

SCRUTINY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

25 November 2019 AT 6.00 P.M. AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE

Committee Members Present Councillor Murray (Chair)
Councillor Ferguson
Councillor Harrison
Councillor Jeavons
Councillor Rasab
Councillor Samra
Councillor Shires

Officers Present James Walsh – Executive Director (Resources & Transformation)
Paula Furnival – Executive Director (Adult Social Care)
Paul Gordon – Head of Business Change
Vicky Buckley – Head of Finance
Elise Hopkins – System Leader (Money, Home, Job)
Sarah Oakley – Voluntary and Community Sector Lead
Craig Goodall – Senior Democratic Services Officer

Portfolio Holders Councillor Bird - Leader
Councillor Andrew – Deputy Leader and Regeneration
Councillor Chatta – Personnel and Business Support
Councillor Martin – Adult Social Care
Councillor Perry – Community, Leisure and Culture
Councillor Towe – Education and Skills

Invitees Present Janet Davies – Chair of the Community Associations Network

186/19 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Hussain, Nawaz and Statham.

187/19 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

189/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

Item 196/19 'Resilient Communities and Community Associations' - Councillors Harrison, Ferguson and Towe declared interests due to their work with local community associations.

Item 194/19 'Areas of Focus' – Councillor Murray reported that he was a non-executive director of PTP Training Ltd which was referenced in the Forward Plan to the Black Country Executive Joint Committee.

190/19 LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 (AS AMENDED)

Resolved:

That members of the public and the press be excluded from the meeting during item 196/19 ‘Resilient Communities and Community Associations’ under paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended), namely:

- 1. Information relating to any individual.**
- 2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.**
- 3. information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).**

191/19 MINUTES

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 August 2019, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

192/19 DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2019/20 TO 2022/23 AND THE WALSALL PROUD PROGRAMME

The Committee were provided with an overview of the draft revenue budget for 2020/21. The challenges presented to setting a multi-year budget by the delay of the announcement of the government settlement due to the upcoming General Election were noted. This meant that funding for local government had only been announced for 2020/21.

With regard to 2020/21 draft revenue budget Members sought to understand if the £10.6m additional finance for the year would be ongoing. Members were informed that, prior to the outcome of the next spending review, the assumption for financial planning purposes, had to be that it was a ‘one off’.

Members made queries of the 2019/20 financial position and action taking place to mitigate existing overspends.

Resolved:

That

- 1. the draft revenue budget 2020/21 be noted.**
- 2. Members be informed of the detail of the mitigating actions that saved £323,000 in the Adult Social Care budget for 2019/20.**

192/19 FORECAST REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN FOR 2019/20 – 5 MONTH POSITION ENDED 31 AUGUST 2019

Members were informed of the forecast revenue and capital financial position for 2019/20, based on the position to August 2019, for the Council as a whole and for the services within the remit of the Committee.

The Head of Finance highlighted the Council was forecast to overspend by £1.4m. The Resources and Transformation Directorate was £85,000 overspent. The capital forecast predicted an underspend of £22.44m for the Council. The Resources and Transformation Directorate was predicted to underspend by £3.09m. Capital underspends were expected to be carried forward to 2020/21.

Members discussed the opportunities for financial savings by reducing the use of printed documents and using tablets and laptops.

Resolved:

That the Revenue and Capital Outturn for 2019/20 be noted.

193/19 TRAINING AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT FRONTLINE WORKERS TO DEAL WITH AGGRESSIVE INCIDENTS

Members were informed of the training available for frontline workers who deal with aggressive incidents.

The System Leader (Money, Home, Job) highlighted the services provided from the First Stop Shop. She reported on the levels of abuse and violent incidents noting that they were increasing as other face-to-face emergency drop in services provided by partners had closed. The Council was increasingly the place of last resort for vulnerable people. She reported on the numbers of recent incidents. All of which had been perpetrated by nine individuals. She outlined the training opportunities available to staff and now learning and development needs were identified.

