



Environment Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee Annual Report 2021/2022

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to write this foreword to the summary of the Sub-Committee's work during the 2021-2022 municipal year.

We have sought to maximise the impact of the Sub-Committee's work whilst also being mindful of the increased workload on Council officers as a result of the pandemic.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to the other members of the Sub-Committee and all officers who supported our work. I hope the report acts as a good summary of our work this year.

I commend this annual report and am pleased to submit it to the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

Councillor Maggie Themistocli
Chairman, Environment Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee

REMIT AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE **Terms of Reference**

The areas scrutinised by the Committee are:

- Environment
- Transport
- Environmental Strategy
- Community Safety
- Streetcare
- Parking
- Social Inclusion
- Councillor Call for Action

SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Maggie Themistocli (Chairman)
Councillor Michael Deon Burton (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Carole Beth
Councillor Nic Dodin
Councillor Matt Sutton
Councillor Darren Wise

TRAFFIC & PARKING SAFETY SCHEMES 2021-22

The Sub-Committee received a report that detailed the Council's Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) and Transport for London (TfL) Local Implementation Plan.

No funding had been received from TfL to date. TfL were currently in discussions with local authorities to determine how much funding would be allocated to deliver transport schemes.

The effectiveness of speed reduction schemes were assessed over a five year period. Speed humps were no longer used in schemes and there had been a shift towards speed reduction by decreasing 30mph areas to 20mph.

It was noted that in some areas where speed limits had been reduced there had been no decline in accidents. In other areas both in the borough and outside of the borough, there was evidence that the incidents of accidents had decreased.

RAINHAM CREEK - UPDATE

The Sub-Committee received an update of current issues relating to Rainham Creek.

There had been a build -up of litter in the area and that despite some limited cleaning up by Council staff using boats and nets, it was apparent that more needed to be done to keep the area clean and safe. Council staff were unable to undertake a full clean-up operation because there was a need for specialist equipment.

An annual clean-up using a specialist contractor was being looked into and would be carried out in the autumn. An interim clean-up during the month of July was being organised so much of the litter could be safely clear up.

It was noted that the Council's maintenance team undertook regular scheduled maintenance of the surrounding area; including: grass cutting, shrub pruning, litter picking and litter bin emptying.

There were questions around cutting costs by completing the clean-up every two years rather than annually. There was the possibility of future funding for the clean-up from the Environment Agency. The Sub-Committee felt that any possible formation of a topic group to look at the subject would be more prudent after officers had secured a contractor to carry out the clean-up.

A subsequent update came to a meeting at the end of the year with a presentation that contained before and after pictures of the process of the clean-up and it was explained that the situation would be monitored.

MARLBOROUGH HIGHWAYS CONTRACT KPIS

The Sub-Committee received a presentation that highlighted the proposed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that were set against the award of a new 2 year extension of the highways works carried out by Marlborough Surfacing Ltd.

The Sub-Committee were advised that discussions between the contractor and the Council were ongoing and that in order to maintain continuous improvement; there was a plan to introduce a RAG (Red, Amber and Green) rating system.

Cleaning of gullies was a cyclical programme that was now carried out by Marlborough Ltd yearly and Fixed Penalty Notices were issued when permits for works were overdue.

FLOODING IN THE BOROUGH 2021

The Sub- Committee received a report that provided an overview on the position relating to flooding in the borough. Details were given of areas in the borough, due to their nature and topography, were at risk from flooding.

Examples of four noticeable flooding events in recent years were highlighted and included: the August 2016 event whereby the River Rom flooded in the north of the borough, the August 2020 event whereby Rainham and Hornchurch had been affected and a further two events of flooding in 2021 whereby parts of the north of the borough and Romford had been affected.

A number of rivers and tributaries across the borough which generally flowed from north to south towards the River Thames. Officers advised the Sub-Committee that in the past twenty years, rainfall events had become frequent and intense throughout the UK which had led to localised areas of flooding.

It was further highlighted that the relevant flood risk management authorities that were responsible for maintaining respective drainage assets. After a flooding event, the Council, as Lead Local Flood authority had to produce a section 19 report to investigate and record what had taken place. These reports were required to be published on the Council's website and would include the recommendations that had been provided.

