



Overview & Scrutiny Board

17 March 2026

Subject Heading:

Self Evaluation of Board's Work 2025/26

SLT Lead:

Sandy Hamberger, Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Report Author and contact details:

Anthony Clements, Committee Services Manager
anthony.clements@havering.gov.uk

Policy context:

The report deals with the statutory process of Overview and Scrutiny.

Financial summary:

There is no significant financial impact from the statutory processes as these requirements are being met by existing budgets.

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Things that matter for residents

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy

Resources - A well run Council that delivers for People and Place **X**

SUMMARY

With the assistance of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer, the Board will be asked to consider the latest Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) Survey of Local Government Scrutiny findings and review its work during 2025/2026 and the effectiveness of this.

RECOMMENDATION

The Board reviews its 2025/2026 performance and identifies ways to improve scrutiny and effectiveness.

REPORT DETAIL

Background

Scrutiny in councils acts as a critical, independent "check and balance" on executive decision-making, designed to improve public services and ensure transparency. By utilizing evidence-based reviews and public, non-partisan questioning, scrutiny contributes to better policy development, increased accountability, and enhanced performance.

Key Contributions to Councils:

- Holding the Executive to Account: Scrutiny committees, composed of non-cabinet councillors, examine decisions, policies, and actions of the cabinet and senior officers.
- Improving Policy and Performance: Through "pre-decision scrutiny," committees review plans before they are implemented, ensuring they are robust and represent good value for money.
- Giving Residents a Voice: Scrutiny amplifies public concerns by allowing for the review of issues that directly affect local communities.
- External Scrutiny: It extends beyond the council to review the work of partners like the NHS, police, and other organizations delivering services to local residents.
- "Critical Friend" Function: It provides constructive challenge rather than just opposition, with the goal of driving continuous improvement.

- "Call-in" Powers: Scrutiny has the power to temporarily pause executive decisions ("call-in") to review them and recommend changes if necessary.
- Task and Finish Groups: Small, time-limited groups often investigate specific, complex issues in depth to provide focused recommendations.

Main Roles of Scrutiny Committees:

- Policy Review & Development: Reviewing existing policies to ensure effectiveness and proposing new ones.
- Performance Monitoring: Reviewing how well council services are performing against targets.
- Budget Scrutiny: Monitoring the council's financial position and value for money.
- External Partnerships: Scrutinising the impact of services delivered by third-party organisations

Great scrutiny in councils

Acts as a constructive "critical friend" to the executive, driving improvement through evidence-based, non-political challenge. It focuses on public priorities, holds decision-makers to account, and produces clear, actionable recommendations that improve local services, rather than just reviewing reports. [A councillor's workbook on scrutiny](#) Local Government Association.

Havering Overview and Scrutiny Board Programme 2025/26

The Board had a busy year, setting its work programme with a focus on scrutinising areas from the Statutory Corporate Plan, Finance, and progress of the Councils agreed Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) Improvement and Transformation Plan and CIPFA Financial Management review – both a requirement to support the Councils financial support from the Government and areas within the plan itself.

The table below summarises the items scrutinised by the Board over 2025/2026. The Board is asked to note that following last year's annual review of the effectiveness of scrutiny and the seven recommendations that went to May 2026 Cabinet, in line with those Board recommendations are now normally presented at Cabinet by the Chairman or Vice-Chair of the Board.

Overview and Scrutiny Board Meeting Date	Item Scrutinised
16 th April 2025	Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board :

	<p>7th May 2025 Cabinet Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relevant Cabinet Member should be required to attend each meeting of the Board or Sub-Committees where there is an item relevant to their portfolios. • 2. All Cabinet responses to scrutiny recommendations or comments should be included as an agenda item at the next scrutiny meeting. • 3. Comments and recommendations to Cabinet should be presented at the Cabinet meeting by the Chairman and Vice-Chair of the Board or relevant Sub-Committee. • 4. Cabinet responses to scrutiny comments on called-in decisions should be circulated to all members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board as well as other Members supporting the call-in. • 5. Cabinet supports the Board's request for scrutiny reports to be received two weeks ahead of publication as this will facilitate earlier pre-meets and general consideration of the material. • 6. That Cabinet commends the Overview and Scrutiny Board reviewing the work it undertook over the past year, and its ongoing efforts to make the scrutiny process as effective as possible for residents. • 7. That a protocol be developed for working practices between Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Board including, but not limited to, the issues outlined in the recommendations above.
<p>3rd July 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Savings Proposals Update • Corporate Human Resources Metrics & Agency Workers, Sickness Absence • Customer Services Strategy • Annual Scrutiny Report 2024/25
<p>9th October 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Savings Update • Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) Improvement and Transformation Plan and CIPFA Financial Management review

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Human Resources Metrics & Agency Workers, Sickness Absence • Cabinet Responses to Scrutiny Recommendations for the Havering Volunteer Centre and Scrutiny Process
8 January 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of Former Library Sites – Requisition of Cabinet Decision
4 February 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ombudsman Complaints 2024/25 • Contract Procedure Rules • Council Budget Proposals 2026/2027
17 th March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Human Resources Metrics & Sickness Absence • Agency Workers • Wellbeing Annual Report • Health & Safety statistics • Commercial Strategy • Response of Cabinet to comments from call-in re Future Use of former Library Sites • Annual Scrutiny report 2025/26: recommendations for incoming Administration and Board Members

It should be noted that the Board comprises a number of Members from other scrutiny sub-committees and this provides an opportunity to input into each other's work programmes in line with Terms of Reference. E.g. the joint scrutiny review by Place and People sub-committees 21st October 2025 on Arnold's Field.

Scrutiny Training undertaken during 2025/2026

The Board requested training for Scrutiny Members, Cabinet Members, Executive Leadership Team and the Executive Leadership Group. These were commissioned and delivered by an independent trainer in October 2025.

The training was seen as an enabler of effective scrutiny by raising awareness and providing opportunity to explore how scrutiny works and role requirements. This is an unusual initiative amongst Local Authorities and should be considered a very positive indicator of the Board's work and profile.

The training sessions provided a valuable opportunity to identify actions to strengthen the effectiveness of scrutiny.

2025/26 review and Improvements for 2026/2027

From the training undertaken, planned next steps include developing a formal scrutiny protocol, informed by Member feedback gathered during the training programme. This protocol will also support the Member induction process on scrutiny following the Council elections.

Members are encouraged to support holding a joint Cabinet–Scrutiny meeting ahead of the first Board meeting of the new municipal year. This would allow both groups to agree how the new protocol will be implemented and ensure a shared understanding of roles and expectations going forward.

The Board is requested to review the improvements outlined in the Statutory Scrutiny Officer's attached presentation, which will also be delivered during the meeting to support the discussion.

The Board is invited to consider strengths and weaknesses of how scrutiny has been undertaken this year and may also wish to suggest both improvements to strengthen scrutiny and items for its work programme for the 2026/27 municipal year.

Members are asked to note that, in consideration of the Council's financial position, the work programme for 2026/27 should be informed by the Statutory Corporate Forward Plan and the DLUHC Improvement and Transformation Plan. Links to both documents are given at the end of this report.

Acknowledgements

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer recognises the substantial time and effort of the Board Members, Chair deputy Chair and Committee Services Officers which have made the 2025/2026 Board year possible.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks: None of this covering report.

Legal implications and risks: None of this covering report.

Human Resources implications and risks: None of this covering report.

Equalities implications and risks: None of this covering report.

Environmental and Climate Change implications and risks: None of this covering report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Statutory Corporate Forward Plan - [Forward plan - MARCH 2026- FORWARD PLAN | London Borough of Havering](#)

DLUHC Improvement and Transformation Plan - [Improvement+and+Transformation+Plan.pdf](#)