



Havering

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

PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE AGENDA

7.00 pm

Tuesday
8 September 2026

Council Chamber -
Town Hall

Members 11: Quorum 4

COUNCILLORS:

**Reform UK Group
(7)**

Khuram Amin (Chairman)
Tom Vickery (Vice-Chair)
Petru Eugen Dinsorean
Joe Lock
Della Morton
Geoff Starns
Henry Williams

**Labour Group
(1)**

Trevor McKeever

**Havering Aligned Residents'
Association Group
(2)**

Oscar Ford
Kimberley Gould

**East Havering Residents Group
(1)**

Vacancy

CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

**Statutory Members
representing the Churches**

Vacant (EHRG) and Jack
How (Roman Catholic
Church)

**Statutory Members
representing parent
governors**

Julie Lamb, Special Schools

Non-voting Members

Ian Rusha (NEU)

For information about the meeting please contact:

Luke Phimister

01708 434619 luke.phimister@havering.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.

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.

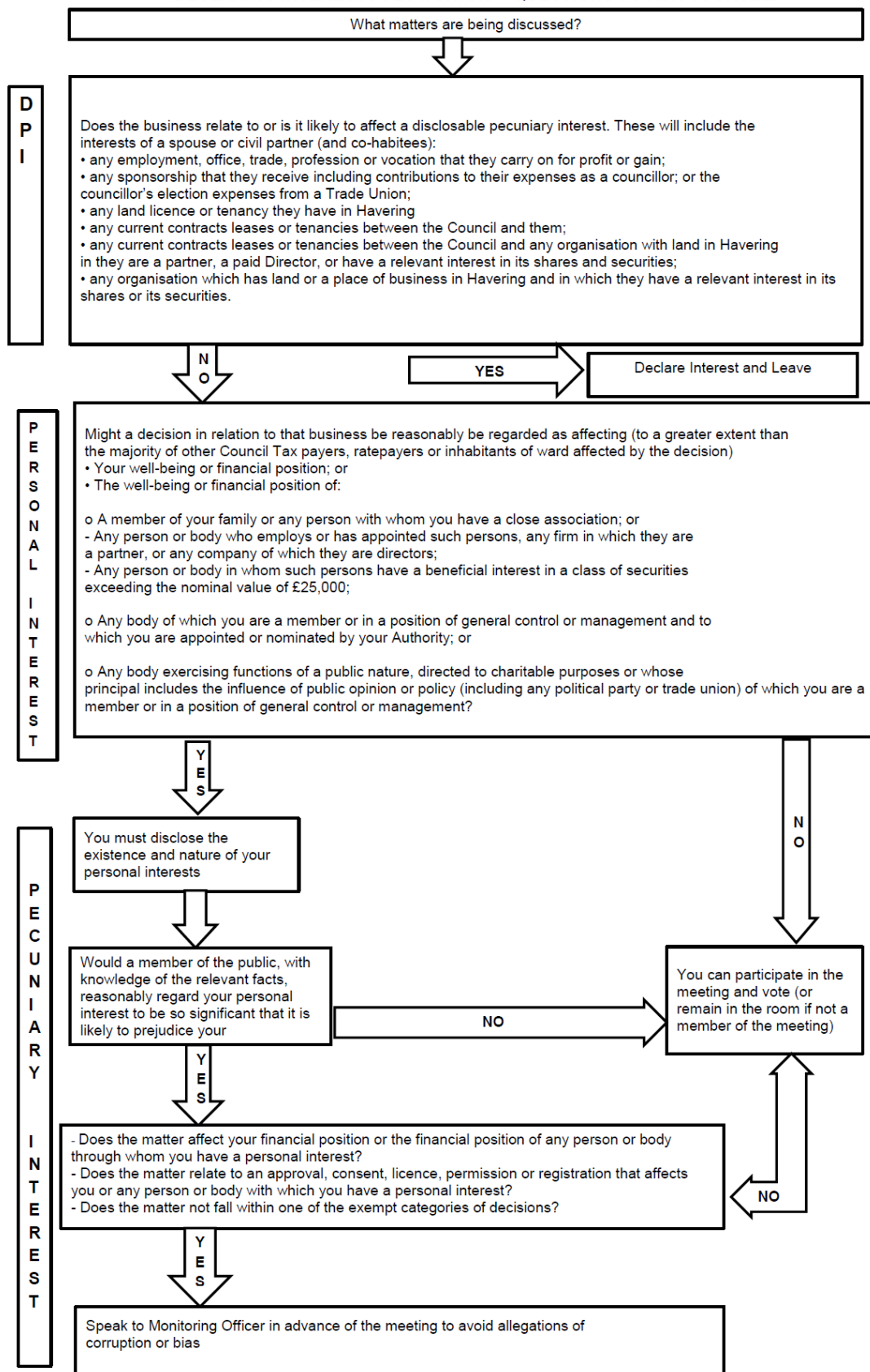
Terms of Reference

The areas scrutinised by the Committee are:

- Drug, Alcohol & sexual Services
- Health & Wellbeing
- Health O & Scrutiny
- Adult Care
- Learning and Physical Disabilities
- Employment & Skills
- Education
- Child Protection
- Youth Services

- Fostering & Adoption Services
- Education Traded Services
- Early Years Services
- Looked after Children
- Media
- Communications
- Advertising
- Corporate Events
- Bereavement & Registration Services
- Crime & Disorder

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

To 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 11 - 14)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 19 March 2026 (attached) and authorise the Chairman to sign them.

5 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY: HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY, 2026-2029 (Pages 15 - 56)

Reports attached.

6 ENDORSEMENT OF THE DRAFT SCRUTINY WORKING PROTOCOL (Pages 57 - 70)

Report attached.

7 CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO ACHIEVE EFFECTIVE SCRUTINY FOR 2026/27 (Pages 71 - 76)

Report attached.

8 NOMINATIONS TO OUTER NORTH EAST LONDON JOINT HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Pages 77 - 78)

Report attached.

9 AGREEING ITEMS FOR THE PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2026/27 (Pages 79 - 86)

Report attached.

Zena Smith
Head of Committee and Election Services

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE
Appointment Centre Room 7 & 8, Town Hall, Romford
19 March 2026 (7.02 - 8.08 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	Jason Frost (Chairman) and Damian White (In place of Judith Holt)
Havering Residents' Group	Christine Smith
Labour Group	Frankie Walker (Vice-Chair)

17 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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 Jacqueline Williams and Judith Holt, with Councillor Damien White substituting for Cllr Holt, and co-optees Julie Lamb, Jack How and Ian Rusha.

19 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interests.

20 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 21st October 2025, 6th November 2025 and 13th January 2026 were approved as accurate and were signed by the Chairman.

21 DEFIBRILLATORS IN HAVERING - HEALTHWATCH HAVERING

The Sub-Committee was presented a report from Healthwatch Havering on Defibrillators in the Borough.

The committee noted that the Circuit database lists defibrillator locations but recorded entries were not always publicly accessible. Approximately 220–230 defibrillators existed in Havering, but many were inside schools and

offices and inaccessible outside working hours. Members noted that only 14% were available 24/7 and 8% were listed but missing.

It was explained that defibrillators were far more effective than traditional CPR alone and should ideally be accessible within 500m of any given location and deployable in 3–5 minutes. All units were privately funded and not funded by the NHS or LAS. Members were pleased to note that some new defibrillators had already been installed following the report, including at two churches.

Population growth and increasing density were highlighted, strengthening the case for wider public availability. The Sub-Committee discussed the challenges of school-based defibrillators, including safeguarding concerns and restricted access. Officers confirmed that first-aid training in schools already incorporated defibrillator use. The committee considered the value of including defibrillators in future housing developments, possibly as part of developer social value commitments, management charges or estate infrastructure. Officers described the importance of maintenance and battery checks and confirmed that modern defibrillators required no specialist training.

In response to Members' Questions, the Director of Children's Services advised that she would ask Headteachers of schools that had defibrillators on their premises to consider making at least one accessible to the public at all times, and the Director of Adult Services stated that she would explore the possibilities of installing a defibrillator in each of the Council's sheltered housing complexes and would consult with the Director for Regeneration to request that developers of new housing to include at least one publicly-accessible defibrillator in all new developments.

The Sub-Committee formally supported the recommendation for a publicity campaign promoting defibrillator use and awareness, as set out in the report.

22 ANNUAL COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

The Sub-Committee first received the Adult's Social Care Complaints report.