There were a number of schemes and studies that the Council also had to put in place and state whether they were ongoing or had been completed. In regards to possible faults within the stations, the section 19 reports would identify these.

It was to be noted that the floods that occurred in the north of the borough earlier on in 2021 year, were caused by a month's worth of rainfall in an hour and that therefore there was no quick fix as the drainage in that area dated back to the 1930s and as the effects of climate change could mean this would be more problematic in future. Sluice gates were not an option because they were maintained by the Environment Agency and could not be opened in the Thames levels were already too high.

REVIEW OF PESTICIDES USED BY HAVERING

The Sub-Committee received a report that reviewed the use of pesticides by the Council following publicity surrounding Glyphosate (a commonly used weed killers of pesticides). The report referred to herbicides (substances used to kill undesirable plants) rather than pesticides (chemicals used to kill pests or eradicate disease).

It was to be noted that a report was previously produced for Cabinet in November 2019 and therefore this was an update to Members on the Council's position.

It was explained that Havering Council had adopted an integrated approach to weed control on its highways, council land, and parks and open spaces. This included the use of the herbicide Glyphosate, as well as manual removal, mulching and growth suppressants within parks and open spaces.

Havering continued to conform to the EU's Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive, which recommended minimising use of herbicides and taking reasonable precautions during application.

Glyphosate was recently re-licensed by the European Pesticides Commission for five more years. However, recent well-publicised studies have asserted that the product poses potential risks to humans, animals and biodiversity, and groups including the Pesticide Action Network UK (PAN UK) campaign for its use to be phased out, along with other pesticides and herbicides. Other studies had concluded there to be either no such links, or links only associated with high levels of contact.

It was noted that the report also reviewed the current weed control measures and described alternative methods that were currently available within the industry. Equalities impact assessments would also be carried out to identify any alternative methods following procurement of a new contractor.

TRAFFIC AND PARKING SAFETY SCHEMES UPDATE 2021-22

The Sub-Committee received a report on the Traffic and Parking Safety Schemes that were in line with Transport for London's (TfL's) actions for local authorities in London. The Mayor's Transport Strategy (MTS) set out objectives including healthy streets and provision of a good transport experience as key parts of the MTS policy framework.

It was noted that the Local Implementation Plan (LIP) was an allocation of funding to the London boroughs by TfL to spend on projects that support the MTS and shape London's social and economic development to encourage active travel and make provisions for both walking and cycling.

It was explained that Vision Zero was a part of the MTS and was an initiative first introduced in Sweden in 1997. Vision Zero was an action plan which focused particularly on reducing road danger on the road network, by implementing schemes which would reduce crashes and improve road safety.

The Council recognised there were additional measures that could be implemented to improve the environmental aspects of areas within Havering to improve road safety to

reduce casualties of all road users on both Transport for London Road Network (TLRN) and borough roads, especially in the vicinity of schools.

Havering was investing significant levels of its' LIP funding on physical infrastructure measures to encourage modal shift. A substantial element of LIP funding was also spent on measures focused on securing behaviour change and presenting alternative travel choices for journeys.

These measures often encompassed educational initiatives delivered in schools, to businesses and other community groups to encourage people to consider making choices involving smarter travel and road safety education initiatives. The aim of these was to encourage people to walk, cycle or use public transport to/from their destination and ultimately see a reduction in journeys by private vehicles.

School Street schemes which were funded by TfL offered a proactive solution for school communities to tackle air pollution, poor health, and road danger reduction. A School Street scheme would encourage a healthier lifestyle, active travel to school for families and lead to a better local environment. These schemes were a current Council priority as they were mainly self-enforcing with the use of closed-circuit television (CCTV) at timed closures points operational during school drop off and pick up times.

Following on from the EOSSC meeting held on 21st July 2021, the types of safety schemes implemented since financial year 2015/2016, KPI details (where available) and before and after speed data to ascertain if safety had improved.

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Throughout the year the Sub-Committee continued to receive the quarterly performance reports that had previously been reported to Cabinet and Demand Pressure Dashboards which illustrated the growing demands on Council services and the context that the performance levels set out in the reports had been achieved within.

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

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Minutes of meetings of Environment Communities Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee