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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD
Havering Town Hall, Main Road, Romford
21 March 2022 (7.30 - 9.15 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	Ray Best, Judith Holt, Nisha Patel and Christine Smith
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)

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillors Philippa Crowder and Natasha Summers.

All decisions were taken with no votes against.

The Chairman reminded Members of the action to be taken in an emergency.

40 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillors Philippa Crowder and Natasha Summers.

41 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

42 ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE POLICY AND VOLUNTARY RELEASE SCHEME

The senior responsible officer for the voluntary release scheme advised that there would be a reduction of around 400 posts across the Council by September 2022. The Council had to address a £13m budget gap and the new voluntary release scheme would be open to all Council employees with more than one year service.

Employees interested in the scheme were being asked to make a case explaining why they should be released. The relevant manager is then asked for their input and whether they support the case. Areas with staff shortages such as social workers or planners were unlikely to allow any voluntary releases. Eligible staff would receive a release payment of up to £30k as well as, if over 55 years of age, an unreduced pension payment up to the end of their service. Staff would also be asked to say how their existing post could be covered. The Senior Leadership team would review all applications for voluntary release in May 2022 and final decisions would be taken by a panel on 15 June with staff advised shortly afterwards. Drop in sessions were being held for staff and there was regular consultation with Trade Unions.

The Council's organisational change policy aimed to ensure fair, transparent and consistent management of change. The applications for voluntary release figures were currently being considered and it was aimed to minimise the impact of departures on service areas. Preparatory work would be done at this stage with the position being discussed with any new Administration after the election. Final decisions on allowing staff to leave would not be taken until 15 June. Some Members remained concerned that the process was too quick and that the impact on finance and services had not been fully considered. Officers responded that a timeline of six months was reasonable and that the impact on the service was considered on four occasions during the voluntary release process. It was noted that it was 400 posts that would be lost which could include some agency staff. The aim was to seek to minimise the impact of all lost posts.

The model was more staff-led, asking employees to express an initial interest in being released and had been used in other Councils such as Newham. Members felt it was important however to keep staff on board during the process. Decisions on voluntary release would be made in this financial year with the full financial benefit being felt in the following year. It was not possible at this stage to predict the numbers of staff who would apply to leave. If the required numbers asking to leave under voluntary release were not received then other ways of making the remaining savings would have to be considered. It was hoped to avoid compulsory redundancies but this could not be guaranteed.

Employees would lose their release payment if they moved to another Council within 4 weeks and could not return to Havering within 12 months, including as agency staff. The precise savings achieved would depend on the cost of the posts involved. Savings could also be made from any release of agency staff. Members remained concerned at the impact the loss of 400 posts would have on the delivery of public services.

The Board **NOTED** the position.

43 **CCTV COVERAGE**

Members were advised that it was a statutory duty of the Council to work with the Police and other partners to prevent or reduce crime and that CCTV was key to this. A survey of the existing cameras had been delayed due to the impact of the pandemic and a change in staffing arrangements. The affordability of the current CCTV arrangements in Havering was also being considered. A report on future CCTV arrangements was likely to be taken to Cabinet in June 2022.

The service did its best to ensure that cameras were repaired as soon as possible and cameras were audited quarterly. There had not been any incidents of faulty cameras that had led to the prevention of a crime investigation. The housing service was undertaking a consultation with tenants and leaseholders about CCTV and it was noted that cameras could only be put in areas identified by the crime data. The consultation would be widespread.

There had been a number of successful uses of the CCTV system including a nationally publicised murder case in the Brewery. Three muggers had also recently been located via CCTV and their details passed to Police. It was accepted that the current CCTV system was not ideal but it did work. The CCTV pictures were sufficiently clear to enable the Police to identify people from them.

Faulty cameras would be repaired within in a week if possible although repair times averaged 3-4 weeks due to replacement parts being needed. The average repair time would be confirmed by officers but mobile cameras could be used if necessary. Members felt that a detailed report on CCTV costs would be needed if any pre-decision scrutiny was to be undertaken.

It was important that people reported crimes as this data fed into the areas where CCTV could be located. The initial priority for the CCTV network would be coverage of town centres.

The Board **NOTED** the position.

44 **REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE BOARD**

The Assistant Director of Policy, Performance and Community explained that it had not been possible to look at other models of scrutiny due to the impact of Covid. The Board had been provided with a survey from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny which would assist with annual scrutiny reports as well as a Councillor scrutiny handbook which would allow suggestions for what would help overview and scrutiny in Havering. Scrutiny guidance from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny had also been made

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available. It was confirmed that the Assistant Director – Sandy Hamberger was the Statutory Scrutiny Officer for the Council.

Some Members felt that the current Overview and Scrutiny system was not working very well and more officer support was needed. It was felt that there was no parity of esteem between scrutiny and the Administration and this was shown by there not being any Opposition Chairs of Scrutiny. A review of the scrutiny process in 2018 had not proceeded.

Officers would also follow up on whether the Board could have sight of the self-assessment section of the recent READI review.

The Board **NOTED** the position and the documents presented.

Chairman