Following questions Members were informed that 3 of the 9 existing persistent complainants were former looked after children. The Council's new responsibilities for preventing homelessness had increased the number of vulnerable people visiting the First Stop Shop which could receive up to 1,000 visitors a day.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

194/19 IMPLEMENTING THE NEW SCRUTINY GUIDANCE

The Committee considered options on how to implement the new scrutiny guidance.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer reported that following the recommendations made by the Committee at its last meeting the following were presented for Members consideration:

1. Suggested principles and proposed way forward to draft a Scrutiny-Cabinet Protocol;
2. A draft Co-option scheme for feedback and recommendation to Council for inclusion in the Constitution;
3. Amended sections of the Constitution regarding Member interests and scrutiny for feedback and recommendation to Council for approval;
4. Draft report writing and presentation guidance for feedback;
5. An updated draft scrutiny report template for feedback.

Members were supportive of the proposals and requested that the report template include headings on financial information and reducing inequalities.

A Member of the Committee expressed the view that scrutiny needed to be stronger and have parity of esteem with the executive to be more effective. He noted that the Council could return to the Committee system if desired.

Resolved:

That:

1. **The principles for the Scrutiny-Cabinet Protocol be supported and a draft be developed, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair and the Leader and Deputy Leader, for consideration and agreement by the Scrutiny Overview Committee;**
2. **The draft Co-option Scheme be forwarded to Council for approval and inclusion in the Constitution as a new protocol;**
3. **The draft amendments to the Constitution in Part 4.5 'Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules' and 'Member Code of Conduct' be forwarded to Council for approval and inclusion in the Constitution;**
4. **The report format guidelines and updated report format be approved and rolled out for use across all Overview and Scrutiny Committees from January 2020.**

195/19 FEEDBACK FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees present feedback on the recent activity at their respective committees.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

194/19 **AREAS OF FOCUS 2019/20**

Resolved:

That consideration of a draft Scrutiny-Cabinet Protocol be added to the work programme.

195/19 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the date of the next meeting was 4 February 2020.

As agreed under item 190/19 Members of the public and press were excluded from this part of the meeting. Janet Davies, Chair of the Community Association Network was invited to remain in the room by the Committee.

Whilst the item below took part in private session the minute below is a full account of the discussion which took place.

196/19 **RESILIENT COMMUNITIES AND COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS**

The Committee considered this item in two parts. Members wished to understand the Councils approach to building resilient communities and community associations (CAs).

A) RESILIENT COMMUNITIES (RCs)

The Executive Director (Adult Social Care) provided an overview of the RC model highlighting its four components:

- Enabling people to have personal responsibility;
- Community led solutions;
- Integrated services for the delivery of support to communities;
- Integrated enforcement.

A short discussion took place on the value of the 'Community Conversation' meeting model that was being used in the East and West Localities and the levels of support different communities would require to make the RC model effective.

B) COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS (CAs)

The Head of Business Change reported that the Council had built effective working relationships with local CAs. The Council provided assistance with development needs and was an active participant in the CA Network. He highlighted that the trading position of CAs can change quickly citing the example of Streetly CA which was performing very positively despite previous challenges. He noted that good relationships enabled the Council to be supportive of CAs and assist with challenges as they arose.

Janet Davies, Chair of the CA Network, reported on the wide range of work undertaken by CAs across the borough. She noted the success of the CA Network and thanked the Head of Business Change and the Voluntary and Community Sector Lead for their key work in bringing people together. She noted that CAs could do more but many found commissioning processes and tendering for work challenging so lost contracts that they could have delivered to larger organisations.

The Portfolio Holder (Community, Leisure and Culture) explained that the RC model put local people and CAs at its heart. CAs already undertook a lot of valuable work. CAs were independent of the Council with many having little involvement with the local authority. The Council's partnership with the CA Network was integral to support CAs in the future and understand the opportunities and risks in the community. This engagement would hopefully assist in preventing CAs going bankrupt.

The Committee discussed various CAs across the borough and acknowledged the excellent work they did and how it linked to locality working. It was acknowledged that challenges existed at some CAs. These were usually exacerbated by old buildings that required maintaining. The Portfolio Holder emphasised that the Council was committed to work with all CAs that wished to engage with the authority, noting that not all CAs were part of the CA Network.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

The meeting terminated at 8.05 p.m.

Chair:

Date:.....