



Havering

L O N D O N B O R O U G H

PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE AGENDA

7.00 pm

**Tuesday
15 September 2026**

**Council Chamber -
Town Hall**

Members 11: Quorum 4

COUNCILLORS:

Reform UK Group (7)

Chairman: Alex Donald (Chairman)
Bailey Nash-Gardner (Vice Chairman)
Robert Attree
Duncan Cowie
Graham Edwards
Paul Sullivan
Henry Williams

Havering Aligned Residents' Association Group (2)

Sue Ospreay
Chris Wilkins

Labour Group (1)

Matthew Stanton

East Havering Residents Group (1)

Darren Wise

For information about the meeting please contact:

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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.

What is Overview & Scrutiny?

Each local authority is required by law to establish an overview and scrutiny function to support and scrutinise the Council's executive arrangements. Each overview and scrutiny sub-committee has its own remit as set out in the terms of reference but they each meet to consider issues of local importance.

The sub-committees have a number of key roles:

1. Providing a critical friend challenge to policy and decision makers.
2. Driving improvement in public services.
3. Holding key local partners to account.
4. Enabling the voice and concerns to the public.

The sub-committees consider issues by receiving information from, and questioning, Cabinet Members, officers and external partners to develop an understanding of proposals, policy and practices. They can then develop recommendations that they believe will improve performance, or as a response to public consultations. These are considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and if approved, submitted for a response to Council, Cabinet and other relevant bodies.

Sub-Committees will often establish Topic Groups to examine specific areas in much greater detail. These groups consist of a number of Members and the review period can last for anything from a few weeks to a year or more to allow the Members to comprehensively examine an issue through interviewing expert witnesses, conducting research or undertaking site visits. Once the topic group has finished its work it will send a report to the Sub-Committee that created it and will often suggest recommendations for the Overview and Scrutiny Board to pass to the Council's Executive.

Terms of Reference

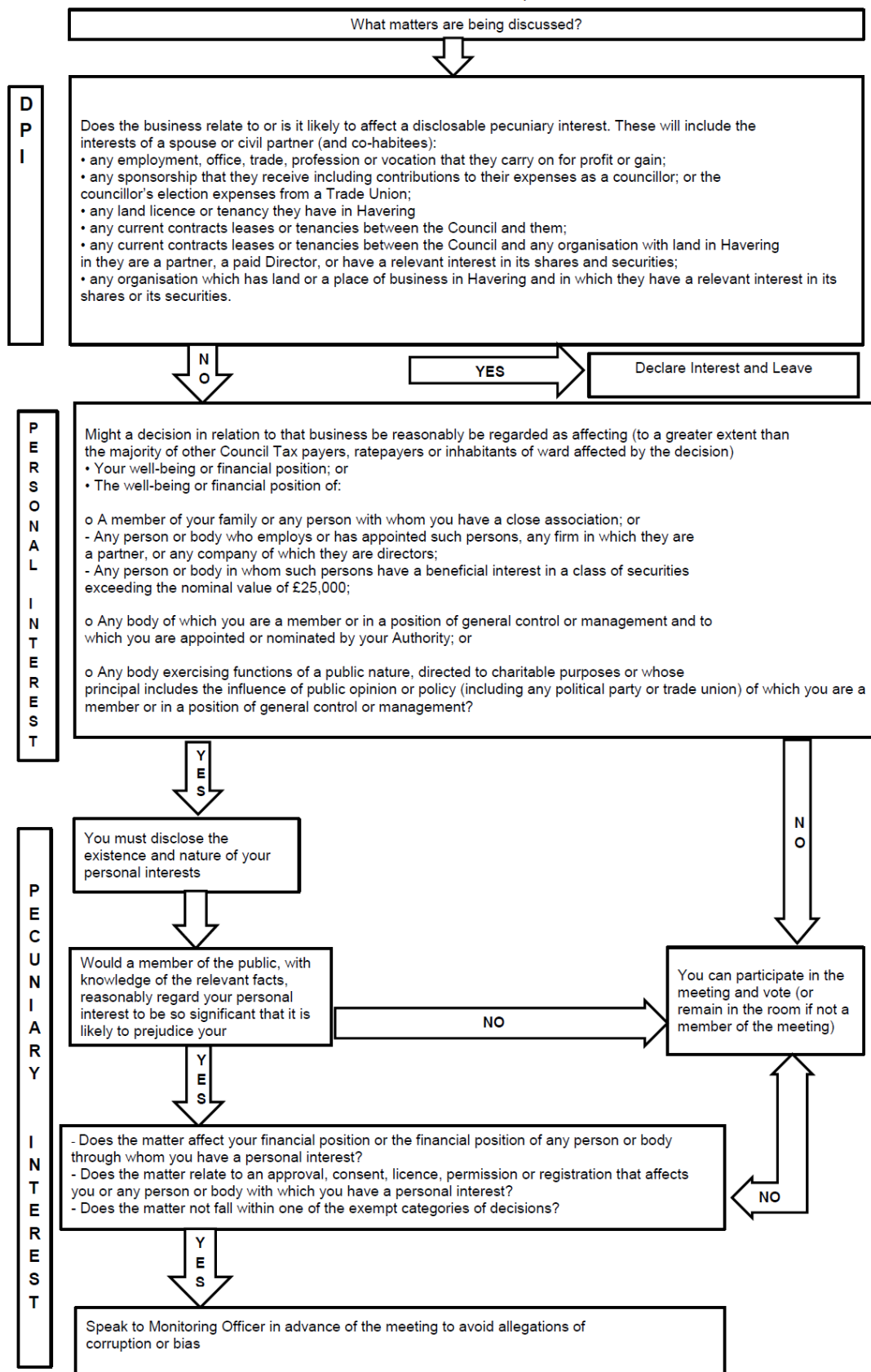
The areas scrutinised by the Committee are:

- Housing & Accommodation Services
- Land & Property Services
- Planning
- Building Control
- Business Services
- Inward Investment
- Asset Management
- Property Services
- Facilities Management
- Sports

Place Overview & Scrutiny Sub Committee, 15 September 2026

- Leisure
- Arts
- Music
- Libraries
- Heritage
- Parks & Open Space
- Highways
- Parking & Traffic
- Waste & Recycling
- Climate Change
- Transport & Infrastructure
- Public Protection & Licensing
- Emergency Planning
- Technical Services

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

Receive (if any)

3 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members are invited to disclose any interests in any of the items on the agenda at this point of the meeting. Members may still declare an interest in an item at any time prior to the consideration of the matter.

4 MINUTES (Pages 9 - 18)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 10 March 2026 and authorise the Chairman to sign them.

5 PROVISIONAL ITEM: PROPOSED TASK AND FINISH GROUP - HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING

The Sub-Committee to discuss a proposal for a task and finish group.

6 ENDORSEMENT OF THE DRAFT SCRUTINY WORKING PROTOCOL (Pages 19 - 32)

Report attached.

7 CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO ACHIEVE EFFECTIVE SCRUTINY FOR 2026/27 (Pages 33 - 38)

Report attached.

8 AGREEING ITEMS FOR THE PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2026/27 (Pages 39 - 46)

Report attached.

