



Overview and Scrutiny Board Annual Report 2022/2023

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to give this short introduction to the summary of the Board's work during the 2022-2023 municipal year. Details are given below of elements of the Board's work this year including call-ins and budget scrutiny.

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 this year. 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 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 Board 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 who served on the Overview and Scrutiny Board during the year were:

Councillor Gerry O'Sullivan (Chairman)

Councillor Phil Ruck (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Mandy Anderson

Councillor Sarah Edwards

Councillor Laurance Garrard

Councillor Martin Goode

Councillor Jackie McArdle

Councillor Tim Ryan

Councillor Christine Smith

Councillor Natasha Summers

Councillor David Taylor

Councillor Katharine Tumilty

Councillor Bryan Vincent

Councillor Damian White

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD – REVIEW OF ACTIVITY, 2022/23 MUNICIPAL YEAR

1. Call-ins of Executive Decisions

In February, the Board considered a call-in (requisition) of the contract award authorisation for the extension and modification of Central Depot. The proposals were scrutinised by the Board with particular emphasis being given to the lack of costings in the original proposal. Whilst the call-in was not upheld, the Board did make a recommendation that all relevant information, particularly capital costs, should be available in future reports.

2. Finance and Budget Issues

The Board has, throughout the year, sought to undertake thorough scrutiny of the Council's financial position, particularly given the current challenging economic climate. In October, the Board discussed with officers reductions in funding from Central Government. It was also noted that increases in demand

for both Adults and Children's Social Care were putting pressure on the Council's finances.

Formal scrutiny of the Budget and Council Tax proposals was undertaken by the Board in February. Scrutiny discussions concerned the impact of the rise in the cost of living on many areas of the budget. Savings proposals in response to the Council's overspend and reductions in Central Government funding were also scrutinised.

The Board made a number of recommendations to Cabinet on the budget proposals covering areas such as housing contractor performance, social care spending and the use of earmarked reserves.

3. Emergency Planning and Resilience

The Board was advised that the Wennington fires in June 2022 had been the only major incident in the borough in the previous five years. The Board however conducted a detailed scrutiny of a number of areas including the nature of major incident exercises, notification of incidents to Members and opportunities for Member training in these areas.

4. Levels of Corporate Risk

A key focus of the Board's work throughout the year has been to scrutinise the level of risk to the Council and how this is managed. This has included scrutiny of the risk management process itself, the response and ongoing recovery work in relation to the Wennington fires and financial issues related to the Council's Joint Venture work. The Board also scrutinised the borough's level of cyber-resilience and risks to the Council of any shortfall in the availability of housing.

5. Resilience of Care Home Market

At its October meeting, the Board considered the available capacity of the care home market in Havering and mitigations to reduce the impact of provider failure. Difficulties for care home providers were also scrutinised including issues such as staff recruitment/retention, the National Living Wage and the risk of burnout or stress.

6. Parking Enforcement

The Board has begun to scrutinise areas related to the Parking Enforcement process including the reasons for successful challenging of some Penalty Notices and the risk of digital exclusion if residents are unable to use the app to pay for parking. This has resulted in the recent establishment of a task and finish group to scrutinise these issues in more detail.

7. Corporate Complaints Process

In March, the Board undertook scrutiny of the proposed new complaints policy which would be more consistent and easier to understand. Consideration was also given to waste collection complaints with scrutiny of the financial penalties levelled on the contractor and that a larger monitoring team would be introduced as part of the new contract.

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.

Environmental and Climate Change Implications and Risks

None – narrative report only.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.