



PARTNERSHIPS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11

SUMMARY

This report is the annual report of the Committee, summarising the Committee's activities during its year of operation ended May 2011.

It is planned for this report to stand as a public record of achievement for the year and enable Members and others to have a record of the Committee's performance.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council note the 2010/11 Annual Report of the Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

REPORT DETAIL

During the year under review, the Committee met on seven occasions and dealt with the following issues:

1. OVERVIEW OF PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- 1.1 At its first meeting in June 2010, the Committee sought to develop an understanding of what were the key partnerships involved in the Council's work. To this end, the Assistant Director for Transformation, Customer and Community Engagement gave a detailed presentation on relationships with the Council's key partners. This included discussions of the role of Homes in Havering, business organisations such as the Hornchurch and Romford Town Centre Partnerships and the Council's working with NHS

Havering. Also considered were issues relating to land use covered by the Borough's Local Development Framework and the role of Transport for London in the borough. Finally, the Committee also considered the role and function of the Havering Strategic Partnership representing key Havering organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

- 1.2 As a result of the presentation, the Committee was able to consider areas for its work programme and it was decided to concentrate on issues including the role of Homes in Havering, partnership working as applied to Romford Town Centre, relationships between the Council and the voluntary sector and the role of Transport for London.

2. ROLE OF HOMES IN HAVERING (HiH)

- 2.1 At its September meeting, the Committee received a presentation from both the Chief Executive of HiH and the Head of Housing and Public Protection. This explained the distinction between those services, for example repairs, voids and rent collection carried out by HiH as an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) and those such as lettings and housing strategy that were dealt with by the Council's retained service.
- 2.2 The Committee scrutinised in particular the partnership working between the Council and HiH and the benefits this had brought which included a review of the Tenancy Agreement and improvements to the repairs service. The Committee also considered the shortfall in Decent Homes Funding received for Havering and how this was being addressed.

3. PARTNERSHIP WORKING IN ROMFORD TOWN CENTRE

- 3.1 At its September meeting, the Committee received an initial presentation on the role of the Romford Town Centre Partnership (and its equivalent body covering Hornchurch). This explained that the Partnership, involving local businesses, the Council, churches and Police representatives sought to promote and market the town centre as effectively as possible. The Partnership was heavily involved in redevelopment schemes that affected the town centre.
- 3.2 In order to develop a greater understanding of the issues facing Romford Town Centre, the Committee decided to visit the town centre itself and this was undertaken, in conjunction with officers, on 19 November 2010. Members visited all four major malls as well as the marketplace and this proved an invaluable opportunity to hold discussions with traders face to face on their views and the issues they faced. Members were pleased to note that most traders seemed satisfied with their current location etc. although concerns were raised over accessibility issues in Romford

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- Shopping Hall as a result of the building works that were ongoing at that time.
- 3.3 Immediately following the town centre visit, the Committee met formally and held further in-depth discussions on the issues affecting Romford Town Centre. Members felt that there had been generally positive feedback from the traders they had spoken to although traders in Romford Shopping Hall and parts of the market were unhappy with the amount of footfall they were receiving. They felt the Shopping Hall was not sufficiently visible to the public and some market traders were dissatisfied with the recent positioning of stalls.
 - 3.4 Members were of the view that the Romford night time economy, although healthy, could have put off some people from visiting the town centre, even during the day. It was also felt that the market had stagnated to some extent in recent years and perhaps needed to become more diverse.
 - 3.5 The Committee returned to this subject at its final meeting and heard that work to revitalise the market area was ongoing. This included trials of a new market layout with improved signage, clearer sightlines and more efficient clearance of rubbish. Efforts were also being made to attract new themed markets to Romford.

4. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COUNCIL AND THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

- 4.1 The Committee has prioritised a wish to understand the relationships the Council has developed with the voluntary sector in Havering. As such, the Committee's meeting in March scrutinised this area in depth. The Council's Policy, Partnership and Performance Manager explained a number of aspects of the local voluntary sector including the Compact agreement between the Council and voluntary groups and the anticipated impact of the Government's Big Society reforms. The Assistant Director for Commissioning (Adult Services) then explained the links between strategic commissioning and the voluntary sector. In a challenging funding environment, an emphasis had been placed on commissioning around community needs with an increasing uptake of personal budgets allowing service users more choice in the care and activities provided.
- 4.2 The Chief Executive of HAVCO also explained the work of her organisation (an umbrella body for the local voluntary sector). She felt that there was now an effective relationship between Havering and the voluntary sector and was surprised this had not been reflected in recent surveys that had been carried out. The Committee noted with interest that

the recession had seen a marked increase in the numbers of people wishing to volunteer their time.

