

# Overview and Scrutiny

## Annual Report 2025/26



## **Foreword**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has delivered its work programme for the year, in line with the Council's commitment to co-production, based on input provided by members of the Haringey community at our Scrutiny Café in September 2024. The Committee and its Panels have heard reports on a wide range of policy and service areas, acting as a "critical friend" by providing the constructive challenge needed to help the executive realise its policy aims.

A detailed run through of the areas scrutinised by the Committee and Panels is provided in the body of the report, but here I would like to thank Committee and Panel members for the extremely hard work they put in to scrutinise the 2026/27 budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Due to the huge challenges facing councils nationwide with increasing costs in Temporary Accommodation, Adults Social Care and Children's Social Care.

Following my last report to Council we have maintained a strong focus on the issue of financial planning and further increased our public meetings to consider the quarterly updates on the budget position and have required Scrutiny Panels to also focus on savings delivery for service areas according to each Panel's respective remit.

**Councillor Matt White - Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

## Haringey's Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2025/26



Cllr Matt White (Chair)



Cllr Pippa Connor Cllr Makbule Gunes Cllr Anna Lawton Cllr Adam Small  
(Vice Chair)

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## 1. What is scrutiny?

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- 1.1 Overview and Scrutiny was brought into being by the Local Government Act 2000. A requirement of the act is for a local authority with executive arrangements to have one or more overview and scrutiny committees.
- 1.2 These are able to scrutinise the decisions or actions taken by the Council or partner organisations or, indeed, consider any matter that affects people living in the area.
- 1.3 Overview and scrutiny should:
- Provide constructive “critical friend” challenge.
  - Amplify the voices and concerns of the public;
  - Be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role; and
  - Drive improvement in public services.
- 1.4 Overview and Scrutiny plays an important role in local democracy through enhancing local accountability of services, improving transparency of decision-making and enabling Councillors to represent the views of local residents.
- 1.5 The work programme of Overview and Scrutiny is determined by the Councillors that undertake it rather than Council officers or Councillors on the Council’s Cabinet, although they can make suggestions. Suggestions from members of the local community are also very welcome. In addition, consultation exercises have been undertaken by Overview and Scrutiny, including surveys, to identify the issues that matter most to local residents.
- 1.6 The work programme covers a balance of activities:
- Holding the Executive to account;
  - Policy review and development – in-depth reviews to assess the effectiveness of existing policies or to inform the development of new strategies;
  - Performance management – identifying under-performing services, investigating and making recommendations for improvement;
  - External scrutiny – scrutinising and holding to account partners and other local agencies providing key services to the public; and
  - Public and community engagement – engaging and involving local communities in scrutiny activities and scrutinising those issues which are of concern to the local community.
- 1.7 It should also;
- Reflect local needs and priorities;
  - Prioritise issues that have most impact or benefit to residents;
  - Involve local stakeholders; and
  - Is flexible enough to respond to new or urgent issues.

- 1.8 Scrutiny is a flexible process and can be carried out in a variety of ways, using various formats. In accordance with the Scrutiny Protocol, our areas of enquiry have been drawn from the following:
- Performance Reports;
  - One-off reports on matters of national or local interest or concern;
  - Issues arising out of internal and external assessment;
  - Reports on strategies and policies under development;
  - Issues on which Cabinet or officers would like scrutiny views or support; and
  - Progress reports on implementing previous scrutiny recommendations.
- 1.9 In addition, in-depth scrutiny reviews are an important aspect of Overview and Scrutiny and provide opportunities to thoroughly investigate issues and to make recommendations regarding them. Through the gathering and consideration of evidence from a wide range of sources, this type of work enables more robust and effective challenge as well as an increased likelihood of delivering outcomes.
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## **2. The structure of scrutiny in Haringey**

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- 2.1 In Haringey there is one over-arching Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This is supported in its work by four standing scrutiny Panels that scrutinise the following service areas:
- Adults and Health;
  - Children and Young People;
  - Culture, Community Safety & Environment
  - Housing, Planning & Development.
- 2.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for developing an overall scrutiny work programme, including the work done by the four standing Panels.

### **Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Panels**

- 2.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is made up of five councillors who are not members of the Council's Cabinet. Membership of Overview & Scrutiny Committee is proportional to the overall political makeup of the Council. The Scrutiny Panels are made up of between 3 and 7 councillors who are also not members of the Cabinet. Scrutiny Panels are chaired by members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and membership is, as far as possible, politically proportionate.
- 2.4 Both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny Panels oversee discrete policy areas and are responsible for scrutinising services or issues that fall within these portfolios.
- 2.5 A number of scrutiny functions are discharged by both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the individual Panels. These include:
- Questioning Cabinet members on areas within their portfolio.
  - Monitoring service performance and making suggestions for improvement;

- Assisting in the development of local policies and strategies; and
  - Monitoring implementation of previous scrutiny reports; and
  - Budget monitoring.
- 2.6 As the 'parent' committee, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is required to approve work programmes and to ratify reports and recommendations developed by scrutiny Panels. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee also retain a number of scrutiny functions not undertaken by Panels. This includes:
- Call-ins: where there is a challenge to decision taken by the Cabinet or individual Cabinet member or a key decision taken by an officer under delegated authority.
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### **3. Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Councillors:** Matt White (Chair), Pippa Connor (Vice-Chair), Makbule Gunes, Anna Lawton and Adam Small

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- 3.1 There were eight formal meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in 2025/26, as well as an additional four informal sessions to consider the financial details contained in the quarterly budget monitoring reports and draft 2026/27 budget and MTFS to allow key lines of enquiry and focused discussions at the public meetings. The Committee monitored the Council's performance as set out in the Corporate Delivery Plan and held a Question-and-Answer session with the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive on their priorities for the year ahead.
- 3.2 Cabinet Members were invited to share their plans and thinking for their respective areas and answered questions on progress of their work areas.

#### **Scrutiny Review - Violence Against Women & Girls**

- 3.3 The Committee expanded this review to include a focus on Schools-based VAWG prevention: "Developing a Coordinated Community Response (CCR)" and "Prevention" were two of the four key priorities of the Council's VAWG Strategy (2016-2026) and involved all agencies working together in partnership. The Committee have finalised the report and this was agreed at the 11<sup>th</sup> of March meeting. This will put forward a practical plan to support the good partnership work already taking place to prevent VAWG, strengthen support for survivors and build trust. The recommendations support the work on the imminent update to the council strategy for preventing violence against Women and Girls.
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## **Community Safety Scrutiny Review.**

- 3.4 The Committee considered a Scrutiny Panel led, short review on Community Safety which had compiled recommendations following an annual meeting with the Borough Commander, the Cabinet Member for Communities, Youth Panel representatives and Council officers. Discussions topics had included Ward Panel meetings, antisocial behaviour, stop and search and youth issues in the Borough.
- 3.5 Recommendations from the report were agreed and passed to Cabinet and Borough Commander in June 2025. These included:
- Closer working and better and more frequent communication between the Youth Panel representatives and Community Safety Panels.
  - To review and strengthen the Ward Panel Meeting structure as a main tool of communication between residents, local organisations and the Police.
  - For the Community Safety Team to assist in communications and support residents finding venues.
  - Forward performance figures to be reported on a quarterly basis to the Ward Panel meetings.
  - For antisocial behaviour reporting to be more prominent and user friendly.

