a gap in received quarterly comms issues now resolved.

York Test - (value of tests purchased)

Jan 2025	£180
Feb 2025	£113
Jun 2025	£273
Jul 2025	£550
Aug 2025	£317
Sep 2025	£238
Oct 2025	£396
Total	£2,067

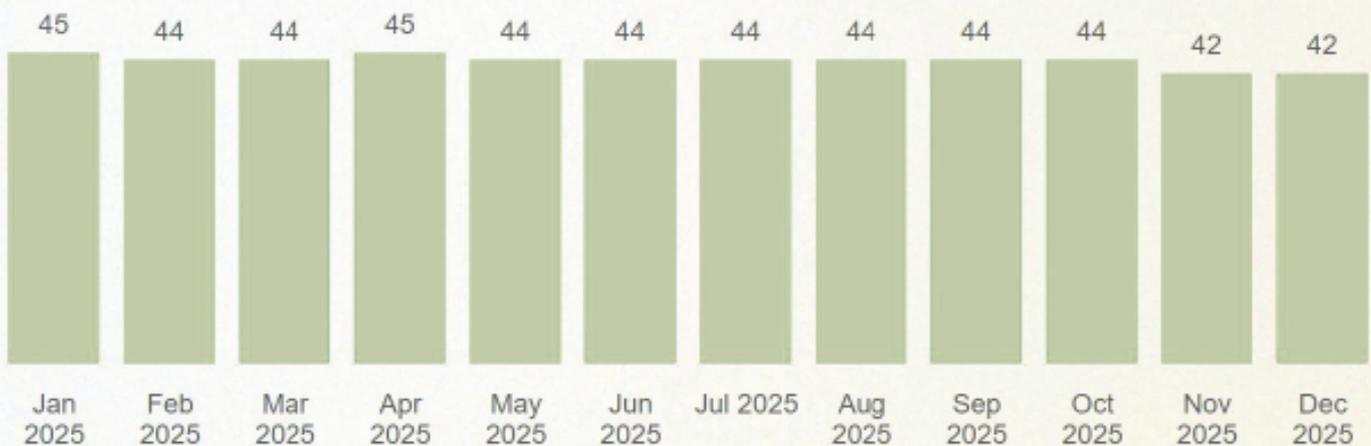


KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Regular comms shared throughout 2025 and data shows an interest in colleagues exploring 'paid for' options to support their health.

Simplyhealth	
Active polices	42
Active lives	65
Average age of policy holder	67
Total claims	221
Claims value	£11,866

