

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD  
Havering Town Hall, Main Road, Romford  
1 February 2017 (7.00 - 9.35 pm)**

**Present:**

**COUNCILLORS**

**Conservative Group** Steven Kelly, Robby Misir, Dilip Patel, Viddy Persaud (Vice-Chair) and Linda Trew

**Residents' Group** Barbara Matthews, Ray Morgon and Barry Mugglestone

**East Havering Residents' Group'** Gillian Ford (Chairman) and Linda Hawthorn

**UKIP Group** Ian de Wulverton, Patricia Rumble and Lawrence Webb

**Independent Residents' Group** Michael Deon Burton and Graham Williamson

**Labour**

An apology was received for the absence of Councillor Keith Darvill.

All decisions were taken with no votes against.

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

**14 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**15 THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2017-18**

The report updated Members on the Local Government Financial Settlement which had been announced in December 2016.

The report summarised the key elements of the Autumn Budget Statement, the implications for the corporate budget and the proposed financial strategy for the coming year. The report also included the latest in year financial monitor and the latest proposals for the capital programme.

Section four of the report detailed Havering's financial strategy which included provision for the reduction in Revenue Support Grant (RSG) over the next three years based upon the four year financial settlement applicable from 2016/17 and those reductions are re-confirmed and will reduce from £20.89m in 2016/17 to £1.376m in 2019/20. The impact of the settlement on Business Rates and New Homes Bonus were still being evaluated although it was not expected to have a material impact on the 2017/18 forecast position as reflected in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) model. A full analysis would be included in the February Council Tax setting report.

Local authorities would now be able to increase the Social Care Precept by up to 3% per annum in 2017/18 and 2018/19. The additional 1% compared to the increase allowed in 2016/17 would require the authority to set out how the money was being spent on improvements in adult social care. The total increase allowed for over the three-year period to 2019/20 was limited to 6%.

Section eight of the report detailed the Council's financial strategy for the three year period commencing 2017/18.

Section nine of the report detailed a background to the current Capital Programme.

An indicative block programme of £4.9m for 2017/18 had been approved by Cabinet in October 2016 which represented a continuation of the strategy adopted in recent years.

The report also summarised the Council's financial position which showed that the Council would need to raise income or make additional savings of approximately £13m in order to balance its financial strategy over the next three years. Of this sum £3.8m had to be found as part of the budget setting process for 2017/18.

During the debate Members sought and received clarification relating to several aspects of the report and its impact on the Council's service provision.

In relation to the future collection of Business Rates Members asked that consideration be given to investigating the use of alternative premises for small/start up businesses to help attract/keep these businesses within the borough.

Officers confirmed that the possible introduction of a commercial vehicle tariff was a 2018/19 possible saving that would require prior consultation with stakeholders. Current figures suggested that nearly 12,000 commercial vehicles were regularly parked either on the streets or drives of the borough. The problem had been exacerbated with the main utility companies reducing their depot capacities where historically vehicles had been parked. To address the problem and to encourage companies to use their own

facilities it was proposed to introduce a £500 annual permit charge for commercial vehicles that parked on the highway outside of work time. Companies that would be targeted with the possible tariff would be those that employed over 1,000 employees. It was also noted that although other local authorities were considering introducing similar schemes no such scheme existed and therefore there were risks associated with the deliverability.

Several Members commented that there were many un-liveried vehicles that also used the highway to park on and it was suggested that maybe the tariff could be levied against the gross vehicle weight rating of vehicles therefor not discriminating against certain employers.

Members also commented that the Council should be seen to keeping its own house in order by levying the charge against its own employees who took Council vehicles home and parked on the highway.

Officers responded by agreeing that all viable options would be explored and that the Cabinet report only asked for agreement to take the proposal forward for consultation.

Members also felt it was important going forward that developers wishing to build in the borough took more responsibility for including parking provision within developments and not rely on the Council approving schemes that were parking free.

Members also agreed that the introduction of a new Local Plan would assist in achieving this aim. Officers confirmed that a new Local Plan was currently being drafted and would be put before Members for their consideration in the near future.

Members also requested that the proposed swimming pool at the new Hornchurch Leisure Centre be a full size 50m competition pool which would attract additional users and provide revenue opportunities going forward.

## **16 ICT PROVISION**

Members received a presentation from the Council's Director of Technology and Innovation on the ICT service provision within the borough.

The presentation highlighted the service's visions and objectives and Members noted that the prime focus for the service was to improve its core infrastructure so it could support the Council's ambitions to improve service delivery for residents.

The presentation also detailed corporate ICT functions and gave a breakdown of the service's budgets and equipment used.

Members noted that the service dealt with the strategic management of ICT including change and development, information governance & corporate systems, IT infrastructure support, programme management & business improvement and print services.

