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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE
Appointment Centre Room 7 & 8, Town Hall, Romford
11 February 2025 (7.00 - 8.59 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group Jason Frost (Chairman)

Havering Residents' Group Robby Misir, Christine Smith and Julie Wilkes

Labour Group Frankie Walker (Vice-Chair)

1 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received for the absence of Councillors Judith Holt, Jacqueline McArdle and Lamb.

3 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interests.

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 HAVERING SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2023-MARCH 2024.

The Committee received the Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report for the 23/24 financial year.

The annual report had been published as per the Council's statutory duty. The report focused on a number of key areas such as sexual abuse and the new 'Pantosaurus' promotional campaign in schools to teach 'No means no'. Another area focused on was neglect and mental health. Members noted that following the COVID-19 pandemic, children were more anxious to return to school with a higher number of children electing to home-school.

Members raised queries on private fostering to which officers explained that it occurs when a child is fostered with family members with no money involved and the Council still has a duty to ensure the child's safety; questions were also raised on child deaths of which there had been 20 recorded cases within Havering of which the majority were due to complex health issues.

Members also discussed the work carried out around free school meals. Officers explained that schools were promoting them as much as possible with the Council encouraging those families who are eligible to utilise them. Members discussed the unfair stigma that surrounds children on free schools meals and were reassured that the Council was working on counteracting that stigma.

The Committee made no recommendations and noted the report.

6 CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND EXTERNAL MONITORING

Members received a report on the Children Social Care Improvement Plan.

The Committee noted the plan had been submitted to OFSTED and the DfE on 31st May 2024, OFSTED had conducted a visit in October 2024 and the DfE had conducted a visit in November 2024. Officers explained both OFSTED and the DfE viewed the Plan as the best course of action but would return for further monitoring visits. Members were pleased to note agency staff levels were reducing and staff were being retained after training.

The Committee made no recommendations and noted the report.

7 HAVERING YOUTH WELLBEING CENSUS

The Committee was presented with the Youth Wellbeing Census.

It was noted that the child population within the Borough had increased by over 15% in the last decade which increased the pressure on youth wellbeing services with mental health becoming a growing concern.

Members noted the survey was delivered as part of lessons in schools with 14 out of 18 mainstream secondary schools having engaged. 2,287 pupils

**People Overview & Scrutiny Sub
Committee, 11 February 2025**

participated across years 8 & 10 which represented 36% of Havering children population.

Members were shown the dashboard that had been created to compile the survey data and were pleased with the layout and simplicity.

The Committee made no recommendations and noted the report.

Chairman

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