

5 February 2019

**Feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

**Portfolios:** All

**Wards:** All

**1. Summary of report**

This report provides a short summary of the activity of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

**2. Recommendation**

**That, subject to any comments Members may wish to make, the feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees be noted.**

**3. Report**

*Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee*

The Committee met on 11<sup>th</sup> December and considered the Safeguarding Children Annual Report which provided an overview of partnership performance in relation to safeguarding children and young people. The Social Care Year-end Performance and Benchmarking report outlined Walsall's final 2017-18 performance for children's social care key indicators compared with the previous two-years from the two key statutory returns that were submitted to the Department for Education each year. The Committee considered the progress made delivering activities in the 'Right for Children Transformation programme'.

*Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee*

The Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 10 January 2019, items considered included:

- Access to Grammar School places
  - Attended by Tim Swain (CEO of Mercian Trust and former Head of QM Grammar School) and Alison Bruton (Head of QM High School)
  - Discussion of background and progress of Mercian Trust, which now comprises 6 schools
    - QM Grammar School (Selective)
    - QM High School (Selective)
    - Shire Oak (Academy)
    - Aldridge School (Academy)
    - Studio School (14-19 Vocational School)
    - Ladder School (Alternative provision school operating in conjunction with Ladder Foundation)

- Discussion of steps being taken to increase access, especially to the selective schools:
  - Successful bids for £3.5M DfE funding to increase places by 30 in each, so Grammar School PAN to be 180 and High School to be 150
  - Working with feeder and other primary schools and running presentations to encourage access from Walsall parents unaware of chance to apply
  - Discussion of impact of 'Greenwich Agreement' which prevents pupils from other local authority areas from being excluded when applying to any schools
- Pupil place planning and school expansions
  - Background on report that went to Cabinet on 21 November 2018
  - Discussion of data and impact regarding school expansions, as per report – including use of modular building where needed
  - Discussion of school admission process – some Members concerned at how this operates, especially given increasing number of complaints from parents in their wards when cannot get children into preferred schools as no longer catchment areas.
  - Request for further report to next meeting regarding admissions issues and practice, and comparisons with neighbouring LA's practices.
  - Request that letter from Chair on behalf of Cttee be drafted and sent in the first instance to the LGA setting out these concerns.
- New Leaf inclusion Centre
  - Update on progress since last report to Cttee (September meeting) and following critical Ofsted inspection report that placed NL in special measures.
  - Ofsted happy with steps being taken to address issues raised in inspection report.
  - New Deputy Head teacher appointed
  - Improvements to buildings, with long term expectation that will move to other, more appropriate, premises.
- Right for Children Transformation Programme
  - Overview of programme provided by Isabel Vanderheeren, with the report being noted.
  - Discussion of bid for involvement in pilot project with What Works Centre (WWC) funded by DfE. Whilst unsuccessful, lessons learnt as may be other, future opportunities.
  - Social Workers to be re-located to four locality hubs by April 2019, so will be better able to provide support to schools.

### *Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee*

At its meeting on 15 January 2019 the committee received a presentation from the Chair of the Black Country LEP, Chris Handy. He outlined the state of the Black Country economy and how growth can improve in the Borough. In addition, he gave a short briefing on developments of the regeneration corridor and Garden City Concept.

Sarah Middleton from the Black Country Consortium, updated the Committee on the Black Country LEP Assurance Framework and governance arrangements of the LEP. She informed the Committee that they were still awaiting some guidance from Government. Changes were implemented following accountability and governance concerns from a few LEPs. However, the Committee were reassured that Black Country LEP already had good governance.

Rosemary Coyne from the Sustainable Housing Action Partnership attended the meeting and reported on her work within the housing sector and the development of modular homes. She gave some examples of good housing strategies around the world and how companies such as Accord Housing were working on modular home strategies.

Members were also considered a Cabinet report outlining the Association of Black Country Authorities' application to UNESCO for Global Geopark status for the Black Country. The application has been submitted and if approved would be beneficial for the Black Country in strengthening tourism.

#### *Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee*

The Committee met on 27<sup>th</sup> November and the theme for the meeting was 'finance'. This included a briefing on national social care investment to ease winter pressures, which informed the Committee of additional funding to alleviate pressure on the National Health Service, and that there was separate guidance for which the funding could be used. The Draft revenue budget and capital programme 2018/19 – 2021/22 was considered alongside a report on service reductions to drug and alcohol services in Walsall. The Director of Public Health attended to inform members of Social Care and Health OSC of proposals to refresh the Walsall Plan.

The Committee met on 17<sup>th</sup> January and the theme of the meeting was Walsall CCG, who were in attendance to present the NHS 10 year plan, Urgent Care Centres / GP out of hours Service and diabetes care. The Committee considered the Walsall Safeguarding Adults Annual Report which provided an overview of the partnership performance in relation to safeguarding adults and of the delivery of the statutory safeguarding adults board arrangements. A progress update on the refresh of Walsall Plan was also received.

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