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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD
Havering Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
10 March 2021 (7.30 - 8.55 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	Ray Best, Philippa Crowder, Judith Holt, Sally Miller, Nisha Patel, Christine Smith, Maggie Themistocli 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)

49 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Councillor Natasha Summers.

50 **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There were no disclosures of interest.

51 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 16 February 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

52 **PROTOCOL ON THE OPERATION OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD MEETINGS DURING THE PANDEMIC**

The protocol on the operation of Overview and Scrutiny Board meetings during the pandemic was noted by the Board.

53 **COUNCIL COMPLAINTS PROCESS - REFERRAL FROM ADJUDICATION AND REVIEW COMMITTEE**

At its meeting on 6 January 2021, the Adjudication and Review Committee had referred the issue of the Council Complaints Process to the Overview and Scrutiny Board as a possible subject for scrutiny.

A Member stated that Havering was the only London borough with a three stage complaints process and felt that the Board should scrutinise this area to ascertain if the process was fit for purpose. Other Members agreed, feeling that for example it would be better to try and resolve housing complaints at an earlier stage rather than being dealt with via the corporate complaints process. This would result in a more efficient process and better outcomes for residents.

Members noted the scrutiny checklist which they felt was a useful aid to their work and suggested this could be included as part of the induction material for new Councillors as well as being included in Board agendas going forward as part of the Forward Plan item.

It was suggested that any topic group on the complaints process should be briefed on the numbers of complaints received, the complaints mechanisms in different Council departments and best practice in other Councils.

Following a proposal by Councillor Morgon that was seconded by Councillor Darvill, the Board **AGREED** unanimously that a topic group on the Council's complaints policy be established. The scope of the review to be considered by the Board at its next meeting.

54 **REPORT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC COMMAND RESPONSE TOPIC GROUP**

The Board considered the report of the Covid-19 pandemic command response topic group. The Chair of the topic group recorded his thanks to the other Members on the topic group, as well as all officers who had supported the review. Evidence for the review had been received from across the Council's Senior Leadership Team. Some disappointment was expressed at the slow response from outside bodies although this had been due to the effects of the pandemic.

The review had placed emphasis on the role of Councillors during the pandemic and how important it was for them to receive regular information and communicate this to residents. The review had also recommended an annual meeting of Councillors to be updated on the emergency planning process. Other issues identified for the Council in relation to the pandemic had included a significant impact on finances and the impact on staff of working in the pandemic. The topic group had concluded that sufficient support must be made available to staff.

It was clarified the gold, silver and bronze command related to the Council's decision making structure during a pandemic with gold level being represented by the Chief Executive, silver the senior management team and bronze lower level managers.

Members supported the topic group report, feeling that it was well presented and detailed. Concerns were raised that many Councillors felt isolated from the pandemic response process. It was suggested by a Member that more training could be provided to Members on e.g. the Civil Contingencies Act. It was felt that communications overall had been good at the Council but that the role of Councillors had been underutilised. A more localised approach with more communications at ward level could be employed.

The topic group Chair added that clear evidence had been received from the Police that the notice period for new Regulations regarding the pandemic had been very short.

The Board noted the report of the pandemic command response topic group and **AGREED** to refer the recommendations of the topic group to a meeting of the Cabinet.

55 **REVIEW OF THE FORWARD PLAN OF FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS**

The clerk was asked to clarify the position with parks byelaws and whether cycling in parks was allowed.

A Member suggested that it was important for the Board to scrutinise the Council's joint venture developments at an early stage, if time allowed. This applied to areas such as the Rainham and Beam Park development as well as the asset management strategy.

It was clarified that the Joint Venture Working Party was an advisory body that made recommendations to Cabinet. The Board remained welcome to select joint venture items for pre-decision scrutiny if it wished. Members remained keen to scrutinise areas such as the Bridge Close and Beam Park redevelopments, if time was available before the relevant decisions were due to be taken.

The Board **AGREED** that the following items be selected for pre-decision scrutiny:

Bridge Close Regeneration – Making of the Compulsory Purchase Order
Asset Management Strategy and Plan 2019-2022
Rainham and Beam Park Regeneration – Business Plan 2021/22

Chairman