Active Policies at the End of Month



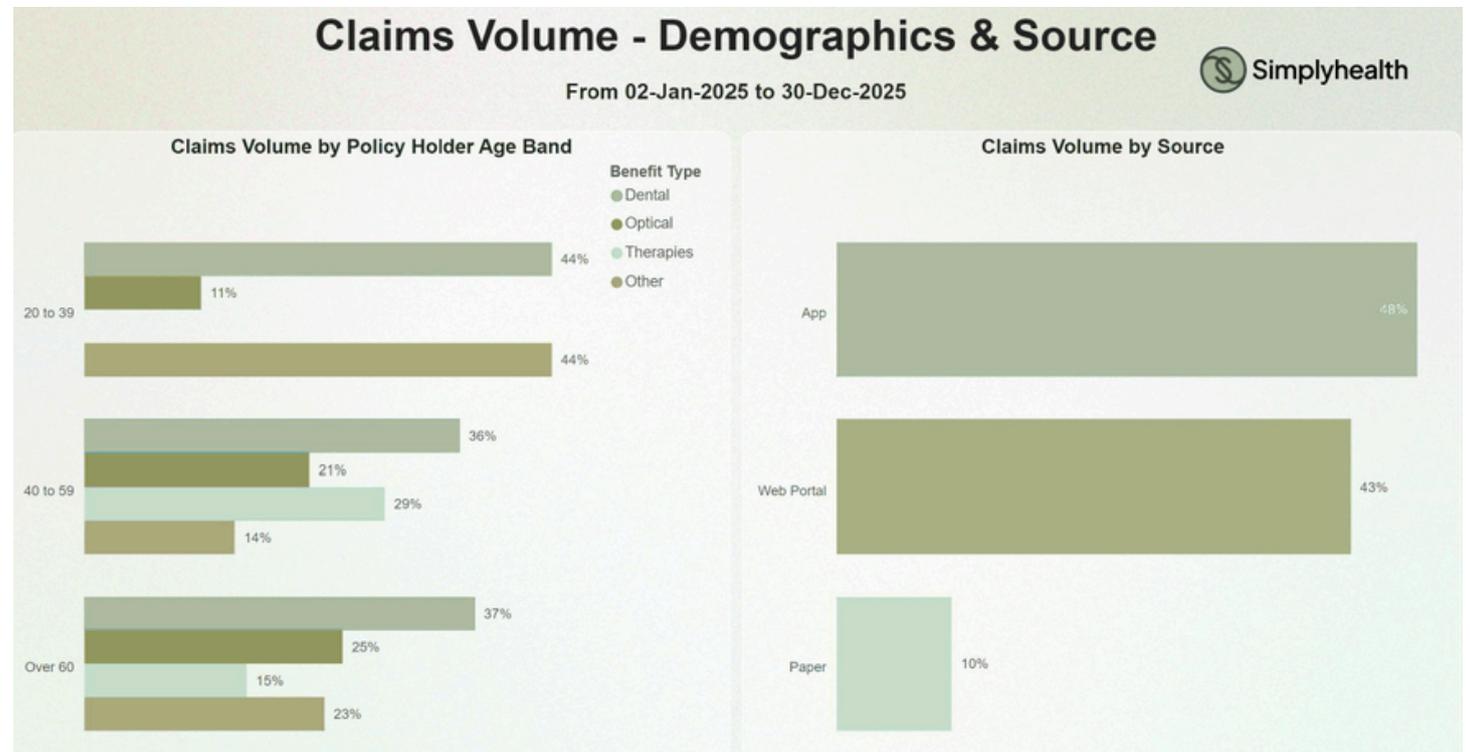
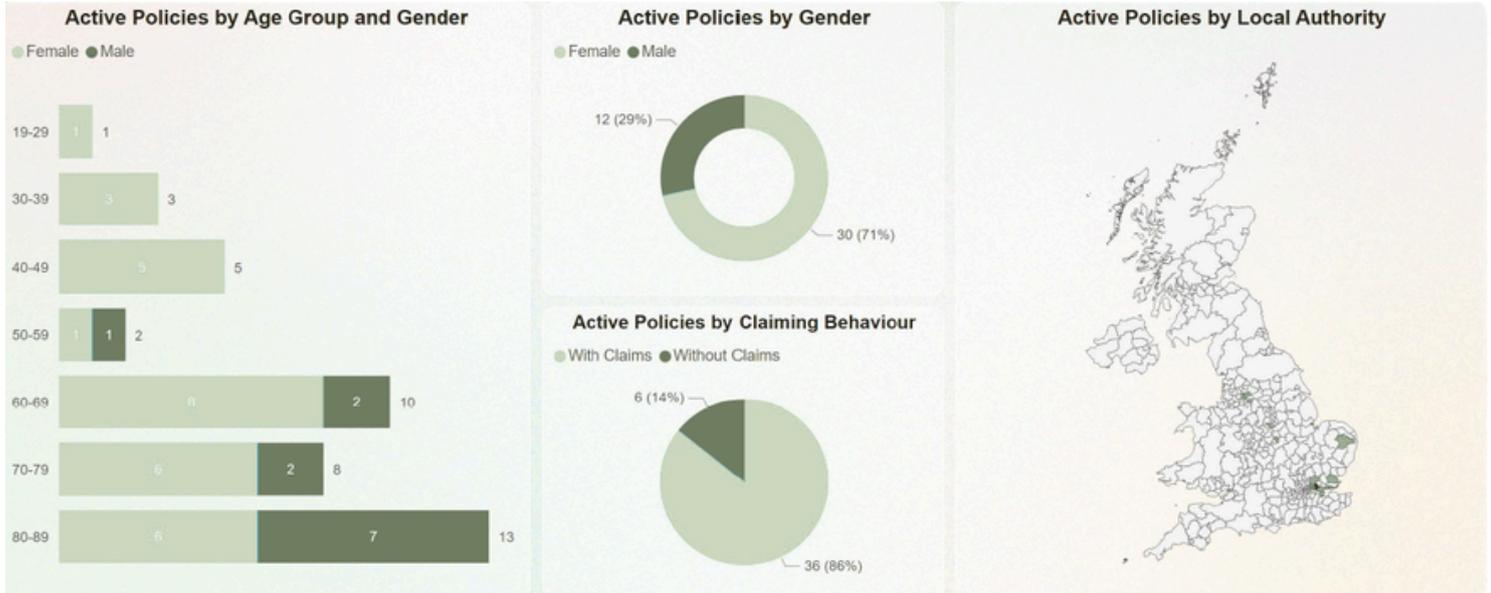


Active Policies

ProductLevel	Single	Couple	Single Parent Family	Family	Total Policies
Level 1	8	4	1	2	15
Level 2	3	4			7
Level 3	7	6			13
Level 4	3	2			5
Level 5	1				1
Level 6	1				1
Total Policies	23	16	1	2	42

Active Lives

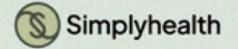
ProductLevel	Single	Couple	Single Parent Family	Family	Total Lives
Level 1	8	8	3	7	26
Level 2	3	8			11
Level 3	7	12			19
Level 4	3	4			7
Level 5	1				1
Level 6	1				1
Total Lives	23	32	3	7	65



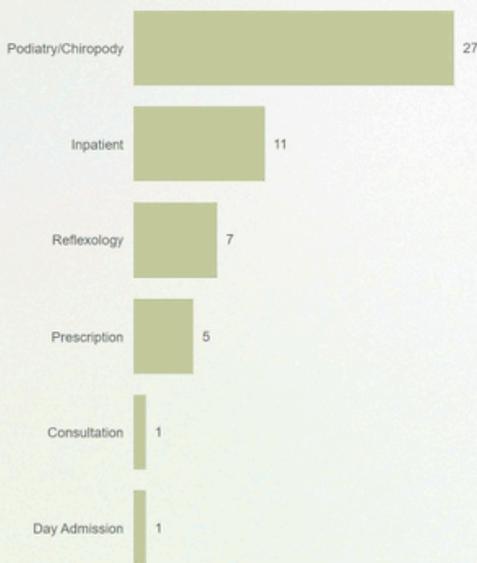


Benefit Summary

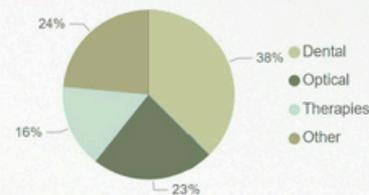
From 02-Jan-2025 to 30-Dec-2025



Claims Volume by Benefit (Other)