Zena Smith
Head of Committee and
Election Services

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PLACE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE
Council Chamber - Town Hall
10 March 2026 (7.00 - 9.10 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group David Taylor (Chairman)

Havering Residents' Group Philippa Crowder, Laurance Garrard, Robby Misir and John Wood

Labour Group Matthew Stanton (Vice-Chair)

East Havering Residents Group

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

109 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There was no interest disclosed at the meeting.

110 MINUTES

The minutes of the sub-committee meeting held on 27 January 2026 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

111 NEW HOUSING ALLOCATION SCHEME - PROGRESS REPORT

The Sub-Committee received a presentation from the Assistant Director of Housing Demand and the Housing Choice and Applications Manager on the implementation of the Council's new Housing Allocations Scheme and Housing Register system which went live in September 2025.

Officers outlined the development and implementation of the project, noting that a number of risks had been identified at an early stage. These included concerns regarding contractor capacity, staff turnover, continuity within the delivery team and the completeness of the new system. Particular concern had been raised regarding project management arrangements due to issues experienced on a previous project. Although these concerns were recorded and monitored through the project risk log, progress was adversely affected

by staffing changes, contractor performance issues and repeated delays during 2024 and early 2025.

Members were advised that the Council's preferred option had been to migrate applicant data directly from the previous housing register system into the new platform. However, the contractor confirmed that this could not be achieved within the agreed design and implementation timescales. As a result, a full re-application process was introduced to ensure data accuracy and allow comprehensive testing and verification prior to go-live.

The Sub-Committee heard that the project experienced a number of setbacks, including slower-than-expected progress during 2024, extended configuration work, the departure of key project personnel and periods where project activity stalled. In response, governance arrangements were strengthened, a new project team was appointed and officers worked closely with MRI, the software provider, to complete system configuration, testing and implementation. The Housing Register was temporarily closed to facilitate final testing and application verification before the new system was successfully launched on 24 September 2025.

Following implementation, application numbers significantly exceeded expectations. Historically the service received around 200 housing applications per month; however, 642 applications were received within the first two weeks of launch and 1,552 applications were submitted during the first full month. By February, more than 3,000 applications had been received. Of these, over 1,600 had been assessed and more than 1,000 fully processed through verification stages.

Officers reported that the higher-than-anticipated demand created a substantial processing backlog. In response, additional staffing resources were deployed, assessment processes were prioritised according to housing need and regular performance monitoring arrangements were introduced. At the time of the meeting, approximately 172 high-priority applications remained under assessment and officers continued to focus resources on reducing outstanding cases.

Members discussed concerns raised by some existing applicants whose relative position on the Housing Register had changed following the introduction of the new allocations scheme. Officers explained that transitional arrangements had been incorporated into the policy; however, following implementation it became apparent that additional measures were required to ensure existing working households were not unfairly disadvantaged. Consequently, a "working household contribution" adjustment was introduced while maintaining the policy objectives of the revised allocations framework.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the scheme was now fully operational, with ongoing monitoring arrangements in place. These included regular reporting to the Cabinet Member, reviews of banding outcomes and

continued assessment of staffing and resource requirements to ensure the efficient administration of the service.

Members sought assurance regarding communication with applicants. Officers advised that residents had been notified of the new arrangements in August 2025 and had received further updates in November regarding implementation delays and increased application volumes. Since then, communications had been undertaken through individual correspondence and updates published on the Council's website.

The financial implications of the project were also discussed. Officers confirmed that while some additional costs had been incurred as a result of delays and implementation challenges, these had been partially offset through contractor cost reductions and the provision of additional support without full reimbursement. As a result, the overall financial impact on the Council had been mitigated.

In response to questions regarding the transfer from Capita to MRI, officers confirmed that no project information or system data had been lost. MRI had received a full handover and was able to continue development work without restarting the project.

Members sought further information regarding arrangements for vulnerable applicants, including those with significant medical needs and households living in long-term temporary accommodation. Officers advised that accelerated assessment processes, specialist panels and targeted interventions had been put in place to ensure vulnerable households received appropriate consideration within the allocations process.

Discussion also took place regarding the initial processing of applications. Officers explained that existing applicants had been given a two-week period to submit applications before the scheme was opened more widely. As application numbers increased significantly, the service moved to a prioritisation approach based on assessed housing need rather than processing applications solely in date order.

Members questioned whether the impact of increased homelessness-related priority awards had been fully anticipated during the design of the scheme. Officers acknowledged that while demand from homeless households had been expected, the overall volume of applications received after launch exceeded projections, particularly from applicants able to submit applications immediately following implementation. This led to the introduction of further mitigation measures to address unforeseen impacts.

The Sub-Committee sought assurance regarding plans to clear the remaining backlog. Officers advised that approximately 583 applications remained outstanding and that temporary additional staffing resources would remain in place through April and May. The objective was to significantly reduce the backlog by mid-May before returning to normal operating arrangements.

Members requested that further communications be issued to applicants setting out current progress, expected processing times and the actions being taken to address outstanding applications.

During discussion on temporary accommodation, officers advised that households living in high-cost temporary accommodation could not automatically be prioritised for permanent housing outside the allocations framework, as this would potentially disadvantage other applicants with significant housing needs. Separate work continued to reduce temporary accommodation costs through other interventions.

Members acknowledged the challenges encountered throughout the implementation process and welcomed the work undertaken to stabilise and successfully deliver the new system. The Sub-Committee supported a formal review of the Housing Allocations Scheme approximately 12 months after implementation and agreed that a further report should be submitted in September 2026 to review performance, outcomes, impacts on applicants and lessons learned.

The Sub-Committee noted the update and thanked officers for their attendance and responses to Members' questions.

112 EMERGENCY TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION IN HAVERING AND THE LACK OF SUPPLY

The Sub-Committee received a report and presentation from the Assistant Director of Housing Demand and the Director of Living Well on the increasing pressures facing the Council's homelessness and temporary accommodation (TA) services, together with the Council's strategy to increase accommodation supply and reduce reliance on emergency placements.

Officers advised that homelessness demand had increased significantly since 2020 due to a combination of factors, including rising housing costs, the continued contraction of the private rented sector, affordability pressures and wider economic challenges. Temporary accommodation remained one of the Council's most significant financial pressures and represented a major risk to the General Fund.

The Sub-Committee was informed that approximately 350 households were currently living in temporary accommodation, including families with children and single people placed in hotels and nightly paid accommodation. Members noted that homelessness pressures had intensified following the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly during the Government's "Everyone In" initiative, which led to a substantial increase in single-person accommodation placements. Family homelessness subsequently increased significantly from 2022 onwards, resulting in growing reliance on hotel accommodation and other emergency housing solutions.

Officers explained that the Council had responded by securing nightly paid self-contained accommodation within the borough to provide more suitable housing for families and reduce the use of hotels, particularly for households with children. Additional temporary accommodation had also been provided through the use of Royal Jubilee Court. However, Members were advised that this was not a permanent increase in housing supply because the site remained earmarked for future redevelopment.

Despite rising demand, the Council had made progress in improving the quality and cost-effectiveness of temporary accommodation. Members noted that the number of families remaining in bed and breakfast accommodation beyond the six-week statutory limit had reduced significantly, reaching zero during parts of the previous year, although numbers had since risen again to approximately 30 households.

The Sub-Committee also considered the challenges facing the Council's private sector leasing portfolio. Officers reported that leased properties had reduced substantially from approximately 840 properties in 2019-20, with between 80 and 100 properties being lost each year as landlords withdrew from leasing arrangements, sold properties or sought higher returns elsewhere. Rising interest rates, inflation and increasing landlord costs had accelerated this trend, while lease-end repairs and dilapidation liabilities created further financial risks for the Council.

Members noted that homelessness presentations had risen considerably in recent years. Family and friend exclusion remained the most common cause of homelessness in Havering, while domestic abuse continued to be a significant contributing factor. The average number of approaches to the homelessness service had increased from around 169 households annually in 2019-20 to approximately 284 households more recently.

Officers outlined the Council's homelessness prevention measures, including rent deposit schemes, landlord incentive programmes and support to help residents access private rented accommodation. However, it was acknowledged that worsening affordability within the private rented sector had reduced the effectiveness of these interventions. Members also heard that forthcoming legislative changes, including the Renters Rights Act, could create additional pressures within the housing market.

The Sub-Committee received an update on a range of initiatives designed to increase accommodation supply and reduce future temporary accommodation costs. These included a property acquisition partnership which aims to deliver up to 150 properties, office-to-residential conversion schemes, pension fund investment opportunities and build-to-rent developments. Although progress on some schemes had been slower than originally anticipated, officers advised that further acquisitions and supply projects were continuing.

If successfully delivered, these programmes were expected to significantly reduce the Council's reliance on hotels and nightly paid accommodation by 2028-29 while improving outcomes for homeless households and creating a more sustainable homelessness service.

Members were updated on the Family Welcome Centre scheduled to open in May, which would provide 74 units of temporary accommodation and replace capacity previously available at Royal Jubilee Court. Officers highlighted that the facility would adopt a psychologically informed, trauma-focused approach, recognising the complex needs often experienced by homeless families. Staff training in trauma-informed practice was underway to support this model.

The Sub-Committee also noted progress on the Waterloo Estate modular housing scheme, which would provide 18 additional units of temporary accommodation and was expected to become operational during spring 2026. The scheme would provide move-on accommodation for households currently living in temporary accommodation and help improve accommodation flow through the system.

During discussion, Members sought clarification regarding the future of Royal Jubilee Court and the length of stay experienced by some residents. Officers confirmed that the accommodation would remain in use until replacement facilities became available and that households who had spent extended periods at the site would be prioritised for transfer to new accommodation as opportunities arose.

Members also questioned how the Council ensured that accommodation secured through private sector partnerships met local housing needs. Officers explained that acquisition and partnership discussions were focused on family-sized homes, particularly two, three and four-bedroom properties, reflecting the borough's most pressing accommodation requirements.

The Sub-Committee discussed future housing supply projections, the potential repurposing of accommodation if demand reduced and whether additional short-term solutions could have been delivered more quickly. Officers acknowledged that securing sites, funding and the necessary approvals often required considerable time, but stated that the Council continued to explore opportunities to accelerate delivery where possible. It was emphasised that the Council's approach sought to balance immediate accommodation needs with longer-term investment in sustainable housing provision.

Members also considered the role of planning and development in addressing housing demand and were advised that housing and planning teams worked closely together to ensure identified accommodation needs were reflected in discussions with developers, although viability considerations often influenced final delivery outcomes.

In response to questions regarding financial planning, officers confirmed that demand for temporary accommodation was continually monitored and incorporated into budget forecasting. Although investment in additional accommodation supply was expected to reduce future expenditure pressures, significant demand and associated costs were expected to remain for the foreseeable future.

The Sub-Committee welcomed the progress being made across the Council's accommodation delivery programme, while recognising the significant challenges facing homelessness services. Members requested further updates on modular housing proposals and noted the extensive work being undertaken to increase accommodation supply, reduce costs and improve outcomes for residents experiencing homelessness.

113 VOIDS OVERVIEW

The Sub-Committee received a report and presentation from the Assistant Director of Housing Property and Assets on void property performance and management during 2025/26. Members were advised that, up to February 2026, a total of 620 residential voids and 352 garage voids had been completed. Voids were categorised as B1 (minor works), B2 (major works requiring up to 90 days) and B3 (long-term or complex voids requiring extensive works). Officers clarified that a typographical error within the report had incorrectly stated the average void turnaround time, with the overall average re-let time being 24.96 days rather than 41.75 days.

The Sub-Committee noted that 229 general needs and temporary management organisation (TMO) voids had been completed during the reporting period, with the majority falling within the B1 category. In addition, 47 sheltered housing voids and 15 hostel voids had been completed. Officers advised that approximately 86% of all voids required only minor works, typically involving repairs, decoration and replacement of fixtures and fittings.

Members received an update on buyback properties and noted that a significant proportion of these were categorised as B3 voids. Officers explained that properties acquired through the buyback programme often required substantial refurbishment works before being suitable for letting, largely because many had been occupied for long periods and had not been maintained to the Council's required standard. To mitigate this issue, surveyors were now being involved earlier in the acquisition process to assess property condition and identify potential refurbishment requirements before purchases were completed.

The Sub-Committee discussed performance against void turnaround targets and noted that, when benchmarked against peer authorities, Havering's performance compared favourably and ranked amongst the strongest in London. Officers advised that ongoing work to improve systems, data

collection and reporting would further strengthen performance monitoring and benchmarking capabilities.

Members questioned the gap between the completion of repair works and the eventual letting of properties. Officers explained that although repair works might be completed relatively quickly, additional time could be required for property allocations, applicant verification, occupational therapist assessments where adaptations were involved, and the management of offer and acceptance processes. In response, officers outlined improvements that had been introduced, including earlier applicant verification checks and the prioritisation of verification activity before formal offers were made, with the aim of reducing avoidable delays.

The Sub-Committee also explored whether occupational therapist assessments could be undertaken earlier when adapted properties became available. Officers acknowledged that there was scope to improve coordination between services, although adapted properties represented a relatively small proportion of the overall housing stock. Members encouraged officers to continue reviewing processes to minimise delays in rehousing households requiring adapted accommodation.

Further discussion took place regarding the advertising of void properties through the Choice Based Lettings system. Officers confirmed that void properties were generally advertised while repair works were still underway, enabling bidding and shortlisting activity to take place in parallel with refurbishment works. Members welcomed this approach and encouraged officers to continue identifying opportunities to reduce the time between works completion and tenancy commencement.

Members raised concerns regarding delays in sheltered housing lettings and questioned whether allocations could be managed more directly by housing allocations staff. Officers explained that scheme managers played an important role in assessing suitability and ensuring prospective residents met the specific requirements of sheltered accommodation. Nevertheless, officers agreed to review the process to identify whether efficiencies could be achieved without compromising suitability assessments.

The Sub-Committee also discussed the financial implications of void turnaround times, particularly in relation to family-sized accommodation and temporary accommodation costs. Members emphasised the importance of returning larger properties to occupation as quickly as possible, given the Council's demand for family housing and the costs associated with temporary accommodation placements. Officers agreed that reducing void turnaround times remained a key priority and highlighted the contribution of the buyback programme in increasing the supply of larger family homes.

