

Overview & Scrutiny Board

2 December 2020

REPORT

Subject Heading:

Topic Groups Update

SLT Lead:

Andrew Beesley, Head of Democratic Services and Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Report Author and contact details:

Anthony Clements – Principal Democratic Services Officer
anthony.clements@onesource.co.uk

Policy context:

To update the Board on progress with its Topic Groups.

Financial summary:

None

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering
Places making Havering
Opportunities making Havering
Connections making Havering

[X]
[X]
[X]
[X]

SUMMARY

At a previous meeting, the Overview & Scrutiny Board agreed to establish a number of Topic Groups. In accordance with Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rules, the terms of reference for Topic Groups have to be confirmed by the Board. This report presents the Board with the proposed scope for the Debt Recovery Topic Group and updates the Board on progress with the other Topic Groups.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Board notes the current position with the two established Covid-related Topic Groups.
2. That the Board agrees the proposed scope of the Debt Recovery Topic Group.

REPORT DETAIL

1. Covid-19 Topic Group 1 comprises Councillors Michael White (Chairman) Philippa Crowder, Sally Miller, Nisha Patel, Christine Smith and Darren Wise.

Focus - Review the impact of COVID on residential care homes and the third sector in Havering

The Topic Group has held useful discussions with the Head of the Council's Joint Commissioning Unit. This encompassed areas such as new ways of working by care homes, resilience testing of providers in this sector and the risk assessment of care services provided by the voluntary sector during the pandemic.

Plans are currently being finalised for the Group to meet with representatives of local care homes in order to hold discussions on how these facilities are being supported during the pandemic.

2. Covid-19 Topic Group 2 comprises Councillors Keith Darvill (Chairman) Linda Hawthorn, Ray Morgon and Christine Smith.

Focus - Review the Council's response to COVID, focussing on its pandemic-flu plan and Command structure

The Topic Group has divided the review into 3 areas of activity:

1. Reviewing the Council's flu-pandemic plan and developing an understanding of the Council's Command Structure;
2. Understanding and exploring the relationship between the Command Structure and the Borough Resilience Forum; and

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3. Communication strategy for the Pandemic response and understanding the roles undertaken through the Command Structure, including the Resilience Forum and elected Members.

The Topic Group has met on a number of occasions with Council Officers, including the Chief Executive, Director for Public Health, Assistant Director for Customer and Communications and senior officers from the Council's Emergency Planning section.

It plans to meet with external representatives from the Borough's Resilience Forum in advance of the next Board meeting.

The Topic Group intend on presenting its findings back to the Board at its next meeting in February.

3. COVID Topic Group 3 - Debt Recovery - comprises Councillors Graham Williamson (Chairman), Ray Morgon, Barry Mugglestone and Dilip Patel.

The Topic Group has now held its first meeting and had initial discussions with Council finance officers. The proposed overall scope of the review is as follows:

To understand the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on arrangements for and levels of:

- **Council Tax collection**
- **Business Rates collection**
- **Overall Council Debt**

To understand current officer strategy to increase collection rates and reduce outstanding debts and to investigate any changes to this as a result of the pandemic.