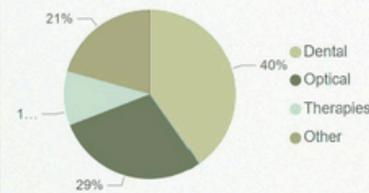
Claims Volume by Benefit Type



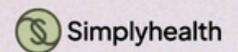
Claims Value by Benefit (Other)



Claims Value by Benefit Type

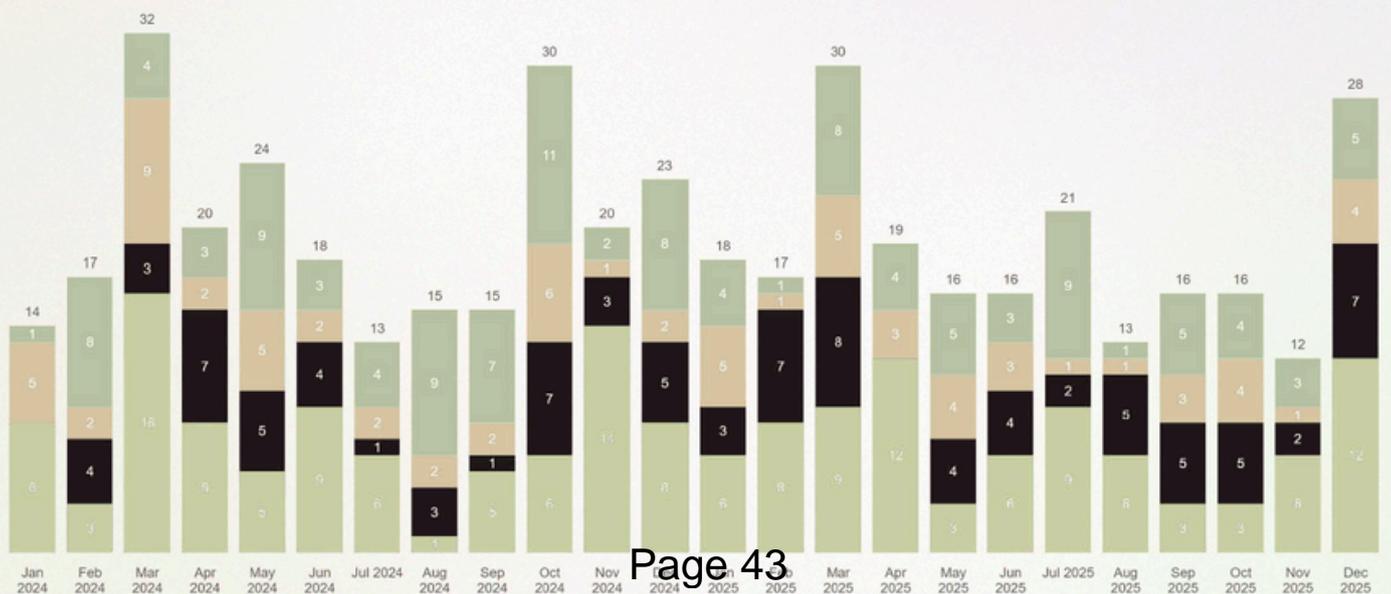


Claims Trend



Claims Volume by Benefit Type

Legend: Dental (Green), Optical (Black), Therapies (Orange), Other (Light Green)



Webinar



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Webinars delivered either by Wellbeing Consultant or in partnership with Public Health:
- Suicide Prevention & Support in Havering.
- Wellbeing Hub Tour.
- What is a Mental Health First Aider?
- Men's Health Awareness Week - Men's Health Conditions.

Webinars	
Webinars promoted	126
Webinars delivered interally	4
Please rate from a scale of 1 - 10 how informative you found the webinar, training or event?	Average rate - 9
How likely are you to recommend the webinar, training or event to a colleague?	Average rate - 9

The Chiro Collective



Romford & Ilford
Family Chiropractic Centre

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Partnership with The Chiro Collective and Romford & Ilford Family Chiropractic Centre commenced January 2025
- 3 sessions took place 2 at the Town Hall and 1 at Langtons House.

The Chiro Collective	
Number of events	3
Number of colleagues attending	90
Number of colleagues utilising corporate voucher offer (80% discount)	51
FOC to council (Free of charge)	Saving of £885
Corporate voucher (colleague saving)	£10,710 and £210 individually.

A Brief Overview of the Report

A quick review of the report indicates steady progress, but it also highlights increasing pressure on wellbeing needs. With the rejection of the growth bid, 2026 is expected to impose limits on the service's capabilities. Innovation will continue, albeit at a slower pace, focusing on achieving more with fewer resources.

The Importance of Collaboration

Collaborative efforts will be essential in navigating these constraints, underscoring the significance of teamwork and shared responsibility. By utilizing existing resources more efficiently and creatively, there is potential to sustain momentum in key areas. Employee feedback will be invaluable in pinpointing priorities and identifying small adjustments that can lead to substantial improvements.