In response to questions regarding performance benchmarking, officers advised that sector-wide reporting changes and limitations within existing housing management systems had made direct comparisons with other authorities challenging. However, a new IT system was expected to improve

reporting capabilities and enable more meaningful benchmarking across London boroughs in the future.

Members acknowledged the positive performance achieved by the service, while highlighting opportunities for further improvements in allocations, verification processes, sheltered housing lettings and adapted property management.

The Sub-Committee noted the report and requested that officers continue to explore measures to reduce void turnaround times and maximise the availability of housing stock.

Chairman

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Place Overview & Scrutiny Sub- Committee

15 September 2026

REPORT

Subject Heading:

Endorsement of the draft Scrutiny Working Protocol

SLT Lead:

Sandy Hamberger, Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Report Author and contact details:

Anthony Clements, Committee Services Manager
anthony.clements@onesource.co.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

This report asks the Place Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee to endorse the draft Scrutiny Working Protocol (attached). The Protocol provides a practical framework for how Cabinet and Scrutiny will work together while respecting their separate roles. Its purpose is to support constructive challenge, transparent decision-making and effective governance.

For new scrutiny Members, the Protocol explains what effective scrutiny looks like in practice. It establishes expectations for early engagement, information sharing, work programming, Member and officer conduct, pre-decision scrutiny, call-in and the tracking of recommendations.

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The report:

- explains why the Scrutiny Working Protocol has been developed;
- summarises the principles and working arrangements it establishes;
- describes how it will help Members undertake effective scrutiny; and
- shows how the Protocol supports the recommendations arising from the 2025/26 annual review of scrutiny.

WHAT MEMBERS ARE BEING ASKED TO DO

- consider whether the draft Protocol provides a clear and effective framework for the relationship between Cabinet and Scrutiny;
- endorse the draft Protocol and;
- apply its principles and expectations in future scrutiny and executive work.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Place Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee:

1. endorses the draft Scrutiny Working Protocol;
2. supports the application of the Protocol's principles and expectations in future scrutiny and executive work.

REPORT DETAIL

Background

1. Overview and scrutiny is a core part of the Council's governance arrangements. It enables non-Cabinet Members to examine decisions, policies and services, contribute to policy development and hold the Executive to account.

2. Effective scrutiny should be independent, evidence-based and focused on improving outcomes for residents. It should provide constructive challenge, test whether proposals are robust and affordable and make clear recommendations that can improve decisions and services.

3. The draft Scrutiny Working Protocol provides a shared framework for the relationship between Cabinet and Scrutiny. It recognises that the two functions have distinct but complementary roles and that both make an important contribution to good governance.

4. The Protocol adds practical detail to the Council's formal scrutiny arrangements. It does not replace the Council's Constitution or applicable legislation. If there is any inconsistency, the Constitution will take precedence.

Why the Protocol matters

5. Effective scrutiny depends on a positive working relationship between Cabinet and Scrutiny. Members must be able to challenge decisions and policies openly while maintaining mutual respect and focusing on evidence, outcomes and improvement.

6. The Protocol supports this by establishing shared expectations for:

- behaviour and mutual respect;
- communication between Cabinet and Scrutiny;
- timely access to relevant information;
- scrutiny work programming;
- early engagement and pre-decision scrutiny;
- Cabinet Member attendance and engagement;
- the proportionate use of call-in;
- the respective roles of Members and officers;
- the recording and follow-up of recommendations; and
- training and annual review.

7. For new scrutiny Members, these arrangements provide a clear starting point for understanding how scrutiny should operate and how Members can add value.

The role of scrutiny Members

8. Scrutiny Members do not make executive decisions. Their role is to examine issues, test evidence, ask constructive questions and make recommendations.

Used effectively, scrutiny can:

- **Act as a critical friend:** provide constructive, evidence-based challenge rather than opposition for its own sake.
- **Hold the Executive to account:** examine Cabinet decisions, policies and actions and seek clear explanations.
- **Improve policy and performance:** test proposals, service outcomes, value for money and performance.
- **Support better decisions:** scrutinise significant proposals before decisions are made, when there is still an opportunity to influence them.
- **Bring residents' perspectives into decision-making:** consider community evidence and the effect of decisions on local people.
- **Scrutinise external partners:** examine relevant services delivered by organisations such as the NHS, police and other partners.
- **Use call-in proportionately:** request a review of an eligible executive decision in accordance with the Constitution.
- **Undertake focused reviews:** establish time-limited task and finish groups where detailed investigation would add value.

9. Scrutiny is not a forum for individual complaints, casework or political point-scoring. Questions and recommendations should remain focused on policies, decisions, performance, services and outcomes.

10. Principles Members should apply

The Protocol asks Members to:

- respect the distinct roles of Cabinet and Scrutiny;
- recognise that both functions are important to good governance;
- engage openly, constructively and in good faith;
- base challenge and recommendations on relevant evidence;
- focus scrutiny on improving decisions, services and outcomes;
- recognise that officers provide impartial support to the Council as a whole; and
- comply with the Member Code of Conduct in formal and informal settings.

11. These principles apply during public meetings, informal discussions, pre-meetings, task and finish groups and other scrutiny activity.

How the Protocol will work in practice

Work programming

12. Scrutiny will continue to determine its own work programme in accordance with the Constitution. Work programmes should be realistic, focused on significant

issues and informed by the Council's priorities, financial position and forthcoming decisions.

13.Cabinet's views should be invited at an appropriate stage, while Scrutiny retains responsibility for deciding its programme. Regular dialogue should help identify where scrutiny can have the greatest impact and avoid duplication.

Early engagement and pre-decision scrutiny

14.Scrutiny is most effective when it considers important proposals early enough to influence them. The Protocol encourages timely engagement and the use of pre-decision scrutiny for significant matters.

15.Pre-decision scrutiny can help Members test assumptions, examine evidence, consider risks and resident impacts, and suggest improvements before a final decision is taken. It does not replace executive decision-making.

Information and reports

16.Cabinet and officers should support the timely provision of clear, relevant information so that Members can prepare and ask informed questions. Scrutiny Members should identify their information needs early and use information proportionately.

17.Formal rights of access to information remain governed by the Council's Constitution and applicable legislation.

Cabinet Member engagement

18.Cabinet Members should engage positively with scrutiny and attend when asked when matters within their portfolios are being considered . Where possible, key lines of enquiry should be shared in advance to support focused and productive discussion.

Member and officer roles

19.Members set scrutiny's direction, examine evidence and agree recommendations. Officers provide professional and impartial advice, evidence and administrative support.

20.Members should respect officer roles and resource constraints when setting work programmes or establishing task and finish groups. Officers should support both Cabinet and Scrutiny fairly and objectively.

Call-in

21.Call-in is an important constitutional safeguard that allows an eligible executive decision to be reviewed before implementation. It should be used proportionately and normally as a last resort rather than as a substitute for early engagement or pre-decision scrutiny.

22. Any call-in must comply with the requirements and timescales set out in the Council's Constitution.

Recommendations and follow-up

23. Scrutiny recommendations should be clear, evidence-based, practical and directed to the appropriate decision-maker. Cabinet should provide a formal, recorded response.

24. Recommendations, responses and agreed actions should be tracked so that Scrutiny can review implementation and assess whether its work has made a difference.

