MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON

3 February 2015

PRESENT

Committee Members
Councillor Waida Forman (Chair)
Councillor David Carter (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Joel Charles
Councillor Manny Doku
Councillor Maggie Hulcoop
Councillor Dan Long
Councillor Patrick McCabe
Councillor Dennis Palmer
Councillor Linda Pailing

Also Present
Councillor Edna Stevens

Officers
Graham Branchett, Chief Operating Officer
Simon Pipe, Customer and Media Services Manager
Michael Pitt, Environment and Licensing Manager
Marysia Rudgley, Community Safety Team Manager
Joel West, Governance Support Officer

46. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor Jacqui Cross.

47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

48. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2014 are agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to recording apologies of absence from Councillor Maggie Hulcoop.

49. MATTERS ARISING

None.
50. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

None.

51. **WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

None.

52. **REVIEW OF HATE CRIME IN HARLOW - INTERVIEWS WITH WITNESSES AND INTERIM REPORT**

The Committee received an interim report for the Review of Hate Crime in Harlow. Marysia Rudgley, Community Safety Manager, introduced the report.

The following witnesses were in attendance for this item:

i. Sergeant Phil Moulsher, Neighbourhood Policing Sergeant, Essex Police
ii. PC Jenny Paget, Hate Crime Officer (Harlow), Essex Police
iii. Steve Goodsell, Show Racism the Red Card (anti-racism education charity).

Sergeant Moulsher and PC Paget informed the Committee of the Police’s standard response to reports of hate crime, including the different responses provided to high and medium-risk incidents. All victims of hate crime are contacted by the Police, either by phone or letter. They also outlined the main differences between ‘hate crimes’ and ‘hate incidents’.

PC Paget provided some statistics of recorded hate incidents in Harlow that showed that overall incidents had decreased slightly in 2014 compared to 2013. Sergeant Moulsher informed the Committee that the detection rate for hate crime in Harlow was around one-third which, though lower than desirable, is comparable to crime detection in Harlow overall.

Steve Goodsell outlined the role of Show Racism the Red Card. The Charity has been working with school age children to provide education of hate crime, racism and related issues since 1996. Recently, the Charity has obtained funding to provide workshops in schools in Essex. Sixteen schools will be visited, including four in Harlow. Steve explained that the workshops had shown that the children have only a limited understanding of racism and hate crime, but have been useful to provide a safe place to explore ideas around race, challenge preconceptions and dispel myths. The workshops have been well received by the schools. Steve encouraged Councillors to attend the upcoming workshops in Harlow and agreed to send details to Committee members.

The Committee asked PC Paget whether Essex Police also believed there to be evidence of a rise in hate crime toward Eastern European residents in Harlow, as suggested in the report. PC Paget responded that, as the
Police do not currently have a dedicated hate crime analyst, she was unable to answer.

Councillors raised concern that the Hate Crime Ambassadors referred to in the report may not be promoted sufficiently, as they were unaware of their existence prior to seeing the report. PC Paget assured Councillors that Hate Crime Ambassadors maintain close links with various agencies and community groups in the Town who signpost residents to them.

The Committee indicated support for actions that would help promote wider understanding of hate crime in Harlow and that could be included in its final report on this review:
(a) a summary of hate crime, in the form of a short leaflet, that could be provided to teachers in Harlow schools;

(b) a joint meeting between the Committee and the Harlow Youth Council to link the work each body has undertaken on hate crime.

In response to a query from Councillors, PC Paget and Sgt Moulsher agreed to send statistics of hate incidents in Harlow involving disability and a comparison with other Essex districts, to members of the Committee.

The Committee thanked attending witnesses for their help in this review.

**RESOLVED** that a final report for Review of Hate Crime in Harlow, including recommendations for the Cabinet if appropriate, be presented to the March 2015 meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

53. **REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL’S CUSTOMER SERVICES - FINAL REPORT**

The Committee received the final report for the review of the Council’s Customer Services. Simon Pipe, Customer and Media Services Manager, introduced the report and provided a brief summary of the review to date. Further to the information presented regarding lost call rates in the table at paragraph 6 of the report, Simon informed the Committee that the indicative lost call rate for January 2015 remained low, at around 10 per cent of all calls.

The Committee agreed with the proposal to introduce a new key performance indicator for call waiting times, but felt that the current target for responding to 85 per cent of complaints in accordance with the Council’s published timescales was too low. Councillors felt that the Council should aspire to a much higher compliance of this indicator: around 95-100 per cent.
RESOLVED that the Committee RECOMMENDS to Cabinet that:

A The proposal to introduce a new performance indicator and target for Contact Harlow telephone waiting times, as detailed in paragraph 11 of this report, is approved.

B A review be undertaken of the performance target for meeting the Council’s complaints procedure timescales.

54. **REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL’S BIODIVERSITY POLICY AND THE MAINTENANCE OF OPEN SPACES - FINAL REPORT**

The Committee received the final report for the review of the Council’s Biodiversity Policy and Open Spaces. Michael Pitt, Environment and Licensing Manager, introduced the report and provided a brief summary of the review to date.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes the proposals to enhance public understanding of the Council’s landscape management and biodiversity policy and to continue to improve grounds maintenance.

55. **RESPONSES OF THE CABINET TO REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

None.

56. **REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

a) Referral from Cabinet - Outcome of the LGA Peer Challenge 2014

The Committee received a reference from the Cabinet on the LGA Peer Challenge 2014.

RESOLVED that:

A The referral from Cabinet on the LGA Peer Challenge 2014, including the proposed terms of reference for the reviews of community engagement and service user engagement, is noted.

B Scoping reports for the reviews be received at the March 2015 meeting of the Committee.

57. **WORK PLAN**

The Committee received a report summarising its work plan for 2014/15. Councillors noted that a number of items had been suggested for consideration in 2014/15, but had not been allocated to specific meetings and suggested that a report be received at the next meeting to advise on the future of these items.
RESOLVED that:

A  The work plan be noted, subject to inclusion of scoping reports for the reviews of community engagement and service user engagement to the March 2015 meeting.

B  A report on the Committee’s work plan be received at the March 2015 meeting, to identify which of the unallocated items be recommended for consideration in 2015/16.

58.  MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE