

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD
Havering Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
19 August 2020 (7.30 - 9.15 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	Philippa Crowder, Judith Holt, Sally Miller, Robby Misir, Dilip Patel, Nisha Patel, Christine Smith and Michael White (Vice-Chair)
Residents' Group	Ray Morgon and Barry Mugglestone
Upminster & Cranham Residents' Group'	Linda Hawthorn and Christopher Wilkins
Independent Residents' Group	Graham Williamson
Labour Group	Keith Darvill
North Havering Residents' Group	Darren Wise (Chairman)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Natasha Summers.

All decisions were taken with no votes against.

6 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

7 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2020 were agreed as a correct record, subject to Councillor Barry Mugglestone being recorded as sending apologies to the meeting, and signed by the Chairman.

8 POLICY & STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The report before Members detailed a high-level framework that had been written to provide in-house guidance for the development of policies and

strategies and to provide a consistent approach to all stages of policy and strategy formation, approval and review.

Attached as an appendix to the report was a library of current policies and strategies in Havering, which would be maintained corporately (by Policy, Performance and Communities), so that Members and officers have up to date information readily available for review.

The purpose of the framework was to provide a consistent approach to all stages of policy and strategy development, as well as ensuring the Council had consistent, relevant and up-to-date governance documentation. This supported the 2019 LGA Peer Review improvement recommendation.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) considered the framework in January 2020 and agreed the next step would be to disseminate this to the Opportunities Theme Board in February 2020 and then to present it to the Overview and Scrutiny Board for its information.

The key policy list showed that the Council had over 300 policies and strategies. During the Opportunities Theme Board, it was agreed that a review of the key policy list would be undertaken within six months.

The review was to detect any duplicated policies and to identify any policies and strategies that did not meet the definition as set out within the framework. Officers would then start to consider which of the policies on the list were to be kept, decommissioned or amalgamated together in the hope to reduce the number of policies held within the council to approximately 50-60 or to a maximum of 100.

The reduced list could then be looked at for quality and reviewed on a regular basis. The next step would be to make sure all the policies delivered against the priority outcomes for the Council.

Members felt it was a very useful document that would assist overview & scrutiny going forward. Members also felt it would be useful if the document was listed under service areas.

Members were advised that officers were working with London Council's to benchmark policies.

Officers advised that it would take approximately six months to go through the list and cull the policies that were no longer relevant or needed. It was suggested that the Board could consider the shortened list perhaps in March 2021

In response to a question as to how the policies list would work in tandem with the contracts list, officers replied that another piece of work was being carried out regarding the outcomes that the policies affect which would include the commissioning of contracts and the links between the two.

The Board **considered** the Policy and Strategy Development Framework and **noted** the status of current policies and strategies as set out in the appendix to the report.

9 **PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY PROTOCOL**

The report before Members detailed how Overview & Scrutiny could support the Council's transition from lockdown, following the Covid-19 pandemic, through an emphasis on pre-scrutiny of forthcoming executive decisions. To facilitate this, a pre-decision scrutiny protocol was proposed for adoption.

Overview and Scrutiny had the potential to play a significant role in assisting in the Council's recovery from the pandemic in the months ahead and to provide a 'critical friend' in identifying areas for improvement should there be further spikes in the virus which required additional periods of lockdown.

Pre-decision scrutiny should feature as part of the Overview & Scrutiny Board's work programme with regular monitoring of forthcoming decisions via the Forward Plan of key decisions. The Council was required to give 28 days' notice of a planned key executive decision.

Similar to arrangements for the administration of call-in, responsibility for considering requests for pre-decision scrutiny rested with the Overview & Scrutiny Board.

Historically, there had been an absence of engagement in pre-decision scrutiny with post-scrutiny call-in being the option of choice.

Appended to the report was a protocol on how pre-scrutiny would work going forward. The aim of the protocol was to set out an agreed way of working with the Cabinet, in line with the Council's Constitution, to facilitate the proper role of Overview and Scrutiny in respect of pre-decision scrutiny.

Pre-decision scrutiny allowed Members the opportunity to provide comment or alternative recommendations.

The Forward Plan would become a standing item for the Board which was a common practice across many local authorities.

Any items that Members wished to undertake pre-decision scrutiny on would be added to the Board's work programme and would be earmarked for particular scheduled meetings or, in necessary, additional meetings to allow decision making to be carried out in a timely manner.

When pre-decision scrutiny took place it was likely to remove the opportunity for call-in at a later date.

In response to a question relating to how pre-decision scrutiny would work in practice alongside Cabinet deadlines, officers responded by advising the

Forward Plan was regularly monitored and updated and that items added to the plan were emailed to all Members.

If Members highlighted a particular decision that they wished to scrutinise and the majority of the Board also agreed then an additional meeting of the Board would be convened to allow for consideration of the item before the decision by Cabinet or the designated officer.

Members felt it would be useful if there was some more clarity around the timetabling of the pre-decision scrutiny process particularly around timescales that Members would need to adhere to when requesting pre-decision scrutiny. One suggestion was the creation of a flow chart or decision tree detailing timescales etc.

The Board **adopted** the Protocol on Pre-Decision Scrutiny subject to the creation of a flowchart/decision tree document to sit alongside the protocol.

10 FORWARD PLAN

The report before Members contained a printed version of the Statutory Forward Plan which would become a standing item for the Board.

When entries were added to the plan all Members were emailed with details of the decision, who was taking the decision and the date it was due.

Members suggested that items for future scrutiny included the Inclusive Growth Strategy and Bretons Phase 2 Master plan. However if the latter scheme was passed by Cabinet in September there was a possibility that the decision may be called in as some Members questioned the validity of the proposal.

It was **agreed** unanimously that pre-decision scrutiny on the Inclusive Growth Strategy take place before the next scheduled meeting of the Board.

The Board **considered** the Statutory Forward Plan and **noted** its contents

11 OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME

The report before Members detailed the Overview & Scrutiny Board's work programme for the forthcoming year.

It was agreed that the lead Members on the two Covid-19 topic groups would meet shortly to discuss the scopes of the two groups.

Officers advised that the terms of reference of any topic groups needed to be agreed by the Board and these would need to be brought to the next meeting of the Board.

Members requested that the Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy and the Parks Strategy be brought to the next meeting of the Board.

Members also requested that the Council's contract register and its links with policies be updated at a future meeting.

It was **agreed** unanimously that the Homeless Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy be reviewed via pre-decision scrutiny.

Chairman