## **Update to the Non – Voting Member Protocol**

- 3.6 The Non – Voting Member protocol had been updated and agreed by Council in March 2025 to ensure that it was as robust as possible. The decision making for appointments of non–voting members was previously assigned, in the Constitution, to the Scrutiny Panels. This was felt to be an anomaly as the Panels did not have decision making powers. This responsibility was added to the terms of reference for Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee implemented this decision, agreeing that Scrutiny Panels can appoint up to 3 non-voting members and nominations came forward from established community groups. Other factors supporting the change to the protocol were increased focus of scrutiny on the budget and performance due the council’s financial position. The Committee agreed that wider advertisement of the non – voting member positions would be taken forward in the 2026/27 municipal year. The Committee followed the updated protocol and appointed Amanda Bernard to the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Panel as a non-voting co-opted member for 2025/2026 and appointed Helena Kania to the Adults and Health Scrutiny Panel as a non–voting co-opted member for 2025/26.

## 2024/25 Provisional Outturn and the draft 2026/27 Budget & MTFs.

- 3.7 At the June 2025 meeting, discussions highlighted significant and ongoing financial pressures, rising statutory demand, depletion of reserves, and the increasing reliance on Exceptional Financial Support (EFS). The Committee raised concerns about financial sustainability and the ability to deliver future savings without impacting frontline services.
- 3.8 The Committee noted the major financial pressures which were:
- Costs of delivering statutory service adult social care, children’s social care, and temporary accommodation, continued to outstrip funding.
  - Nationally, demand for statutory care was rising; Haringey mirrored this trend, particularly in adults with complex needs and growing mental-health-related cases in the 18–64 cohort.
  - NHS contributions for some care packages remained insufficient, increasing pressure on the Council’s General Fund.
- 3.9 The Committee raised concerns about quarterly monitoring reports repeatedly showing persistent overspends, raising concerns about the effectiveness of in-year controls. The proportion of planned savings successfully delivered was falling, indicating that remaining options were increasingly difficult and complex.
- 3.10 The Committee discussed the Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) & Budget Gap and noted that EFS interest costs would add to future budget pressures. The Committee requested clearer reporting on EFS borrowing costs in future documents.
- 3.11 The Committee noted the reserves position & sustainability and whilst still within safe levels, reserves were not sufficient for medium-term resilience, and most were earmarked, limiting flexibility. The Committee noted Government expected councils using EFS to deplete reserves where possible, reducing future headroom.
- 3.12 The Committee considered the underspend of £24.4m in corporate budgets reflects reduced borrowing costs and capital programme re-profiling. Members expressed concern about the lack of transparency on capital underspend whether caused by governance, viability, market factors, or delivery issues. The Committee requested improved scrutiny access, including potential training/workshops and improved reporting mechanisms.
- 3.13 The Committee considered the demand, demographics & long-term risk, noting that demand-led services dominated the budget; therefore, large cuts in discretionary services (parks, libraries) cannot close the medium-term funding gap. The Committee emphasised the need for oversight of:
- New capital decision-making arrangements
  - Spending control governance

- Savings delivery assurance

3.14 The risks, opportunities and next steps were outlined to the Committee in June and the following was noted:

- Rising statutory demand with no matching increase in national funding.
  - Reducing reserves and dependency on future EFS (not guaranteed).
  - Inflationary and interest rate pressures impacting capital viability.
  - Limited headroom for further cuts without affecting frontline services.
- Opportunities / Required Actions
- Deep-dive review of service models and essential vs. non-essential activity.
  - Detailed property portfolio review to identify disposal or income opportunities.
  - Improved partnership funding alignment, especially with the NHS.
  - Strengthening savings development and assurance processes.
  - Enhanced scrutiny visibility: capital tracking, EFS interest reporting, spending controls

### **In Year Budget Monitoring Quarter 1 - 20205/2026 Budget**

3.15 In September quarter 1 projections showed that inflationary and demand pressure, particularly in adult social care and temporary accommodation, had exceeded available funding. Delivering savings remained challenging after years of cumulative reductions, though around 70% of proposals were currently on track. Rising numbers of residents requiring care packages and increasing private rental costs continued to drive overspends. With around 80% of the Council's budget spent on statutory services, flexibility remained limited.

3.16 As part of the financial recovery plan, strict spending controls were being applied, including Panels reviewing non-essential spending over £1,000, restrictions on recruitment, and streamlining procurement. While this provided some optimism, Members raised concerns about the £34.1m forecast overspend and the limited availability of contingencies in future years. Officers emphasised the need to reduce reliance on Exceptional Financial Support and to maximise reserves where possible.

3.17 The Committee continued to question some budget assumptions, risks of winter pressures, capital financing costs linked to EFS borrowing, and digital transformation savings. Wider concerns included capital programme deliverability, income generation capacity, the impact of the Fair Funding Review, and financial risks arising from 33 schools currently in deficit were also expressed.

3.18 Quarter 2 forecasts in December 2025 showed a £23.4m overspend, an improvement of £10.7m since Quarter 1 due to reduced pressures in Adult Social Care and Temporary Accommodation. Spending controls, tighter staffing management, and reduced agency use supported this. Rising HRA damp-and-mould costs, ongoing capital programme review, and high statutory service demand remain key pressures.

3.19 Members continued to raise concerns about the scale of the budget gap, noting that most of the £10.7m Q2 improvement came from external finance rather than service

reductions. Officers explained that this reflected one-off in-year benefits such as higher interest income, lower capital financing costs, and a surplus from the Collection Fund. The Committee explored rising bad debt provisions, Housing Benefit overpayment pressures, and EFS interest forecasts. Members also queried savings delivery, with significant proportions rated Amber or Red. Officers highlighted progress in some areas, the need for improved forecasting and delivery discipline, tighter controls on agency staffing, and ongoing work to strengthen long-term financial sustainability. The Committee requested figures on housing benefit overpayments, ongoing monitoring of income generation, clarity on the Disposals Policy, concern over low savings delivery, and full-year capital budget details for improved scrutiny.

### **Scrutiny Budget 2026/27 recommendations and discussions related to the remit of the Committee**

- 3.20 The Committee reviewed a wide range of budget pressures and savings proposals across services, reflecting an increasingly challenging financial position for the Council. Persistent structural pressures, rising demand, and limitations in national funding frameworks were recurring themes across all discussions. Members emphasised protecting residents facing hardship. Housing Benefit overpayments also remained a significant risk due to the migration to Universal Credit, loss of DWP subsidy, and rising supported accommodation costs. Members agreed to lobby government to fully fund these statutory pressures.
- 3.21 Proposals to expand digital onboarding aim to generate savings by increasing e-billing take-up, though Committee members raised concerns about digital exclusion and the modest initial targets. Election costs for 2026 have risen sharply due to venue changes and postage increases; Members requested detailed breakdowns and urged exploration of future efficiencies, including potential venue sharing. Advertising income targets were revised down as previous expectations proved unrealistic in a saturated market. The corporate landlord model revealed operational estate pressures linked to utilities and business rates, though officers expected efficiencies once the new Civic Centre was occupied. Digital capital spending was reduced following a review that identified no impact on delivery.
- 3.22 The Committee also discussed corporate levies, contingency requirements, and medium-term risks, including potential future NLWA increases. A projected £57m budget gap for 2026/27 underscored the scale of challenge. Members stressed the need for robust savings governance, careful monitoring of delivery, and strengthened oversight of the Financial Sustainability Plan to minimise reliance on Exceptional Financial Support. Digital transformation savings were RAG-rated Red because priorities shifted to housing demand and adult services. Lower-priority areas will take longer to deliver, with delays reflected in Q2 compared to Q1 progress.