During a brief debate Members were advised plans were in place to develop a strategic ICT document and that corporate priorities determined future ICT priorities.

All parties felt it was important going forward that Member engagement was encouraged when trialling new software and improvements were carried out to the ICT provision.

Members noted that the Council's Director of Technology and Innovation already met regularly with several Members to discuss ICT provision.

Officers advised that Members had been involved in the re-design of the Council's website however Members take up on briefing sessions had been poorly attended.

Several Members commented that they had had problems with accessing software through their iPads which often needed passwords re-set and sometimes required a visit to the town hall to seek assistance.

Officers undertook to review the process and would seek to introduce procedures to make the process more streamlined.

The Council's Director of Technology and Innovation asked that if Members had specific queries relating to IT access that they contact their Group Leaders who would pass on any queries for resolving. Arrangements would also be made for drop-in sessions to be held when Members could bring their IT issues to the attention of officers.

Members were reminded that some IT access issues existed because of parameters placed on the Council because of the need to follow PSN (Public Services Network) guidelines.

In response to a question relating to the number of mobile phones that the Council supported, officers advised that in line with the Council's hot-desking policy more staff worked out in the field supporting residents and therefore due to health and safety measures needed to be contactable by mobile phone.

Members asked if an up to date telephone directory could be made available online to assist Members with contacting officers with queries relating to council services.

17 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE/TOPIC GROUP  
UPDATES**

**Health Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

The Vice-Chairman gave an update on the work of the Sub-Committee.

The Sub-Committee had been scrutinising the work of BHRUT and how it was dealing with the extra pressures of winter weather places. The Trust's Chief Operating Officer had advised that Queen's Hospital had been at its peak in the first week of January and that a redirection process had been put in place to send patients presenting at A&E, where appropriate, to other suitable facilities such as walk-in centres or local pharmacies.

BHRUT had also presented on the number of health tourists that were seen by the Trust (approximately 500 a year). Trust officers had explained how they attempted to recover treatment costs from patients but this was often a complex task. Members had asked to see an example of the paperwork that patients were asked to complete in order to clarify what information patients were required to give.

The work covered by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment had also been scrutinised. This included plans to produce borough level health profiles on a range of areas including mental health, smoking levels and the production of a new pharmaceutical needs assessment.

The Director of Adult Services had updated the Sub-Committee on the latest position regarding the establishment of an Integrated Care partnership for Outer North East London which included the development of three health facilities in Havering. It was hoped that these would work to provide more efficient and focussed services at a local level. The Sub-Committee had also confirmed the position regarding the payment of care home charges for residents whilst they were in hospital. Members had been advised that full charges were paid by the Council for the first twenty eight days whilst a resident was away from the home which then dropped to 60% of the charge after a four week period.

The joint topic group and Healthwatch Havering had met with representatives of NELFT and NHS Improvement in order to gain their perspectives on the issue of delays to treatments. Work was now underway to draw out the key themes from the evidence sessions in order to be able to report back to BHRUT officers for their response.

Members were advised that as part of the forty four Sustainability and Transformation Plans agreed between councils and the NHS there was a possible threat of the loss of some local pharmacy provision within the borough. The Vice Chairman of the Sub-Committee undertook to investigate and provide a response at the next meeting of the Board.

### **Crime & Disorder Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

The Chairman advised that the Sub-Committee had received an update on the work of the National Probation Service. Members had been advised that the service had just received the first set of re-offending rates data covering the National Probation Service, Community Rehabilitation Company and Youth Offending Service.

The average re-offending rate across London was 25%, for Havering the figure was 20.7% across all age ranges, with the exception of the 35-39 age group. Havering had out-performed the London average.

11% of female offenders in Havering had re-offended compared to 18% across London. For male offenders the figures were Havering 22%, London 27%.

Whilst the figures were good it was of concern that 48.5% of those who were released from custody re-offended and this figure had remained steady across the years.

Detective Superintendent John Ross, the point of contact for Havering Police, Had spoken with Members about the changes which had come into effect in January 2017.

The tri-borough pathfinder had commenced with Chief Superintendent Jason Gwillim taking the role of senior officer across the three boroughs, Havering, Barking & Dagenham and Redbridge. Chief Superintendent Gwillim would be supported by a senior leadership team of four, each with a defined role. DS Ross was charged with Protecting Vulnerable People, there were other units for Neighbourhoods, Response and Investigation.

In response to a question relating to the future provision of probation services once the Victoria Road centre had been closed, the Chairman undertook to investigate further and report back to the Board.