Training and review

25. Cabinet and Scrutiny Members should receive regular training so that they understand their roles, powers and responsibilities. The training plan and the Protocol itself should be reviewed annually.

How the Protocol supports the 2025/26 annual review

26. The Protocol is a key mechanism for implementing the recommendations arising from the 2025/26 annual review of scrutiny.

Recommendations fully or substantially addressed

- **Working Protocol between Cabinet and Scrutiny:** The Protocol defines roles, responsibilities, behaviours, ownership and arrangements for annual review.
- **Timely training and support:** It commits Cabinet and Scrutiny Members to regular training and review of the training plan.
- **Early engagement:** It establishes expectations for regular and open dialogue between Cabinet and Scrutiny.
- **Focused work programming and pre-meetings:** It promotes realistic work programmes, Cabinet input, continuing dialogue and timely reports.
- **Task and finish groups:** It requires Members to consider scope and officer resources before establishing a group.
- **Tracking recommendations and actions:** It requires formal Cabinet responses and arrangements for follow-up.
-

Recommendations partially or indirectly addressed

- **Thematic key lines of enquiry:** The Protocol supports advance sharing of questions when Cabinet Members attend. This could be applied more widely to substantive scrutiny items.
- **Post-decision scrutiny:** Recommendations and Cabinet responses will be tracked, although a wider process for reviewing implemented decisions is not specified and will be supported by Committee Services.

- **Focus on the Council's financial position:** Financial matters can be prioritised through work programming and pre-decision scrutiny.
- **Joint scrutiny:** Coordinated work programming is supported.
- **Access to information and data:** The Protocol promotes timely evidence and reports, while formal information rights remain governed by the Constitution.
- **Monitoring the impact of policies and decisions:** The Protocol supports challenge and impact analysis,

Matters outside or not explicitly covered by the Protocol

- **Length of Members' tenure:** This is outside the scope of the Protocol and would require a separate governance decision.
- **Stakeholder and community engagement:** This is not set out explicitly and will need to be considered through work programming and the scope of individual reviews.

27. Overall, the Protocol materially advances most of the annual review recommendations and provides a practical framework that can be developed through experience and annual review.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks: There are no significant financial implications arising from this report. The requirements will be met from existing budgets.

Legal implications and risks: The Protocol supports the Council's statutory overview and scrutiny arrangements. It does not replace the Council's Constitution or applicable legislation.

Human Resources implications and risks: There are no specific Human Resources implications arising from this covering report.

Equalities implications and risks: There are no specific equalities implications arising from this covering report. Members should nevertheless consider equality impacts when scrutinising individual policies, services and decisions.

Environmental and Climate Change implications and risks: There are no specific environmental or climate change implications arising from this covering report. Relevant impacts should be considered when scrutinising individual policies, services and decisions.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Self-Evaluation of Board's Work 2025/26 and Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Presentation [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Overview & Scrutiny Board,](#)
[17/03/2026 19:00](#)

Havering London Borough Council

Cabinet/Overview and Scrutiny Protocol

“The Scrutiny Protocol”

1. Purpose of the Scrutiny Protocol

- 1.1. The purpose of this Scrutiny Protocol (‘the Protocol’) is to support effective working arrangements between the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Board (and its sub-committees) (‘Scrutiny’) to ensure good governance at the Council.
- 1.2. Ensuring good scrutiny in the Council is a whole council responsibility.

2. Aims of the Scrutiny Protocol

The aims of the Protocol are:

- 2.1 To ensure a mutual understanding of the roles and responsibilities of Scrutiny and the Cabinet;
- 2.2 To encourage open, trusting relationships between the Cabinet and Scrutiny;
- 2.3 To support focused, transparent and timely scrutiny of Council business;
- 2.4 To facilitate effective scrutiny work planning and
- 2.5 To enable Scrutiny to hold the Executive to account and influence Council business in a meaningful way.

3. Status of the Protocol and its relationship to the Constitution

- 3.1. The Protocol represents good practice in the arrangements between the scrutiny function and executive decision making in a local authority.
- 3.2. The Protocol is not a formal part of the Council’s Constitution but will be published on the Council’s website in the interests of transparency and accountability.
- 3.3. The Protocol will be owned by the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Board.
- 3.4. The Protocol will be reviewed annually by Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Board and any changes must be agreed by both.

- 3.5. The Protocol is intended to add detail and practical ways of working to the operation of the scrutiny function in the Council but the Protocol does not replace or change any part of the formal Constitution of the Council.
- 3.6. If there is any inconsistency between this Protocol and the Constitution (including the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules [link here](#)) the Constitution will take precedence.

4. Principles underpinning the relationship between Cabinet and Scrutiny

The following principles will underpin the relationship between Cabinet and Scrutiny and will inform all interactions between the two:

- 4.1. Recognition of and respect for the respective roles of the Cabinet and Scrutiny in the good governance of the Council;
- 4.2. Acknowledgement that, whilst Cabinet is the body which makes the executive decisions at the Council, there is parity of esteem in these roles in relation to their respective contribution to good governance;
- 4.3. Mutual respect between Cabinet and Scrutiny and the expectation that both will deal with each other in good faith;
- 4.4. Acknowledgement that officers support both the Cabinet and Scrutiny and that officers' obligations and accountabilities are to the Council as whole (and not to either Cabinet or Scrutiny or to any particular party or member) and
- 4.5. Adherence to the standards required of members in the Council's Members' Code of Conduct ([link here](#)).

5. Interaction with officers

- 5.1. Officers support both the Cabinet and Scrutiny and that officers' obligations and accountabilities are to the Council as whole;
- 5.2. The roles of the statutory officers (in particular the s.151 officer, the Monitoring Officer and the Statutory Scrutiny Officer) should be respected and their advice reflected on in relation to the functioning of scrutiny and in the interpretation of this Protocol;
- 5.3. In setting the work programme and in any decision to set up task and finish groups or similar groups, members will actively consider and make provision for the resource implications for officers of the activity required and
- 5.4. The provisions of the Council's Protocol on Member-Officer Relations should be respected in all dealings between members and officers in relation to scrutiny and the operation of this Protocol ([link here](#)).

6. Overview & Scrutiny work programming

Developing an effective and realistic work programme is a key component of effective scrutiny and to achieve that, it is agreed as follows:

- 6.1. Scrutiny will set its own work programme (in accordance with the Constitution);
- 6.2. But it is essential that Scrutiny contributes to the development of key policies and addresses the most significant issues facing the Council;
- 6.3. To achieve this, Cabinet's views on the work programme should be invited and welcomed at a key stage in its initial development and through the year
- 6.4. There should be regular dialogue between Scrutiny and the Cabinet (supported by key officers) which should be informal and candid to ensure both have a clear sense of the other's work and priorities;
- 6.5. Items should come to Scrutiny at a time when Scrutiny's involvement can be meaningful and their recommendations and views can be taken fully into account and
- 6.6. Cabinet should support and facilitate where possible the timely production of reports for Scrutiny to enable Scrutiny to undertake its functions effectively and at an optimum time for its recommendations and views to be fully taken into account.
- 6.7. The provisions of paragraph 7 below apply in relation to pre-decision scrutiny items to be included on the work programme of Scrutiny.