- 3.23 The Committee questioned the scale of projected borrowing, governance controls, and affordability of the housing programme. Officers emphasised strengthened capital governance, clearer separation of debt categories, ongoing scrutiny, and the need to reduce reliance on EFS. The Committee recommended that the budget reports should accurately reflect the structural financial issues faced by the Council.
- 3.24 In December, the Committee received a verbal update on the Local Government Settlement for 2026/27 from the Section 151 Officer and Corporate Director of Finance and Resources the Corporate Director highlighted that the main issue was the continued reliance on Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) and the resulting rise in interest and Minimum Revenue Provision costs. Members also queried assumptions around Council Tax collection rates, noting falling local collection despite growth in property numbers. Officers explained that government uses national averages that do not reflect Haringey's higher Band C charges or levels of discounts and exemptions. The Committee also noted rising EFS-related interest: £8m by 2026/27, compared with £3m in 2025/26. The Committee discussed the severity of the budget gap for future years and reliance on EFS and that the objective to minimise reliance on EFS was difficult given that up to 80% of the Council's spend was on statutory services and, while it may be possible to make efficiencies, the Council had no choice about the need to provide these services.

### **Scrutiny Review (Housing Planning and Development Panel) - TA Placements & PRS Discharges**

- 3.25 This was agreed by the Committee in October and passed to November Cabinet for response. The Review examined the pressures facing residents in Temporary Accommodation, highlighting the severe impact of the housing crisis on vulnerable groups, including minoritised communities, domestic abuse survivors and families placed out of Borough. Members stressed that while the Council's ability to change national housing policy is limited, lobbying government and working collaboratively with other Boroughs is essential. The Review emphasised the Council's duty of care to support residents' wider needs and proposed practical measures, such as a dedicated Temporary Accommodation support officer. Members also supported exploring ways of adding some degree of choice into the process, ensuring that there was a robust quality and inspection regime, as well as improving early intervention for affected families. The review was put forward to Cabinet where a majority of the recommendations were agreed.

## 4. Adults and Health Scrutiny Panel

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**Councillors:** Pippa Connor (Chair), Cathy Brennan, Thayahlan Iyngkaran, Mary Mason, Sean O'Donovan, Felicia Opoku, and Sheila Peacock.

**Co-optees/Non-voting Members:** Helena Kania

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### Overview

- 4.1 There were five formal meetings of the Adults & Health Scrutiny Panel in 2025/26, one of which was dedicated to scrutiny of the Draft Budget (2025/26) and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2026/27-2030/31). The meetings involved Q&A sessions with the Cabinet Member for Adults & Health and discussions with senior Adults & Health officers and a range of external witnesses on key issues of concern. The Panel also held evidence sessions to gather information in support of its Scrutiny Review of communications with residents on adult social care issues.

### Scrutiny Review – Hospital Discharge

- 4.2 In 2023/24 the Panel began a Scrutiny Review on the barriers to discharge from hospital, including in relation to residents of sheltered housing. Delays to discharge once a patient no longer requires hospital care can result from shortages in capacity in social care and community care or from issues with the discharge process itself. Delays to hospital discharge can have a detrimental impact on the health of patients as well as causing additional direct and indirect costs to the health and social care system. The Panel held evidence sessions with the Adult Social Care team, Housing team and with Discharge Coordinators and other senior staff at the Whittington and North Middlesex University Hospitals. The Panel is expected to publish its report in February 2026.

### Haringey Carers Strategy 2025-28

- 4.3 The Panel considered this report in June, in line with their policy development role, and noted that this strategy provided an update on the Council's work with carers, voluntary and community sector partners, specialist services and networks that support carers in Haringey. Following a co-production and engagement process, some key priorities for the Strategy were developed:  
Improving access to timely, clear and accessible information and support;  
strengthening carers' rights, wellbeing and resilience;  
and creating inclusive, culturally responsive services that reflect the diversity of Haringey's communities.

- 4.4 The Panel discussed the financial, practical and emotional pressures facing unpaid carers, particularly in the context of welfare reforms such as proposed changes to Universal Credit and PIP. Members were concerned about the impact on vulnerable residents, and officers confirmed that the Council had responded to the Government's consultation and would model the local effects. Carers often lacked awareness of available support, so better information, advice and signposting, delivered in accessible format, was identified as essential. Trust, sensitivity and peer support were also highlighted as key themes raised during engagement workshops.
- 4.5 Access to respite care was a major concern. Officers explained that respite is provided based on assessed need, but capacity, timeliness and communication remain challenges. Work is underway to improve review cycles, use Direct Payments more flexibly, and streamline urgent contact routes. The strategy aims to offer a broader "menu" of respite options reflecting varied needs.
- 4.6 The Panel discussed data, representation and KPIs, emphasising the need for clearer baselines, inclusion of diverse carer groups, and stronger measures around employment, training and digital access. Officers confirmed that national and local indicators would be triangulated, and that co-production with carers would continue as KPIs are refined.
- 4.7 The Panel stressed the need for improved communication about respite offers, long-term monitoring of strategy outcomes, and support pathways for carers after the caring role end

### **Connected Communities**

- 4.8 The Panel received an update on the restructure of Connected Communities into the new Independence and Early Intervention (IEI) Team, designed to provide earlier, integrated support and reduce demand for adult social care. Officers outlined the proactive, locality-based model, improved tenancy sustainment work, and £700k savings achieved, supported by increased Better Care Fund contributions. Members asked about Councillor contact routes, resettlement and financial advice teams, digital inclusion, and the effectiveness of the new "front door." Officers emphasised better triage, updated digital resources, new neighbourhood connector roles, and ongoing work to align services, reduce failure demand, and strengthen partnership working across health and community organisations. The Panel put forward the following priorities for the officers to take forward: providing understanding the role of Neighbourhood Connectors, ensuring clear communication of the new model to stakeholders, clarifying how multiple funding streams will be aligned, keeping Haricare information updated for effective signposting, and ensuring all Councillors are fully informed to support residents accessing the new service.
- 4.9 Dan Rogers, CEO of Public Voice CiC, spoke to the Panel about the Joint Partnership Board (JPB). The JPB provided a forum where commissioners and advisers of services and residents worked together on service improvements

and facilitated co-production. The JPB also facilitated a set of reference groups that represented seldom heard people, including a carers group, an older person's group and a disabled person's group. The reference groups developed their agendas and worked together on important issues. The Chairs/co-Chairs of the reference groups then worked together with the JPB to discuss issues that were having an impact on the wider community and inequalities. In 2024, a number of JPB members requested a strategic review of the function of the JPB, including strengthening the governance of the Board and representation of the community. Following a discussion, areas for the Panel to monitor in future were:

- Efforts to encourage statutory partners to be actively involved with the reference groups including, health, public health, mental health and the local authority.  
Wider partnership opportunities around funding, including health partners.
- Monitoring progress towards outcomes.
- Enabling all groups to be able to access the JPB and to contribute their opinions and expertise.
- Establishment of a JPB website.
- How the Council's volunteering offer could be used to bring in more skills and resources for the JPB.

## **Cabinet Member Q&A**

4.10 The Panel held two Q&A sessions in 2025/26 with the Cabinet Member for Health, Social Care and Well-being, Cllr Lucia das Neves, covering a range of topics including:

- The future of Healthwatch and maintaining the resident voice in healthcare
- NHS neighbourhood model and how this might fit with Haringey's localities approach
- Continuing Healthcare (CHC) funding in NCL
- merger of the NCL ICB with NWL ICB

## **Budget Scrutiny**

4.11 As part of the Council's budget scrutiny process, the Panel considered a finance Update in June with a focus on savings delivery and budget pressures in the remit of the Panel. Members raised concerns about rising demand among adults aged 50–64, particularly the balance of physical and mental health needs and the impact of Covid. Officers confirmed no additional Government funding and noted increasing complexity, with modelling showing higher acuity since the pandemic. Case numbers for younger adults with physical disabilities had risen significantly, highlighting the need for improved forecasting. The Panel also discussed delays in delivering savings due to capacity issues in commissioning and transitions, with new staffing now in place. The Panel stressed the

importance of understanding cohort-specific data, equality impacts, and how savings and service changes affect residents.