The Role of Communication

In this changing landscape, effective communication will be crucial. Transparent updates about progress and challenges will keep everyone informed and engaged, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose. As we approach 2026, it's evident that adaptability and resilience will be our most valuable assets, steering us through a year marked by thoughtful growth and innovation.

Looking Ahead to 2026

A glance towards 2026 reveals steady improvement in core areas but also escalating pressure on personal and financial wellbeing. With new funding currently on hold, the service will encounter stricter limitations on what can be achieved.

Financial wellbeing is becoming increasingly important, as more individuals seek support in light of rising living costs. Progress will persist, but at a more measured pace, with an emphasis on smarter resource utilization and leveraging current benefits providers, such as Salary Finance and HSBC, for small, meaningful enhancements.

Focus on Sustainable Solutions

The focus will be on developing sustainable solutions that boost financial literacy and offer practical assistance to employees. Workshops and seminars covering budgeting, saving, and debt management will be introduced, aiming to equip staff with the knowledge and tools necessary to confidently overcome economic challenges.

Moreover, collaborative partnerships with financial experts and institutions will be pursued to offer more comprehensive support options. This proactive approach aims to reduce stress and promote a sense of security among employees, positively impacting their overall wellbeing.

Commitment to a Supportive Environment

As we transition into this new phase, our commitment to nurturing a supportive and inclusive environment remains steadfast. By addressing both personal and financial wellbeing, the organization strives to build a robust framework where employees feel valued and empowered, ready to face the challenges of 2026 and beyond with resilience and optimism.

Strategic Leadership in Wellbeing Initiatives

With the Communications team leading the STAR Awards, the HR Wellbeing Consultant will now have the capacity to shape strategic plans for 2026. This shift in responsibilities will enable the HR Wellbeing Consultant to concentrate on identifying key areas where wellbeing initiatives can have a significant impact.

By analysing data and feedback from colleagues, tailored strategies can be developed to address specific needs, ensuring the efficient and effective allocation of resources.

Plans include expanding the Mental Health First Aider network, with clearer signposting and increased awareness of the available support.

This initiative aims to empower colleagues by providing accessible resources and trained individuals who can offer immediate support and guidance. By broadening the network, the HR Wellbeing Consultant hopes to cultivate a culture of openness and understanding, where discussions about mental health are normalized and encouraged.

Let's continue to lead by example in creating a psychologically safe environment that champions mental health, in a wellbeing focused workplace.

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Subject Heading:	Health and safety training & sickness absence
ELT Lead:	Neil Stubbings – Strategic Director of Place
Report Author and contact details:	Mark Riordan – Corporate Health & Safety Team Manager
Policy context:	The prevention of work related ill health in line with the Corporate Health & Safety policy.

SUMMARY

In response to a question from the committee, the Corporate Health & Safety service has reviewed sickness absence data against the provision of health and safety training relating to musculoskeletal disorders and stress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Overview and Scrutiny Board notes that the data will continue to be reviewed and any areas of concern where further training needs are identified will be addressed. The Overview and Scrutiny Board takes any other action it considers appropriate.

REPORT DETAIL

Sickness absence data relating to musculoskeletal injury and stress has been reviewed to determine whether there is a correlation between this and the provision of health and safety training in these topics.

Manual training is provided as a mandatory e-learning course to PC users and as a classroom course for non-PC users. Stress related course are only provided via e-learning. Completion of both these e-learning courses is approximately 70% (February 2026).

Sickness absences relating to musculoskeletal injuries for the years 2023, 2024 and 2025 are generally in the range of 10 -15 new absences per month. Although this number is low, analysis of this by Service area has revealed an area of concern with the catering team accounting for approximately 24% of all cases. This will be followed up with a review of risk assessments in place and addressing any additional training needs requirements. It should be noted that musculoskeletal absences may not be due to work related issues and could be due to existing health conditions or to activities outside work. The data also only considers the first day of a new absence and so, in effect, it may reflect a smaller number of staff having multiple periods of absence.

Stress related absences in 2025 have been in range of 3 new absences per month. This data was broken down into Services areas (19) and, when considered against a staff population in excess of 2700, it was not possible to identify any trends of concern. It should also be noted that the stress related absences may also not be work related and could relate to external factors such as financial concerns, relationship / family issues and ill health.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks: None of this summary report.

Legal implications and risks: None of this summary report.

Human Resources implications and risks: None of this summary report.

Equalities implications and risks: None of this summary report.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

None of this summary report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

Overview & Scrutiny Board

5 March 2026

REPORT

Subject Heading:

Commercial Strategy - Update

SLT Lead:

Andrew Blake-Herbert

Report Author and contact details:

Trevor Cook, 01708 431250,
trevor.cook@havering.gov.uk

Policy context:

The Commercial Strategy supports the delivery of a range of commercial activities in the Council. It is managed within Havering's Governance framework to enhance financial sustainability and service efficiency, optimising resource allocation to improve services.

Financial summary:

There are no immediate direct financial implications for the Council. The Strategy will be delivered using existing resources, with costs absorbed by relevant teams. If specific commercial initiatives are identified which require investment, then this will be the subject of future reports.