7. Pre-decision scrutiny

- 7.1. It is recognised that Scrutiny can add value to key decisions which are to be taken by Cabinet by exploring them in advance.
- 7.2. In particular, Scrutiny can help the decision-making process by
 - 7.2.1. Providing an impartial perspective;
 - 7.2.2. Challenging assumptions and making evidence gathering more robust;
 - 7.2.3. Developing realistic plans and targets and
 - 7.2.4. Securing ownership and buy-in to the final decision.
- 7.3. Pre-decision scrutiny does not replace decision-making and is not the same as general service or policy development.

7.4. Pre-decision scrutiny will take place as follows:

- 7.4.1. Scrutiny will monitor and review the Council's Forward Plan of forthcoming key decisions (as standing items on agenda) to determine which items they would like an input into before decisions are made by the Cabinet or the individual decision maker with delegated responsibility.
- 7.4.2. Members will be notified by email when an item is added to the Forward Plan.
- 7.4.3. Members will have 5 calendar days to make a request for pre-decision scrutiny to the Chairman and Clerk of O&S Board.
- 7.4.4. It is permissible for the Leader or individual Cabinet Members to suggest topics for pre-decision scrutiny however the decision to accept rests with the Board.
- 7.4.5. The request, stating reasons, will be made in writing to the Chairman and Clerk of the Board within 5 calendar days of the item being added to the Forward Plan.
- 7.4.6. Where a request has been received in accordance with the requirements above, the Clerk of the O&S Board will write to O&S Board Members giving up to 5 working days for the suggestion to be accepted onto the agenda for the next scheduled meeting. A majority of Members from the committee is required to achieve this.
- 7.4.7. In the event of a tie, the Chairman will have a second and casting vote. That a suggestion is rejected does not prevent the use of call-in at a later date. The matter will progress for consideration by Cabinet or delegated decision maker and be available for call-in subject to any exemption.
- 7.4.8. Where pre-decision scrutiny of a forthcoming key decision is agreed by the Overview & Scrutiny Board, a draft copy of the Cabinet report or Executive Decision will be provided. Where necessary and following consultation with the Chairman, an extraordinary meeting of Board or committee will be convened in accordance with the procedure rules.
- 7.4.9. The relevant Cabinet Member, Director, Assistant Director and/or appropriate officer(s) will attend the Overview and Scrutiny meeting to present the draft report and answer any questions posed by members of the committee.
- 7.4.10. The Overview and Scrutiny Board will discuss the report and identify any points it would like addressed in the final report to be presented before Cabinet or the individual decision maker with delegated responsibility; this could include any alternative recommendations which the Board consider necessary.
- 7.4.11. Unless the proposal is different from that which the decision-maker is subsequently required to consider, the pre-decision scrutiny of the subject

prevents the opportunity for call-in once the decision is made by the Cabinet or the individual decision maker with delegated responsibility

8. Cabinet attendance at Scrutiny meetings

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules cover the formal procedure for Cabinet attendance at Scrutiny meetings. In addition, to these rules (and the provisions in paragraph 7 above relating to pre-decision scrutiny) this Protocol agrees:

- 8.1. To recognise that everyone's time is valuable (members on Scrutiny and Cabinet, and officers) and all decisions on meeting arrangements, attendance etc will be made with this point acknowledged;
- 8.2. That the main aim of attendance by Cabinet members at Scrutiny is to ensure that Scrutiny can receive full answers to its questions to enable it to come to a considered view;
- 8.3. That it is not the purpose of Scrutiny to make political points but it is part of Scrutiny's function to be challenging and probing;
- 8.4. This approach will be reflected in the consideration of practical arrangements for Scrutiny including:
 - 8.4.1. formal invitations being issued in advance where Cabinet members' attendance is required;
 - 8.4.2. expectation of attendance by Cabinet members following an invitation, unless there are exceptional reasons and
 - 8.4.3. notification of key lines of enquiry in advance (reflecting that the aim of questioning is not to ambush or catch out, but to get the fullest possible answer).
- 8.5. That it is appropriate for Cabinet members to field questions jointly with lead officers (and to pass technical/operational questions to the officers), but that there is an expectation that Cabinet members will lead on questions about policy choices.

9. Call-ins

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules cover the formal procedure for dealing with call-ins and take precedence. This Protocol agrees the following:

- 9.1. That call-in is an action of last resort;
- 9.2. That proactive work planning and pre-decision scrutiny should obviate the need for call-ins but that

9.3. Cabinet recognises that this is a statutory right of Scrutiny and may be exercised from time to time.

10. Cabinet's responses to Scrutiny's recommendations

- 10.1. When Scrutiny recommendations are presented to Cabinet, the Chair and/or Deputy Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board may present recommendations to the Cabinet either in person or via an officer.
- 10.2. Scrutiny recommendations and the responses of Cabinet will be tracked to enable review and analysis of their impact.
- 10.3. Cabinet should give formal, recorded responses to Scrutiny recommendations.

11. Training and development

- 11.1. Members of both Cabinet and Scrutiny recognise the importance of ensuring they are up to date and confident in how scrutiny operates and what best practice looks like.
- 11.2. They commit to regular training to ensure their skills are updated and the training plan will be reviewed at the annual review of the Protocol.

12. Sign off from the Leader and Chair of the O&S Board

.....
Leader (on behalf of Cabinet)

.....
Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board (on behalf of Scrutiny)

Dated

Place Overview & Scrutiny Sub- Committee

15 September 2026

REPORT

Subject Heading:

Consideration of recommendations to achieve effective scrutiny for 2026/27

SLT Lead:

Sandy Hamberger, Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Report Author and contact details:

Anthony Clements, Committee Services Manager
anthony.clements@onesource.co.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

The Sub-Committee is asked to review and agree which recommendations from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer's Annual Review of Scrutiny work undertaken and published on 17 March 2026, should either be referred to Cabinet for consideration, implemented operationally, or not implemented. The recommendations are intended to strengthen the effectiveness of scrutiny.

RECOMMENDATION

The Sub-Committee considers the recommendations and agrees which should be referred to Cabinet for consideration, which operational recommendations should be implemented, any recommendations which should not be implemented and any new ones.

REPORT DETAIL

Background

1. Council scrutiny provides an independent check and balance on executive decision-making. Through evidence-based reviews and public, non-partisan questioning, it strengthens accountability and transparency, supports better policy development and helps improve public services.

2. Key contributions of scrutiny

- **Acting as a critical friend:** Scrutiny provides constructive challenge, rather than opposition for its own sake, to support continuous improvement.
- **Holding the Executive to account:** Non-Cabinet councillors examine the decisions, policies and actions of Cabinet and senior officers.
- **Improving policy and performance:** Through pre-decision scrutiny, committees review proposals before implementation to test whether they are robust and offer value for money.
- **Giving residents a voice:** Scrutiny brings public concerns into the Council's decision-making and reviews issues that directly affect local communities.
- **Scrutinising external partners:** Scrutiny may also examine the work of organisations such as the NHS, police and other bodies delivering services to residents.

- **Using call-in powers:** Scrutiny can temporarily pause an executive decision so that it can be reviewed and, where appropriate, changes recommended.
- **Establishing task and finish groups:** Small, time-limited groups can investigate specific or complex issues in depth and make focused recommendations.