- 4.12 In November, the Panel expressed serious concern about the projected budget gap for 2026/27–2030/31 and the growing interest costs linked to Exceptional Financial Support (EFS). They noted that limited resources may require increased spending in priority areas and deeper reductions elsewhere, raising questions about future adult social care provision. Concerns were also raised about cuts to the Better Care Fund, risks in delivering digital savings, rising provider costs, and weaknesses highlighted by KPMG in procurement and forecasting. The Panel recommended ongoing monitoring of these risks.
- 4.13 The Panel further considered pressures and savings that had previously been agreed in the previous budget process. On the Supported Living Contracts item, the Panel emphasised the importance of ensuring that the housing capital projects would align with social care commissioning needs and anticipated levels of demand. The Panel recommended that further scrutiny was required on transitions, in partnership with the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Panel, in order to understand the reasons for the reduced numbers despite the national trends appearing to indicate greater demand. The Panel noted that, of the previously agreed savings, there were no current concerns about these becoming undeliverable. The Panel welcomed the additional investment in staffing and highlighted staff retention as a potential risk as this could impact on the Council’s ability to fulfil its statutory duties. It was recommended that workforce issues be monitored further by the Panel going forward, particularly in relation to improvements to Care Act assessments.

### **Haringey Safeguarding Adults Board - Annual Report 2024/25**

- 4.14 The Panel raised concerns about safeguarding communication gaps, SAR learning, and oversight of local care provision. Officers outlined work with providers to improve communication, training and escalation processes, and noted plans to manage rising safeguarding demand. Members queried delayed urgent care authorisations in recent SARs and highlighted concerns about the backlog of CQC inspections, which had been escalated. Financial abuse, hoarding, transitional safeguarding and grooming-related risks were also discussed. Officers acknowledged capacity pressures and outlined plans to strengthen triage, the “front door,” and multi-agency coordination.
- 4.15 The Panel noted in the discussion with Natalie Cowland, Independent Chair of the Haringey Safeguarding Adults Board, that was no evidence that there were currently grooming gangs active in Haringey. Safeguarding Adults Boards had all had the opportunity to feed into Baroness Casey’s work in this area through the national chairs’ network. Recent media reports had referred to concerns about grooming gangs in the Haringey area and queried whether cases such as this could have been misidentified. Natalie Cowland said that the categorisation of any such incidents would be a question for the Police. The Panel noted that

there was some significant work ongoing in Haringey in relation to issues of modern-day slavery, sex work and sexual exploitation of adults which was linked in with the HSAB, Community Safety Partnership and with the Council's multi-agency work on the prevention of VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls). Further information on this work could be brought to the relevant Scrutiny Panel if required. The Panel agreed to approach the Police to respond to further questions on this. There will now be a report on the processes and systems for collating data to understand how this data can be further explored in line with the Casey report recommendations and to have assurance on how this data can be shared with partners. A report and discussion on this matter will be taken forward by Overview and Scrutiny in the coming municipal year.

### **Performance review**

- 4.16 In June 2025 the Panel reviewed Q3 performance indicators for Adults, Health & Welfare and Safer Haringey. Members raised concerns about delays to the Physical Activity Strategy and Wellbeing Model, noting impacts from leisure insourcing. Updates were sought on anti-racism and Welcome Strategy work, where limited capacity and external factors slowed progress. Transitions for younger adults were improving, with upcoming engagement events planned. Members queried outdated milestone dates and requested clearer mapping of indicators to Scrutiny Panel remits. Further updates were provided on disabled sport initiatives, Canning Crescent progress, and VAWG actions. Officers emphasised capacity challenges, partnership working.

### **Joint Scrutiny work**

- 4.17 The Chair of the Panel, Cllr Pippa Connor, is also Chair of the North Central London Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) which covers the boroughs of Barnet, Enfield, Camden, Haringey and Islington (see section 8 of this report). Emerging issues that are raised at the JHOSC are often reported to the Adults & Health scrutiny Panel and vice-versa. A joint meeting between the Adults & Health Scrutiny Panel and the Children & Young People's Scrutiny Panel took place in June 2025 with a focus on Transitions.
- 4.18 The Joint Adults & Health and Children & Young People Scrutiny Panels received an update on the Council's Transitions Programme, designed to support young people moving from childhood to adult services. Officers confirmed the service is now fully staffed with permanent or fixed-term posts, reflecting reduced reliance on agency staff across Children's Services. The Panel welcomed early positive outcomes but requested examples of challenges and how early intervention prevents escalation.

- 4.19 Members explored the role of health partners, noting delays in joint assessments and significant pressures within the NHS due to national restructuring and funding cuts. Placement costs and market inflation were also discussed, with officers highlighting large differences between children and adult provision and wide variation across private providers. Concerns were raised about young people falling through gaps between CAMHS and adult mental health services. Members requested Health colleagues attend the next joint meeting and that clearer pathways be published. Employment support and SEND internships were also examined, with officers outlining plans to expand inclusive apprenticeships and supported employment programmes.
- 4.20 The Panel discussed support for families below statutory thresholds, the need for better navigation across services, improvements to supported accommodation, LGBTQ+ housing pathways, and the development of KPIs. Members requested further updates on co-production, outcomes, and savings delivery.

## **5.Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel**

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Councillors: Anna Lawton (Chair) Anna Abela, George Dunstall, Marsha Isilar-Gosling, Mark Grosskopf and Kaushika Amin.

Co-optees (Voting):Camilla Borthwick-Fox and Christine Cordon

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### **Scrutiny Review on the Provision of Services for Under 1's and Delivery of Outcomes by the Children & Young People's Scrutiny Panel.**

- 5.1 The Panel agreed this Review in September 2025, with a focus on provision for babies and infants, recognising the growing evidence about the crucial importance of early intervention during the first year of life. The Review is examining what services are currently available in Haringey, how the introduction of 30 hours' free childcare for children from 9 months has affected local provision, and whether local services are sufficient to meet rising demand. The Review will also look at how Haringey's service offer aligns with the Government's strategy for early childcare. The interim report was agreed by Overview and Scrutiny on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2026.

### **Haringey's Youth Strategy 2025–2030**

- 5.2 The Panel reviewed Haringey's Youth Strategy 2025–2030, supported by contributions from young people involved in its co production. Young residents highlighted the need for more creative opportunities, borough wide access to tutoring and youth provision, better publicity of services, and expanded co

production roles. Members discussed benchmarking with other boroughs, support for the VCS sector, and affordability of activities. Concerns were raised about uneven service distribution across the borough and underuse of social media for engagement. Officers outlined plans to improve communications, develop a Haringey youth network, and strengthen young people's involvement in commissioning. The Panel also reviewed the 2024–2027 Youth Justice Plan and noted the recent single inspection of the Youth Justice Service, which achieved a “Good” rating with outstanding features. Six improvement recommendations have been incorporated into the updated plan. Members queried the rise in first time entrants and whether this reflected changes in Metropolitan Police practice; officers will undertake a deeper data review. Performance targets for emotional/mental health and substance misuse interventions were also discussed, with officers emphasising ambitious expectations despite workforce turnover. The service was strengthening referrals, partnership work, and early intervention Panels to divert young people away from the criminal justice system.

- 5.3 The Panel reviewed 2024–25 educational attainment and school finance updates, noting continued improvement across most key stages. Early Years outcomes were strong, with Haringey ranked 10th nationally for good development and phonics above London and national averages. KS2 results reached the London average, and SEND and disadvantaged groups, particularly Turkish, Kurdish and Black African pupils performed well. Officers highlighted an anomalous dip for Black Caribbean boys at KS2 due to cohort composition. GCSE outcomes placed Haringey between London and national averages, with high SEND performance and the lowest secondary exclusion rate in London. Members queried attainment gaps, representation in equality work, and support for specific cohorts.

### **2023–24 Childcare Sufficiency Annual Report**

- 5.4 The Panel reviewed the 2023–24 Childcare Sufficiency Annual Report and received an update on take up of the 30 hour childcare entitlement. Members queried how Haringey's childcare costs compared with inner London and requested data in writing. Officers explained the Council's role in monitoring the childcare market, identifying gaps, and encouraging new provision, particularly for 9–23-month-olds, following new funding. Schools had increasingly opened nursery places in response to demand. The Panel also discussed cultural differences affecting childcare take up and recommended updating terminology such as “minority ethnic” to “global majority.” Officers stressed the importance of acknowledging cultural and linguistic factors influencing early years engagement.

### **2024/25 Children's Social Care Annual Performance Report**

- 5.5 The Panel reviewed the 2024/25 Children’s Social Care Annual Performance Report, examining trends for Children Looked After, Child Protection Plans, and Children in Need. The Panel queried why Haringey’s Section 47 enquiry rated differed from statistical neighbours. Officers explained this reflected stronger local safeguarding thresholds and professional judgment rather than higher risk levels. A slight dip in assessments completed within 45 days was explored, with officers emphasising there was no complacency and that prioritising direct work with children could delay paperwork. The Panel also sought updates on Ofsted improvement recommendations, with officers confirming significant progress since 2023 and positive feedback from Ofsted’s 2025 focus visit.

## **Haringey Safeguarding Children’s Partnership – Annual Report**

- 5.6 The Panel considered the HSCP Annual Report 2024–25, introduced by the Independent Scrutineer with senior officers and the Cabinet Member. Members reviewed progress since 2019, including the creation of joint statutory accountability across the Council, Police and Health, and the introduction of independent scrutiny. Officers advised that performance monitoring now draws on a more developed dataset, with emerging trends reviewed regularly. The Panel explored safeguarding links with housing and noted that, while the HSCP does not allocate housing, Awaab’s Law sets statutory timescales for addressing damp and mould. A dedicated housing subgroup is supporting this cross-Council work. Concerns were raised about CAMHS access and rising demand. Officers outlined the new single point of access, and the expansion of school based mental health support. Members also sought assurance on the independence of the scrutineer role, which officers confirmed provides challenge but has no operational duties.
- 5.7 Clarification was requested on EHCP performance data, with a follow up requested. In relation to recent media reports on grooming gangs, the Corporate Director advised that no local patterns or indicators were currently being seen and noted that identifying young people at risk of exploitation is primarily a police responsibility. Officers also highlighted the weekly, partnership level Missing Panel, which coordinates intelligence and responses for children who go missing. The Panel asked about reducing waiting times for ADHD and autism assessments. Officers reported work to streamline the number of pathways and bring providers together through a collaborative aimed at improving coordination, reducing duplication and shortening assessment times. A key principle is ensuring that assessments are accurate, so children do not have to restart the process.

## **Budget Monitoring**

- 5.8 In September 2025, The Panel reviewed the Q1 2025/26 Budget Monitoring report, noting a projected £4m overspend on the £77.43m Children’s Services budget. Key pressures included undelivered digitalisation savings (£750k), partial achievement of the corporate 5% staffing savings, and the £1.43m social care

prevention grant now required for statutory reforms rather than offsetting placements. Members queried the feasibility of digital savings, clarity on how savings are set, and the financial implications of school closures. Officers committed to providing a full breakdown at Q2.

### **Scrutiny of the 2026/27 Draft Budget/5 Year Medium Term Financial Strategy**

5.9 As part of the Council's formal budget scrutiny process the Panel examined proposals for the 2025/26 budget and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy in December 2025. The Panel had scrutinised the proposals relating to Children's Services and the details were set out in the minutes from the meeting. The previously agreed savings had been delivered, and the Panel had been satisfied with this. A new budget pressure related to rising costs in certain areas and so not recommendation was required on this. There had been robust queries from the Panel about additional staff required to deal with subject access requests. There were invest-to-save measures on foster care allowance increases and accommodation for care leavers which the Panel was happy with. The Panel noted that some schools were currently running a deficit and so the issue of school financing had been of particular interest to the Panel recently. The budgets were separate from the Council's General Fund but there was still some risk to be mindful of. There were no specific recommendations arising from the Children & Young People's Scrutiny Panel.

### **Cabinet Q&A**

5.10 Councillor Zena Brabazon, the Cabinet Member for, Children, Schools and Families, attended meetings of the Panel and took part in a Q&A at three meetings. Amongst the issues raised were Haringey having received the highest grade in relation to the recent local area Ofsted/CQC inspection, and that Haringey's Children's Services was just awarded its first grade of 'Outstanding' in an Ofsted inspection.

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## 6. Climate, Community Safety & Culture Scrutiny Panel

**Councillors:** Makbule Gunes(Chair), George Dunstall, Luke Cawley-Harrison, Mark Grosskopf, Liam Carroll, Eldridge Culverwell, & Liam Carroll

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### Overview

- 6.1 There were five formal meetings of the Climate, Community Safety & Culture Scrutiny Panel in 2025/26, one of which was focused on scrutinising the budget proposals that came under the Panel’s remit. The work plan for the Panel for 2025/26 was made up of a combination of issues raised by the Panel Members and areas of concern put forward by councillors, residents and partners as part of the scrutiny survey undertaken in September 2024. The Panel questioned Cabinet Members responsible for the policy areas under its remit and held discussions with the Police and senior officers in connection with key policy framework documents.

### ASB(Anti-Social Behaviour Policy)

- 6.2 The Panel reviewed the draft ASB Policy prior to consideration by Cabinet, noting roles, reporting routes, and multi-agency work. Members raised concerns about business-related ASB, unclear responsibilities, response delays, and small staffing. Officers agreed to consider additions, improve feedback systems, explore landlord links, and consult wider council services, residents, and businesses before finalising the policy. The Panel reviewed the Good Neighbourhood Management Policy, aimed at issues below ASB thresholds for council tenants and leaseholders. Members raised concerns about escalation, policy naming, council responsibilities, and referral routes. Officers agreed to refine terminology, consider frequency-based escalation, and align with tenancy strategy. Further scrutiny involvement was encouraged.

### Climate Change Action Plan

- 6.3 The Panel received an update on the Climate Change Action Plan, noting progress, delays from external pressures, and the need for clearer impact measures. Members queried building disposals, delivery-focused actions, and financial constraints. Officers highlighted governance via the Climate and Well-Being Board and agreed to improve reporting, outcomes, and carbon-impact visibility.

## **Statement of Licensing Policy**

- 6.4 The Panel considered the draft Statement of Licensing Policy, a Policy Framework document which was reviewed every five years and sets out how the Council will discharge its responsibilities under the Licensing Act. Panel questions focused on whether interim reviews may be required before the next formal renewal; officers confirmed that future legislative changes, including Martyn's Law, may necessitate updates. Members also queried how consultation ensured accessibility for the borough's diverse communities, and were informed that police, Public Health, businesses, trade bodies, resident groups and community organisations had been engaged. Further discussion covered match-day and event-day management at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, cumulative impact concerns in West Green Road and High Road Tottenham, and the use and monitoring of Temporary Event Notices. Members also raised issues around unregulated alcohol sales, enforcement capacity, and the balance between supporting local businesses and protecting residents. Officers emphasised partnership working and intelligence-led enforcement.

