

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ADJUDICATION AND REVIEW COMMITTEE
Wednesday 27 April 2011 (7.30pm – 8.30pm) At Havering Town Hall

Present:

COUNCILLORS:

Conservative Group	Dennis Bull (Chairman), Sandra Binion, Garry Pain, Barry Oddy and Peter Gardner
Residents' Group	June Alexander and John Mylod
Independent Residents' Group	Michael Deon Burton
Labour Group	

Councillor Keith Wells was also present at the invitation of the Chairman

All decisions were reached without dissent.

18 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 January 2011 were agreed and signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.

19 NEW CRM (CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT) SYSTEM & CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

A further presentation was given to Members by the CRM Project Manager and the Program Manager tasked with replacing the existing Oracle based CRM system with a Microsoft Dynamic version that would interface with Outlook, the council-wide applications software to inform them as to the current position of the installation of the new system and when it would start.

Members remained enthusiastic about the scope of the system, its flexibility and apparent user-friendliness. Questions were asked to ascertain the system's operating capacity and Members were provided with encouraging predictions. Members particularly liked the idea that the new system was not only easier to access, but that the way it was constructed meant that many enquiries – from different services – could be made and that the records would be updated in real-time, making them far more useful than the current static format.

The new system had been scheduled to go live at the beginning of April, but during testing, some anomalies had come to light which were being rectified. The Committee was informed that the revisions were undergoing testing and the system should be going live during May.

20 CRM (STATISTICAL UPDATE)

The CRM Program Manager presented the CRM statistics for the previous three months. A Member observed that there had been a sharp increase in complaints raised against Culture & Community in March and was reminded that the old Revenues and Benefits Service had been transferred there from the Finance & Commerce directorate and that the period was in fact the one in which the Council Tax bills would have been sent out; hence the rise in complaints (even though there had been no change in CT from the previous year).

Another Member asked about the management of complaints against Homes in Havering (HiH) through CRM and was reminded that HiH was not part of either the existing CRM system or the new version, though it was hoped that this could be changed at some point in the future.

The oral report was **noted**.

21 LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN – STATISTICAL UPDATE: 1 January to 31 March 2011

The clerk drew the Committee's attention to the charts appended to the agenda and asked whether there were any questions about them. As there were none, he asked Members to note in particular that Culture and Community (the most outward looking directorate) had over 50% of the Ombudsman's activity; that almost half of the contacts were premature complaints which filtered into the Corporate complaints process – though he reminded Members that several of those went on to become investigations.

In addition, during the past year, Romford Town and Gooshays wards had produced the highest number of complaints with 14 apiece. Whilst Homes in Havering had accounted for 24% of all complaints, Housing and Public Protection and Development and Building Control each returned 16% which was in line with national averages.

The oral report was **noted**.

22 LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN – OVERVIEW OF LAST YEAR (2010/11)

The clerk presented a briefing to the Committee in which Members were informed of changes and developments emanating from the Ombudsman's office during the past year. Members were informed that the biggest changes were just coming into force and involved the greater involvement of the Ombudsman in Social Care coupled with a change in computer software and the current interregnum after the retirement of Tony Redmond. The clerk said that currently a replacement was not yet in place but that his region was being administered by Jane Martin (one of the remaining two local government Ombudsmen).

The clerk also warned the Committee that further changes were being contemplated with new powers being granted to the Ombudsman (such as the alarming change in the status of the Ombudsman's decisions which are expected to soon be given the force of law. A further area to be kept in mind was that concerning social housing. The Local Government Ombudsman was already in negotiations with his opposite number in Social Housing to hand over some jurisdiction as and when the necessary legislation was in place. The clerk reminded Members that if and when that happened, housing complaints could become rather less straight-forward than they were at present as there could be two Ombudsmen involved with one tenant's complaint if it crossed the boundary between repairs and maintenance and tenancy issues.

Members **noted** the briefing and asked the clerk to keep them informed of future developments.