3.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

Effective Council Scrutiny

4.Effective scrutiny acts as a constructive critical friend to the executive, using evidence-based, non-political challenge to drive improvement. It focuses on residents' priorities, holds decision-makers to account and makes clear, practical recommendations that improve local services rather than simply reviewing reports. See the Local Government Association's [A councillor's workbook on scrutiny](#).

Annual Review of the Overview and Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2025/26

5.At its meeting on 17 March 2026, the Board reviewed its 2025/26 work programme and effectiveness. The programme had focused on the Statutory Corporate Plan, the Council's financial position, and progress against the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Improvement and Transformation Plan and the CIPFA Financial Management Review, which supported the Council's exceptional financial support arrangements.

6.Drawing on findings from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's annual survey, Members identified proposals to strengthen scrutiny in 2026/27. These are set out in a table below, together with comments from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer to support consideration and decision-making.

7. The scrutiny board and sub-committees will decide which recommendations should be referred to Cabinet, implemented operationally or not progressed. Members may also propose further recommendations.

Progress on the 2025/26 Recommendations to Strengthen Scrutiny

8.Following a similar review in March 2025, Cabinet considered seven recommendations to improve scrutiny and approved five. One was not supported

because the Council's Constitution already provided for it, while another was not supported because a statutory deadline was already in place which took precedent.

9.Recommendations from the March 2026 Annual Review to Strengthen Scrutiny in 2026/27

Members are asked to consider the recommendations below. Comments from the Statutory Scrutiny Officer are included to support discussion and decision-making.

Number	Recommendation	Comments
1	Length of tenure- is one-year sufficient to learn the roles?	Cabinet approval required
2	Working Protocol between Cabinet & Scrutiny	This is the central purpose of the protocol which has been drafted, shared and discussed ahead of Scrutiny meetings including at the training sessions. The protocol is a recognition of and respect for the respective roles of the Cabinet and Scrutiny in the good governance of the Council. If endorsed, the Protocol will be reviewed annually by Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Board and any changes must be agreed by both. Scrutiny and Cabinet endorsement is required
3	Timely training and support	This has been actioned, through induction, and externally provided training sessions In line with previous scrutiny Members feedback, this was undertaken prior to the first Scrutiny meetings of 26/27 commencing. The decision was taken to ensure that newly appointed scrutiny Members were appropriately trained and equipped to undertake their responsibilities effectively from the outset, thereby supporting the effective operation of the Council's scrutiny function and wider governance arrangements.
4	Pre-meet with new administration & scrutiny prior to scrutiny Meetings commencing	Meeting with Cabinet and Scrutiny Chairs and deputy Chairs held 1st July 2026/ Section 6.4 of the protocol provides for regular dialogue between Cabinet and Scrutiny

5	Focused work-planning and pre-meets	Part of every agenda and meeting.
6	Thematic key lines of enquiry	To be considered as part of work planning
7	Post-decision scrutiny: reviewing the impact a decision has had.	Every meeting will have a non-public short review of the meeting undertaken with an improvement focus
8	Focus on financial position	This will be considered as part of work planning and specific scrutiny e.g. budget and saving scrutiny, the special financial measures Improvement and Transformation Plan
9	Adoption of task and finish groups	These will be considered and determined by the Scrutiny Board and Committees as part of their work programming Section 5.3 of the protocol expressly refers to decisions to establish task and finish groups, including consideration of officer resources
10	Tracking of recommendations/implementation/actions agreed	This is two-fold: the recommendations to Cabinet and individual ones agreed by each Board and committee to ensure they are followed up on. The Draft Protocol Section 10 covers this element
11	More joint sub-committee scrutinies	This is part of work programming discussions
12	Provide access to relevant information and data	The constitution sets out the enhanced access afforded to Scrutiny Members
13	Engage more with stakeholders and the community	This is part of scrutiny work programming
14	Monitor the impact of policies and decisions	This would form part of any requested scrutiny review of specific policies and decisions within their remit-and would need very careful and explicit scoping. The protocol supports policy scrutiny and impact analysis of recommendations
15	Other?	To be identified as part of the first 2026/27 Scrutiny meetings

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

Self-Evaluation of Board's Work 2025/26 and Statutory Scrutiny Officer Presentation [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Overview & Scrutiny Board, 17/03/2026 19:00](#)

Place Overview & Scrutiny Sub- Committee

15 September 2026

REPORT

Subject Heading:

Agreeing items for the Place Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee's work programme for 2026/27

SLT Lead:

Sandy Hamberger, Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Report Author and contact details:

Anthony Clements, Committee Services Manager
anthony.clements@onesource.co.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

This report invites the Place Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee to collectively discuss and agree its work programme for 2026/27. It sets out the principles and approaches that support effective, Member-led scrutiny and asks the sub-Committee to identify and prioritise topics where scrutiny can add value, influence forthcoming decisions and improve outcomes for residents, while taking account of the Council's strategic priorities, emerging risks and available Member and officer capacity.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Place Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee agrees the priority areas for inclusion in its 2026/27 work programme and, for each priority, determines the most appropriate method of scrutiny and indicative timing, taking account of strategic relevance, public interest, opportunities to influence decisions and available capacity.

REPORT DETAIL

Background

1.This report supports the Sub-Committee in agreeing its annual work programme for 2026/27. A focused programme enables scrutiny to concentrate its limited time and resources on the issues of greatest importance to residents and the Council.

2.Through a well-planned programme, scrutiny can:

- **act as a critical friend** by providing constructive, evidence-based challenge;
- **hold the Executive to account** by examining Cabinet decisions, policies and actions;
- **improve policy, performance and value for money**, including through pre-decision scrutiny;
- **give residents a voice** by bringing community concerns and lived experience into decision-making;
- **scrutinise external partners** where their services affect Havering residents;
- **use call-in powers** to review executive decisions before implementation, where the constitutional requirements are met; and
- **establish task and finish groups** to investigate specific or complex issues in depth.

A well-planned programme supports effective scrutiny:

- **Policy review and development:** testing existing policies and contributing to new or revised proposals.
- **Performance monitoring:** assessing service outcomes and progress against agreed targets.
- **Budget scrutiny:** examining the Council's financial position, affordability and value for money.
- **External partnership scrutiny:** considering the impact of services delivered with or by partner organisations.

Poor Work Programming

3. Done badly, scrutiny can end up wasting time and resources on issues where the impact of any work done is likely to be minimal.

4. Work Programming that does not engage the whole committee is not conducive to effective scrutiny.

Principles for setting the work programme

5. Effective work programming moves scrutiny beyond the reactive receipt of reports and creates a purposeful, Member-led programme of challenge. It should align scrutiny activity with forthcoming decisions, strategic priorities and emerging risks, while identifying the evidence, public voices and expertise required.

6. When setting and reviewing its programme, the Sub-Committee should:

- retain ownership of its work programme in accordance with the Constitution;
- select issues where scrutiny can add value and contribute meaningfully to policy, performance or decision-making;
- invite Cabinet's views during development of the programme and maintain regular, candid dialogue with Cabinet and relevant officers;
- schedule items early enough for recommendations to influence decisions;
- balance ambition with available Member and officer capacity; and
- avoid duplicating the work of the Executive, Audit Committee or other bodies.