## **Draft Library Strategy- 2026-2030**

- 6.5 The Panel were consulted on the strategy and put forward their input in keeping with their policy development role. The Panel explored the role of volunteers in libraries and the risks of over-reliance, particularly concerns about unequal volunteer capacity between affluent and less affluent areas. Members asked about age-related usage trends. Officers outlined insights gathered through data and qualitative engagement: young people rely on libraries for study spaces, older residents for digital access and printing, and usage varies significantly by location. The Panel emphasised continued qualitative engagement to shape services. Suggestions included providing Communication Cards and printing facilities for SEND families, which officers agreed to investigate. Training for staff on mental health, inclusivity and SEND was also highlighted as essential.

The discussion covered commercialisation, future library models, and the development of Community Librarian roles to strengthen local relationships and programming ahead of the London Borough of Culture. Data-driven planning would continue, with annual review of usage data added to the work programme.

## **Panel review of the Walking and Cycling Action Plan,**

- 6.6 The Panel began planning its review of the Walking and Cycling Action Plan, in September 2025 aiming to refine the previously agreed scope and adjust the timeline for completion to March 2026. Members reflected on the original intention of focusing on cycling infrastructure delivery, safety, accessibility, and the impact of interventions such as LTNs and increased use of dockless bikes. The Chair highlighted the need to also examine walking routes, which are less visible than cycling infrastructure. The Panel raised concerns about the rise of powered two-wheelers, associated safety risks, and the need to draw on best practice from boroughs such as Waltham Forest and Hackney. The Head of Transport and Travel briefed the Panel on the dockless bike trial, upcoming contract revisions, expanded fixed parking locations, enforcement

powers, and the work of the London Micromobility Group. He explained plans for a revenue-share model, stronger KPIs, and a relaunch of resident engagement following contract award. Members also discussed issues such as dangerous e-bike use, language barriers among delivery riders, and the need for education and enforcement.

## Financial Scrutiny

- 6.7 The Panel reviewed the quarterly budget position ahead of Cabinet and OSC consideration. The Director of Environment reported a £1.09m projected overspend, driven by unmet digital transformation savings, parking and highways pressures, and events-related shortfalls in parks and leisure. Members raised concerns about unclear digital savings, recurring slippage, and the need for direct engagement with the digital team. Officers explained that savings had previously been grouped without detailed plans, but restructures and departmental roadmaps were now in place. Questions also covered staffing savings, library income pressures, and consortium fees. Actions included seeking a digital team overview and further information on library agreements
- 6.8 In December, the Panel reviewed the quarter 2 financial update, focusing on areas rated red or amber within its remit. Members sought assurance regarding a budget double-counting error in the Walking and Cycling Action Plan; officers confirmed the issue had been corrected and that funding, via Strategic CIL, TfL and the Local Implementation Plan was secure for the next five years. The Panel then explored income and commercialisation within leisure services. Officers explained that delays had resulted from the complexity of the TUPE transfer, workforce harmonisation and the development of a new service offer, though income generation was improving and a commercialisation plan was in place, with full benefits expected in the next financial year.
- 6.9 Members raised concerns about the long-standing non-delivery of digital transformation savings, seeking clearer visibility of IT projects and their financial impacts. Officers attributed slippage to historic savings, Covid-period delays and resource prioritisation, agreeing that the responsible director should attend a future meeting.
- 6.10 Further discussion covered parking income, PCN processes, camera relocation, debt collection and the reasons behind write-offs. Officers assured the Panel that collection rates were improving despite legal constraints. Finally, the Panel sought clarification on capital slippage in waste management; officers explained this related to procurement delays for kitchen waste vehicles, with no major financial risk identified.
- 6.11 As part of the Council's formal budget scrutiny process the Panel examined proposals for the 2026/27 budget and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy in December 2025 with recommendations subsequently made to Cabinet on Leisure Commercialisation, Waste Management Fleet Purchases, Moselle Brook, Clean Air School Zones

## **Performance**

- 6.12 In September the Panel received updates on environmental and cultural performance, beginning with a report that fly-tipping incidents had increased to around 4,500 in quarter 1. The Director of Environment explained that this rise was partly due to seasonal factors and improved reporting by staff. Members raised concerns about inconsistent responses to reported incidents, particularly on Coppetts Road, and sought clarity on response times and the working relationship between Veolia and Kingdom. Officers emphasised that enforcement is intelligence-led, with resources targeted at hotspots, and noted that Kingdom had only recently begun operating, so further time was needed to assess full impact. Actions were agreed for follow-up investigations and a detailed briefing on enforcement processes.
- 6.13 The Panel also heard that wider economic pressures had delayed the borough's Power Purchase Agreement and District Energy Network plans. Challenges were also identified in delivering anti-idling measures and Healthy School Zones, particularly for schools on main roads, though officers outlined mitigation work with the GLA and national funding streams. Cultural updates highlighted preparations for the London Borough of Culture, strong delivery of community events in Quarter 1, and strengthened partnership working across council teams and with the voluntary sector. Bruce Castle Museum had also reopened

## **Review on Cycling Safety and the Walking & Cycling Action Plan**

- 6.14 In November the Review was updated and would look specifically at the Walking & Cycling Action Plan including a detailed look at the safety of roads for cyclists and road users and this review is expected at the June 2026 Overview and Scrutiny meeting for approval.
- 6.15 At the February 2026 meeting, Superintendent Hannah Hayes who covers Haringey specifically attended the Panel meeting to answer questions from the Panel. In the discussion, there was noted the rises in theft, violence, burglary and vehicle offences; July saw the highest levels. Drug offences were also up, partly reflecting proactive policing. Some spikes were linked to prolific offenders whose arrest reduced incidents. Tottenham Hale and South Tottenham remained priority areas. Vehicle crime on Ferry Lane included theft of easily resold items. Police capacity is reduced, and event-related policing creates financial pressures. Shoplifting remained challenging despite enforcement tools. Concerns were raised about limited intelligence work in the west. Other issues discussed included closure orders, mosque patrol visibility, rising bike theft, and wider Community Safety Partnership activity.

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## 7. Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel

**Councillors:** Adam Small (Chair), Dawn Barnes, Holly Harrison-Mullane, John Bevan, Khaled Moyeed, Isidoros Diakides.

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### Overview

- 7.1 There were five formal meetings of the Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel in 2025/26, one of which was primarily focused on scrutiny of the Draft Budget (2026/27) and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2026/27-2030/31) and the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. The meetings involved questioning Cabinet Members and discussions with senior officers in Placemaking and Housing on key issues of concern. The Panel also held a number of evidence sessions to gather information in support of its scrutiny review.

### Update on Housing Improvement Plan

- 7.2 In September, the Panel received an update on the Housing Improvement Programme, covering the voluntary undertaking to the Regulator, safety and compliance, Decent Homes, and damp and mould. Officers confirmed the Council had met all ten commitments made to the Regulator, with external validation pending. Court access issues varied month to month, and while some warrants were costly, gas and electrical safety warrants offered a more efficient route. Fire safety actions were explained in relation to Pennington's earlier review of the stock, which led to the Council's self-referral.
- 7.3 Officers reported significant progress on Decent Homes, with 1600 homes updated in year one and 719 in year two, reducing non-decency from 31.83% to 19.35%. Although the programme is backloaded, the Council expected to reach 100% by 2027/28, supported by four Tier 1 contractors currently being mobilised. The Panel noted a need to monitor contract performance once major works begin. Officers confirmed adequate profiling of works through stock condition surveys and stressed that external works would dominate the next phase.
- 7.4 Regarding damp and mould, a specialised team was in place with capacity to meet Awaab's Law requirements, though demand may rise. The service was reducing a backlog of 300 cases before the law takes effect. The Council emphasised that other statutory areas, such as fire safety, would not be deprioritised.