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy **X**

Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council **X**

SUMMARY

The Council adopted the Havering Commercial Strategy 2024–2029 in September 2024 to provide a clear corporate framework for embedding a commercial mindset across the organisation, strengthening financial sustainability and improving service delivery.

This report will assure the Overview & Scrutiny Board that appropriate governance, monitoring and reporting arrangements are in place through the Commercial Strategy Action Plan and the Strategic and Operational Commercial Boards, providing assurance that delivery is being managed effectively and that risks are identified and addressed.

RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to note the content of this report.

REPORT DETAIL

The Havering Commercial Strategy 2024–2029 is being implemented through a structured and monitored Commercial Strategy Action Plan, overseen by newly established Strategic and Operational Commercial Boards.

Delivery activity to date has focused on embedding the conditions required for sustainable commercial activity across the organisation, rather than specific income-generation initiatives.

This reports provides a summary of the key areas of achievement.

Embedding a commercial culture and approach

A core element of delivery has been the development of a shared commercial culture, ensuring that services consider value, demand, cost recovery and customer need as part of routine decision-making. The Action Plan includes specific actions to:

- **Develop a commercial mind-set across the Council**, increasing awareness and adoption of commercial practices within service areas.
- **Identify and promote commercial leads within services**, providing clear points of accountability and supporting collaboration across departments.
- **Embed a commercial approach into service delivery and planning**, including a review of existing strategies to identify where commercial principles can be more explicitly applied.

These actions are intended to move the organisation away from ad-hoc commercial activity and towards a consistent, corporate approach aligned with Council priorities.

Building commercial capability and awareness

The Action Plan places significant emphasis on workforce capability, recognising that successful commercial delivery depends on staff confidence and skills. Key areas of activity include:

- **Development of commercial awareness and capability training**, supported by identified learning sponsors within service areas.
- **Incorporation of commercial skills and knowledge into job profiles**, recruitment processes and workforce development activity, ensuring that commercial thinking becomes part of the Council's long-term capability rather than reliant on individuals.

To support this, the Council has established a Commercial Awareness Resource Bank, providing a central point of reference for guidance, training, tools and information that services can draw upon when developing or reviewing commercial activity. This supports consistency, reduces duplication and reinforces shared understanding across the organisation, rather than prescribing a single delivery model.

Communication, engagement and idea generation

The Strategy recognises that commercial opportunities often emerge from operational insight. The Action Plan therefore includes measures to:

- **Create forums and mechanisms for sharing commercial and money-saving ideas**, enabling staff to propose opportunities for consideration and development.
- **Improve internal communication and signposting**, including the introduction of a commercial presence within internal systems to help services understand available support and expertise.

These actions are designed to increase engagement, encourage innovation and ensure that commercial thinking is not confined to specialist teams.

Governance, monitoring and accountability

Strong governance underpins delivery of the Strategy. The Strategic and Operational Commercial Boards provide:

- **Oversight of progress against the Action Plan**, ensuring that actions are tracked, risks identified and priorities adjusted where necessary.
- **A mechanism for challenge and coordination**, helping to align commercial activity with corporate objectives, financial planning and service priorities.

This approach ensures transparency and allows Members to scrutinise progress against agreed actions rather than individual commercial proposals in isolation.

Next stage of delivery

As the Strategy moves into its next phase, the focus will increasingly be on demonstrating impact, including clearer links between commercial activity, service sustainability and financial resilience. The Action Plan provides the framework for this transition, with continued emphasis on capability, consistency and governance rather than short-term income measures.

Success will be demonstrated by the extent to which commercial thinking is routinely embedded in service decision-making, rather than treated as a separate or specialist activity. This will include services consistently considering demand, cost recovery, customer need and social value when developing strategies, business plans and service changes, supported by clear governance and proportionate challenge.

A successful outcome will also be reflected in a more confident and capable workforce, with commercial awareness embedded into roles, recruitment and development, and supported by accessible guidance through the Commercial Awareness Resource Bank.

Over time, this should result in better-informed decisions, improved service sustainability and a clearer line of sight between commercial activity, financial resilience and outcomes for residents, with progress monitored through the agreed Action Plan and reported transparently through the established Commercial Boards.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

The Commercial Strategy supports the Council's medium- and long-term financial sustainability by improving commercial performance and income generation. The Council already undertakes a range of trading and commercial activities and raises significant amounts (over £30m) of fees and charges income from the public, schools and other bodies from activities including schools catering, car parks,

bereavement services and others. This income enables the continued provision of good quality services.

The Strategy in itself does not require additional resources but may require some reprioritisation of time and efforts from existing staff and management. However, it is anticipated that benefits will accrue to those services that engage with the strategy.

If, as a result of this work, improvements and new initiatives are identified that require future investment then business cases will need to be developed, and any resources required identified. Commercial activity can involve additional risk as well as opportunity and these risks must be carefully considered, scenario analysis carried out and mitigation plans developed before new commitments are entered into.

The development of strong governance arrangements that can take decisions in a timely fashion so that opportunities are not lost is a priority. In addition there should be regular monitoring of all activities and alignment with the approved Action Plan.

Legal implications and risks:

All commercial activity is required to operate within existing legal and regulatory frameworks. The Council has a range of powers that may be relied upon when delivering projects which form part of the Strategy, including the general power of competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, subject to any other statutory constraints.