7. Approaches available to the Sub-Committee

- **Pre-decision scrutiny:** examination of significant proposals before Cabinet decides them. It can provide an impartial perspective, test assumptions, strengthen the evidence base, improve plans and targets, and build understanding of the final decision. It informs rather than replaces executive decision-making.
- **Joint scrutiny:** two or more committees or councils working together where an issue benefits from shared oversight, expertise or resources.
- **Thematic scrutiny:** examination of a cross-cutting outcome rather than a single service. This approach brings together evidence from services, residents and partners to identify gaps, duplication and opportunities for joint

action. Potential themes include reducing health inequalities, community safety, housing and health, and support for vulnerable children.

- **Task and finish groups:** small, time-limited reviews used for focused examination of complex or strategically important issues.

8. Core work programming cycle

The Sub-Committee should use the following cycle:

1. **Identify issues:** draw potential topics from corporate priorities, the Cabinet Forward Plan, performance and risk information, resident feedback and previous scrutiny work.
2. **Prioritise topics:** assess public interest, strategic significance, timing, available evidence and the added value scrutiny can bring.
3. **Plan delivery:** select the most suitable format and schedule activity realistically, allowing flexibility for emerging issues.
4. **Review impact:** monitor recommendations and assess whether scrutiny has improved policy, performance, decisions or outcomes.

Further guidance is available in the Local Government Association's [A councillor's workbook on scrutiny](#).

Areas considered by the Sub-Committee in 2025/26

9. The Sub-Committee may wish to follow up matters considered during 2025/26. The Annual Review Report, published on 17 March 2026 and listed under Background Papers, summarises that programme.

10. The programme focused on the Statutory Corporate Plan, the Council's financial position, and progress against the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government Improvement and Transformation Plan and the CIPFA Financial Management Review, which supported the Council's exceptional financial support arrangements.

Developing the 2026/27 work programme

11. The Chair will invite the Sub-Committee to identify and discuss potential areas for inclusion, supported by clear reasons and the intended scrutiny outcome. For each priority, the Sub-Committee should consider the most appropriate approach: a standalone item, assurance review, joint or thematic scrutiny, pre-decision scrutiny, or a task and finish group.

What Members are being asked to do

12. Members are asked to propose and prioritise a manageable number of topics, explain the outcome they want scrutiny to achieve, select the most appropriate scrutiny route and agree indicative timing. The final programme should remain flexible so that urgent or emerging matters can be considered during the year.

13. Topic-selection criteria

- **Resident impact and public interest:** the number or groups of residents affected and the significance of the issue to local communities.
- **Strategic relevance:** alignment with Council priorities, significant forthcoming decisions or partnership commitments.
- **Risk and performance:** evidence of service, financial, legal, equality, reputational or delivery risk, or sustained underperformance.
- **Timing and influence:** whether scrutiny can take place early enough to shape a policy, budget or executive decision.
- **Evidence and access:** whether reliable information, witnesses and resident or service-user views can be obtained.
- **Added value and capacity:** whether scrutiny can make a distinctive contribution without duplicating other work and can be delivered within available Member and officer resources.

14. Choosing the appropriate scrutiny route

- **Work programme item:** a planned item used to examine policy, performance, risk, finance or an issue requiring assurance.
- **Pre-decision scrutiny:** planned examination of a proposal before Cabinet or another decision-maker reaches a decision.
- **Call-in:** a separate constitutional process through which an eligible executive decision may be reviewed before implementation when the specified requirements and timescales are met. It should not be used as a substitute for planned scrutiny.
- **Task and finish group:** a small, time-limited review suitable for a complex matter requiring evidence from several sources and detailed recommendations.
- **Joint or thematic scrutiny:** appropriate where an issue crosses service, committee, partner or council boundaries.
- **Assurance review:** a focused examination to establish whether governance, controls, delivery arrangements or improvement activity are operating effectively.

15. Information to record for each proposed topic

Proposed topic	Why scrutiny should consider it	Intended outcome	Suggested route	Indicative timing	Lead Member
To be agreed	Resident impact, strategic relevance, risk and supporting evidence	The change, assurance or influence sought	Sub-Committee item, pre-decision, task and finish, joint, thematic or assurance review	To be agreed with regard to forthcoming decisions and capacity	To be agreed

Support, capacity and monitoring

16. Committee Services will support the Sub-Committee to scope agreed items, identify evidence and witnesses, schedule activity and record recommendations. Relevant services will provide reports, data and professional advice.

17. Members should recognise that task and finish activity may require additional reading, evidence sessions and drafting outside formal meetings. Progress against the programme and implementation of agreed recommendations should be reviewed periodically by the Sub-Committee, with adjustments made where priorities, risks or capacity change.

18. Remit of Place Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee

The Place Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee has responsibility for scrutinising the following areas:

- Housing & Accommodation Services
- Land & Property Services
- Planning
- Building Control
- Business Services
- Inward Investment
- Asset Management
- Property Services
- Facilities Management
- Sports
- Leisure
- Arts
- Music
- Libraries
- Heritage
- Parks & Open Space
- Highways
- Parking & Traffic
- Waste & Recycling
- Climate Change
- Transport & Infrastructure
- Public Protection & Licensing
- Emergency Planning
- Technical Services

19. Glossary for new Members

- **Executive:** the Cabinet and other authorised executive decision-makers.
- **Forward Plan:** the published notice of forthcoming executive decisions.
- **Pre-decision scrutiny:** scrutiny carried out before an executive decision is made.

- **Call-in:** temporary suspension of an eligible executive decision so that it can be reviewed under the Constitution.
- **Task and finish group:** a time-limited Member group established to investigate a defined issue and make recommendations.
- **Thematic scrutiny:** scrutiny organised around an outcome or cross-cutting issue rather than a single service.
- **Assurance review:** a focused check that arrangements, controls or planned improvements are adequate and effective.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks: There are no direct financial implications arising from agreeing the work programme. Scrutiny activity will be supported within existing Member and officer resources. Individual reviews may identify financial implications, which will be assessed and reported separately where relevant.

Legal implications and risks: Overview and scrutiny is a statutory function. The work programme and any subsequent activity must be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Constitution and relevant legislation. Specific legal issues arising from individual reviews will be considered as part of those reviews.

Human Resources implications and risks: There are no direct staffing implications arising from agreeing the work programme. The scope and timing of reviews should nevertheless take account of Member and officer capacity. Any workforce implications identified through individual reviews will be assessed separately.

Equalities implications and risks: There are no direct equalities implications arising from agreeing the work programme. In selecting and undertaking reviews, the Sub-Committee should consider impacts on people with protected characteristics and seek relevant resident and service-user evidence. Any specific implications will be assessed within the relevant review.

Environmental and Climate Change implications and risks: There are no direct environmental or climate implications arising from agreeing the work programme. Where a proposed topic has environmental or climate impacts, these should be considered within the scope and evidence for that review.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Self-Evaluation of Board's Work 2025/26 and Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Presentation [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Overview & Scrutiny Board,](#)
[17/03/2026 19:00](#)

[Forward plan - AUGUST 2026- FORWARD PLAN | London Borough of Havering](#)

[A councillor's workbook on scrutiny](#) (page 10 work programming)