- 7.5 Officers detailed improved cross-service data-sharing on vulnerable residents and outlined plans to grow the in-house DLO, which already completes 70% of repairs. Delivery partners and contractors are required to report damp and mould concerns. The Panel also discussed inspection practices by the Regulator, the Council's mock inspection, and the ongoing work to ensure readiness. Overall, the Panel welcomed progress but stressed the importance of continued scrutiny, particularly regarding contractor mobilisation, demand pressures, and achieving the Decent Homes timeline.

## **Local Plan Update**

- 7.6 In November, The Panel reviewed the Draft Local Plan which was out for public consultation. The Panel praised the depth and scope of the Plan, which sets out a spatial vision addressing housing need, climate action and wider placemaking priorities. Officers confirmed the Plan operated on a 15-year horizon and would be updated every five years to remain responsive to changing national and local priorities. Although adoption was not expected until 2027, the draft Plan already signals the Council's expectations to developers.
- 7.7 The Panel discussed the Plan's focus on neighbourhood-level fairness and the concept of 15-minute cities, while officers emphasised balancing hyper-local identity with borough-wide and London-wide priorities. They also highlighted cross-portfolio collaboration, particularly links to Shaping Wood Green and Shaping Tottenham. The Panel queried major infrastructure proposals, such as a potential Victoria Line extension, which officers confirmed were appropriate to include. Further work was planned on infrastructure delivery, digital mapping, and development viability. Members also explored the implications of potential national reforms on planning powers; officers confirmed these would not alter the substance of the Local Plan.

## **Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and Budget 2026/27 proposals**

- 7.8 The Panel reviewed the HRA Business Plan and Budget 2026/27, which projects income and expenditure over 10- and 30-year periods and underpins investment in existing stock and the New Homes Programme. Officers explained that the business plan currently reflects a worst-case scenario, with improvements expected once rent convergence guidance is issued and discussions with the GLA on construction-period interest costs progress. The long-term aim was to generate an £8m revenue-to-capital surplus, although rising interest costs have made this challenging. Members queried rising capital financing costs, projected to reach £76m annually by the end of the MTFs, around 30% of the HRA budget. Officers emphasised that increasing rental income and long-term modelling ensured affordability and confirmed the HRA's debt-to-equity ratio remained below the industry threshold of 60/40. The Panel requested future reporting on total HRA debt and affordability markers.
- 7.9 Discussion explored whether the New Homes Building Programme tapered off in later years; officers confirmed figures only reflected currently approved schemes, with additional phases to be added following Cabinet approval and viability testing. The HRA remained balanced across the planning period.

- 7.10 Members examined discrepancies between formula rents, rent caps, and service charges, including differentials between leaseholders and tenants. Officers clarified that service charges reflected actual usage and were pooled by block or location, ensuring both groups paid proportionately for services received.
- 7.11 Repairs investment appeared to decline after Year 1 due to one-off costs, with funding increasing again in Years 6–10. Officers highlighted that Decent Homes and major works would significantly reduce repair demand long-term.
- 7.12 Finally, members raised concerns about long-term borrowing risks, tenant affordability amid yearly rent rises, and the financial impact of the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme. Recommendations were agreed for further analysis, publication of an HRA Debt Management Plan, modelling of tenant affordability thresholds, and reviewing the Neighbourhood Moves Scheme to ensure efficient use of housing resources

## **Financial Scrutiny**

- 7.13 As part of the Council’s budget scrutiny process, the Panel examined proposals for the 2026/27 budget and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy with recommendations made to the Cabinet. This included further assurances around the proposed £257k saving in floating support contracts. The Panel was concerned that the short term saving from a reduction in tenancy sustainment may result in additional costs to the Council in the long run. The Panel also asked that further information be provided around how the Council plans to improve performance on turning around void properties and reach the 1% target.

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## **8. North Central London Joint Health OSC**

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### **Overview**

Haringey is a part of a joint health overview and scrutiny committee (JHOSC) covering the boroughs of Barnet, Enfield, Camden, Haringey and Islington. Each borough has two representatives on the Committee. Haringey’s representatives on the JHOSC were Cllrs Pippa Connor (Chair) and Matt White. The Committee has been supported by scrutiny officers in Haringey for the past 6 years. This Committee was established to scrutinise health issues common to all of the five boroughs. Amongst the issues discussed this year at the JHOSC were the following:

### **Scrutiny of NHS Quality Accounts**

- 8.1 The Committee received an update on the newly formed North London NHS Foundation Trust (NLFT), established in November 2024 following the merger of the two NCL mental health trusts. The Trust highlighted progress on estates, including the opening of Highgate East and Lowther Road, and improvements to

person-centred care planning through DIALOG+. Physical health checks for people with serious mental illness had exceeded national targets through the Longer Lives initiative. A trauma-informed approach continued to be embedded, with Schwartz Rounds to be rolled out in 2025/26.

- 8.2 The Trust presented its updated Quality Priorities for 2025/26, with continued focus on learning from feedback, improving safety, supporting staff wellbeing, and delivering high-quality care closer to home. Members revisited concerns raised in previous years, including the lack of supported housing delaying discharge, long waiting times, and gaps in integration with GPs and carers during care transitions. The Trust acknowledged these issues; Members recommended strengthened liaison with the GLA on supported housing, more transparent reporting on waiting times and KPIs, and measurement of information-sharing rates with carers. Further recommendations included adding metrics on equity of access for diverse communities, enhanced reporting on the neighbourhood model, and exploring system flags for patients who stop taking prescribed medication. Members emphasised improved signposting for non-crisis patients and stronger communication between Trust neighbourhood teams and local authorities.
- 8.3 Questions were also raised about the Trust's approach to quality improvement, performance measurement (including the shift to SDS charts), patient safety incident reporting, and feedback mechanisms. The Trust committed to including more detail in the final Quality Accounts on clinical audits, performance trends, community survey findings, complaints handling, and outcomes from patient safety investigations. Overall, Members welcomed progress but stressed the need for clearer metrics, stronger collaboration, and improved transparency to support effective scrutiny next year

### **Terms of reference update**

- 8.4 In July 2025, Committee declined to approve the updated draft terms of reference, emphasising their right to elect the Chair independently and raised concerns about unresolved resourcing. Following this in January 2026, a proposal was agreed to alternate resourcing of the meetings on an annual basis amongst the 5 borough democratic services or scrutiny teams.

### **NCL Estates & Infrastructure strategy**

- 8.5 The Committee received an update from the NCL Director of Estates on progress in the local care estate programme. The focus this year is on strengthening primary care infrastructure, improving GP leadership, and progressing smaller GP-led projects. Despite challenge, including the need to secure ongoing 5% capital allocations and the wider 10-year plan, the programme has delivered two major schemes annually since 2021 and currently has 24 smaller projects in train. Around 200 GP premises are not fit for purpose, and investment is being balanced between new sites and improving existing estates. Members heard that delivering local care projects is complex due to the number of stakeholders involved. Approximately £100m has been

secured nationally through a utilisation and modernisation fund, with eight projects approved. A key concern raised was the unfunded 23% of local care infrastructure; only one year's 5% allocation is confirmed, requiring a shift to in-year deliverable projects and joint working with councils—for example, adapting the former Islington council building for GP use.

- 8.6 Discussion also covered the role of disposals, reinvestment of capital receipts, and significant primary care estate pressure in Barnet and Enfield. Members expressed reservations about increased reliance on public/private partnerships; further clarity was requested on financial risk, reinvestment mechanisms, and upcoming lease renegotiations. The Committee also sought detailed information on void estate plans, neighbourhood hub boundaries, and timelines for future reporting.