### **Environment Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

The Chairman advised that the Sub-Committee had reviewed the latest set of corporate performance indicators and had also received a presentation about enforcement, concerning fly-tipping and dog-fouling, amongst other enforcement issues, It had been decided to establish an enforcement topic group, to go into more depth on these subjects, in particular the major fly-tipping, which was an issue in several areas of the borough at present. It was agreed that it might be beneficial for a member of the Crime & Disorder Sub-Committee to attend the topic group meetings.

### **Individuals Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

The Chairman advised that the Sub-Committee had investigated Havering's Dementia Strategy.

Given the age profile of Havering's population, it was important to have a local dementia strategy and this would be aligned with Havering's overarching Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The dementia strategy had been based on a number of principles including listening to people living with dementia and their carers about tackling the stigma associated with dementia and enabling people to make informed choices.

The current service provision in Havering included memory clinics provided by NELFT and a dementia advisory service provided by Tapestry. Neurology and mental health liaison services were available at BHRUT and GPs were also able to make initial diagnoses of memory problems. Blood tests were conducted as part of an overall assessment of dementia in order to exclude urinary tract infections which could exhibit similar symptoms. A CT scan could also be used to look for changes in the brain that were indicative of dementia.

Officers would confirm the timescales for treatment for dementia following a GP referral although the target period from GP referral to treatment at a memory clinic was 12 weeks. Officers would also confirm what treatments were currently offered at the memory clinics.

There was a need to have more joined up working between health and social care with for example telecare commissioned by the Council to support people with dementia to remain in their own homes where this was possible. Officers had advised that it was important for people with dementia not to enter hospital as this was the worst place for their condition.

Officers had also advised of the work the Dementia Action Alliance had undertaken in local schools. Havering CCG was now very active in ensuring GPs were aware of dementia and the GP diagnosis rate had now improved.

Members were advised that there had previously been plans to use St Bernard's Day Centre in Harold Wood as a possible facility to provide dementia care in the borough although the centre had now been unused for approximately four years.

### **Towns & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

The Chairman advised that the Green Belt topic group was all but concluded.

The Sub-Committee had been receiving regular updates on the Romford Market Regeneration. It was agreed that the regeneration of the market be a future agenda item for the Board to receive an update on the progress of the works.

A topic group was planned to look at housing repairs and whether the Council was getting value for money on responsive repairs.

### **Children & Learning Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

The Chairman advised that officers had provided an update on the key issues regarding journey times for the provision of transport for children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities. The update had addressed issues raised with the time young people were spending on board transport and provided details on the current levels of spend, increasing pressures and actions underway to vary the offer and meet demand.

Officers had advised that having reviewed all the data they had agreed that an additional bus be added to transport young people to Corbets Tey School after half-term, this would help reduce the length of journeys and tackle the issue of young people arriving at school late. This would be an additional expense on the budget adding £23k this year and £46k in a full year.

HMCI had published its Annual Report of education, early years and skills for 2015/16 on 1 December 2016. Each Regional Director had published a report covering performance in their geographical patch.

. As a result of officer discussions with the Regional Schools Commissioner, an independently chaired Improvement Board had been established to oversee the agreed improvement strategy to tackle under-performance in the secondary sector. Dame Joan McVittie had been appointed Chair and the first meeting was held on 20 January, with good attendance from Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors across the secondary sector with all 18 secondary schools being represented.

A draft action plan had just been received and was yet to be considered by officers. The Council had a key role to play to use its influence and provide support. The Regional Commissioner had indicated that funds would be available to fund school improvement and when further details were available a bid would be submitted.

The Chair of the Children's Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee had requested the Regional Schools Commissioner be invited to a future meeting and for standing item updates on improvement action plan implementation.

Officers had submitted a report detailing the recommendations contained in the Children's Social Care and Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) – Ofsted SIF report and the Council's engagement on the action plan. Ofsted had awarded the Council an overall 'Requires Improvement to be good' grading to the Children's Social Care and LSCB services, making 13 recommendations.



The 'Experiences and progress of care leavers' strand had received an 'inadequate' grading, as a result of which Ofsted would make a return visit towards the end of March 2017.

### **Debt Recovery Topic Group**

Councillor Williamson advised that the topic group had met with senior officers and the new task force shortly before Christmas.

Officers had provided the group with detailed breakdowns of the monies owed to the Council and how they planned to recover the sums owed.

Going forward the group would continue to meet with officers and the task force and look at new initiatives to encourage residents to pay their Council Tax, including any arrears.

The topic group would continue to report its work to the Board and suggested that the Chief executive be invited to future meetings of the Board to explain the rationale behinds the Council's debt recovery processes and that an annual report on debt recovery could be produced for the public.

### **Procurement Topic Group**

Councillor advised that the group had met with the Council's Head of Procurement and had received documentation detailing the procurement process. Members noted that there were a couple of areas that the group wished to challenge in more detail, in particular contract monitoring. A second meeting was planned for the near future.

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**Chairman**