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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD Havering Town Hall, Main Road, Romford 3 August 2016 (7.00 - 10.00 pm)

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	Steven Kelly, Robby Misir, Viddy Persaud (Vice-Chair), Linda Trew and Michael White
Residents' Group	Barbara Matthews and Ray Morgon
East Havering Residents' Group'	Gillian Ford (Chairman) and Linda Hawthorn
UKIP Group	+Patricia Rumble and Lawrence Webb
Independent Residents' Group	Graham Williamson
Labour	Keith Darvill

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillors John Crowder, Dilip Patel, Barry Mugglestone and Ian de Wulverton.

+Substitute members: Councillor Patricia Rumble (for Ian de Wulverton).

All decisions were taken with no votes against.

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

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 9 March, 26 April and 24 May 2016 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

4 WAIVER OF CALL-INS

The Chairman gave an update on recent executive decisions that had been exempt from call-in and waived through under delegated powers.

A list of the waived call-ins is appended to this set of minutes.

5 SICKNESS ABSENCE - UPDATE

The Council's Operational HR Manager gave Members an update on the position regarding sickness absence within the Council.

Members noted that over the last year sickness levels had raised by 3% against a London average of 5% however this had been seen in a small number of services and not across the Council as a whole.

In the period between January 2015 and March 2016 forty nine members of staff had been dismissed, retired or left the organisation as a result of sickness absence.

Members were advised that the Council was undertaking a six month pilot of a Day One absence service in partnership with its occupational health provider Medigold in three areas of the council: Streetcare, Catering and the Parks service.

If an employee had an unplanned absence and they were not able to attend work, they would ring into a team of trained advisers who would be able to provide direct medical advice and support to assist them in returning to work as soon as possible.

Other organisations had seen a direct benefit to their employees from using the service. For instance an employee had been diagnosed as suffering from a heart attack when they telephoned into the service and they were able to get direct advice and support and were taken immediately to hospital for treatment.

With other clients, Medigold had seen a 22.9% reduction in the number of days lost to absence through using the Day One absence service.

The Council had negotiated the cost of the service down to £3.17 per employee per month which for the Streetcare service would be an annual cost of £8254, absence currently costs the council approximately £2m in lost work days.

Trade union colleagues had been fully consulted and engaged during the development of the scheme.

The pilot would be closely monitored to ensure that the service was working well and that savings were being achieved.

During the debate Members discussed the cost of the new sickness reporting scheme and questioned whether it offered value for money.

Members also questioned whether the return on investment/cost benefit analysis had been investigated thoroughly and highlighted concerns as to whether managers were carrying out their roles to the levels expected.

Officers responded by commenting that it was still the responsibility of managers to monitor sickness absence and deal with it in the appropriate way.

Members also expressed some concerns that staff may be harassed when they were genuinely ill.

Officers were asked to feedback to the Board as a number of concerns had been raised.

Members **noted** the update.

6 **ANNUAL CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2015/16**

The report before Members provided an overview of the Council's performance for each of the strategic goals (Clean, Safe and Proud). The report highlighted areas of strong performance and potential areas for improvement.

Also attached to the report (as Appendix 2) was a Demand Pressure Dashboard that illustrated the growing demands on Council services and the context that the performance levels set out in the report have been achieved within.

Whilst the PIs currently included in the Corporate Performance report provided both Members and officers with vital performance information that could be used to improve services, there were few PIs that focused on customer satisfaction. There are various options to address this, from undertaking small surveys on a quarterly basis, to larger surveys on an annual basis, consulting focus groups to setting up consultation panels, as well as many other options in between. So that the Council may fully understand the options available and what the benefits and resource implications of each option may be, the Communications Service was currently seeking views from an external consultant to gain expert advice on how the Council could gauge residents' satisfaction in the most meaningful way.

In response to a question relating to the financial cost of employing a consultant, officers advised that a consultant had yet to be engaged.

Members also commented that there could be better engagement with the relevant Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committees, an example of which had been the sheltered housing review which had taken place without any scrutiny.

During consideration of the report Members highlighted several areas of concern which included:

- Consideration of more relevant areas of work by the individual Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committees.
- The possibility of developing a more robust new model of scrutiny.
- Collection of more data regarding how businesses felt about the Council.
- The need for information contained within the performance report to be shared by officers to the Sub-Committees and their topic groups.
- The need for previously agreed performance indicators to be included in the performance report e.g levels of corporate debt.
- Performance indicators that did not fall within the remit of the Sub-Committees to be reported to the Board and officers to attend meetings of the Board to discuss those indicators e.g collection of Council Tax and Business Rates, processing of benefit claims, payment of suppliers within 30 days, completion of complaints and Member enquiries within target timescale, and percentage of customers satisfied with the contact centre and online transactions.

Members also suggested that in future the report show the RAG ratings in three separate sections so that all the Red indicators were grouped together with the same applying to the amber and green.

