



OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD AGENDA

7.00 pm

**Tuesday
18 August 2026**

**Havering Town Hall,
Main Road, Romford**

Members 11: Quorum 5

COUNCILLORS:

**Reform UK Group
(7)**

Robert Benham
Malvin Brown
Duncan Cowie
Sathya Maddassani
Angelica Ola (Vice-Chair)
Gary Payne
Diane Smith

**Labour Group
(1)**

Matthew Stanton

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

Gillian Ford
Barry Mugglestone (Chairman)

**East Havering Residents Group
(1)**

Martin Goode

For information about the meeting please contact:

**Anthony Clements 01708 433065
anthony.clements@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.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

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

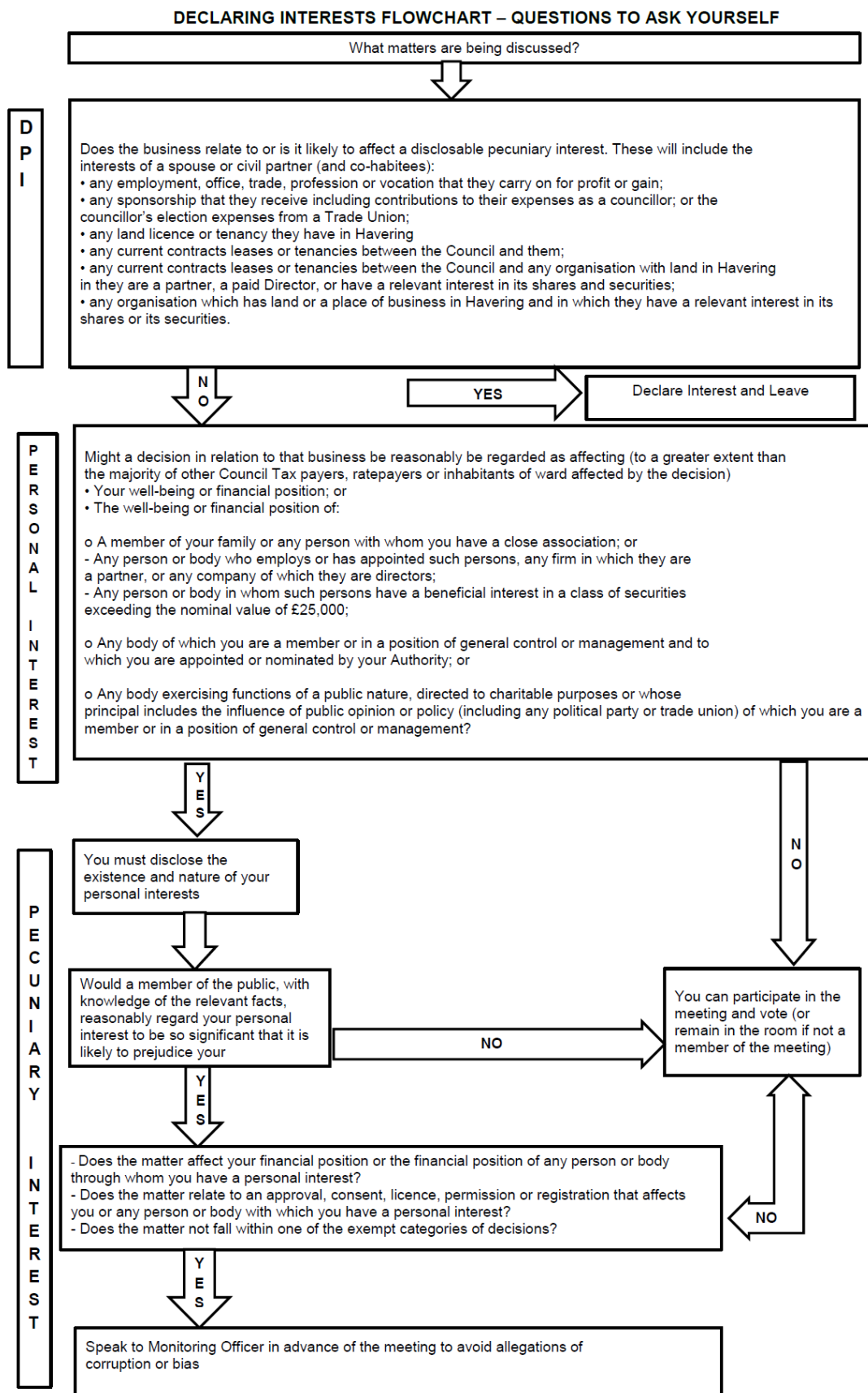
The Overview and Scrutiny Board acts as a vehicle by which the effectiveness of scrutiny is monitored and where work undertaken by themed sub-committees can be coordinated to avoid duplication and to ensure that areas of priority are being reviewed. The Board also scrutinises general management matters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

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

Terms of Reference:

The areas scrutinised by the Board are:

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



Principles of conduct in public office

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AGENDA ITEMS

1 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

(if any) - receive.

3 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

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

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

4 MINUTES (Pages 7 - 18)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meetings of the Board held on 17 March 2026 and 25 March 2026 and to authorise the Chairman to sign them (exempt minutes of 25 March meeting not available to press or public).

5 CALL-IN OF EXECUTIVE DECISION - PURCHASE OF SYNERGY EDUCATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (Pages 19 - 66)

Reports attached (some documents not available to press or public).

6 ENDORSEMENT OF THE DRAFT SCRUTINY PROTOCOL (Pages 67 - 80)

Report and draft protocol attached.

7 CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO ACHIEVE EFFECTIVE SCRUTINY FOR 2026/27 (Pages 81 - 86)

Report attached.