It was noted that Adults Services operated a single-stage complaints process, with complainants able to escalate directly to the Ombudsman. Complaint numbers had fallen slightly from the previous year. Officers had increased focus on analysing complaints by ethnicity to ensure equitable access to the process.

Members noted there had been seven Ombudsman referrals received, a significant reduction compared with the previous year, and three cases resulted in findings of maladministration.

Members raised concerns about a sharp rise in cases categorised simply as "Adult Social Care" which officers attributed to miscoding within the

case-tracker system, as it was being used as a 'catch-all'. Officers explained that financial assessments continued to be one of the most common causes of complaint and noted that younger residents, aged 25–34, were becoming increasingly confident in submitting lengthy, often potentially AI-generated complaints.

The Sub-Committee agreed the following action points:

1. Remove "Adult Social Care" as a catch-all category and reallocate cases accurately.
2. Correct the categorisation of "personal care" which should not be classed as a disability category.
3. Add clear timescales to the 2025/26 action plan.
4. Provide training for complaints officers to improve handling of complex casework.

The Sub-Committee then received the Children's Social Care Complaints report.

It was reported that the year had coincided with the aftermath of an Inadequate Ofsted rating, alongside significant restructuring and the introduction of an improvement plan. Complaint numbers had risen but officers emphasised that improved scrutiny and recording, rather than service deterioration, accounted for much of the increase. Many complaints related to staff attitude, which often arose from statutory requirements for unannounced visits. Officers also highlighted the increasing length and complexity of complaints, potentially generated with AI tools. It was explained that delays were being experienced at Stage 2 due to national shortages of independent investigators.

The committee noted that learning from complaints was being fed regularly into quality assurance and systemic-practice training for staff which aimed at strengthening communication with families and preventing escalation.

The Sub-Committee agreed the following action points:

1. Update service categories within the case-tracker to reflect new structures and remove outdated headings.
2. Ensure the 2025/26 report reflects new Family First Partnership arrangements.

The Sub-Committee then received the Education Service Complaints report.

Members noted a small fall in overall complaints with SEND complaints decreasing but general education complaints slightly rising. Member enquiries increased due to an improved recording processes. Response times had improved from 65% to 78%. Officers highlighted a new staff recognition scheme that acknowledged compliments and good practice.

Members noted that two Ombudsman cases were considered during the year; one resulted in maladministration with injustice, while the other required no further action. Members queried the exclusion of Ofsted-directed school complaints from the report to which officers explained that, although Ofsted handled these cases, the council was always notified and used the intelligence to support school-improvement monitoring.

The Sub-Committee agreed the following action points:

1. Include a section in future reports explaining any liaison with Ofsted.
2. Refine Education service categories within the case-tracker.

Chairman

PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE – 8th September 2026

Subject Heading:

Pre-decision Scrutiny – Homelessness
Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy
2026 - 2029

Report Author and contact details:

Anthony Clements - Committee Services
Manager
Anthony.clements@havering.gov.uk

Policy context:

Within the scrutiny remit of the People
Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee

SUMMARY

This report introduces to the Sub-Committee the pre-decision scrutiny of the forthcoming Council Homelessness and Prevention of Rough Sleeping Strategy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Sub-Committee scrutinises the attached Strategy and Cabinet Report and agrees any recommendations to be forwarded to Cabinet for response.

REPORT DETAIL

The attached draft homelessness and rough sleeping strategy 2026 – 2029 is due to be considered by Cabinet shortly. As part of its powers of pre-decision scrutiny, the Sub-Committee is invited to scrutinise the strategy and formulate any comments or recommendations that it wishes Cabinet to respond to as it considers the final report on this matter and decides on the final strategy.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks: None for this covering report

Legal implications and risks: None for this covering report

Human Resources implications and risks: None for this covering report

Equalities implications and risks: None for this covering report

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS
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None for this covering report

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

CABINET

Subject Heading:

Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026–2029

Cabinet Member:

Councillor Martin Lardner – Cabinet Member for Housing

ELT Lead:

Patrick Odling-Smee - Director of Living Well

Report Author and contact details:

Darren Alexander, Assistant Director Housing Demand

darren.alexander@haverling.gov.uk

01708 43 3751

Policy context:

This report seeks Cabinet approval to adopt Havering Council's Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026–2029. The strategy sets out the Council's updated approach to preventing homelessness, reducing rough sleeping, improving the experience of residents in temporary accommodation and embedding compassionate, trauma-informed, inclusive and timely housing services. It reflects the current pressures facing Havering, including more than 15,000 homelessness approaches over the last five years, the reduced availability of affordable private rented accommodation, wider housing development market pressures, continued reliance on temporary accommodation and the need to move from emergency responses towards earlier prevention, planned supply, stronger partnership working and clearer assurance. It also

aligns local delivery with the Government's Local Outcomes Framework, including outcomes relating to homelessness prevention, rough sleeping, children and family stability, housing quality and multiple disadvantage.

Financial summary:

The strategy does not itself commit the Council to new expenditure. Delivery will be managed through existing service budgets, approved programmes and future decisions where separate authority is required. The strategy is intended to support financial sustainability by strengthening prevention, reducing avoidable homelessness, reducing reliance on nightly paid and hotel accommodation over time, improving case progression and supporting the development of a more stable accommodation pathway.

Is this a Key Decision?

Yes

When should this matter be reviewed?

Annual review through Housing Demand performance reporting and a formal strategy refresh before the end of 2028/29.

Reviewing OSC:

Places Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee

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

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well	X
Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy	
Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council	

SUMMARY

- 1.** This report seeks Cabinet approval to adopt the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026–2029.
- 2.** The strategy sets out four priorities: preventing and reducing rough sleeping by supporting people affected by trauma, family breakdown, exploitation and begging; ending the use of nightly paid and hotel accommodation by 2030; improving the temporary accommodation experience; and providing compassionate, empathetic customer care that listens and takes action.
- 3.** The strategy responds to more than 15,000 homelessness approaches over the last five years, continued pressure from the collapse of affordable private rented supply, wider development market pressures, and the need to provide stable alternatives to emergency hotel and nightly paid accommodation.
 - 3.1.** The strategy also reflects the revised emphasis on inclusive access, child and family voice, exploitation linked to street begging, psychologically informed environments, stronger case closure assurance and alignment with the Government's Local Outcomes Framework.
- 4.** The strategy is intended to provide a clear delivery framework for 2026–2029, with progress monitored through service performance, practice assurance, partnership activity, Local Outcomes Framework measures and annual review.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.** Cabinet is asked to resolve:
 - 5.1.** To approve and adopt the Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026–2029.
 - 5.2.** To note the four strategic objectives and the consolidated action plan set out in the strategy.
 - 5.3.** To delegate authority to the Director of Living Well, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to make minor amendments to the final published strategy where required for accuracy, formatting or presentation, provided that such amendments do not materially change the agreed objectives.
 - 5.3.1.** To receive annual progress updates on delivery of the strategy through the appropriate governance and scrutiny arrangements.

REPORT DETAIL

Background and local context

6. Havering Council has received more than 15,000 approaches from households threatened with homelessness and individuals experiencing rough sleeping over the last five years. During the same period, the borough has experienced significant pressure on emergency accommodation, including the use of nightly paid and hotel placements.
7. These pressures have been driven by a combination of external factors, including the impact of COVID-19, the cost-of-living crisis, rising rents, higher interest rates and reduced availability of affordable private rented accommodation.
8. Relationship breakdown remains the most common cause of homelessness in Havering. Other causes include loss of private rented accommodation, rent or mortgage arrears, unsafe accommodation, domestic abuse, mental ill-health, substance misuse, leaving care, leaving custody and other life transitions where support is not in place early enough.
 - 8.1. The strategy also recognises that the collapse of affordable private rented supply is linked to wider housing market and development pressures, including higher borrowing costs, rising construction costs, reduced investor confidence and delays or uncertainty in affordable housing delivery. Havering's response is therefore to move from dependence on market availability towards planned, controlled and purpose-led supply through acquisitions, modular accommodation, long-term leasing, build-to-rent nominations, QLM and partnership models.
9. The strategy recognises that homelessness is rarely caused by one issue. It requires early intervention, personalised support, effective case progression, stronger partnership working, inclusive access routes and a more stable supply of accommodation.
10. The strategy sets out the Council's vision that all residents in Havering should be supported through early intervention, comprehensive support and strong partnership working to prevent homelessness and eradicate rough sleeping wherever possible.
11. The four objectives are to support people affected by exploitation and rough sleeping; end the use of nightly paid and hotel accommodation by 2030; provide a better temporary accommodation experience; and deliver compassionate, empathetic customer care that listens and takes action.

