

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD ON THURSDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2022**

**COUNCILLORS**

**PRESENT** (Chair) Margaret Greer, Maria Alexandrou, Nawshad Ali, Elif Erbil, James Hockney, Mohammad Amirul Islam, Michael Rye OBE and Nia Stevens

**ABSENT** (Deputy Chair) Bektas Ozer

**STATUTORY CO-OPTES:** *1 vacancy (Church of England diocese representative), vacancy (other faiths/denominations representative), vacancy (Catholic diocese representative), Alicia Meniru & 1 vacancy (Parent Governor representative) - Italics Denotes absence*

**OFFICERS:** Fay Hammond (Executive Director Resources) and Claire Johnson (Head of Governance and Scrutiny) and Jane Creer (Secretary)

**1**

**WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Bektas Ozer, who was substituted by Cllr Nia Stevens.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Ergin Erbil, Deputy Leader of the Council, due to a prior engagement. No other Cabinet representatives were available, but officers were available to answer questions at the meeting, or written questions could be submitted.

Apologies for slight lateness were received from Cllr Elif Erbil and Cllr Mohammed Islam.

**2**

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

**3**

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

NOTED that there were outstanding actions for the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive (Minute 5). The requested information would be circulated to OSC Members.

**ACTION:** Fay Hammond / Marie Lowe

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**AGREED** the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 23 June 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

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### **ENFIELD COUNCIL CORPORATE COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22**

The report summarised the findings of the Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2021-22 and focused on the nature of complaints and learning they provided to improve services in the future.

Fay Hammond, Executive Director of Resources, introduced the report and invited questions from the Committee.

Members of the Committee asked the following questions:

Q. The 27 complaints advised as upheld by the Ombudsman were highlighted, but that the report provided little information on these. It was suggested that a narrative paragraph be included in the report as a matter of course, as there was a breakdown for other complaints, but not the 27 upheld. It was requested that the categorisation / detail of the 27 complaints upheld by the Ombudsman be circulated to OSC Members.

A. Fay Hammond advised that the information could be provided by email, and that officers would be able to attend a future meeting if Members had further questions.

**ACTION:** Fay Hammond / Will Wraxall / Governance Team

*A summary of the 27 upheld Ombudsman complaints 2021-22, including the substance of the complaint, and the actions agreed to address them, was circulated to Members.*

Q. Members asked what was being done to understand the nature of complaints received, and to deal with more issues preventatively.

A. It was advised that there had been work undertaken to investigate the root cause of waste service complaints and issues, including officers going out with bin collection crews, analysis of data from customers and crews, and customer call centre staff sitting with the waste service officers. Some issues had been identified in relation to agency staff, which had now reduced as more crew were now permanent. From the last data, for August, the number of missed bins was reduced. More data would also be gathered for September. It was most important to prevent issues arising in the first place. In respect of Housing repairs, there had been a restructuring of staff so that customer call team staff were now based in the Edmonton Green housing hub with the housing repairs staff. This had led to improved performance.

Q. Members questioned that the table at para 3.3 of the report did not add up to 100%.

A. It was possible this was a result of combined complaints, or miscellaneous categories, but would be checked and a response provided to OSC Members.

**ACTION:** Fay Hammond / Will Wraxall / Governance Team

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*The figures in the table only included services which received at least 1% of total complaints. The remaining 20% of total complaints consists of a number of services which receive very few complaints individually, but which total between them 11% of complaints. It also included 9% of total complaints which had not been assigned a category correctly – this has been addressed as a control issue with the introduction of Verint, for which a service must be identified within the system when allocating the complaint. The Complaints team apologises for the lack of clarity in the OSC report and will look to address this also within the cover report to General Purposes Committee.*

Q. Members asked if extra resources would be needed to deal with volumes of complaints for the future.

A. It was advised that each department now had complaints team officers located with the service staff, and the increased closeness had driven improved performance. Rather than looking to increase resource, the greater focus was on getting things right first time and reducing issues / complaints.

Q. Members asked what quality checks were carried out on MEQs in respect of satisfaction and complaint resolution.

A. It was confirmed that quality check work was done on a regular basis, and that quality dip tests were done.

Q. The Chair asked about annual statutory complaints reports for Adults and Children's Social Care referenced in para 7 of the covering report, and when they would be expected to be received by Scrutiny panels.

A. Fay Hammond would confirm the timelines for these.

**ACTION:** Fay Hammond / Will Wraxall / Governance Team

*Slots at the relevant Scrutiny panels this year will be confirmed.*

Q. The Chair asked further to para 17 of the covering report, how success of action plans was being measured.

A. It was confirmed that actions were monitored via the Assurance Board, which was chaired by the Chief Executive.

*Performance updates are taken to the Assurance Board on a six-monthly basis. Further, each departmental management team receives a quarterly update.*

Q. The Chair asked about final stage complaint volume changes and timescale performance.

A. It was advised that comparison was difficult given the changed approach from 3 stages to 2 stages, but that in the first quarter of this year 88% of complaints were being responded to on time, and the trend was for improvement.

Q. Members raised that MEQs had been closing after a short time.

A. It was confirmed that adjustments had been made to the system so that this would no longer happen, and that MEQs were now open for 20 days.

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There was an opportunity for Members to reject an MEQ response. Eleanor Brown was conducting analysis on reasons for rejection as a learning exercise. The Chair welcomed the adjustments to the system and the ability to copy in other councillors.

Q. Members considered that 8 days was a long time for MEQ responses, particularly for simple queries.

A. It was advised that this aspect had not been looked at, but it would be possible to conduct some analytics on this.

*Eleanor Brown would run a report to see how many MEQs were responded to early to ascertain the extent this was happening, and to respond accordingly to the findings.*

Members raised a number of comments in relation to waste service issues experienced by their constituents:

Q. Cllr Maria Alexandrou advised that a whole road in her ward, Lytton Avenue, experienced missed bins four weeks in a row.

A. The systems followed by waste collection crews were described, and that if they reported a missed road and reason, a pickup would be arranged later the same day or for the next day. Residents could report missed bins via the website or Council customer contact phone number. Previous project work had found little commonality between what was reported by crews and customer complaints. The case raised would be reviewed and a response provided to Cllr Alexandrou.

**ACTION:** Eleanor Brown

*Cllr Alexandrou's issues have been investigated and findings provided separately.*

Q. Cllr Rye advised that constituents in Bicknoller Road experienced several missed bin collections due to access being difficult by the roundabout if cars were also parked there. However, it was a short road and refuse collectors could have walked over and got the bins. He felt common sense should have been applied. He suggested that crews be followed without them being aware they were being monitored to see what was happening in reality.

A. The case raised would be investigated and a response provided to Cllr Rye.

**ACTION:** Jon Sharkey / Eleanor Brown

*Short roads and inaccessibility was a known issue to the project and work was being done with Highways to progress and identify solution options.*

Q. Members raised that a common complaint was that the operatives did not return bins to where they were collected from, and that bins were left scattered along pavements and causing obstruction.

A. It was advised that there had been issues noted with inexperienced or temporary operatives. Clarity on the policy on bin placement, what was expected from the customer and from the refuse collector would be

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communicated to OSC Members, and Eleanor Brown would pick up as part of the project.

**ACTION:** Jon Sharkey / Eleanor Brown

*This is an issue which has been picked up as part of the missed bin project and there is work with the service to implement actions to address this. An update can be provided on the causes of this experience and how it will be addressed from December as the project concludes its design phase and prepares for improvement implementations.*

Q. Members asked about how the collection rounds were planned, in respect of times, distance covered or numbers of bins.

A. It was advised that algorithm technology was employed.

Q. Members asked about the start times of collections. Residents had complained about early morning noise, and about clashes with school drop off times.

A. It was acknowledged that some crews did like to leave the depot at 04:00am to avoid traffic, and that it would be impossible to cover every single eventuality.

*Policy to be made clearer around start times and when earlier collections are necessary, and that the 6am start time advised on the website did not always happen in practice.*

Members acknowledged the compliments sent from residents in the report and thought this was important to acknowledge this also.

Fay Hammond was thanked for her attendance and responses.

**AGREED** that the findings and improvement actions included in the Corporate Complaints Annual Report be noted.

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### **SCRUTINY ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMMES 2022/23**

The Scrutiny Annual Work Programme report and appendices set out the draft work programmes for Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the seven standing Scrutiny Panels for 2022/23.

The Chair advised that areas of duplications had been identified and highlighted in the work programmes as follows.

Page 36 – Overview and Scrutiny Committee where it is proposed that the relevant panels consider the Annual Safeguarding Report.

Page 37 – Local Plan information on updates and timelines. It is proposed that the Regeneration and Economic Development Panel will lead on this item at a single item meeting the date to be advised, to which all Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be invited.

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A work programme amendment for Overview and Scrutiny Committee was proposed to change the date for Budget consultation from 12 January 2023 to 16 January 2023.

Any further changes would be made in consultation with the Chair.

Members suggested additional text be added to agendas for clarification to Scrutiny Panels that they should be only considering and asking questions specific to their panel remit in response to combined reports.

**AGREED** that the Scrutiny Annual Work Programme report and proposed work programmes for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Scrutiny Panels for 2022/23, subject to the above amendments, be recommended to Council for adoption.

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#### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

NOTED

1. The next business meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee was scheduled on Thursday 10 November 2022 at 7pm at the Civic Centre.
2. A call-in meeting was scheduled on Tuesday 11 October 2022 at 6:30pm at the Civic Centre. Members were asked to confirm their availability, or arrange for a substitute for the meeting.