8 AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD'S WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2026/27 (Pages 87 - 94)

Report attached.

Zena Smith
Head of Committee and Election Services

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD
Council Chamber - Town Hall
17 March 2026 (7.00 - 9.30 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	Dilip Patel and David Taylor
Havering Residents' Group	Philippa Crowder, Laurance Garrard (Chairman), Bryan Vincent and Julie Wilkes (Vice-Chair)
Labour Group East Havering Residents' Group	Jane Keane and Matthew Stanton Martin Goode

All decisions were taken with no votes against.

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

24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillors David Godwin and Phil Ruck.

25 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

26 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2026 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

27 CORPORATE HR METRICS

Officers reported that there had been a continued improvement in staff absence levels with overall sickness levels continuing a downward trend from 10.8 to 10.2 days per employee per year. Mental health issues were the main cause of sickness absence and it was accepted that long term sickness remained a pressure point.

There had been an increase in demand for wellbeing support and the new provider of Occupational Health and Employee Assistance services was

now fully in operation. It was accepted that budget constraints would limit expansion but it was hoped to expand the Mental Health First Aider network.

Managers were now increasingly aware of the Occupational Health referral process and how this could reduce sickness absence levels and help staff to return to work. It was noted that a reduction in referral numbers was expected in 2026 due to the six week handover period to the new provider.

Detail could be given on how one day sickness absences were treated and it was clarified that staff could take up to 5 days carers leave per year. It was suggested that future HR reports to the Board could include comparative data with other boroughs but officers felt it was best not to identify other geographical areas specifically in the data. Comparisons could also be provided with sickness absence in the private sector.

Trends in absence around musculo-skeletal issues could be looked at and work had been undertaken with a local chiropractic clinic although this was limited by budgetary constraints. Those staff who had attended had provided positive feedback and it was hoped managers would encourage more colleagues to attend the sessions.

A Member felt that patterns of sickness absence should be managed and the effect of working from home should be investigated. Officers emphasised that support was available to managers when dealing with sickness trends etc. Sickness certificates were required to be produced after 5 days absence. Further details of the full cost to the Council of sickness absence could be provided in future reports. Staff received full pay for their first six months of sickness absence with half pay for the following six months. Phased returns and reasonable adjustments were offered to assist with returns to work.

Working from home was not specifically mentioned in the sickness statistics as some staff did also come into the office. Carers leave etc was recorded separately. It was felt that it was not cost effective to seek external accreditation for sickness management given current resources. Learning was shared with other Local Authorities via networks.

The following recommendations were **AGREED**:

- 1. That it be recognised that an improvement in sickness absence rates had been achieved under very difficult financial circumstances.**
- 2. That ways in which other comparable Local Authorities deal with sickness absence be investigated.**
- 3. That an update on sickness absence due to musculo-skeletal issues be given to a future meeting of the Board.**

4. That messaging on ways to prevent short term illness be provided to staff.
5. That officers work towards 100% completion by staff of training on musculo-skeletal and stress issues.

28 CORPORATE METRICS - AGENCY WORKERS

Officers accepted that some staff were retained on long term agency contracts in e.g. catering as this could be better financially for the Council. The position on long term agency staff in higher graded posts was discussed with the individuals concerned. It was noted however that it was not necessarily always a cheaper option to convert from temporary to permanent staff. Agency staff were sometimes hired in the short term to cover restructures and further detail could be provided on this. The percentage fee paid to the employment agency for staff supplied could be given to the Board as an exempt item.

Senior agency staff were recruited, where necessary, via consideration of their CV and mindset demonstrated rather than where they lived. It was hoped to reduce the percentage of agency staff in the Council's workforce to around 12%. The use of the Adecco agency was part of a London-wide agreement although other agencies could be used within this, where necessary. Information could be provided on agency staff who had been in post for more than three years.

Officers emphasised that efforts were being made to control costs with other agencies being transferred into the Adecco supply chain where possible. Work was needed with HR to understand the lack of applications for permanent positions and hence the need to retain more agency workers. There were 67 project workers employed as agency staff and further detail could be provided. Efforts were also made to recruit permanently into the in-house Project Management Office. The possibility of training existing staff to undertake project management work would need to be discussed with hiring managers.

A Member felt it should be investigated whether an in-house employment agency could be developed as seen in for example Haringey. A Member also asked if a breakdown could be produced of the type of agency contracts used in Havering e.g. fixed term, open ended etc.

The Board agreed the comments and action points as recorded above.

29 COMMERCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE

The Assistant Director of Education – Starting Well explained that the Council wished to make its services more commercially-minded and for all Council officers to think more commercially. This would include training for

staff and the setting of appropriate targets as part of the performance review process. A commercial awareness resource bank had recently been launched for staff.

It was not possible at this stage to report specifically on the impact of traded services although the Havering Schools Income Generation Framework was available. It was hoped that more detailed reporting would be available in the future.

The possibility of a staff incentive scheme to generate savings had been raised but there were no definite plans at this stage. The 'Big Idea' campaign had been run successfully amongst staff. It was suggested by Members that more detail on the Commercial Strategy should be brought to a future meeting of the Board along with more indicators of progress. Officers responded that this was shown in the action plan for the Commercial Strategy. This information was commercially sensitive but could perhaps be brought to the Board as an exempt item.

There was strict legislation around how generated income could be used and this was required to be ring-fenced to the service. Information on income derived from fees and charges could not be shown specifically at present.

The Board agreed the comments and recommendations as shown above.

30 RESPONSE OF CABINET TO CALL-IN OF EXECUTIVE DECISION - FUTURE PROPOSALS FOR FORMER LIBRARY SITES

At its meeting on 14 January 2026, Cabinet had responded to the comments of the Board following the upholding of a requisition of a Cabinet decision concerning future proposals for former library premises.

The Board recommended that Cabinet be asked to give a specific response to recommendations 5 and 6 concerning Hornchurch library. The Board agreed this could be taken direct to the relevant Cabinet Member and Head of Service.

31 SELF-EVALUATION OF BOARD'S WORK 2025/26

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer detailed some options for future arrangements for scrutiny in Havering. This included potentially having longer tenures for scrutiny Chairs with a minimum of two years. It was noted that, in addition to scrutiny Members, training on these areas had been provided to Cabinet Members and the Executive Leadership Team. A working protocol between Cabinet and scrutiny was in the process of being developed.

A Member felt that there was inadequate support given to scrutiny and this was demonstrated by the low number of task and finish groups and the

number of delayed reports. They felt this should be addressed in the new Council term.

Officers stated that scrutiny was a statutory function and more engagement could be undertaken with the public and with other partners. Better tracking of recommendations implemented could be undertaken. A Member suggested this could also apply to responses to questions raised at meetings.

It was felt it would be useful, where this was possible, to receive scrutiny reports at an earlier stage. A work plan for the full year could be circulated to assist Members and officers. AI could also be used to provide a summary of key lines of enquiry etc to be used at meetings. Perhaps how to use the relevant software could be included as part of the Member induction programme. It would also be important for terms of reference for scrutiny reviews to be as clear as possible.

The Board agreed the above points and suggestions as recommendations to go to Cabinet for response.

Chairman

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Public Document Pack

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD
Havering Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
25 March 2026 (7.00 - 9.18 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	Dilip Patel, David Taylor and Michael White
Havering Residents' Group	Philippa Crowder, Laurance Garrard (Chairman), Bryan Vincent and Julie Wilkes (Vice-Chair)
Labour Group East Havering Residents' Group	Jane Keane and Matthew Stanton Martin Goode

All decisions were taken with no votes against.

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

32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillor David Godwin.

33 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

34 CALL-IN OF EXECUTIVE DECISION - BUILD TO RENT - AT THE LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE

Officers advised that the 40 year agreement referred to in the lease was a nominations agreement rather than a lease. If the properties were to not be delivered then the projected savings would not be achieved. A Member asked why no procurement exercise had been undertaken and if this constituted best value. Officers responded that a procurement exercise was not required in this instance but the proposals did represent good value for money for the Council. The Council would receive a significant number of properties at low risk.

Members asked for clarity on the criteria for eligibility for the new homes. It was confirmed that this would be based on the current Council allocation scheme. There would be a selection process to ensure families gained the tenancies and received any additional support required.

All proposed developments would be located in Havering and the Council would not be able to meet the demand for housing without it. A representative of the developers confirmed that they had received Cabinet approval for a similar scheme in another Local Authority.

It was accepted that the proposals had been submitted late to the Council's Forward Plan but the plans had not been rushed overall with discussions with Cabinet progressing for 6 – 9 months. Members asked however how they would be given oversight of the scheme. Officers responded that the Cabinet Member would be involved in each decision set out in the recommendations of the Cabinet report.

The development would be able to reduce the liability of the Council. The proposal was an innovative arrangement and a lot of work had been undertaken with investors. It was emphasised that the Council's commitment was only triggered once the new homes were delivered.

A Member asked if a new Administration felt there had been insufficient scrutiny of the proposals and what penalties would there be if the agreement was cancelled. Officers responded that the overall agreement was unlikely to be finalised prior to the election. Alternative options that had been considered were set out in the Cabinet report. An earlier proposal for modular housing units had not been rejected and had been taken forward in Rainham.

It was confirmed that the Council would not be liable for management fees and that rental collection would be undertaken by the management company. Havering would be liable for uncollected rent within parameters. This division of liability for rent arrears would not have been possible if Mercury Land Holdings had developed the scheme due to Mercury having a publicly funded model.

Detailed issues such as the coverage of void costs would be finalised at a later stage. The developers had reached the stage of agreeing property specifications with the other Local Authority they were working with and had established a practical completion date to hand over to that Council.

It was clarified that the development would consist solely of social housing for Havering residents. It was accepted that there would be a financial commitment required from the Council but this would be less than undertaking a lease agreement for the 40 year period. As shown in the Cabinet report, the scheme would produce net savings in the cost of temporary accommodation. The proposed scheme used a different financial model that would provide good quality affordable accommodation for Havering.

Whilst officers accepted there remained an element of risk on delivery of the project, due diligence had been undertaken as shown in the legal and financial comments included in the report. The proposed scheme would give a much higher proportion of social housing than other Council schemes and

would provide the correct type of housing required for families on the waiting list etc. The Council's powers if the required property standards were not delivered would be part of the contractual arrangements.

It was accepted that one of the proposed sites may have to be resubmitted to Strategic Planning Committee but priority sites would be developed first. There was no plan by the developers to exit the arrangement and a sinking fund and revenue streams had been created in advance. The Council would establish guarantees of continuing standards if a change of supplier should be required. The properties themselves could not be sold over the 40 year timescale and hence would not be impacted by house price inflation.

There would be trigger points agreed for exiting the contract but the Council wished to undertake the commitment for 40 years. It was felt that there was only a low risk to the Council of demand falling and that the demand for housing was likely to remain high. The project could not go bankrupt due to the set up of the vehicle being used. The developers made agreements specifically for each Council but with the same overall terms.

There would be penalty clauses in the contract in case of poor performance. It was confirmed that the Council had an agreement for nomination rights for the new properties. It was emphasised that the proposed scheme required a far more limited commitment from the Council than other schemes using different models. The scheme was in line with the objectives of the developer's investors who sought long term sources of secure income.

The meeting went into an exempt session at this point.

On resumption of the open section of the meeting, the requisition of the Cabinet decision was **NOT UPHOLD** by 6 votes to 5 on the casting vote of the Chairman.

Members voting in favour of upholding the requisition:

Councillor Martin Goode
Councillor Dilip Patel
Councillor David Taylor
Councillor Matthew Stanton
Councillor Michael White

Members voting not in favour of upholding the requisition:

Councillor Philippa Crowder
Councillor Laurance Garrard (plus casting vote)
Councillor Jane Keane
Councillor Bryan Vincent
Councillor Julie Wilkes

Chairman

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Overview & Scrutiny Board

18 August 2026

Subject Heading:

Call-in of Executive Decision -
Purchase of Synergy Education
Management System

SLT Lead:

Patricia Narebor – Deputy Director of
Legal Services

Report Author and contact details:

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

Policy context:

The report deals with a statutory process.

Financial summary:

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

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

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well

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

Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council

SUMMARY

In accordance with paragraph 17 of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Rules, a requisition signed by at least six Members representing more than one Group (Councillors Petru Eugen Dinsorean, Henry Williams, Alex Donald, Iurie Bivol, Khuram Amin, John Tyler and Lesley Tyler) have called-in the Key Executive Decision dated 23 July 2026

The grounds for the requisition are:

1. Decision-making authority

Clarification is required from the Monitoring Officer regarding whether the decision-maker possessed the necessary delegated authority, taking account of the complete VAT-inclusive contract value and the relevant constitutional and procurement thresholds.

2. Financial inconsistency

The published decision contains an apparent £100,000 inconsistency between the stated extension subtotal and the annual extension figures. The financial information should be corrected and formally verified before implementation.

3. Supplier identity

Clarification is required regarding the precise legal entity receiving the contract and whether that entity is correctly appointed under the relevant YPO framework lot.

4. Direct award and value for money

The published report does not provide sufficient like-for-like, whole-life cost evidence to demonstrate that the proposed five-year direct award represents the best available value for the Council.

5. Procurement, contractual and governance safeguards

Further evidence is required regarding the direct-award assessment, funding risks, social value, data security, service resilience, contract performance and exit arrangements.

The Executive Decision itself is attached (exempt documents not available to press or public). A response by officers to the grounds for the requisition is also attached.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board considers the requisition of the Key Executive Decision and determines whether to uphold it.

REPORT DETAIL

As per Appendices

- Key Executive Decision report (not available to press or public)
- Grounds for requisition and supporting report (exempt supporting report not available to press or public)
- Response to grounds from officers (exempt appendix not available to press or public)

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks: None of this covering report.

Legal implications and risks: None of this covering report.

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

Equalities implications and risks: None of this covering report.

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

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Requisition of Executive Decision – Procurement of Synergy Education Management System

Grounds for Requisition

I hereby submit a formal call-in requisition concerning the executive decision titled “Procurement of Synergy Education Management System”, reference 9594.

The councillors supporting this call-in are:

1. Councillor Petru Eugen Dinsorean
2. Councillor Henry Williams
3. Councillor Alex Donald
4. Councillor Iurie Bivol
5. Councillor Khuram Amin
6. Councillor John Tyler
7. Councillor Lesley Tyler

This list includes councillors representing more than one political group.

I have attached my detailed scrutiny report setting out the evidence and grounds for the call-in.

The principal grounds are:

1. Decision-making authority

Clarification is required from the Monitoring Officer regarding whether the decision-maker possessed the necessary delegated authority, taking account of the complete VAT-inclusive contract value and the relevant constitutional and procurement thresholds.

2. Financial inconsistency

The published decision contains an apparent £100,000 inconsistency between the stated extension subtotal and the annual extension figures. The financial information should be corrected and formally verified before implementation.

3. Supplier identity

Clarification is required regarding the precise legal entity receiving the contract and whether that entity is correctly appointed under the relevant YPO framework lot.

4. Direct award and value for money

The published report does not provide sufficient like-for-like, whole-life cost evidence to demonstrate that the proposed five-year direct award represents the best available value for the Council.

5. Procurement, contractual and governance safeguards

Further evidence is required regarding the direct-award assessment, funding risks, social value, data security, service resilience, contract performance and exit arrangements.

Proposed alternative

Implementation should be paused and the decision referred back for reconsideration following:

- a determination by the Monitoring Officer concerning the decision-maker's authority;
- correction and verification of the financial figures;
- confirmation of the correct contracting supplier;
- publication of an adequate direct-award and value-for-money assessment; and
- confirmation that the necessary procurement, contractual, financial and information-governance safeguards are in place.

This call-in does not seek to terminate an essential education service. Its purpose is to ensure that the proposed award is lawful, financially accurate, properly authorised and supported by sufficient evidence before implementation.

Councillor Petru Eugen Dinsorean

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Questions raised by Councillor Petru Eugen Dinsorean.

Cllr Dinsorean submit a formal call-in requisition concerning the executive decision for the Procurement of Synergy Education Management System.

Other Councillors supporting this call-in are:

1. Councillor Petru Eugen Dinsorean
2. Councillor Henry Williams
3. Councillor Alex Donald
4. Councillor Iurie Bivol
5. Councillor Khuram Amin
6. Councillor John Tyler
7. Councillor Lesley Tyler

The principal grounds for the call in were:

1. Decision-making authority

Clarification is required from the Monitoring Officer regarding whether the decision-maker possessed the necessary delegated authority, taking account of the complete VAT-inclusive contract value and the relevant constitutional and procurement thresholds.

2. Financial inconsistency

The published decision contains an apparent £100,000 inconsistency between the stated extension subtotal and the annual extension figures. The financial information should be corrected and formally verified before implementation.

3. Supplier identity

Clarification is required regarding the precise legal entity receiving the contract and whether that entity is correctly appointed under the relevant YPO framework lot.

4. Direct award and value for money

The published report does not provide sufficient like-for-like, whole-life cost evidence to demonstrate that the proposed five-year direct award represents the best available value for the Council.

5. Procurement, contractual and governance safeguards

Further evidence is required regarding the direct-award assessment, funding risks, social value, data security, service resilience, contract performance and exit arrangements.

Responses to questions raised by Cllr Dinsorean

Q1. Decision-Making Authority

- 1.The original report stated the contract value excluding VAT, which is below the £1 million threshold. However, it is acknowledged that when VAT is included the total contract value exceeds £1 million. To ensure transparency the Key Executive Decision report has been amended to include the full VAT-inclusive contract value.
- 2.The values in the Financial Scheme of Delegation (Constitution Part 3, paragraph 4) are expressed as figures net of VAT. This is because VAT is reclaimable by the Council and the delegation value reflects the actual cost to the Council.
- 3.The Contract Procedure Rules express total contract values as inclusive of VAT. This is because the procurement legislation thresholds are expressed as inclusive of VAT. There is an error in the table at paragraph 8.2 (which is intended to reproduce the Part 3 delegation) of the Contract Procedure Rules. The table records the £1 million delegation value as inclusive of VAT. Officers will take steps to address this administrative error. The Monitoring officer has been consulted and is satisfied with the approach being taken.
- 4.In light of the above, the Strategic Director of People has authority to award the contract.
- 5.The Financial Scheme of Delegation permits further delegation of delegated powers by Strategic Directors. (Constitution Part 3, 3.3.2 paragraph 5) subject to record of delegation in writing being lodged with the Monitoring Officer. A sub delegation for all of Part 3.3.3 from Barbara Nicholls, Strategic Director of People to Tara Geere, Director of Starting Well dated 3 April 2024 is held by Democratic Services. Tara Geere also therefore has authority to award the contract.
- 6.It is noted that Councillor Kevin Gill, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, has indicated he wishes to be the decision maker. Cllr Gill has authority to make the decision and the report has been amended accordingly.

Q2. Financial Inconsistency

- 7.The discrepancy identified in the published report resulted from a typographical error. The extension period value was incorrectly stated as **£256,101.66** when the correct figure is **£356,101.66**, which aligns with the annual extension costs contained within the pricing schedule and contract documentation. The Key Executive Decision report has been amended to correct this error and accurately reflect the full contract value.

Q3. Supplier Identity

- 8.Access UK Limited is the legal contracting entity and the party named within the contract documentation. "The Access Group" is the supplier's trading name and was referenced in parts of the procurement documentation for ease of recognition. The Key Executive Decision report has therefore been amended to consistently refer to **Access UK Limited** as the supplier to remove any ambiguity.

9. Access UK Limited is the framework supplier appointed under the YPO Software Application Solutions Framework (001095) and is the correct legal entity receiving the contract award.

Q4. Direct Award and Value for Money

10. In response to the concerns raised, the Key Executive Decision report has been updated to provide a clearer five-year like-for-like comparison and strengthen the value-for-money rationale supporting the direct award.

11. A market appraisal was undertaken through the YPO framework, considering alternative suppliers including CACI and LiquidLogic. The assessment considered not only software licence costs but also implementation costs, migration costs, integration requirements, staff retraining, operational disruption and business continuity risks. The outcome concluded that retaining the existing Synergy platform represented the most economically advantageous solution when whole-life costs were considered.

12. The assessment identified that migration to an alternative platform would require extensive data migration, system reconfiguration and retraining across all schools, early years providers and multiple statutory education functions. The current platform already supports School Admissions, SEND, Free School Meals, Early Years Funding, safeguarding and pupil tracking services, avoiding significant transition and implementation costs whilst ensuring continuity of statutory service delivery. The Key Executive Decision report has therefore been amended to include a five-year like-for-like comparison demonstrating the value-for-money case for retaining the incumbent supplier.

Q5. Procurement, Contractual and Governance Safeguards

13. Additional assurance can be provided regarding the procurement process and the contractual, governance and operational safeguards that will apply throughout the contract term.

Procurement Safeguards

14. The contract is being awarded through the YPO Software Application Solutions Framework (001095), which is a fully compliant public procurement route. The framework permits direct award and was selected following procurement advice and benchmarking against alternative framework options. The procurement process included market appraisal, framework benchmarking and assessment of alternative suppliers before concluding that Access UK Limited offered the best overall value when whole-life costs and operational risks were taken into account.

Funding and Financial Safeguards

15. The contract is funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and does not place pressure on the Council's General Fund. The contract incorporates fixed pricing arrangements for the initial term, providing cost certainty and protection from inflationary increases. Financial due diligence has also been completed through the framework provider as part of the framework assurance process.

Social Value Commitments

16.The supplier has committed to a range of measurable social value benefits, including:

- £2,000 per annum contribution to the Live Well Havering Community Chest during the initial contract term.
- Digital awareness and online training resources for residents and community groups.
- Employability support including CV-writing and mock interview workshops for young people.
- Dedicated social value governance through an appointed Social Value Coordinator.
- Annual reporting on delivery of social value commitments.

Data Security and Information Governance

17.A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has been completed for the contract. The Council remains the Data Controller and Access UK Limited acts as Data Processor. The contract contains a dedicated Data Protection Schedule requiring compliance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. It includes provisions covering data security, breach notification, processor obligations, audit rights, confidentiality, international data transfers and sub-processor management.

Security measures include:

- Role-based access controls.
- Audit logging.
- Multi-factor authentication capability.
- TLS 1.2 encryption for data in transit.
- Encrypted storage and AES-256 encrypted backups.
- Security monitoring and penetration testing.
- Segregated customer environments and strict access controls.

18.Primary hosting and backup arrangements are located within UK data centres, providing assurance regarding data residency and resilience.

Service Resilience and Business Continuity

19.The contract requires Access UK Limited to maintain a Security Management Plan, Business Continuity Plan and Disaster Recovery arrangements. The supplier operates dual UK data centres, encrypted backups and recovery arrangements designed to minimise disruption to critical education services. The Council's DPIA records recovery targets of up to four hours recovery time objective (RTO) and thirty minutes recovery point objective (RPO).

20.The supplier has demonstrated strong performance under the existing contract, with no significant service failures reported and continued compliance with national admissions and statutory education requirements.

Contract Performance Management

21.The supplier's performance will continue to be monitored through contract management arrangements, service reporting, framework requirements and service-level obligations. The contract includes provisions allowing the Council to issue improvement notices, require

remedial action, undertake audits and terminate the contract in the event of material breach or poor performance.

Exit and Data Recovery Arrangements

22.The contract includes formal exit provisions to protect the Council's interests at contract expiry or termination.

These arrangements include:

- Return of Council data in an industry-recognised format.
- Support for migration to any replacement solution.
- Return and subsequent secure deletion of Council data.
- Deletion of hosted databases and backups in accordance with the supplier's exit policy.
- Continued cooperation with the Council to ensure an orderly transition and continuity of statutory services.

Publication of Financial Information

23.In accordance with the Council's transparency requirements, the overall contract value will continue to be included within the Key Executive Decision report. However, the detailed pricing schedule, unit rates, supplier commercial information and other financially sensitive breakdowns are considered commercially confidential information. Publication of this level of detail could prejudice the Council's commercial position and the supplier's legitimate commercial interests. Accordingly, whilst the total contract value remains publicly available, the detailed financial breakdown should be contained within an exempt appendix and withheld from publication under the relevant provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 relating to commercially sensitive information.

Overall Position

24.The issues raised have been reviewed and addressed through amendments to the Key Executive Decision report. The revised report:

- Confirms the appropriate decision-making authority.
- Corrects the identified financial error.
- Clarifies the legal identity of the supplier.
- Strengthens the whole-life cost and value-for-money assessment.
- Provides further evidence regarding procurement, governance, financial, contractual, operational, information governance and exit safeguards.
- Confirms that the overall contract value will remain publicly available within the Key Executive Decision report in the interests of transparency, whilst detailed pricing schedules and commercially sensitive financial information will be contained within an exempt appendix to protect the Council's and supplier's legitimate commercial interests.
- Provides updated legal advice clarifying the route via which award from a framework procured under superceded procurement legislation is lawful.

25. Taken together, these amendments provide assurance that the procurement has been undertaken through a compliant framework route, that appropriate governance and contractual protections are in place, that commercially sensitive information is appropriately protected through the use of an exempt appendix where required, and that the Council's statutory education services will continue to be delivered safely, securely and efficiently throughout the contract lifecycle.

Notice of KEY Executive Decision containing exempt information

This Executive Decision Report is part exempt and Appendix A is available for public inspection as it contains or relates to exempt information within the meaning of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. It is exempt because it refers to Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information), and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information

Subject Heading:	<i>Procurement of Synergy Education Management System</i>
Decision Maker:	<i>Cllr Kevin Gill (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)</i>
Cabinet Member:	<i>Cllr Kevin Gill (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)</i>
ELT Lead:	<i>Tara Geere- Director of Starting Well</i>
Report Author and contact details:	<i>Jonathan Goodwin – School Admissions Team Leader 01708 431857</i>
Policy context:	<i>Education Services to award a new contract to their existing supplier for the delivery of statutory services in line with statutory functions set out under the Childcare Act 2006.</i>
Financial summary:	<i>The total cost of the contract including Wonde Integration with 98 school licences plus maintenance costs and running costs for 3 years plus a 2 year extension period is £861,104.38 excluding VAT (£1,033,325.26 Inc VAT) (£505,002.72 for years 1-3 (£606,003.26 Inc VAT)</i>

Key Executive Decision – Part Exempt Report

	<i>and £356,101.66 for extension years 1 and 2 (£427,321.99 Inc VAT)) This will be met from the centrally held Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget and traded income from the Free School Meal Checking Service.</i>
Reason decision is Key	<i>Expenditure or saving (including anticipated income) of £500,000 or more</i>
Date notice given of intended decision:	<i>22 March 2026</i>
Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committee:	<i>People OSSC</i>
Is it an urgent decision?	<i>No</i>
Is this decision exempt from being called-in?	<i>No</i>

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 X

Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

The Cabinet Member for Children Services is recommended to agree:

To award a contract to **Access UK** Ltd via Lot 11 (Education Management and Learning Systems) of the YPO Software Application Solutions Framework – 1095 for an education management system (Synergy), for a period of 3 years plus a 2-year extension period commencing 1 August 2026, at a cost of £861,104.38 *excluding VAT* (£1,033,325.26 *Inc VAT*) (£505,002.72 for years 1-3 (£606,003.26 *Inc VAT*) and £356,101.66 for extension years 1 and 2 (£427,321.99 *Inc VAT*))

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

*Part 3.2, Section 3.8: **The following Functions may be delegated to individual Cabinet members by the Leader.***

To approve the commencement of the tender process, to award contracts, agree extensions of contract terms where the value of such matter is between £1,000,000 and £2,000,000 subject to consultation with the Strategic Director of Resources. (Note: Pension Committee has powers to invite tenders and award contracts for investment matters within their terms of reference)

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

This report seeks to direct award a new contract via the YPO framework to deliver an Education Management system to comply with the council's statutory requirements for 3 years (plus 2 year extension) at a cost of £861,104.38 *excluding VAT* (£1,033,325.26 *Inc VAT*) (over the contract period (5 years)).

Comparison of costs / services

A market review was undertaken to evaluate viable Local Authority Education Management Systems (LA EMS) capable of managing the Council's statutory duties including Co-ordinated School Admissions, Child Employment / Entertainment Licencing, SEND Finance management, Early Years, Education Welfare, and Free School Meals.

1. YPO Framework 1095 (Lot 11) Evaluation

Although four suppliers are listed under Lot 11 of the YPO Framework 1095, an initial technical assessment confirmed that only two suppliers offer a compatible Local Authority Education Management System:

- **Access UK Ltd (Synergy):** Compatible. Offers a comprehensive, fully integrated LA EMS designed specifically for managing local authority statutory obligations across education and early help.
- **Liquidlogic Ltd (EYES):** Compatible. Provides a dedicated LA education system via the *Liquidlogic Early Years & Education System (EYES)*.
- **Civica UK Ltd:** Incompatible. Civica does not offer a local authority education database. Their software portfolio is restricted to individual school-level operational, compliance, and school finance tools.

- **The Key Support / Arbor:** Incompatible. Arbor provides a school-level Management Information System (MIS) for individual schools and multi-academy trusts. They do not supply a local authority platform capable of delivering council-level statutory services.

2. Off-Framework Evaluation (G-Cloud Framework)

- **CACI Ltd (Impulse Nexus):** Compatible, but rejected on cost. CACI's *Impulse Nexus* system was evaluated as a technically viable alternative. However, CACI is not available via YPO Framework 1095. A detailed cost analysis was conducted using the G-Cloud procurement framework, but CACI was ultimately discounted as the submitted costings did not demonstrate equivalent value for money or overall cost-efficiency when compared against the framework routes available under YPO.

Consequently, Access UK Ltd (Synergy) represents the most functional, compliant, and cost-effective solution available to the Council.

Exempt Appendix A includes a comparison of the costs, split into each service area or module.

Why is it needed?

The system would enable the council to undertake and record various statutory education and children's social care duties which are dependent on this system. Thereby enabling Havering Council to discharge its statutory duties around the following associated functions:

- Special Education Needs Funding
- Early Years Funding
- Free School Meals Eligibility Checking
- School Admissions and Appeals Services
- School Attendance and Inclusions
- Alternative Provision
- Children Missing Education (CME)
- Elective Home Education (EHE)
- Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Service requirements

The system requirements have been set to meet all statutory duties, the needs of the service, and to ensure we can maximise income through government entitlements, such as the free early years childcare programme.

The system must have capability to ensure the following:

- Parents can apply through an online parent portal for the two-year-old offer & the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP).
- Requirements of the 30 hours codes of the Disability Access Funding (DAF) and EYPP are met.
- Eligibility Checking Service (ECS) and instant outcomes for the 2-Year-old offer must be integrated and compliant with all requirements of Universal credit entitlements.
- Information shared by parents and LA systems allow for the push of codes (2 year olds and 30 hours) so that when a Early years provider claims, the base line child level data is already present in the system.
- Requirements for 30 hours breakdown of universal hours and extended hours are met.
- Data requirements for the Department for Education Early Years Census can be met with all data fields related to child level and establishment data are formatted ready for transfer to the DfE COLLECT system.
- School Census data can be securely imported to allow the LA to have a centralised hub for all pupils.

Key Executive Decision – Part Exempt Report

- Automated calculation of funding for providers can occur, enabling them to control their finances for government initiatives.
- Date parameters for term dates to be flexible, to prevent late returns from providers.
- Automatic calculations of the ages of children interfaces with termly date parameters, so children not eligible are identified.
- Local adjustments are not required for children who start after census closure and this is automatically managed therefore ensuring no further requirement for a funding transfer manual process.
- Maintain data requirements so there is no further need to send census exports or 30 hours childcare exports.
- Data requirements of the schools portal allows access to statutory school age and early years data on one platform.
- Specific functionality highlights and evidences over claims/duplicate data to reduce errors and any potential fraud.
- Data requests from Childcare works, DfE and HMRC and fully reportable.
- The school admissions module is fully compliant with Pan-London admissions configuration and protocol.
- The parent portal for school admissions, allows applications and notifications on outcomes for the main cohort of allocations and in-year applications.
- Schools will receive details of admissions applicants and self-rank them (so to apply any local admissions criteria) and allow data to return to the local authority through the system – for both main cohort and in-year applicants.
- Allocation of unplaced applicants to their nearest school with a vacancy is automated.

ICT Requirements

As The Access UK Ltd are the current providers of the system, the Havering ICT Business Partner have already supported this system. Technical and information security requirements have been satisfied. The system is Hosted remotely via Access UK Ltd and meets all Havering requirements.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 1 – Do nothing – this option is not possible as the system would be out of contract and unsupported, and the Local Authority would not be legally compliant.