There are no direct legal implications arising from this covering report. Ongoing legal oversight through established governance arrangements mitigates the risk of non-compliance.

Human Resources implications and risks:

Successful delivery of the Strategy depends on workforce capability and capacity. There is a risk that insufficient commercial skills or competing pressures may limit progress. This is being addressed through planned training, updated job profiles and the identification of commercial leads across services

Equalities implications and risks:

The Commercial Strategy has been subject to equality and health impact considerations. There are no adverse equalities impacts arising from this covering report, and commercial activity is expected to support positive outcomes through improved service delivery.

Environmental and Climate Change implications and risks:

There are no direct environmental or climate change implications arising from this covering report. The Council has agreed for the organisation and the borough to be carbon neutral by 2040 or sooner. A key strategic action centres around data and technology. Through this, sustainable practices and technologies will be integrated to reduce carbon emission associated with operation and services. Where relevant, individual commercial proposals will continue to be assessed to ensure alignment with wider Council environmental objectives.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Havering Commercial Strategy 2024-2029 [Commercial Strategy | London Borough of Havering](#)

Overview & Scrutiny Board

17 March 2026

Subject Heading:

Response of Cabinet to Call-in of Executive Decision - Future Proposals for Former Library Premises

SLT Lead:

Gavin Milnthorpe – Deputy Director of Legal Services

Report Author and contact details:

Anthony Clements – Committee Services Manager
anthony.clements@onesource.co.uk

Policy context:

The report deals with a statutory process.

Financial summary:

There is no significant financial impact from the statutory processes as these requirements are being met by existing budgets.

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy **X**

Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council

SUMMARY

In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, Cabinet has responded to the comments made following the recent requisition by the Board of the above Executive Decision. These responses are attached for consideration by the Board.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board considers the response of Cabinet to its comments and takes any action it considers appropriate.

REPORT DETAIL

At its meeting on 8 January, the Board considered and upheld a requisition of a Cabinet decision re the future use of former library sites. The comments made by the Board are attached as are the responses made by Cabinet following a full discussion at the Cabinet meeting. The Board is invited note the responses and agree any action it considers appropriate.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks: None of this covering report.

Legal implications and risks: None of this covering report.

Human Resources implications and risks: None of this covering report.

Equalities implications and risks: None of this covering report.

Environmental and Climate Change implications and risks: None of this covering report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

Overview & Scrutiny Board

17 March 2026

Subject Heading:

Self Evaluation of Board's Work 2025/26

SLT Lead:

Sandy Hamberger, Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Report Author and contact details:

Anthony Clements, Committee Services Manager
anthony.clements@havering.gov.uk

Policy context:

The report deals with the statutory process of Overview and Scrutiny.

Financial summary:

There is no significant financial impact from the statutory processes as these requirements are being met by existing budgets.

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Things that matter for residents

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy

Resources - A well run Council that delivers for People and Place **X**

SUMMARY

With the assistance of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer, the Board will be asked to consider the latest Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) Survey of Local Government Scrutiny findings and review its work during 2025/2026 and the effectiveness of this.

RECOMMENDATION

The Board reviews its 2025/2026 performance and identifies ways to improve scrutiny and effectiveness.

REPORT DETAIL

Background

Scrutiny in councils acts as a critical, independent "check and balance" on executive decision-making, designed to improve public services and ensure transparency. By utilizing evidence-based reviews and public, non-partisan questioning, scrutiny contributes to better policy development, increased accountability, and enhanced performance.

Key Contributions to Councils:

- Holding the Executive to Account: Scrutiny committees, composed of non-cabinet councillors, examine decisions, policies, and actions of the cabinet and senior officers.
- Improving Policy and Performance: Through "pre-decision scrutiny," committees review plans before they are implemented, ensuring they are robust and represent good value for money.
- Giving Residents a Voice: Scrutiny amplifies public concerns by allowing for the review of issues that directly affect local communities.
- External Scrutiny: It extends beyond the council to review the work of partners like the NHS, police, and other organizations delivering services to local residents.
- "Critical Friend" Function: It provides constructive challenge rather than just opposition, with the goal of driving continuous improvement.

- "Call-in" Powers: Scrutiny has the power to temporarily pause executive decisions ("call-in") to review them and recommend changes if necessary.
- Task and Finish Groups: Small, time-limited groups often investigate specific, complex issues in depth to provide focused recommendations.

Main Roles of Scrutiny Committees:

- Policy Review & Development: Reviewing existing policies to ensure effectiveness and proposing new ones.
- Performance Monitoring: Reviewing how well council services are performing against targets.
- Budget Scrutiny: Monitoring the council's financial position and value for money.
- External Partnerships: Scrutinising the impact of services delivered by third-party organisations

Great scrutiny in councils

Acts as a constructive "critical friend" to the executive, driving improvement through evidence-based, non-political challenge. It focuses on public priorities, holds decision-makers to account, and produces clear, actionable recommendations that improve local services, rather than just reviewing reports. [A councillor's workbook on scrutiny](#) Local Government Association.

Havering Overview and Scrutiny Board Programme 2025/26

The Board had a busy year, setting its work programme with a focus on scrutinising areas from the Statutory Corporate Plan, Finance, and progress of the Councils agreed Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) Improvement and Transformation Plan and CIPFA Financial Management review – both a requirement to support the Councils financial support from the Government and areas within the plan itself.

The table below summarises the items scrutinised by the Board over 2025/2026. The Board is asked to note that following last year's annual review of the effectiveness of scrutiny and the seven recommendations that went to May 2026 Cabinet, in line with those Board recommendations are now normally presented at Cabinet by the Chairman or Vice-Chair of the Board.

Overview and Scrutiny Board Meeting Date	Item Scrutinised
16 th April 2025	Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board :

	<p>7th May 2025 Cabinet Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relevant Cabinet Member should be required to attend each meeting of the Board or Sub-Committees where there is an item relevant to their portfolios. • 2. All Cabinet responses to scrutiny recommendations or comments should be included as an agenda item at the next scrutiny meeting. • 3. Comments and recommendations to Cabinet should be presented at the Cabinet meeting by the Chairman and Vice-Chair of the Board or relevant Sub-Committee. • 4. Cabinet responses to scrutiny comments on called-in decisions should be circulated to all members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board as well as other Members supporting the call-in. • 5. Cabinet supports the Board's request for scrutiny reports to be received two weeks ahead of publication as this will facilitate earlier pre-meets and general consideration of the material. • 6. That Cabinet commends the Overview and Scrutiny Board reviewing the work it undertook over the past year, and its ongoing efforts to make the scrutiny process as effective as possible for residents. • 7. That a protocol be developed for working practices between Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Board including, but not limited to, the issues outlined in the recommendations above.
3 rd July 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Savings Proposals Update • Corporate Human Resources Metrics & Agency Workers, Sickness Absence • Customer Services Strategy • Annual Scrutiny Report 2024/25
9 th October 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Savings Update • Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) Improvement and Transformation Plan and CIPFA Financial Management review

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Human Resources Metrics & Agency Workers, Sickness Absence • Cabinet Responses to Scrutiny Recommendations for the Havering Volunteer Centre and Scrutiny Process
8 January 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of Former Library Sites – Requisition of Cabinet Decision
4 February 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ombudsman Complaints 2024/25 • Contract Procedure Rules • Council Budget Proposals 2026/2027
17 th March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Human Resources Metrics & Sickness Absence • Agency Workers • Wellbeing Annual Report • Health & Safety statistics • Commercial Strategy • Response of Cabinet to comments from call-in re Future Use of former Library Sites • Annual Scrutiny report 2025/26: recommendations for incoming Administration and Board Members

It should be noted that the Board comprises a number of Members from other scrutiny sub-committees and this provides an opportunity to input into each other's work programmes in line with Terms of Reference. E.g. the joint scrutiny review by Place and People sub-committees 21st October 2025 on Arnold's Field.

Scrutiny Training undertaken during 2025/2026

The Board requested training for Scrutiny Members, Cabinet Members, Executive Leadership Team and the Executive Leadership Group. These were commissioned and delivered by an independent trainer in October 2025.

The training was seen as an enabler of effective scrutiny by raising awareness and providing opportunity to explore how scrutiny works and role requirements. This is an unusual initiative amongst Local Authorities and should be considered a very positive indicator of the Board's work and profile.

The training sessions provided a valuable opportunity to identify actions to strengthen the effectiveness of scrutiny.

2025/26 review and Improvements for 2026/2027

From the training undertaken, planned next steps include developing a formal scrutiny protocol, informed by Member feedback gathered during the training programme. This protocol will also support the Member induction process on scrutiny following the Council elections.

Members are encouraged to support holding a joint Cabinet–Scrutiny meeting ahead of the first Board meeting of the new municipal year. This would allow both groups to agree how the new protocol will be implemented and ensure a shared understanding of roles and expectations going forward.

The Board is requested to review the improvements outlined in the Statutory Scrutiny Officer's attached presentation, which will also be delivered during the meeting to support the discussion.

The Board is invited to consider strengths and weaknesses of how scrutiny has been undertaken this year and may also wish to suggest both improvements to strengthen scrutiny and items for its work programme for the 2026/27 municipal year.

Members are asked to note that, in consideration of the Council's financial position, the work programme for 2026/27 should be informed by the Statutory Corporate Forward Plan and the DLUHC Improvement and Transformation Plan. Links to both documents are given at the end of this report.

Acknowledgements

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer recognises the substantial time and effort of the Board Members, Chair deputy Chair and Committee Services Officers which have made the 2025/2026 Board year possible.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks: None of this covering report.

Legal implications and risks: None of this covering report.

Human Resources implications and risks: None of this covering report.

Equalities implications and risks: None of this covering report.

Environmental and Climate Change implications and risks: None of this covering report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Statutory Corporate Forward Plan - [Forward plan - MARCH 2026- FORWARD PLAN | London Borough of Havering](#)

DLUHC Improvement and Transformation Plan - [Improvement+and+Transformation+Plan.pdf](#)

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Annual Survey of Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government 2024/25 & Havering Reflections

Highlights of Local Governance and Scrutiny

<https://www.cfgs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Annual-Scrutiny-Survey-2024-25-results.pdf>

Scrutiny Committee Structures

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Most councils operate **multiple scrutiny committees**

- **35%** report **five or more committees**
- Only **13%** have a single overarching scrutiny committee
- Across respondents: **506 thematic committees** were identified
- Most common themes:
 - Health & Care (21%)
 - Children & Education (18%)
 - Economy (12%)
 - Housing (11%)
 - Finance (11%)
 - Environment (8%)

Views on Opposition-Chaired Scrutiny

- **88%** believe opposition-chaired committees bring value
- Reasons cited: independence, balance, accountability
- Minority concerns: risk of politicisation

Scrutiny Chairing Arrangements & Diversity

- **63%**: scrutiny chairs held by majority party
- **20%**: chairs held by opposition
- **17%**: politically balanced

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Diversity representation:
• **34%** female chairs
• **12%** chairs from Black or minority ethnic backgrounds

- Councils report **612 chairs** and **502 vice-chairs** in total



How well Scrutiny Works



Ratings (0–10 scale):

- 7–8 (fairly well): 47%
- 9–10 (extremely well): 7%
- 0–6 (less well/not well): 46%

What Effective Scrutiny Looks Like

What Helps & Hinders Scrutiny

Positive reasons

- Good relationships with Executive
- Effective tracking of recommendations
- Active involvement in policy and budget reviews

Negative reasons:

- Resource constraints
- Political inertia and dominance
- Poor chairing or limited engagement



Ideas for Improving Scrutiny

Councils suggest:

- More focused scrutiny & better work planning
- Better Executive–Scrutiny relationships
- Fewer committees / more streamlined structures
- Greater political balance
- More public involvement
- Stronger recommendations and follow-up

Conclusions from the Survey



Closing

The survey highlights both:

- **Strong foundations**
(engagement with partners, thematic breadth, general belief in value)

- **Systemic challenges**
(resourcing, political culture, process inconsistency, diversity gaps)

Overall: scrutiny is valued but **not yet working at its full potential.**

What Poor Scrutiny Looks Like

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- Poor scrutiny results in decisions that are not transparent
- Poor scrutiny can harm the interests of the community
- Poor scrutiny practices can lead to inefficient use of resources
- Informs Commissioners Judgements



Scrutiny's Impact (Sentiment Statements)

Strong agreement/ agreement levels show scrutiny is seen as having positive influence on:

- Local area challenges
- Local people's lives
- Financial & resource management
- Partner organisations
- Adoption and use of AI



Impact of Scrutiny on Residents

Residents have a greater trust in local government

Government decisions are more transparent

Residents report higher satisfaction with public services

Could think about

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•Engaging with External Partners

Commonly engaged sectors include:

- Voluntary sector
- Health & Social Care
- Education & young people
- Emergency services
- Business & Economy

Councils want stronger relationships, improved collaboration, better visibility, and more digital/hybrid options for partner involvement.

Place-Based Scrutiny

- Focuses on organisations beyond the council (e.g., NHS, Police, utilities, universities)
- Where engagement occurs, outcomes are generally positive
- Many councils **have not attempted** outreach to some key sectors (e.g., broadband providers)

Board recommendations for Strengthening Scrutiny in 25/26



April 2025 Overview & Scrutiny Recommendations from the annual self-assessment of 2024/25. Presented to 7th May 2025 Cabinet by Chair and Deputy Chair:

- 1. The relevant Cabinet Member should be required to attend each meeting of the Board or Sub-Committees where there is an item relevant to their portfolios.
- 2. All Cabinet responses to scrutiny recommendations or comments should be included as an agenda item at the next scrutiny meeting.
- 3. Comments and recommendations to Cabinet should be presented at the Cabinet meeting by the Chairman and Vice-Chair of the Board or relevant Sub-Committee.
- 4. Cabinet responses to scrutiny comments on called-in decisions should be circulated to all members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board as well as other Members supporting the call-in.
- 5. Cabinet supports the Board's request for scrutiny reports to be received two weeks ahead of publication as this will facilitate earlier pre-meets and general consideration of the material.
- 6. That Cabinet commends the Overview and Scrutiny Board reviewing the work it undertook over the past year, and its ongoing efforts to make the scrutiny process as effective as possible for residents.
- 7. That a protocol be developed for working practices between Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Board including, but not limited to, the issues outlined in the recommendations above.

Thoughts on How to Strengthen Scrutiny Arrangements in Havering for 26/27

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- Length of tenure- is one-year sufficient to learn the roles?
- Working Protocol between Cabinet & Scrutiny
- Timely training and support
- mre-meet with new administration & scrutiny prior to scrutiny Meetings commencing
- Focused work-planning and pre-meets
- Thematic key lines of enquiry
- Post-decision scrutiny: reviewing the impact a decision has had.
- Focus on financial position
- Adoption of task and finish groups (see next slide)
- Tracking of recommendations/implementation/actions agreed
- More joint sub-committee scrutinies
- Provide access to relevant information and data
- Engage more with stakeholders and the community
- Monitor the impact of policies and decisions
- Other?

An independent example of reviewing and strengthening scrutiny arrangements



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[Reports | Westminster City Council](#)

<https://committees.westminster.gov.uk/documents/s70838/Item%2010%20Appendix%201%20-%20SITG%20Summary%20Report%20-%2012%20February%202026.pdf>

Takes you to all T&F Group reports

The February 2026 one covers strengthening scrutiny arrangements: The recommendations were sorted into five themes in order to most effectively discuss and respond to them.

- Vision and impact;
- Role and relationships;
- Structure;
- Training and development; and,
- Work programmes and collaboration.

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