

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE
Appointment Centre Room 7 & 8 - Town Hall
6 November 2025 (7.01 - 8.05 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group Jason Frost (Chairman)

Havering Residents' Group Christine Smith and Jacqueline Williams

Labour Group Frankie Walker (Vice-Chair)

Also Present: Ian Rusha (NEU)

1 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillors Robby Misir and Lamb.

3 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interests.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th July were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

5 CORPORATE PARENTING STRATEGY

The Committee received the updated Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Members noted it was a wholly co-designed document developed with children in care and care-experienced young people through multiple focus groups. The strategy aligned with statutory duties under the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and set out a pledge structured around W.I.S.T; Well, Inspired, Safe, Heard, Treated fairly. Officers explained it formed the thematic basis for the Corporate Parenting Panel which meets six times per

year. Members praised the co-design approach, however, a drafting point was raised to clarify references to sub-groups in the published version. An easy-read, child-friendly design was noted as forthcoming which members praised also.

The Committee **endorsed** the strategy and recommended approval by Cabinet.

6 REVIEW OF FOSTER CARER ALLOWANCES

The Committee was presented with a review of foster carer allowances.

Members noted the document compared Havering against neighbouring boroughs and the national minimum expectation, noting a national shortage of foster carers, cost-of-living pressures, and the need to strengthen in-house provision to reduce reliance on residential settings and independent fostering agencies. Officers addressed a previous imbalance in rates, particularly for 16–17-year-olds, and linked it to sufficiency planning and recruitment targets. Officers described participation in the DfE/ North East London fostering recruitment hub and the Mockingbird support model. The Committee discussed annual up-rating practices, finance growth assumptions for the next year, competition from IFAs' marketing, and the ongoing judicial review of foster carers' employment status.

The Committee **recommended** that as part of the annual review, Cabinet should recognise the National Minimum Allowance as the floor (starting point) in any allowances discussion. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

Subject to the above recommendation, the Committee **endorsed** the policy and recommended approval by Cabinet.

7 VULNERABLE PERSON POLICY FOR COUNCIL TENANTS (2025)

The Committee received the Vulnerable Person Policy for Council Tenants.

Officers explained it was required by the Regulator of Social Housing, framed by consumer standards and building-safety duties. The policy defined vulnerability and set out mechanisms for identifying, recording, and using vulnerability data to tailor services across households, not just the named tenant. Delivery elements included mandatory safeguarding and identification training for staff, role adaptation for Intensive Housing Needs and Holding Officers, clear processes on data maintenance, and practical reasonable service adjustments, for example, waiting longer at the door, pre-visit calls and alternative communication methods including requirements for contractors to comply also. Members queried resourcing and assurance to which officers confirmed continuous demand-and-supply reviews would take place alongside cross-council collaboration and a communications plan to raise awareness and facilitate access.

The Committee **endorsed** the policy and recommended approval by Cabinet.

8 **HAVERING EMPLOYMENT CHARTER FOR AUTISTIC PEOPLE AND PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

The Committee received the proposed Employment Charter.

Members noted that it was an aspirational, strategic framework to reduce employment inequality for autistic people and people with learning disabilities. Officers highlighted the significant employment gap, at only roughly 4.8% of people with learning disabilities in paid work across England, and the Council's intent to lead by example within the constraints of the current finances. Officers explained they sought to embed the Charter within HR recruitment and selection policies. Members asked about join-up with schools, adult colleges, apprenticeships and internships to which officers confirmed there would be Children's Services representation along with a focus on transition to adulthood, employment, and travel training. Members requested a tightening of language, specifically around references to "positive discrimination" and "continuous assessment", to ensure legal robustness and equity in resourcing. Officers agreed to review wording with Legal and HR and return the revised text to the Chair for sign-off prior to Cabinet submission.

Subject to the agreed wording changes the Committee **endorsed** the Charter and recommended approval by Cabinet.

Chairman