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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SUB COMMITTEE
Appointment Centre Rooms 7 & 8
29 April 2025 (7.00 - 8.56 pm)**

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Conservative Group	Jason Frost (Chairman) and Judith Holt
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 Jacqueline McArdle.

3 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Co-optee Ian Rusha declared a non-pecuniary interest for item 5 as a Governor of Corbets Tey Special School

4 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 21st January 2025 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

5 SEND & AP STRATEGY

The Sub-Committee was presented with an update on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provisions (AP).

It was explained to members that while other Local Authorities are seeing a decrease in the number of pupils with SEND or needing Aps, Havering has seen an increase of 40% since 2019 with the complexity of needs increasing also. It was noted that although there is significant investment from the Council, the caseload of staff is still much higher than the benchmark which can cause strains on the team.

Members questioned officers on the new Balgores School and the capacity it will hold to which officers confirmed it would be a 300 place school with Astrum Multi Academy Trust operating the site. Officers were confident it would open within the timeframe although there were challenges to face. One area of concern was the recruitment of staff however there was significant interest at the Compass School open day which was encouraging.

Members were pleased that communication with the Council's parks team was ongoing to provide more SEND specific and accessible play spaces and equipment with a specific focus on growing before and after school clubs.

The Committee **AGREED** for the strategy to be presented to the Board in 12 months' time to allow for continuous security.

6 **COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

The Sub-Committee received a report on the Council's Communications Plan.

Officers explained that within the Comms Plan, various sectors and data was used for research to shape the plan. Officers also explained that the Living newsletter was a key channel of information for residents and the team had seen that the Cost of Living, Crime and Cleanliness were top issues for residents. Although Facebook and NextDoor were key social media channels, the team were looking at using Whatsapp and AI to further engage with residents with new and innovative channels.

Members raised questions on how the team was attempting to reach a wider audience to which officers confirmed they were using larger text if needed and traditional leaflets and posters in public spaces, for example libraries.

Members questioned if the Council website had alternative text or if webcasts have subtitles to which it was confirmed they do not and that would be looked into for future improvements.

The Committee **NOTED** the report and made no recommendations.

Chairman