



Overview and Scrutiny Board Annual Report 2020/2021

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

I am delighted to give this short introduction to the summary of the Board's work during the 2020-2021 municipal year.

The Board has been pleased this year to formalise its role in pre-decision scrutiny and further details of this are given below. The selective use of the call-in powers have also lent an effective role and the Board's budget scrutiny and topic group work are also detailed below.

I would like to place on record my thanks to the other members of the Board and all the Council officers, who have supported the Board's work during such a challenging time. The annual reports of the respective Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committees are attached to this report for information.

I commend this annual report and am pleased to submit it to the Overview and Scrutiny Board for approval to refer on to full Council.

REMIT AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

The Board has responsibility for hearing all requisitions ('call-ins') of Council decisions. The Board also leads on the pre-decision scrutiny of forthcoming Council plans and decisions.

The Overview and Scrutiny is also responsible for scrutiny of the following areas:

- Strategy and commissioning
- Partnerships with Business
- Customer access
- E-government and ICT
- Finance
- Human resources
- Asset Management
- Property resources
- Facilities Management
- Communications

- Democratic Services
- Social inclusion
- Councillor Call for Action

The Members on the Overview and Scrutiny Board during the year were:

Councillor Darren Wise (Chairman)

Councillor Michael White (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Ray Best

Councillor Judith Holt

Councillor Sally Miller

Councillor Philippa Crowder

Councillor Nisha Patel

Councillor Christine Smith

Councillor Maggie Themistocli

Councillor Ray Morgon

Councillor Barry Mugglestone

Councillor Linda Hawthorn

Councillor Christopher Wilkins

Councillor Graham Williamson

Councillor Natasha Summers

Councillor Keith Darvill

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD – REVIEW OF ACTIVITY, 2020/21 MUNICIPAL YEAR

1. Pre-decision Scrutiny

The Board agreed during the year a protocol for pre-decision scrutiny and has, during the course of the year, sought to use this important part of the Council's decision making process, in the most appropriate way. The issues selected for pre-decision scrutiny, together with the main comments agreed by the Board for consideration by Cabinet were as follows:

Corporate Parenting Strategy – The Board emphasised the importance of training in the corporate parenting role being made available to all Members

and the need for a sufficiently robust and consistent set of performance indicators. There was also a wish to see as much involvement as possible in the strategy of Looked After Children themselves.

Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy – Areas commented on by the Board included the risk to the strategy if Central Government funding was not to be continued, the need for a clear policy for homeless people in Havering coming from other boroughs and that the Equalities Impact Assessment of the strategy be fully taken into account.

Parks and Open Spaces Byelaws – Members commented that byelaws should be fully enforced, particularly during night-time hours and that all responses to the consultation on the byelaws should be carefully considered. Members also felt that careful consideration should be given to the policy around cycling in parks.

Inclusive Growth Strategy and Implementation Plan – The Board's comments to Cabinet on this issue included the wish to prevent 'dirty' industries coming into Havering, the need for clear timescales and targets in the implementation plan and that the strategy emphasised the importance of continuing to invest in small, local shopping parades.

2. Call-in of Executive Decision

At its October meeting, the Board considered a call-in of an Executive Decision concerning the disposal of land at Hall Lane Pitch & Putt Course, Upminster. The Board discussed a number of issues including the viability of the Hall Lane facility, the cost of any remedial works and methods to protect trees on the site.

The Board voted to not uphold the requisition by 8 votes to 7 with 1 abstention.

3. Budget Issues

Throughout the year the Board has undertaken its role of overall scrutiny of the Council's budget. This has of course focussed on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council's finances.

At its February meeting, the Board considered reports on the Council's budget proposals for the 2021/22 financial year. Comments on the budget that the Board agreed to pass to Cabinet for consideration included that the reports contained a lack of detail on what the impact of proposed savings would be on current service delivery, that consideration be given to the use of remote meeting technology to facilitate a higher level of consultation responses and

that the Board receive more details on the Better Living project and the Council's Transformation Programme.

4. Topic Groups

The Board established the following topic groups during the year under review:

Covid-19 pandemic command response – This review held informative discussions with senior Council officers, as well as representatives of the Police, on the impact of the pandemic on local command and response structures. The topic group's report was agreed at the meeting of the Board in March and will be considered by the Cabinet in due course.

Covid-19 – Impact of the Pandemic on Care Homes and the Third Sector – This topic group held positive discussions with representatives of both local care homes and Third Sector organisations providing care services on behalf of the Council. Having also received input from Healthwatch Havering, the group is now formulating its report which is expected to be presented to the Board early in the new municipal year.

Debt recovery – This review, which is in its early stages, will be seeking to understand current officer collection rates and reduce outstanding debts as well as investigating any changes to this as a result of the pandemic.

Corporate Complaints Process – Following a referral from the Adjudication and Review Committee, the Board has agreed to establish a topic scrutinising aspects of the Council's Corporate Complaints Process. The scope of the group is due to be considered by the Board early in the new municipal year.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

None – narrative report only.

Legal implications and risks:

None – narrative report only.

Human Resources implications and risks:

None – narrative report only.

Equalities implications and risks:

While the work of the Board can impact on all members of the community, there are no implications arising from this specific report which is a narrative of the Board's work over the past year.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.