- 12.** The strategy builds on the learning from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2020–2025 and provides a three-year framework for delivery during a period of significant transition in housing demand, supply and national policy.
- 13.** Objective 1 focuses on relationship-based outreach, trauma-informed engagement and support for people affected by exploitation through begging, substance dependency, coercion, family breakdown and complex trauma. It recognises that street begging does not always equate to rough sleeping and that enforcement must be proportionate, targeted at harm and exploitation, and delivered alongside safeguarding, outreach and recovery pathways.
- 14.** Objective 2 commits the Council to working towards ending the use of nightly paid and hotel accommodation by 2030 through a planned supply programme, reduced reliance on emergency accommodation, better move-on options and long-term accommodation models that provide greater stability for families and the Council's budget. This includes build-to-rent nominations, acquisitions, modular accommodation, office-to-residential conversions, long-term leasing, QLM and partnership models that give the Council greater certainty over cost, timing and use.
- 15.** Objective 3 focuses on the experience of residents who do become homeless. It commits the Council to embedding trauma-informed practice, psychologically informed environments, clearer information, inclusion, better support for children and families, and practice weeks to test whether services are being delivered as intended.
- 16.** Objective 4 focuses on compassionate, timely and clear customer care. It strengthens prevention and demand management by improving access, reducing digital exclusion, listening to residents, children, families and partners, improving case closure and duty-end assurance, and ensuring households understand decisions, review rights and next steps.
- 17.** The strategy includes a consolidated action plan covering relationship-based outreach, disrupting exploitation, alternative giving, public education, exit from nightly paid accommodation, psychologically informed environments, practice weeks, digital inclusion, child-focused engagement, reflective supervision, case closure assurance and alignment with adult social care, health, education, community safety and children's services.
 - 17.1.** The strategy has also been updated to show how local delivery will align with the Government's Local Outcomes Framework. This includes monitoring against outcomes such as households with children in temporary accommodation, families in bed and breakfast accommodation over six weeks, homelessness prevention and relief outcomes, rough sleeping, housing quality and safety, multiple disadvantage, child poverty and family stability.

REASONS AND OPTIONS

Reasons for the decision:

- 18.** To provide a clear strategic framework for preventing homelessness, reducing rough sleeping and improving outcomes for residents experiencing housing crisis between 2026 and 2029, aligned to local need and the Government's Local Outcomes Framework.
- 19.** To respond to the changed housing market, rising homelessness demand, increased use of temporary accommodation, wider development pressures and the need to reduce reliance on nightly paid and hotel accommodation.
- 20.** To strengthen prevention, partnership working, trauma-informed practice, case progression and assurance across the homelessness pathway.

Other options considered:

21. Do nothing.

- 22.** This option is not recommended. Without an updated strategy, the Council would lack an agreed framework for responding to current homelessness pressures, rough sleeping, accommodation supply constraints and the need for consistent, compassionate and timely service delivery.

23. Approve a shorter operational action plan only.

- 24.** This option is not recommended because it would not provide the wider strategic context required for Cabinet, residents, partners and scrutiny. A strategy is required to connect prevention, accommodation supply, rough sleeping, customer care, assurance and partnership working.

25. Delay approval pending further review.

- 26.** This option is not recommended. Homelessness demand, temporary accommodation pressures and rough sleeping risks require a current strategic framework. The strategy can be reviewed annually and amended through future governance where material changes are needed.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026–2029 provides a strategic framework for service delivery and will be implemented through existing budgets, approved programmes and available external funding where appropriate.

There may, however, be future financial implications associated with the delivery of specific elements of the strategy, particularly where investment is required to support homelessness prevention initiatives, accommodation supply programmes, temporary accommodation improvements or new partnership arrangements. Any such proposals requiring additional capital or revenue resources will be subject to separate business cases and the Council's established approval and budget-setting processes.

The strategy is intended to support the Council's financial sustainability by reducing avoidable homelessness, improving demand management and helping to reduce reliance on higher-cost emergency accommodation over time.

27. Legal implications and risks:

28. The Council has statutory duties under the Housing Act 1996, including duties relating to homelessness prevention, relief and the discharge of the main housing duty. The strategy supports the lawful, timely and transparent delivery of those duties and reinforces the need for clear notices, review rights, personal housing plans, evidence-based decisions and effective case closure assurance.

29. Powers

30. The strategy also supports clear decision-making, appropriate notices, review rights, case closure assurance and management oversight across prevention, relief and main duty casework.

31. Where delivery of the strategy requires procurement, contractual commitments, subsidy control assessment, property agreements or changes to policy, those matters will be considered through the appropriate governance route at the relevant time.

32. There are no direct procurement or property transaction decisions arising from approval of the strategy itself.

Human Resources implications and risks:

33. The strategy has workforce implications for Housing Demand services, particularly in relation to trauma-informed practice, reflective supervision, case assurance, practice weeks, customer care and partnership working.

34. The strategy recognises the impact of vicarious trauma and emotional labour on staff working with residents experiencing homelessness, domestic abuse, family breakdown, exploitation and complex trauma.

35. Any staffing changes required to deliver the strategy will be considered through normal workforce planning, budget and HR processes.

Equalities implications and risks:

36. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to:

- 36.1. The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- 36.2. The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics¹ and those who do not, and;
- 36.3. Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

37. In accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council has had due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. The strategy is expected to have a positive impact on groups disproportionately affected by homelessness, including children and families, disabled people, pregnant women, lone parents, minority ethnic households, care leavers, former and serving armed forces personnel, people affected by domestic abuse, people with mental ill-health and people experiencing rough sleeping, exploitation or multiple disadvantage.

38. Equality risks relate to digital exclusion, accessibility of services, the fairness and transparency of housing pathways, the availability of suitable accommodation, the impact of homelessness on children and families, and the need to hear the voices of residents who may not engage through traditional consultation methods.

39. These risks will be mitigated through assisted access, clear communication, needs-led housing pathways, partnership working, child-focused engagement, practice assurance and ongoing monitoring of strategy delivery.

Health and Wellbeing implications and Risks

40. Homelessness, rough sleeping and prolonged use of hotel or nightly paid accommodation have significant health and wellbeing impacts, including stress, anxiety, disrupted education, reduced access to cooking facilities, interrupted healthcare, social isolation and poorer outcomes for children and families.

41. The strategy supports improved health and wellbeing by prioritising prevention, stable accommodation, psychologically informed environments, trauma-

¹ 'Protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex/gender, and sexual orientation.

informed practice, inclusion, access to community support, and closer links with public health, education, adult social care, children's services, community safety, health and voluntary sector partners.

- 42.** The strategy is expected to support better outcomes for residents by reducing crisis responses, improving stability and helping people rebuild connections, confidence and independence.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A: Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026–2029

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Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2029

Havering Council

Foreword

The Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026-2029 for Havering Council represents a significant milestone in our ongoing commitment to ensuring that every resident has access to safe, secure, and sustainable housing. Building upon the achievements and lessons learned from our previous strategies, this new plan is a testament to our dedication to addressing homelessness through early intervention, comprehensive support systems, and collaborative partnerships.

Homelessness is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires coordinated efforts from various sectors, including housing, healthcare, social services, and the community.

Our strategy outlines a clear vision and objectives aimed at preventing homelessness and reducing rough sleeping through early intervention, partnership working and sustained support.

The review of our previous strategy (2020-2025) highlighted several achievements, challenges, and areas for improvement. This new strategy addresses these findings and incorporates updated priorities and approaches to better meet the evolving needs of our community. We have made great progress in helping people out of homelessness and into accommodation, but there is more to do. It is vital that we recognise the need for a broad approach to tackling homelessness, which includes understanding barriers to long-term stability and supporting people through their journey into a place they call home.

Our strategy signals a move towards a culture where homelessness is everyone's responsibility so that all residents have a safe, stable place to live, now and in the future. We will continue to provide strategic leadership and work closely with our partners across the public, voluntary, and community sectors to drive change and align agendas. This collaborative approach is essential to achieving our goals and ensuring that our efforts are effective and sustainable.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to making Havering a place where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

Cllr Martin Lardner

Havering Council Cabinet Member for Housing

Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026–2029

Section 1: Introduction and Local Context

Introduction

Over the past five years, Havering Council has received more than 15,000 approaches from households threatened with homelessness and individuals experiencing rough sleeping. During the same period, the borough has seen record use of emergency accommodation, including nightly placements in chain hotels such as Travelodge and Premier Inn.

