

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE
Committee Room 3A - Town Hall
12 February 2020 (7.00 - 8.15 pm)**

Present:

Councillors Jan Sargent, Carole Beth, Maggie Themistocli (Chairman) and
+Philippa Crowder

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John Mylod, Councillor Matt Sutton and Councillor Martin Goode

+Substitute members: Councillor Philippa Crowder (for John Mylod).

12 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

13 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT Q3

The report before Members supplemented the presentation attached as Appendix 1, which set out the Council's performance within the remit of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee for Quarter 3.

The Sub-Committee had previously chosen five performance indicators to measure, these were:

- Improve air quality in the borough by reducing the level of NO2
- HMO licenses issued
- HMOs enforced against
- Total Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued in month
- Response rate for PCN Challenges and Representations

Air quality monitoring and reporting against air quality objectives are undertaken based on a calendar year. The Service has developed an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to improve local air quality.

The service had its first anti-idling action day at Hilddene School on 31 January and St Josephs school on 5 February. This involved staff and trained volunteers talking to parents in vehicles at school pick up time and advising them on pollution associated with vehicles idling and asking them to switch off their engines.

The number of new HMO applications received had been very low as the compliant landlords had already come forward to licence, leaving those wishing to evade licensing or probably operating poor quality HMOs.

A consultation had been completed to extend the additional HMO licensing scheme to borough wide as well as introducing a small area targeted selective licensing scheme. Proposals would be reported to Cabinet in Spring 2020.

Enforcement of HMOs in Scheme 1 continues: 7 HMOs were issued final penalty notices in Quarter 3 equating to 15 separate penalty notices, 1 prosecution case, 3 Prohibition orders and 2 Improvement Notices issued.

There continued to be poor compliance levels in Moving Traffic Contraventions (MTC) locations (7,094 of 23,538 PCNs issued in Quarter Two for MTC) across the borough.

MTC PCN issuance dropped in December due to a technical issue between the camera supplier and Chipside. This had since been resolved and everything was working well again with issuance back up.

It is appropriate and important to monitor PCNs issued to identify trends and help ensure traffic and parking enforcement continued to contribute to road safety and smoothing traffic flow. However, it remained inappropriate to set a target for numbers of PCNs to be issued.

Action to be undertaken in 2019-20 would be the relocation of the MTC cameras to other sites from those sites where the council had achieved compliancy.

The Sub-Committee **noted** the report

14 HMO - OVERVIEW

The report before Members gave an overview of HMOs (Houses in Multiple Occupation) in Havering.

Members had previously raised concerns about HMOs and an increase in anti-social behaviour (noise, litter) etc. and also a decline in visual amenity through, for example, an increase in lettings boards, satellite dishes and poor maintenance of properties.

However, whilst there were local concerns, there was also an acknowledgement of the important contribution that HMOs make to housing supply through offering a source of accommodation to those who required

additional flexibility regarding length of tenancy or who were unable to purchase or rent self-contained accommodation.

Due to the transient nature of many HMO tenancies, where individuals may be vulnerable and strangers to each other, concerns can arise with the management of these properties. Poor management may impact on both the residents of HMOs, and the wider neighbourhood. Whilst most HMOs were reportedly well-managed, on a national basis, in some areas there remained a particular issue with management and the quality of accommodation.

The report highlighted that 256 licence applications had been made to date with 242 final licences issued and an income generation of £226,634.

The report also highlighted the number of enforcement actions that had taken place.

Havering introduced Additional Licensing in 12 out of 18 wards in March 2018 as a targeted intervention to address residents' concerns, mandating all HMOs under designation to licence. The scheme offered the authority new powers to tackle overcrowding, poor property management and ASB in HMO's. Enforcement of the scheme commenced in March 2018. The expectation for the first year was to achieve 50% compliance, currently compliance sits at 59.1%. 59.1% compliance was the figure as of January 2020's statistics.

Members noted that since March 2018 the authority had delivered the following:

- 166 – Financial Penalty Notices (FPNs)
- 1 – Housing Act Prosecution
- 2 – pending Housing Act Prosecutions
- £555,500 – value of FPNs
- 31 –Statutory Notices served to tackle hazards and disrepair
- 44 – Multiagency enforcement operations
- 1 - Cannabis Factory uncovered
- 6 – Cases of suspected modern slavery involving 50 people

Licences would last for 5 years unless the Council had concerns about the management, use, condition or occupation of the property, in which case the Council may grant a licence for a shorter period, the fee being the standard rate.

Where the Council takes enforcement action, the licence may be revoked. If this happens a new application will have to be made and a new licence fee paid.

Licences were not transferable. If a person wants to become the new licence holder for a property, they must apply for a new licence, and pay a new licence fee.

Application fees covered the Council's costs of processing, administration and validation of the application for a licence. The Part A application fee was due when an application for a license was made and application fees were non-refundable, regardless of whether the application was successful.

Once the license application had been processed and had been approved. The Part B fee would be payable before the licence was issued.

There were separate fees for specific enforcement action, charged under section 49 of the Housing Act 2004.

The Council would use civil penalty notices where appropriate as an alternative to prosecution. The maximum penalty was £30,000 per offence.

The fees for the licence were as follows:

Part A £550

Part B £350

Members were advised that All Member Briefings would take place in the future to keep Members advised on the progress of the scheme.

Members **noted** the contents of the report.

Chairman