Option 2 - Undertake a wider procurement exercise – this option was rejected as there would be significant cost of changing systems along with a substantial disruption to statutory services such as the school admissions and appeals process. Additionally the entirety of the local primary and secondary schools sector would be required to have a new system which would require a significant re-training programme. This would create additional and unreasonable time and cost pressures on education services that cannot be mitigated.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

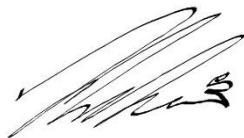
No formal consultation required.

NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER

Name: Jonathan Goodwin

Designation: School Admissions Team Leader

Signature:



Date: 06/02/2026

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Council has a duty in section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006 to secure sufficient childcare for working parents. The Council is making a decision to make a contract for the provision of software for that purpose. The Council seeks to utilise the software provided through the contract to comply with that duty.

The Council has the power to enter into the contract under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, which gives the Council the power to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions

The Council may also award the contract under its general power of competence in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything that individuals generally may do, subject to certain limitations. None of the limitations apply to this decision.

The contract value is above the Procurement Act 2023 (PA23) threshold for service contracts of (£207 720). The procurement is caught by the full PA23 regime. PA23 permits award via call off from extant frameworks procured under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR 2015). The YPO Software Application Solutions Framework is a PCR 2015 compliant framework and as set out in this report, direct award via this framework is permissible. The award is therefore compliant with PA23.

For the reasons set out above, the Council may award the contract.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Revenue implications

The total cost of awarding a contract to Access UK Ltd via the YPO framework for the Synergy Education system is £861,104.38 (£1,033,324.80 inc VAT) over the full five-year term, comprising an initial three-year period followed by a two-year extension.

The system is funded from existing revenue budgets, specifically Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and traded income generated through the Free School Meals Eligibility Checking Service.

Key Executive Decision – Part Exempt Report

The annual costs across the service areas are set out in Exempt Appendix A.

Funding is currently aligned to these statutory and traded functions, and the system costs are therefore fully contained within existing budget allocations.

Risks

The primary financial risk relates to the ongoing sufficiency of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding over the life of the contract. While the relevant statutory services are currently supported through earmarked DSG budgets, there remains sustained national pressure on school funding, with increasing demand and cost pressures potentially exceeding annual grant uplifts.

There is also an ongoing dependency on central government funding arrangements and policy decisions, which could impact DSG allocations in future years of the contract.

In addition, there is a specific risk relating to the Free School Meals (FSM) Eligibility Checking Service, which is currently funded through traded income. At present, interim arrangements are in place for the delivery of this function, and the longer-term operating model for the service has not yet been confirmed. Should the traded service cease or significantly reduce in scope during the contract term, there would remain a requirement to fund the associated system costs for the duration of the contract unless the relevant modules were removed or the contract was re-scoped. This could result in pressure on DSG budgets or require service redesign to align functionality with future service delivery arrangements.

These risks are considered manageable at present, but will require ongoing review throughout the contract period, particularly in light of any changes to national funding arrangements or local service operating models.

Capital implications

There are no capital costs associated with this procurement. The solution is fully revenue funded and hosted by the supplier, meaning no on-premise infrastructure or capital investment is required.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the Council or its workforce.

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

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:

- (i) the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;

Key Executive Decision – Part Exempt Report

- (iii) foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are: age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment. The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

None identified

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

None identified

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

APPENDICES

Appendix A	<i>Financial or business affairs</i>	<i>Exempt</i>
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Part C – Record of decision

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Decision

Proposal agreed

Details of decision maker

Signed

CLLR KEVIN GILL TO INSERT SIGNATURE

Name: Cllr Kevin Gill

Cabinet Portfolio held: Cabinet Member for Children Services

~~CMT Member title:~~

Head of Service title:

~~Other manager title:~~

Date: 31/07/2026

Lodging this notice

The signed decision notice must be delivered to Committee Services, in the Town Hall.

For use by Committee Administration

This notice was lodged with me on _____

Signed _____

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

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Overview & Scrutiny Board

18th August 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 Overview and Scrutiny Board 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;
- recommend that the People and Place Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committees and Cabinet also endorse it; and
- apply its principles and expectations in future scrutiny and executive work.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Overview and Scrutiny Board:

1. endorses the draft Scrutiny Working Protocol;
2. recommends that the People and Place Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committees and Cabinet also endorse the Protocol; and
3. 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

Overview & Scrutiny Board

18th August 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 Board 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 Board 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](#)

Overview & Scrutiny Board

18th August 2026

REPORT

Subject Heading:

Agreeing items for the Overview and Scrutiny Board'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 Overview and Scrutiny Board 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 Board 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 Overview and Scrutiny Board 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 Board 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 Board 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 Board

- **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 Board 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 Board in 2025/26

9.The Board 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 Board to identify and discuss potential areas for inclusion, supported by clear reasons and the intended scrutiny outcome. For each priority, the Board 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	Board 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 Board 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 Board, with adjustments made where priorities, risks or capacity change.

18. Remit of Overview and Scrutiny Board

The Overview and Scrutiny Board has responsibility for scrutinising the following areas:

- Strategy and commissioning
- Partnerships with Business
- Customer access
- E-government and ICT
- Finance
- Human resources
- Asset Management
- Property resources
- Facilities Management
- Democratic Services
- Social inclusion
- Councillor Call for Action
- Hearing of Requisitions/Call-ins

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 Board 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)

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