This has been a particularly challenging time for families with children. Many hotel placements were limited to a maximum stay of two weeks, requiring frequent moves that disrupted schooling, family stability, and health and wellbeing. These pressures coincided with an unprecedented set of external factors, including COVID- 19, the cost- of- living crisis, and the collapse of the affordable private rented sector.

Throughout this period, Havering faced two urgent priorities:

- to reduce reliance on emergency hotel accommodation as quickly as possible,
- and to secure more stable housing options for residents at risk of homelessness within an increasingly constrained housing market.

Homelessness and rough sleeping remain critical issues that require a structured, evidence- led and strategic response. This Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2026–2029 builds on the achievements and lessons from the 2020–2025 Strategy, responding to new pressures while setting out clear objectives for the next three years.

Homelessness can affect anyone. It can occur regardless of age, relationship status, or background. In Havering, relationship breakdown has been the most common cause of homelessness over the last five years, often placing significant strain on family support networks and leading to family- related evictions.

At the same time, landlords across the borough have faced growing difficulty in sustaining affordable tenancies. Rising inflation, higher interest rates, and increased operating costs have made it harder for many landlords to continue letting homes at rents accessible to local residents, further reducing available supply.

Our Vision

Our vision is to prevent homelessness wherever possible, reduce rough sleeping, and ensure residents who do experience housing crisis are treated with dignity, clarity and compassion. We will do this through early intervention, strong partnership working, and access to safe, secure and sustainable housing.

Our Objectives

1. Prevent and reduce rough sleeping by supporting people affected by trauma, family breakdown, exploitation and begging
2. Ending the Use of Nightly Paid and Hotel Accommodation by 2030

3. Providing a Better Temporary Accommodation Experience for Those Who Do Become Homeless
4. Providing Compassionate, Empathetic Customer Care That Listens and Takes Action

Why Do People Become Homeless in Havering?

Homelessness rarely has a single cause. It is often the result of multiple factors coming together over time.

For some, it begins with early life experiences. Childhood trauma, including time spent in care, significantly increases the risk of repeated homelessness and can contribute to inter- generational cycles of housing instability.

Economic factors also play a role. Long- term unemployment, lack of qualifications, or being outside education and training can increase vulnerability—particularly during periods of wider economic uncertainty.

Other people experience homelessness following key life transitions. Those leaving care, the armed forces, or prison without sufficient resettlement support are at heightened risk, as are people affected by substance misuse, mental ill- health, or domestic abuse. Relationship breakdown remains the most common trigger in Havering, often leading to family or relative eviction when support networks can no longer cope.

National guidance places particular emphasis on care leavers because of the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities and the heightened risk of homelessness during transition to adulthood. The Homelessness Code of Guidance includes specific guidance on care leavers, including the need for joint working between housing authorities and children's services, effective prevention and relief activity, assessment of priority need, and suitable accommodation. Government good practice advice also expects local authorities to have joint housing protocols in place so housing and children's services can plan accommodation pathways, support independent living and reduce the risk of care leaver homelessness. This strategy will therefore align homelessness prevention activity with care leaver pathway planning, the Local Offer for care leavers, Personal Adviser support and the Council's wider corporate parenting responsibilities.

Former and serving armed forces personnel will not be left behind in Havering's homelessness prevention work. This is already part of the Council's wider approach to identifying people at risk early and ensuring that service history is properly considered when residents seek housing advice, homelessness assistance or access to social housing. National guidance expects housing authorities to have regard to the Armed Forces Covenant, the Homelessness Code of Guidance and statutory guidance on improving access to social housing for members of the armed forces. This includes recognising the risk of homelessness on discharge from service accommodation, responding to duty to refer notifications, considering vulnerability linked to service, and ensuring that allocation policies do not disadvantage people

because of the requirements of military life. Havering will continue to align its housing advice, homelessness prevention, allocations and partnership work with these duties and expectations.

Homeless households may have:

- lost an assured shorthold tenancy, including through the use of Section 21 notices
- lost their home due to rent or mortgage arrears
- been living in accommodation that is unsafe or detrimental to health
- been forced to live apart from their family due to changed circumstances.

Every homelessness journey is different. Tackling homelessness effectively therefore depends on early intervention and a personalised, holistic approach, recognising individual circumstances and responding before crisis becomes entrenched.

Purpose of this Strategy (2026–2029)

This Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy sets out Havering Council's approach to preventing homelessness, reducing rough sleeping, and improving outcomes for residents who experience housing crisis between 2026 and 2029.

While earlier drafts referred to a longer five- year period, this strategy deliberately focuses on the next three years. This reflects the fact that homelessness services in Havering are in a period of transition — responding to changing patterns of need, funding uncertainty, and evolving national policy — and therefore requires a clear, deliverable, and adaptable framework rather than a fixed long- term blueprint.

This strategy builds directly on the achievements and learning from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Prevention Strategy 2020–2025, taking forward what has worked in Havering while responding honestly to new and emerging challenges.

Homelessness in Havering: What Has Changed

Homelessness in Havering does not mirror the scale or visibility seen in many other London boroughs. Over the past five to six years, the Council has consistently maintained very low numbers of people sleeping on the streets, often in single digits. This has not happened by chance.

Havering's approach has been rooted in relationship- based outreach, persistence, and trust- building rather than enforcement or short- term interventions. Monthly evening street counts, daily engagement with individuals sleeping rough, and close partnership working have allowed the Council to understand not just *who* is on the street, but *why*.

A key learning from this work is that street presence and street begging do not always equate to street homelessness. Some individuals who appear to be sleeping rough do in fact have accommodation but are caught in cycles of exploitation,

substance dependency, coercion, or control by others. These dynamics are often hidden and require time, consistency, and skilled engagement to uncover.

Relationship- Led Outreach: A Havering Approach

Havering has adopted a non- conditional, relationship- led model of engagement with people on the streets.

One example involved a resident who had been sleeping in a highly unsuitable outdoor location for an extended period. Outreach staff maintained regular contact, not to impose solutions, but to demonstrate consistency and build trust. When the resident decided they were ready, they accepted an offer of accommodation and have since sustained it.

This approach has been replicated across multiple cases and reflects Havering's commitment to preventing entrenched rough sleeping through persistence, trust and practical support. It reflects a core belief of this strategy: lasting change happens at the pace of the individual, not the system.

Objective 1

Prevent and reduce rough sleeping by supporting people affected by trauma, family breakdown, exploitation and begging

People who are seen begging or living chaotic lives in public spaces are not “other”. They are residents of our communities — people who have experienced significant trauma, loss, and disconnection over time.

For many, homelessness and street activity are not the starting point, but the end of a long process of breakdown: childhood trauma, domestic abuse, adverse experiences, mental ill- health, substance dependency, and fractured relationships. In many cases, individuals have become completely disconnected from their family support networks, not because families do not care, but because relationships have been overwhelmed by behaviours that have become unmanageable.

Parents, siblings, and wider family members often continue to love the individual, but are no longer able to cope with the chaotic or risky behaviours associated with unresolved trauma, addiction, or mental distress. These fractures are frequently driven by pain on all sides and can result in individuals becoming isolated, distrustful, and disengaged from mainstream services.

This strategy recognises that disconnection is not the same as rejection, and that healing often requires time, safety, and the rebuilding of trust — not just housing.

Rebuilding Connection: Family, Community and Belonging

Where it is safe and appropriate, Havering Council will work to support individuals to reconnect with their family networks, recognising that this cannot be rushed or imposed. In some cases, families themselves require support to understand the

impact of trauma, addiction, and mental ill- health, and to rebuild relationships in a way that does not re- trigger harm.

There may be opportunities to explore structured, supported contact, similar in principle to supervised or mediated contact models, where:

- Conversations are facilitated by trained professionals
- The individual's voice is heard safely and clearly
- Families are supported to understand behaviours rather than blame individuals
- Past harms and co- created dynamics can be acknowledged and addressed.

This strategy however, is also clear that family reconnection is not always possible or appropriate. In some cases, family environments may remain unsafe, unavailable, or part of the cycle of abuse and trauma.

Where this is the case, the Council's role — alongside partners — is to help individuals build alternative forms of connection: supportive accommodation communities, trusted professionals, peer networks, and local services that can act as scaffolding while people rebuild their own sense of identity, structure, and stability.

Belonging does not have to start with family. It starts with being seen, believed, and valued somewhere.

From Connection to Stability

Once individuals begin to experience consistent care, acceptance, and safety, they are better able to:

- Develop internal resilience
- Reduce chaotic or risky behaviours
- Engage meaningfully with support
- Consider repairing or redefining family relationships over time

This is why Havering's approach prioritises relationships before outcomes. Housing, treatment, and recovery are most effective when people feel that they matter — not just to services, but to a community.

Supporting People Who Are Being Exploited Through Begging

Why This Objective Matters

Intelligence gathered through outreach, partner agencies and service users shows that some individuals are coerced into begging to repay drug debts, controlled by others involved in substance misuse or criminal activity, or unable to exit harmful relationships without intensive support.

Alongside this safeguarding and support response, Havering recognises that street begging can also create community safety concerns and may, in some circumstances, be linked to anti-social behaviour, organised exploitation or criminal activity. Enforcement will therefore be used proportionately and in partnership with

Community Safety, Police, outreach, safeguarding and substance misuse services. The focus will not be to criminalise vulnerability, but to address persistent harmful behaviour, disrupt those who exploit others, protect residents and businesses, and ensure that people begging are offered a clear route into support.

What Havering Has Already Put in Place

Over recent years, Havering has developed a strong infrastructure to support people with complex needs:

- Delivery of approximately 81 units of complex needs accommodation, including former schemes such as Farringdon Avenue, which demonstrated the effectiveness of high- support models before transitioning into an approved premises model.
- Ongoing provision of complex needs accommodation through a mix of low- and higher- need providers, with partners such as Penrose agreeing to deliver enhanced support where required.
- A Housing First- informed approach, with placements agreed through the CNAP (Complex Needs Accommodation Panel) involving Housing, Adult Social Care, Probation, and Change Grow Live.
- Strong partnership working enabling informed placement decisions that balance risk, support needs, and sustainability.

These arrangements have allowed Havering to move beyond crisis responses and focus on long- term stability for individuals who would otherwise cycle between the streets, custody, hospital, and temporary accommodation.

Emerging Challenges

Despite these strengths, new pressures are emerging:

- Exempt housing benefit constraints, particularly affecting community interest companies and non- registered providers, creating uncertainty around funding models for high- support accommodation.
- Reduced capacity within the voluntary and faith- led “pack and go” service, traditionally supporting people during extreme weather through mobile provision.
- Increasing need to review emergency and contingency provision, including the potential use of existing assets, alongside existing night shelter arrangements.

These challenges reinforce the need for a coordinated, strategic response rather than reactive solutions.

Under Objective 1, Havering Council will focus on four core action areas:

Action Area	Commitment
1. Targeted Support and Rehabilitation	We will continue to invest in outreach, complex needs accommodation, and Housing First style provision, including exploring options to: • Expand Housing First placements from 20 to up to 40 units • Increase modular and self-contained accommodation options for single people • Strengthen pathways away from exploitation through multiagency working
2. Disrupting Exploitation	We will work with partners to identify and disrupt coercive relationships, support individuals to safely exit exploitative situations, and use proportionate enforcement where street begging is linked to anti-social behaviour, coercion or criminal activity. Enforcement will sit alongside outreach, safeguarding and recovery pathways so that action is targeted at harm, exploitation and persistent community impact, not vulnerability itself.
3. Alternative Giving	We will promote safe and effective alternatives to street giving, ensuring public generosity supports recovery rather than exploitation.
4. Public Education and Awareness	We will change the narrative around street begging in Havering — moving away from judgement and towards understanding, compassion, and informed action.

Measuring Success

Success under this objective will be measured not simply by numbers on the street, but by:

- Sustained accommodation outcomes
- Reduced repeat rough sleeping
- Increased engagement with support services
- Safer, more informed community responses

Objective 2

Ending the Use of Nightly Paid and Hotel Accommodation by 2030

Why This Objective Matters

The use of nightly paid and hotel accommodation is not a policy choice for Havering Council — it is the visible outcome of a series of systemic market failures that have intensified over the last five to six years.

This period has been shaped by a sequence of external shocks:

- The COVID- 19 pandemic
- The invasion of Ukraine and its economic consequences
- A prolonged cost- of- living crisis
- Rapid increases in interest rates and inflation

Together, these events have fundamentally altered the private rented sector (PRS), particularly at the lower end of the market where local authorities traditionally secure accommodation for homeless households.

This objective is therefore about restoring stability, reducing financial risk, and ending reliance on emergency measures that are unsuitable for families, costly for the Council, and unsustainable over time.

Collapse of the Private Rented Sector: The Havering Experience

Havering has experienced what can reasonably be described as a collapse of the ordinary private rented market for homeless households.

Over recent years:

- Landlords have exited the market as mortgage costs outstripped rental income
- Rent increases sought by landlords exceeded what Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and homelessness subsidy could support
- Letting agents increasingly imposed barriers such as blanket exclusions affecting households receiving benefits, guarantor requirements, credit checks, and previous landlord references — excluding homeless households by default
- Some landlords, under financial pressure, pursued illegal evictions, with households unaware of their rights and, in some cases, enforcement actions being mistakenly supported.

Evidence indicates that a significant number of PRS properties — particularly those within the lower 30th percentile — have left the market altogether. The direct consequence has been a sharp reduction in accommodation available to local authorities. Wider private rented sector reform is also expected to place further pressure on the availability of affordable rented accommodation, depending on final implementation and market response.

In Havering, this is reflected in the loss of private sector leased (PSL) properties, falling from around 800 units to approximately 400 over this period.

Wider Developer Market Pressures

Havering's housing pressures have also been affected by wider instability in the housing development market. The same economic conditions that have reduced private rented supply — high inflation, increased interest rates, rising construction costs and weaker investor confidence — have also affected the viability and pace of new housing delivery.

Across London, developers have faced higher borrowing costs, increased build costs, regulatory complexity and more cautious sales and investment conditions. This has led to schemes being delayed, re-phased or reassessed, with affordable housing delivery through the planning system becoming less predictable.

For local authorities, this creates a double pressure. At the same time as more households are being pushed out of the private rented sector, the wider housing market is less able to deliver new affordable supply quickly enough to replace what has been lost. Registered Providers and institutional investors are also operating in a more constrained financial environment, which can limit appetite for new commitments unless schemes are clearly viable and supported by long-term certainty.

This means Havering cannot rely solely on the general development market to resolve homelessness and temporary accommodation pressures. The Council must therefore take a more active role in shaping supply through acquisitions, modular accommodation, long-term leasing, build-to-rent nominations, QLM and partnership models that provide greater certainty over cost, timing and use.

The collapse of the PRS and the slowdown in wider development delivery should therefore be understood as connected parts of the same housing system failure. Havering's strategic response is to move from dependence on market availability to planned, controlled and purpose-led supply.

From PRS Failure to Hotel Dependence

During the early stages of the pandemic, Government instruction to “bring everyone in” led to the emergency use of hotels to accommodate people at risk of COVID- 19. Initially, this was focused on single people and short- stay chain hotels with strict booking limits.

As the cost- of- living crisis deepened, the impact spread to families, and the scale of need outpaced the Council's ability to secure self- contained PRS accommodation. This led to:

- Repeated hotel bookings and re- bookings
- Escalating costs and operational pressure
- Increased scrutiny and audit challenge around unforecast spend

These pressures were not the result of poor planning, but of intense operational pressure in an unprecedented market environment.

Strategic Response: Moving Away from Emergency Provision

Despite these pressures, Havering has not stood still.

In response to the collapse of the PRS and the unsuitability of hotels, the Council has taken decisive steps to replace emergency accommodation with planned, controlled supply, including:

- Opening Jubilee Court (71 units) and a Family Welcome Centre (74 units), offsetting the loss of schemes such as Abercrombie House and Queen Street Hostel
- Investing in modular accommodation (18 demountable units) as the first phase of a scalable approach
- Developing acquisition and leasing models with institutional partners following early market testing with organisations such as Mears
- Amending the Housing Allocation Scheme to enable move on from temporary accommodation and preventative housing in the PRS.
- Progressing a build- to- rent, long- term nominations model through the Inspired Solutions partnership, delivering up to 600 units at Local Housing Allowance- linked rents for 40 years
- Establishing the Council- linked Community Interest Company, QLM, to manage and stabilise accommodation supply, including future schemes such as Chalkhill, mother and baby provision, and potential sites such as Angel Way.

These interventions represent a fundamental shift away from reliance on the PRS and nightly paid accommodation, towards a model that is:

- Affordable
- Predictable
- Long- term
- Designed around family stability and child wellbeing

Ending Nightly Paid and Hotel Accommodation by 2030

Based on detailed financial modelling and trajectory planning — including work led by Housing, Finance, and Business Partnering — Havering will work towards exiting nightly paid and hotel accommodation by 2030. This reflects the scale of market failure, the time needed to deliver new supply, and the need to avoid setting a target that is not credible or deliverable.