It was noted that the graph depicting customer contact by channel, illustrated that the Council was failing in its policy of channel shift and Members questioned what steps were being taken to address the issue and what the budgetary impacts of such actions were.

Members reported that there had been positive feedback for the recent presentation on the new corporate performance management system.

1. It was **RESOLVED** that Cabinet **reviewed** the levels of performance set out in Appendix 1 and the corrective action that was being taken, and
2. **Noted** the content of the Demand Pressures Dashboard attached as Appendix 2.

7 REVIEW AND REFRESH OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR STRATEGY

The Council's Head of Policy and Performance presented a report which detailed the end of Year 1 review of the Voluntary Sector Strategy and action plan. It had been agreed by Cabinet in June 2015 that the strategy and action plan would be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board on an annual basis. The report set out the main achievements to date and those actions where further work was still needed.

The report set out the key achievements in delivering the Voluntary Sector Strategy and Action Plan 2015/16 and the joint working arrangements between the Council and the sector.

Members noted that the revised Havering Compact had been launched in November 2015 and that the Havering Compact Steering Group had also been established to continue to work with partners across Havering to address future training needs and develop partnership working.

The establishment of a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) (a consortium with a robust governance structure) was being explored with participation from a number of agencies.

The next step regarding the proposed initiative was final sign off from the Tapestry Board Meeting in August to establish a subsidiary to run the SPV.

The report also outlined steps being taken to improve communications, access to information, commissioning processes and market positioning.

The report also set out the voluntary sector infrastructure support which would be provided by additional staff resources were had been built into the internal Community Development Team.

Appended to the report was the refresh of the Voluntary Sector Strategy and Action Plan 2016/17.

The report concluded by setting out the financial savings that would be achieved by reducing the Council's spending within the voluntary and community sector.

During discussions Members commented on the number of times the Compact had been reviewed and re-launched. Officers confirmed that this had featured heavily as a priority in the feedback from the sector in response to the consultation on the original strategy and that this was being led by the sector itself, as was its prerogative.

Members also commented that the Council should be helping the sector to centralise its procurement, access support services etc. Officers advised that this support had been offered to the sector as part of the delivery of the year 1 action plan but that there had been no appetite from the sector to take up the assistance.

The Council needed to be much clearer on what it wanted to achieve and how it would measure its progress against this e.g. how many volunteers does the Council need to attract, across all services.

Members expressed concern about the amount of paperwork required to access the £1,000 grant available to "Friends of Parks" groups. Officers advised that one of the objectives of developing a new process for grant monitoring within the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) was to ensure that this was proportional, as well as to ensure that the Council was securing best value from these arrangements.

Members also had concerns that volunteers' attendance was not monitored. It was recognised that volunteering was not a compulsory activity, but that this meant volunteers could be unreliable and as such the Council couldn't really be sure what value they were adding. With this in mind, some Members urged caution in putting volunteers into critical roles.

Members felt that the level of detail contained within the report was insufficient, especially around use of volunteers in libraries. It requested that a report go to a future meeting of the Towns and Communities OSC, and then regularly thereafter, detailing not just how many volunteers had been recruited, but how many were actively and regularly volunteering, what roles they were fulfilling and how many hours they had contributed.

In response to a question relating to whether a list of all relevant VCS groups commissioned by the Council could be provided to each O&S Committee. Officers advised that there was little point in doing this until the VCS review had been concluded and the £1.1m savings identified, as the groups commissioned now would not necessarily be the same groups commissioned going forward.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Board:

1. **Noted** progress made to date in delivering the Voluntary Sector Strategy and action plan, and
2. **Endorsed** the refreshed Voluntary Sector Strategy and action plan for 2016/17

8 **WASTE MINIMISATION TOPIC GROUP REPORT**

The report before Members contained the findings and recommendations that had emerged after the Topic Group scrutinised the subject selected by the Sub-Committee in June 2015.

The report had recommended that Cabinet noted the report of the topic group, agreed to the launch of the "low-cost" advertising and information campaign and to authorise officers to seek external funding to assist with the advertising and information campaign.

However Members commented that the report in its current form was not seen to go far enough. Members felt that some of the "harder hitting" ideas that had been put forward by the topic group had not been included in the report. It was accepted that the report before the Board was the one signed off by the topic group and stated that the officers who had attended the topic group were in favour of the ideas put forward by Members, but they had subsequently been retracted from the report as more senior officers had stated that there was insufficient funding for them. Members commented that this was for Cabinet, rather than any officers, to determine.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be withdrawn and the topic group would reconsider its position on it before recommendations went forward to Cabinet.

9 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE/TOPIC GROUP UPDATES

Health O&S Sub-Committee

The Chairman advised that a new programme of work had been drawn up which was focussed more on outcomes for the Council. The Sub-Committee would be concentrating on the work of Accountable Care Organisation (ACO). The new work would look to add value to the processes of the Council. The Sub-Committee would also look to see how the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) was performing or not if the case.

Environment O&S Sub-Committee

The Chairman advised that the Sub-Committee had received a presentation on the changes to the Environment Service.