- 4.3 The Chief Executive of Havering Crossroads – a charity offering respite breaks and other support to carers also presented to the Committee. The Chief Executive confirmed that there was now a better dialogue with the Council and that the charity had been consulted on issues such as personalisation of care. Members felt however that the work of organisations such as Crossroads should be publicised further although it was noted that the charity was involved in a joint road show event with officers from Adult Services.
- 4.4 The Committee felt that the role of the voluntary sector merited further scrutiny and to this end developed a scope for a topic group review of this sector concentrating in particular on the level of support the Council provides to the voluntary sector. This scope is now being considered for addition to the work programme of the Towns and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

5. THE ROLE OF TRANSPORT FOR LONDON IN HAVERING

- 5.1 The Council's Development and Transportation Manager explained at the Committee's September meeting the role of Transport for London (TfL) within Havering. The Committee noted that there were good relationships between the Council and TfL at officer level but that these could be improved at Member level. The Relationship Manager at TfL did however meet regularly with both Council officers and the Cabinet Member for Environment in order to discuss current projects and issues affecting the borough.
- 5.2 Members noted the presentation but felt that more direct access to relevant officers at TfL would be of assistance in resolving issues at ward levels and it was agreed that officers would forward TfL contact details to the Committee.
- 5.3 In October, members of the Committee also visited City Hall in order to observe a meeting of the Transport Committee of the Greater London Authority. Discussions were also held with an officer supporting the Committee and this allowed Members a useful insight into how transport issues were scrutinised on a pan-London basis.

6. LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME

- 6.1 At its final meeting of the year, the Committee scrutinised the latest update on the progress of the legislative programme as it affected local government. The Committee considered the key points of the Localism Bill which would enable local control over housing and planning decisions and

for example allow local residents the right to approve or veto excessive Council Tax rises. Also considered were changes to Social Housing such as Councils being given the power to set waiting list policies and the introduction of new Housing Benefit rules which aimed to reduce cost and promote fairness in the housing benefit system.

- 6.2 The Committee also considered elements of the Welfare Reform Bill which would lead to a major overhaul of the Welfare system and the White Paper on Open Public Services which sought to facilitate private and third sector organisations being given the right to compete for services with any public body.

7. BUDGET SCRUTINY

- 7.1 In both August 2010 and January 2011, the Committee met jointly with the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees in order to scrutinise aspects of the Council's proposed budget for the coming year. The meetings, chaired by the Chairman of the Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee, scrutinised several issues of relevance to this Committee. These included the sharing of ICT with London Borough of Newham and potential savings in shared procurement via the Council's participation in the East London Shared Services consortium.

8. OTHER ISSUES CONSIDERED

- 8.1 Havering Strategic Partnership – In both June and September, the Committee scrutinised the work of the Havering Strategic Partnership (HSP) – an organisation representing key Havering organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors. The Committee heard that a change of Central Government had meant significant change to the Partnership's work including the ending of Local Area Agreements for which the HSP had previously been responsible for delivering. The Committee noted a number of structural changes to the HSP including the establishment of a Health & Wellbeing Board and felt that the HSP would merit further scrutiny in the future.
- 8.2 Changes to Partnerships and Performance Regime – At its November meeting, the Committee scrutinised recent legislative changes relating to the measuring of local government performance. It was noted that several measures such as the Comprehensive Area Assessment and the Place Survey had been abolished and that the emphasis was now much more on Councils to measure their own performance.
- 8.3 Committee's Future Work Programme – In light of the Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee ending at the close of the 2010/11

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municipal year it was agreed that officers would pass outstanding work programme items to the relevant other Overview and Scrutiny Committee in order for that Committee to consider taking on scrutiny of these matters.

The specific work programme items and the Committee to which they were referred are as shown below:

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Review of Waste Management Partnerships – Biffa, East London Waste Authority, Shanks

Individuals Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Impact of Personalisation of Social Care on Voluntary Sector

Towns and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Site Visit to Orchard Village Development

Cultural Partnerships (Culture Forum, Havering Museum, Queen's Theatre, Sports & Leisure Management)

Proposed Topic Group Review - Council Support for the Voluntary Sector.

Value Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Havering Strategic Partnership