This objective is underpinned by:

- Phased delivery of new supply through acquisition, modular, and build- to- rent models
- Reduced exposure to volatile nightly paid markets
- Long- term nominations agreements that provide certainty for both households and the Council

- Ongoing cost avoidance and subsidy reduction as high- cost placements are replaced

While some delivery programmes remain in progress, early performance demonstrates that the direction of travel is correct, even where delivery timescales have extended.

To deliver Objective 2, Havering Council will focus on the following actions:

Strategic Priority	Description
1. Exit the Private Sector Lease (PSL) Model	Reduce dependency on short- term, high- risk Private Sector Lease arrangements that no longer provide value, affordability, or long- term stability for households or the Council.
2. Deliver Long- Term Affordable Supply	Provide sustainable housing through build- to- rent schemes, acquisitions, office- to- residential conversions, and modular housing, ensuring predictable and affordable options over the long term.
3. Stabilise and Repurpose Existing Assets	Repurpose hostel and temporary accommodation assets as new supply comes on stream, ensuring existing buildings continue to support housing need in a planned and efficient way.
4. Reduce Financial Risk and Subsidy	Replace nightly paid and hotel accommodation with controlled, predictable cost models that reduce financial volatility and reliance on subsidy.
5. Influence and Scale	Use Havering's delivery model to support wider learning across London and contribute to discussions about how homelessness and temporary accommodation pressures can be addressed at scale.

Measuring Success

Success will be measured through:

- Elimination of nightly paid and hotel accommodation by 2030
- Reduction in average placement cost from approximately £83 per night towards an LHA-linked level of approximately £41 per night, where supply and subsidy conditions allow.

- Increased length of stay and stability in settled accommodation, with a minimum five-year stability objective where appropriate.
- Improved outcomes for families and children

Strategic Transition Statement

Ending the use of nightly paid and hotel accommodation is not simply a cost- saving exercise. It is a statement of intent: that families deserve stability, children deserve continuity, and homelessness responses must move beyond emergency containment.

This objective represents Havering's commitment to rebuilding a functioning housing pathway where the market has failed.

Objective 3

Providing a Better Temporary Accommodation Experience for Those Who Do Become Homeless

Why This Objective Matters

For many residents, homelessness is not only a loss of housing — it is a disorientating, traumatic life event. How people are treated at this point can either compound harm or become the foundation for recovery.

Havering recognises that anyone can experience homelessness. Job loss, relationship breakdown, illness, business failure, or wider economic conditions can place households only a few pay cycles away from crisis. This objective is therefore grounded in a clear principle: homelessness is not a personal failure, and people should not be made to feel ashamed for seeking help.

This objective focuses on ensuring that when homelessness cannot be prevented, the experience of temporary accommodation and contact with services is clear, humane, supportive, and stabilising, particularly for children and families.

Transactional and Relational Practice: Creating Consistency Across Services

Across Housing Demand, different teams have historically operated with different practice cultures:

- The Housing Solutions (front door) service has necessarily been more transactional, focused on assessment and statutory decision- making.
- The Complex Needs and Rough Sleeping teams operate in a highly relational way, building trust over time.
- The Hostels and Temporary Accommodation Management Officers combine relational support with practical housing management.
- Parts of the Homeless Accommodation function remain predominantly transactional, focused on placements, bookings, and administration.

This variation has resulted in inconsistent experiences for residents as they move through services.

The aim of this objective is to make the temporary accommodation journey clearer, safer and more consistent, while retaining statutory compliance and operational efficiency.

Supporting Staff to Deliver Better Temporary Accommodation Services

Improving the temporary accommodation experience depends on staff having the confidence, support and capacity to work consistently with residents in difficult circumstances.

Officers regularly hear accounts of:

- Domestic abuse
- Family breakdown
- Childhood trauma
- Exploitation and loss

Within Objective 3, this means:

- Embedding reflective practice as a core management discipline
- Supporting managers to actively monitor wellbeing, not just performance
- Creating space for staff to process complexity safely and professionally

Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE)

Providing accommodation alone is not sufficient. The environment itself matters.

Havering will continue to develop psychologically informed environments across:

- Hostels
- The Family Welcome Centre
- Jubilee Court
- Willow Perrin
- Modular and supported accommodation
- Outreach and community- based settings

PIE principles will focus on:

- Safety and predictability
- Dignity and respect
- Clear information and expectations
- Opportunities for connection and routine

Even where engagement happens outside traditional buildings — such as street outreach or community cafés — the same principles will apply.

From Transaction to Relationship: Technology as an Enabler

To support more relational practice, Havering has introduced digital tools to reduce the administrative burden on officers, improve evidence capture and support timely case decisions, helping keep caseloads safe and manageable.

By allowing conversations to be captured and structured automatically:

- Officers can focus on listening and relationship- building
- Assessments become less interrogative and more conversational
- Decision- making is based on clearer, more accurate evidence

The use of approved digital support tools will further support this shift by:

- Assisting with evidence collation and statutory reasoning
- Creating distance between the *person* and the *decision*
- Reducing the emotional burden on individual officers

Officers remain accountable for decisions but are supported by systems that reduce pressure and improve consistency.

Over time, this may reduce the need for officers to focus primarily on decision- making tasks, allowing capacity to shift toward advocacy, support, and navigation — helping people move forward rather than simply process cases.

Clearer Information and Positive Experiences

Many people in temporary accommodation say that uncertainty makes a difficult situation worse. Clear information, predictable processes and respectful communication help people feel safer and more able to plan.

Our Commitment	What This Means in Practice
Normalising homelessness as a life event	Acknowledging that homelessness can affect anyone and is often the result of circumstances beyond an individual's control.
Reassuring households it is not their fault	Communicating clearly and consistently that seeking help is the right step and that residents will be treated with dignity and respect.
Making processes transparent and predictable	Explaining decisions, timescales, and next steps in plain language so households are not left uncertain or confused.
Clarity about what happens next	Ensuring every household understands the stages of their journey and what to expect at each point.
Clear explanations of decisions	Setting out what decisions are being made, why they are necessary, and how evidence has been considered.
Visibility of available support	Making sure households know what support is available to them, both from the Council and from partner organisations.

Inclusion, Community and Opportunity

Temporary accommodation should not mean exclusion from ordinary life.

Havering will work to ensure that households — particularly children and families — can continue to access:

- Leisure facilities
- Cultural and creative activities
- Parks and community spaces
- Digital access and Wi- Fi
- Food support and community resources

The Council will work with partners to develop financial and access models that support inclusion, recognising that positive experiences build resilience, aspiration, and recovery.

The Live Well Havering JOY App, talking therapies, arts programmes, public health services, and community- based support will be actively promoted as part of the homelessness pathway, aligned with the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and wider public health priorities.

Supporting Families and Children Experiencing Trauma

Families experiencing homelessness often carry significant shame and may struggle to seek help for their children's emotional or behavioural needs.

Havering will explore:

- Earlier access to psychological expertise
- Family- focused trauma support
- Better integration between housing, public health, education, and social care
- Safe spaces for families to talk about need without fear of judgement

The aim is to support families before crisis escalates, and to ensure children are not left carrying trauma alone.

Practice Weeks, Assurance and Continuous Improvement

To ensure the experience described in this strategy is genuinely delivered, Havering will introduce practice weeks across services.

These will:

- Test whether the service being provided matches the service described
- Review communication quality and clarity
- Gather feedback from residents
- Provide assurance to leadership and Members

This approach ensures accountability without blame and learning without defensiveness.

What This Strategy Will Do (2026–2029)

Under Objective 3, Havering Council will:

- Make the temporary accommodation pathway clearer, safer and more consistent
- Support staff to provide consistent and proportionate support to residents
- Create psychologically informed accommodation environments
- Use technology to improve clarity, evidence capture and consistency
- Improve information, expectations and communication for households in temporary accommodation
- Ensure inclusion, opportunity, and positive experiences — especially for children

Strategic Statement

Providing a better temporary accommodation experience is not about comfort alone. It is about stability, dignity, and hope.

If we get this right, temporary accommodation becomes not a place where people are stuck — but a place where people begin to recover, rebuild, and move forward.

Objective 4

Providing Compassionate, Empathetic Customer Care That Listens and Takes Action

Why This Objective Matters

Objective 3 focuses on the experience of temporary accommodation and the environments in which people live when they become homeless. Objective 4 goes wider. It is about how Havering listens and responds across the whole homelessness system — to residents, children, partners, professionals and communities — and how housing acts as a system enabler, not just a statutory service.