### **NHS 10-Year Plan**

- 8.6 The Committee received an overview of the NHS 10-Year Plan from the NCL ICB Director of Place, outlining ambitions to modernise care, address siloed systems, improve workforce support, and implement a single patient record to streamline appointments and information-sharing. Engagement across London highlighted priorities such as ensuring carers are involved during discharge and improving digital accessibility. The ICB must reduce running costs by 50% from April 2026 and will merge into the West and North London ICB, covering 13 boroughs, with consultation on staffing changes beginning in late 2025. Members raised concerns about the feasibility of delivering services with a significantly reduced workforce and queried oversight arrangements under the new model.
- 8.7 Neighbourhood health was identified as central to the Plan, aiming for proactive, data-driven, community-based care in partnership with local authorities and the voluntary sector. Healthwatch representatives stressed the importance of retaining an independent patient voice, warning that the 10-Year Plan focused heavily on organisational restructuring rather than patient experience. Members also raised questions about digital exclusion, data governance, technological over-reliance, and ensuring offline access remains available. The Committee emphasised the need to scrutinise the impact of staff reductions, maintain JHOSC's current structure rather than expand to 13 boroughs, and ensure clear governance, transparent service changes, and strong Healthwatch involvement as reforms progress.

### **Mental Health**

- 8.8 The Committee asked how the Trust manages high-acuity mental-health pressures in winter without extra funding. The Chief Operating Officer explained that the Trust has restructured to flexibly redeploy staff across sites in real time, shifting resources between North Middlesex, Barnet and the Whittington as demand fluctuates. Mental-health surges peak later than physical-health winter pressures, typically from late February to April, creating added discharge-pathway pressures for patients

clinically ready to leave hospital. A key development is the rollout of a second mental-health A&E at Chase Farm, complementing the 24-hour service at Whittington. The Committee requested a future progress update.

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## **9. Budget Scrutiny**

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### **Training / Development and changes in Scrutiny of Budget Monitoring reports**

- 9.1 With the ongoing financial difficulties of the Council, at the start of 2025/26 municipal year, the Committee reconsidered its role in the financial scrutiny process. The Committee noted that the Financial Scrutiny Practice Guide emphasises that financial scrutiny is a continuous, year-round responsibility, which is increasingly important given ongoing pressures on local government finances. In previous years, the Committee reviewed in-year finance and performance twice yearly, but Members called for more timely and rigorous monitoring. From 2025/26, quarterly consideration of the budget position was introduced, alongside quarterly briefings for Scrutiny Panel Chairs. OSC meetings were then scheduled shortly after Cabinet to support faster scrutiny of Budget Monitoring Reports. Additional OSC meetings were added, and quarterly informal OSC sessions to help Members examine financial data and develop informed lines of enquiry.
- 9.2 Overview and Scrutiny Committee now meet informally four times a year to review Budget Monitoring Reports with the Director of Finance, identify key lines of enquiry, and determine which Cabinet Members or officers should attend the public meeting. It also highlights service-specific pressures suitable for deeper exploration at Panel meetings. The public OSC then scrutinises budget pressures, in-year savings, cross-cutting issues, capital and HRA spending, financial recovery actions, and service impacts. Scrutiny Panels focus on directorate-level monitoring, following up concerns from OSC, and ensuring services can deliver statutory and agreed standards within available budgets. This new way of working will likely continue into the new municipal year. As part of the Council's governance arrangements for the development of the new Medium Term Financial Strategy, Overview and Scrutiny considered savings proposals that were presented to Cabinet. Following consideration by Cabinet, all four Scrutiny Panels met in December and January to scrutinise the draft budget proposals that fell within their portfolio areas. In addition, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 9<sup>th</sup> January to consider proposals relating to Culture, Strategy & Engagement.

- 9.3 The Committee met on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2026 to consider the draft Budget/MTFS proposals for the 2026/27 budget and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 9.4 Cabinet Members, senior officers and finance leads were in attendance at each meeting to present proposals and to respond to questions from members. For some of the proposals, additional information was requested. This was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 19<sup>th</sup> of January 2026, along with the recommendations from each Panel, ahead of final recommendations being agreed and referred to Cabinet.
- 9.5 Key recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny included recommendations on :the budget gap, EFS, Better Care Fund, Digital Solutions, Transitions, Leisure income generation and borrowing costs.
- 9.6 The final recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, were considered by Cabinet at its 10th February 2026 meeting. The response from Cabinet to all recommendations can be found via the following two links:

<https://www.minutes.haringey.gov.uk/documents/s155991/5.%20Appendix%20%20Cabinet%20Responses%20to%20Overview%20Scrutiny%20Committee%20Recommendations.pdf>

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## 10.How to get involved

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- 10.1 Public engagement and involvement is a key function of scrutiny and local residents and community groups are encouraged to participate in all aspects of scrutiny from the development of the work programme to participation in project work. For this purpose, all formal meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the four scrutiny Panels are held in public and everyone is welcome to attend.
- 10.2 As well as attending a scrutiny meeting, there are a number of ways in which local people can be actively involved in the scrutiny process:

### **Suggest a topic for review**

- 10.3 Members of the public and community groups can suggest topics for possible scrutiny review. Please use the [scrutiny suggestion form \(Word, 52KB\)](#) to suggest a topic for inclusion within the scrutiny work programme.

### **Being a witness**

- 10.4 Like parliamentary select committees, a range of individuals may be asked to give evidence to support scrutiny reviews. This may include service users and community stakeholders, as well as service providers, policy makers, managers and people who have some knowledge or expertise of the area under consideration.
- 10.5 The ways in which evidence is collected will vary, but may include online surveys, focus groups or public meetings. Details of current scrutiny projects and how you can participate can be viewed on the [scrutiny consultation page](#).

### **Asking questions**

- 10.6 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee or scrutiny Panels may call a Member of the Cabinet and chief officer (such as a service Director) to answer questions on the performance, policy plans and targets for their portfolio or service. The Committee or relevant scrutiny Panel may also call local NHS executives to account for policy and performance issues in the health sector. Representatives from other local public services (for example, police service, fire service, housing associations or Jobcentre Plus) may also be invited to scrutiny meetings where appropriate.
- 10.7 Members of the public can also raise questions about a subject being scrutinised and can submit written questions to be asked of executive councillors and chief officers called before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Panels.

Questions should be sent in writing at least 5 clear working days in advance of the meeting. Questions can be sent by email or post to the Democratic Services Manager, or the appropriate committee or Panel support officer.

## Further Information

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Dominic O'Brien: 020 8489 5896 [dominic.obrien@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:dominic.obrien@haringey.gov.uk)

### Adults and Health Scrutiny Panel

Dominic O'Brien: 020 8489 5896 [dominic.obrien@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:dominic.obrien@haringey.gov.uk)

### Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Philip Slawther: 020 8489 2957 [philip.slawther2@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:philip.slawther2@haringey.gov.uk)

### Culture, Climate Action and Environment Scrutiny Panel

Fola Irikefe: 020 8489 8381 [fola.irikeye@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:fola.irikeye@haringey.gov.uk)

### North Central London Joint Health OSC

Fola Irikefe: 020 8489 8381 [fola.irikeye@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:fola.irikeye@haringey.gov.uk)

### Housing, Planning and Development Scrutiny Panel

Philip Slawther: 020 8489 2957 [philip.slawther2@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:philip.slawther2@haringey.gov.uk)

### For general information or enquiries:

[scrutiny@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@haringey.gov.uk)

Overview and Scrutiny

1<sup>st</sup> Floor

George Meehan House

294 Hight Road, Wood Green

London

N22 8JZ