Enforcement and Safety had been combined, moving operational enforcement in to one area under the Head of Regulatory Services. Community Safety would commission enforcement based on intelligence.

The second area of change was the combining of the Highways and Parking Team in to one team with a new interim Manager. Parks, Open Spaces, Highway maintenance and StreetCare were being brought together in one team whilst Culture and Leisure would fall under the remit of the Chief Operating Officer.

Members noted that there would be a topic group set up to look at air pollution/quality in the future.

Individuals O&S Sub-Committee

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee had received a presentation on the Healthwatch annual report for 21015/16.

The Sub-Committee had also received a presentation on the services provided by Family Mosaic in Havering.

The Chairman also advised that there was an overlap of some subjects with other Sub-Committees and that in future the Sub-Committee's workplan would reflect the need for scrutiny in specific areas around Individuals.

Towns & Communities O&S Sub-Committee

The Vice-Chairman advised that the two topic groups looking at Anti-Social behaviour and the Green Belt were still on-going.

There had been presentations on the Friends of the Parks and library volunteers and discussions on the proposed re-development of Romford Market.

Crime & Disorder O&S Sub-Committee

An update was given by Councillor Williamson.

A new Detective Chief Inspector, Alan Moore, had been appointed in charge of CID.

Police priorities in the borough were domestic abuse and sex offenders and their management. The latest satisfaction survey carried out by the police showed an 88% level of satisfaction within the borough.

There had been a fall in the number of robberies that were committed in the borough which had fallen in line with the MOPAC 7 target.

The Sub-Committee had also been briefed on the Havering Repeat Victim Strategy which aimed to prevent repeat victims of scamming.

There was also to be a joint topic group with the Environment and Towns and Communities OSCs to look at illegal incursions.

Children & Learning O&S Sub-Committee

The Chairman advised that the educational attainment topic group would be meeting again in September and would be looking at school expansions, the Pupil Referral Unit re-configuration, apprenticeships and complaint/compliments that arose regarding Children services.

The Corporate Parenting Panel was now receiving reports of Child Sexual Exploitation cases and missing children and monitored how they re-integrated into society.

Debt Recovery Topic Group

Councillor Williamson advised that the topic group was continuing to look at all Council debt.

Members had been given an update on the collection rates for Council Tax and Business rates for 2015/16. The target collection rate of 97% had again been achieved.

The topic group was also concerned that the old existing debt had again increased to 19.7million.

Cabinet had agreed to implement the topic group's recommendations in its interim report which would see the employment of four dedicated officers to tackle existing debts.

Business rates debt had decreased from £4.9million to £2.4million but there were some concerns that this had come about due to the writing off of debts and a report had been requested detailing how the debt had been reduced.

Councillor Morgon had been invited on to the topic group and was continuing to work with the other Members.

Other Business

It was agreed that a topic group be set up to look at procurement within the Council.

Councillors Kelly, White, Morgon and Hawthorn volunteered to be members of the topic group.

Chairman

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Waiver Date	Notice of Non-Key Executive Decision	Cabinet Member Report Officer
29.4.16	Establishment of a Council led Housing Company to deliver Market Rent and Market Sale Homes – Approval of; i. The London Borough of Havering’s Business Case ii. First Business plan for the Company, Mercury Land Holdings Limited.	Cabinet: Councillor Ron Ower Officer: Tom Dobrashian
29.4.16	Establishment of a Council led Housing Company to deliver Market Rent and Market Sale Homes – Approval of; i. State Aid Complaint Loans to Mercury Land Holdings Limited ii. Agree Heads of Terms on the Loan Agreement to Mercury Land Holdings Limited	Cabinet: Councillor Ron Ower Officer: Tom Dobrashian
4.5.16	Loan to Mercury Land Holdings Limited for the acquisition of Cathedral Court, Wideford Drive, Romford, RM7 0GU	Cabinet: Councillor Ron Ower Officer: Tony Huff
26.5.16	The acquisition of property 23 Briar Road Harold Hill leasehold flat for vacant possession to enable site assembly for the proposed Briar Road development scheme and grant of a shared ownership lease of 40 Halisham Road Romford und the Council’s Home swap scheme	Cabinet: Councillor Damian White Officer: Mike Gappy
26.5.16	The acquisition of property 35 Briar Road leasehold flat for vacant possession to enable site assembly for the proposed Briar Road development scheme.	Cabinet: Councillor Damian White Officer: Mike Gappy
6.7.16	Implementation of the Expansion Proposals for Phase 3 whether to proceed	Cabinet: Councillor Robert Benham Officer: Pooneeta Mahadeo
29.7.16	Decision to support revision to the GLA High Street Fund project, The Retailery	Cabinet: Councillor Osman Dervish Officer: Sarah Moss
16.8.16	Managed service for temporary agency resources contract MSTAR2	Cabinet: Councillor Osman Dervish

		Officer: David Pridmore
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**Waiver of Call in
Overview & Scrutiny Board**