Compassionate customer care does not begin when someone presents as homeless. It begins when:

- a partner cannot access housing pathways
- a family does not understand a process
- a child's voice is unheard
- a professional feels blocked by system design

Listening to Residents, Children and Families

Compassionate customer care means listening beyond the immediate housing question.

For adults, this means:

- being heard the first time
- understanding what is driving the crisis, not just documenting it
- knowing what will happen next and why

For children and young people, listening requires different methods. Children experiencing homelessness often do not have:

- language to describe instability
- confidence to speak openly
- trusted forums to express how homelessness feels

This strategy commits to improving how children's voices are heard, including exploring:

- engagement through schools
- age- appropriate workshops on housing and homelessness
- partnership with education to understand lived experience
- safe, non- stigmatising ways for children to express impact.

The aim is not consultation for its own sake, but understanding impact early enough to respond.

Removing Barriers to Access and Participation

For many residents, housing systems can feel complex, digital, and difficult to navigate. This is particularly true for people with limited digital access, low confidence or literacy, neurodiverse residents, and those for whom English is not a first language.

As housing processes — including the Allocations Policy — have become increasingly digital, this strategy recognises the risk of exclusion if alternative routes are not actively maintained.

Objective 4 commits to reducing these barriers by ensuring that access to services is practical, inclusive and proportionate. This includes providing digital inclusion support where needed, offering assisted access to housing processes, using clear and plain- English communication, and maintaining more than one route into services rather than relying on a single “front door”.

Access is a prerequisite for compassion.

Listening to Partners: Housing as a System Enabler

Compassionate customer care also means listening to our partners, not just residents.

Housing is often the point at which wider systems succeed or fail. It can enable — or block — the work of children's services seeking suitable residential provision, adult social care requiring step- down or supported housing, and health partners working to discharge patients safely from hospital or stabilise people in the community.

This strategy commits to using housing development and commissioning — including build- to- rent, acquisitions, modular housing and mixed- use schemes — to anticipate partner needs, rather than responding only once crisis has occurred.

Where appropriate, this will include factoring children's residential needs into development planning, enabling recovery and step- down pathways from hospital, and aligning supported housing provision with adult social care commissioning priorities.

By doing so, housing becomes a facilitator of system flow, reducing pressure elsewhere and enabling more compassionate outcomes across services.

From Reaction to Proactive Design

Reactionary systems are rarely compassionate.

When services are overwhelmed, decisions can become defensive, empathy is squeezed out, and communication deteriorates. This impacts residents and staff alike.

Objective 4 commits to designing pressure out of the system by planning supply with partner need in mind, strengthening pathways before crisis point, and using data and insight to better anticipate demand.

A proactive system is not only more efficient — it is more humane.

Compassionate Leadership and Workforce Support

Compassionate customer care depends on leadership that supports staff to make clear, fair and humane decisions under pressure.

This strategy recognises that housing staff routinely work with complex need, distress and financial pressure. Leaders must create the conditions for good decision-making, reflective supervision and safe caseload management.

Training, induction and leadership development will embed trauma- informed practice, curiosity- led engagement (the “curious facilitator” approach), financial confidence in decision- making, and assurance awareness without creating a culture of fear.

Clear Decisions, Case Closure and Assurance

Compassion and empathy must be practical. For Havering, this means saying what we mean, doing what we say, and making sure households understand where they stand at each stage of the homelessness process.

The “back door” of the service means the way the Council brings homelessness duties and casework to a clear, lawful and timely conclusion. This includes how duties are ended, how cases are closed, how caseloads are managed, and how managers gain assurance that decisions are accurate, fair and properly explained.

This is not a softer or less rigorous approach. A compassionate service gives people clarity, even when the answer is difficult. Residents should not be left in uncertainty

about whether the Council owes a duty, what steps are being taken, why a duty is ending, what review rights exist, and what practical options remain available to them.

This approach reflects the statutory framework for ending prevention and relief duties, where clear notices, reasons, review rights and timely communication are central to good administration and resident understanding.

Havering will therefore strengthen management oversight of case closure, including routine checks of decision quality, duty-end letters, timeliness, evidence use, personal housing plans and follow-up actions. This will support safe caseload management and ensure that no household is left unclear about the Council's position or their next steps.

The ambition is to develop a gold standard approach to homelessness service delivery: lawful, transparent, timely, trauma-informed and accountable, with assurance built into everyday practice rather than treated as a separate exercise.

Empowering Communities and Building Resilience

Compassion is not dependency.

Objective 4 focuses on enabling people and communities to understand systems, navigate processes, and build confidence and agency. This includes community-based information and workshops, partnership with voluntary and faith sectors, and encouraging peer support and shared learning.

Resilience grows when people feel informed, connected and respected — and when systems are designed to support, not overwhelm.

What This Strategy Will Do (2026–2029)

Under Objective 4, Havering Council will:

- listen consistently to residents, children and families, using feedback to improve services and identify barriers early
- maintain practical, inclusive access routes for residents who need support to navigate housing processes
- work with partners so housing acts as an enabler for health, social care, education, community safety and children's services
- design pathways and accommodation supply around anticipated need, rather than responding only at crisis point
- support staff and managers to make clear, fair and humane decisions under pressure
- strengthen assurance around case closure, duty-end decisions, communication quality and resident understanding
- build community confidence, resilience and shared responsibility for preventing homelessness.

Measuring Success

Success under this objective will be measured through:

- improved resident understanding of decisions, next steps and available support
- increased use of resident, child and partner feedback to shape service improvement
- reduced avoidable complaints linked to poor communication, delay or lack of clarity
- stronger evidence of timely, lawful and well-explained case closure
- improved partner confidence in housing pathways and joint planning
- greater staff confidence in delivering trauma-informed, clear and compassionate services.

Strategic Statement

Compassionate customer care is not an add-on to statutory services. It is how statutory services are delivered.

When people feel heard, respected, and clear about what is happening:

- conflict reduces
- outcomes improve
- trust grows
- systems work better

Objective 4 ensures that Havering's homelessness response is not only lawful and efficient — but human.

Consolidated Action Plan (Objectives 1–4) | 2026–2029

Consolidated Action Plan (Objectives 1–4) | 2026–2029

Objective 1: Rough Sleeping, Exploitation and Street Begging

Action Area	Key Action	Lead / Partners	Timescale	Success Measure
Targeted support and rehabilitation	Continue outreach, complex needs accommodation and Housing First style provision, including options to expand placements and self-contained accommodation for single people.	Housing Demand; outreach providers; Adult Social Care; Probation; Change Grow Live; voluntary sector partners.	2026–2029	Sustained accommodation outcomes and reduced repeat rough sleeping.
Disrupting exploitation and street begging harms	Identify and disrupt coercive relationships, support safe exit from exploitation, and use proportionate enforcement where begging is linked to anti-social behaviour, coercion or criminal activity.	Housing Demand; Community Safety; Police; safeguarding partners; outreach; substance misuse services.	2026–2029	Improved safeguarding responses and reduced persistent harmful street activity.
Alternative giving	Promote safe alternatives to street giving so public generosity supports recovery, outreach and support pathways rather than exploitation.	Housing Demand; Communications; voluntary and faith sector partners.	2026–2027	Increased public awareness and greater use of safe giving routes.

Public education and awareness	Promote informed, compassionate and practical community responses to street activity and rough sleeping.	Housing Demand; Communications; Community Safety; voluntary sector partners.	2026–2029	Safer and more informed community responses.
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Objective 2: Ending Nightly Paid and Hotel Accommodation

Action Area	Key Action	Lead / Partners	Timescale	Success Measure
Exit the PSL model	Reduce dependency on short-term, high-risk Private Sector Lease arrangements that no longer provide value, affordability or long-term stability.	Housing Demand; Finance; Legal; property partners.	2026–2029	Reduced reliance on PSL and greater supply stability.
Deliver long-term affordable supply	Deliver sustainable housing through build-to-rent, acquisitions, conversions, modular housing and long-term nominations models.	Housing Demand; Regeneration; Finance; QLM; Registered Providers; institutional partners.	2026–2030	Increased predictable, affordable and self-contained accommodation.
Repurpose existing assets	Repurpose hostel and temporary accommodation assets as new supply comes on stream.	Housing Demand; Asset Management; Property Services; QLM.	2026–2029	Better use of existing assets and reduced emergency accommodation reliance.

Reduce financial risk	Replace nightly paid and hotel accommodation with controlled and predictable cost models.	Housing Demand; Finance; Business Partnering.	2026–2030	Progress towards ending nightly paid and hotel use by 2030.
Influence and scale	Use Havering's model to support wider learning and contribute to strategic discussions on homelessness and temporary accommodation pressures.	Housing Demand; senior leadership; London partners; government stakeholders.	2026–2029	Havering's model informs wider policy and delivery discussions.

Objective 3: Temporary Accommodation Experience

Action Area	Key Action	Lead / Partners	Timescale	Success Measure
Consistent pathway	Make the temporary accommodation journey clearer, safer and more consistent while retaining statutory compliance and operational efficiency.	Housing Demand; Homeless Accommodation; Housing Solutions; hostel teams.	2026–2029	Improved resident understanding of processes and next steps.
Workforce support	Embed reflective practice, wellbeing oversight and safe spaces for staff to process complexity.	Housing Demand management team; HR; learning and development partners.	2026–2028	Improved staff confidence, wellbeing and consistency of practice.

Psychologically informed environments	Develop PIE approaches across hostels, the Family Welcome Centre, Jubilee Court, modular and supported accommodation and outreach settings.	Housing Demand; supported accommodation providers; Public Health; voluntary sector partners.	2026–2029	Safer, more predictable and more stabilising accommodation environments.
Technology as an enabler	Use approved digital tools to improve evidence capture, reduce administrative burden and support clearer decisions.	Housing Demand; Digital; Information Governance; service managers.	2026–2028	Improved decision quality, timeliness and evidence capture.
Inclusion and opportunity	Work with partners so households, especially children and families, can access leisure, cultural, digital, food and community support.	Housing Demand; Public Health; leisure; culture; education; voluntary sector partners.	2026–2029	Improved access to community support and positive opportunities.

Objective 4: Compassionate Customer Care and System Leadership

Action Area	Key Action	Lead / Partners	Timescale	Success Measure
Resident, child and family voice	Strengthen feedback mechanisms and use insight to improve services, communication and early identification of barriers.	Housing Demand; education partners; Children's Services; resident engagement leads.	2026–2029	Greater use of lived experience to shape service improvement.

Inclusive access	Maintain practical access routes, assisted digital support, clear communication and more than one route into services.	Housing Demand; Digital; Customer Services; voluntary and community partners.	2026–2029	Reduced access barriers and improved resident understanding.
Housing as system enabler	Align housing development, commissioning and supply planning with health, adult social care, children's services, education and community safety outcomes.	Housing Demand; Adult Social Care; Children's Services; Public Health; Education; Community Safety; health partners.	2026–2029	Stronger joint planning and improved partner confidence.
Case closure and assurance	Strengthen oversight of case closure, duty-end decisions, personal housing plans, communication and follow-up actions.	Housing Solutions; Homeless Accommodation; service managers; quality assurance leads.	2026–2028	Timely, lawful and well-explained decisions with fewer avoidable complaints.
Community resilience	Develop community information, workshops and partnership activity to help residents understand systems and build confidence.	Housing Demand; voluntary and faith sector partners; community groups; Communications.	2026–2029	Greater community confidence and shared responsibility for prevention.

Alignment with the Government Local Outcomes Framework

This strategy has been developed to support Havering's local priorities while also aligning with the Government's Local Outcomes Framework. The framework places a clear emphasis on outcomes rather than activity, with a specific national outcome to prevent and reduce homelessness and rough sleeping. Havering's strategy supports this through prevention, early intervention, reduced reliance on unsuitable emergency accommodation, better temporary accommodation experiences, sustained rough sleeping pathways, and compassionate, lawful and timely casework.

The strategy also contributes to wider Local Outcomes Framework priorities, including housing quality and safety, multiple disadvantage, children and family stability, health and wellbeing, neighbourhood safety, community inclusion and child poverty. This is important because homelessness is rarely only a housing issue. It is often connected to trauma, poverty, domestic abuse, mental ill-health, substance misuse, family breakdown, exploitation, digital exclusion and the availability of safe, decent and affordable homes.

Havering will use the following alignment framework to ensure that delivery of this strategy can be monitored against national outcomes while retaining a clear local focus on the needs of residents, families, children and people experiencing rough sleeping or housing crisis.

Government outcome / metric	Havering strategic link	Local performance focus	How progress will be evidenced
Households with children in temporary accommodation	Objective 2 and Objective 3: reducing reliance on unsuitable emergency accommodation and improving the temporary accommodation experience for families.	Reducing the number and duration of family placements in temporary accommodation, particularly where accommodation is unsuitable or disruptive.	Temporary accommodation data, placement duration, family move-on outcomes and reporting through performance and governance arrangements.

Families in bed and breakfast accommodation over six weeks	Objective 2: ending the use of nightly paid and hotel accommodation by 2030.	Minimising and eliminating family use of B&B, hotel and nightly paid accommodation beyond statutory limits.	Monthly monitoring of B&B and hotel use, duration of stay, exceptions, escalation and move-on planning.
Percentage of homelessness duties where homelessness is prevented or relieved	Objective 4: clear decisions, case closure, personal housing plans and early resolution.	Increasing effective prevention and relief outcomes, reducing repeat homelessness, and ensuring lawful and timely case progression.	Prevention and relief outcome data, case closure audits, personal housing plan quality checks and complaints learning.
People sleeping rough on a single night	Objective 1: preventing and reducing rough sleeping through relationship-led outreach and support.	Maintaining low rough sleeping numbers and ensuring rapid, person-centred responses to new rough sleeping.	Street counts, outreach records, verification data and multi-agency case tracking.
Long-term rough sleeping	Objective 1: complex needs accommodation, Housing First style provision and sustained engagement.	Reducing repeat and entrenched rough sleeping by supporting people into accommodation they can sustain.	Sustained accommodation outcomes, repeat rough sleeping data, support engagement and CNAP pathway monitoring.
Housing quality and safety	Objective 3: improving the quality, safety and consistency of the temporary accommodation experience.	Ensuring temporary accommodation is safe, suitable, decent and managed in a way that supports stability and dignity.	Property standards checks, suitability reviews, resident feedback, repairs performance and management assurance.

Multiple disadvantage	Objective 1 and Objective 4: support for people affected by trauma, substance misuse, exploitation, domestic abuse, prison release, mental ill-health and complex needs.	Strengthening multi-agency responses and improving pathways for residents whose homelessness is linked to overlapping needs.	Multi-agency case reviews, safeguarding activity, support engagement, CNAP outcomes and partner feedback.
Children, family stability and child poverty	Objective 2, Objective 3 and Objective 4: reducing disruption for children, improving family accommodation pathways and listening to children's experiences.	Reducing the impact of homelessness on school, health, wellbeing, family stability and access to opportunity.	Family placement monitoring, school disruption feedback, child and family engagement, and joint work with education, public health and children's services.

People Overview & Scrutiny Sub- Committee

8th 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 People 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 People 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

People Overview & Scrutiny Sub- Committee

8th 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](#)

PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE – 8th September 2026

Subject Heading:

Nominations to Outer North East London
Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny
Committee (ONEL JHOSC)

Report Author and contact details:

Anthony Clements - Committee Services
Manager

Anthony.clements@havering.gov.uk

Policy context:

Members to discuss areas relating to
People

SUMMARY

This report is to allow members the opportunity to nominate themselves to represent the Sub-Committee on the ONEL JHOSC.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Sub-Committee nominates three members to sit on the ONEL JHOSC.

REPORT DETAIL

The ONEL JHOSC holds meetings quarterly and scrutinises health issues which impact the wider area of Outer North East London. Thus allows effective scrutiny of the many cross-border issues and changes affecting local health services.

The JHOSC comprises Councillors from Havering, Barking & Dagenham, Redbridge, Waltham Forest and Essex with non-voting participation from Eooing Forest.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks: None for this covering report

Legal implications and risks: None for this covering report

Human Resources implications and risks: None for this covering report

Equalities implications and risks: None for this covering report

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS
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None for this covering report

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

People Overview & Scrutiny Sub- Committee

8th September 2026

REPORT

Subject Heading:

Agreeing items for the People 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 People 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 People 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 People Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee

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

- Drug, Alcohol and Sexual Services
- Health & Wellbeing
- Health Overview & Scrutiny
- Adult Care
- Learning and Physical Disabilities
- Employment & Skills
- Education
- Child Protection
- Youth Services
- Fostering & Adoption Services
- Education Traded Services
- Early Years Services
- Looked After Children
- Media
- Communications
- Advertising
- Corporate Events
- Bereavement & Registration Services
- Crime & Disorder

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)