

A Paper written by the Chair of the Panel, Cllr. Pete Smith to be considered as a first item on the first meeting of the Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the year 2015-16.

The Report by Professor Steve Leach entitled "Overview and Scrutiny View" and which is an early item on the agenda of the first meeting of this Committee should be essential reading for all Scrutiny Committee members and the contents and recommendations contained therein. This Report will provide very useful guidelines and advice with regard to the nature and conduct of Overview and Scrutiny Committees in Walsall for the near future. I am especially keen that we consider one of his recommendation in para 2.5 of his report, namely "a separation of the overview (policy review and development) and scrutiny (holding to account) functions". Furthermore, in lines with his recommendation 9, the balance between agenda items for information and "to be noted" AND items for action and where the Committee can make a difference, should be changed, with greater emphasis on the latter and ensuring that the items for information and "to be noted" are considered later in the agenda. (3.9 of Prof. Leach's Report)

The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel 2015 – 2016

The Education and Children's Services Overview Scrutiny Committee in the year 2015 to 2016 will concentrate on its scrutiny role and in particular its scrutiny of the education services for the Borough's 64,000 young people under the age of 18. Whilst this will not be to the exclusion of all other services that relate to children and young people, the emphasis this year will be on the scrutiny of the extent to which education and skill standards can be/ are being raised and how the gaps between high achievement and under achievement can be/are being significantly narrowed.

The main reason for this emphasis follows the inspection of the Local Authority's arrangements for supporting school improvement, by her Majesty's Inspectors in June 2014 and judged to be ineffective.

- The report indicated that procedures and systems in place within the LA were not effectively ensuring enough pupils were attending schools which were good or better.
- There were no robust procedures or milestones from which the impact of the school improvement strategy could be measured.
- Attainment at key stages one and two was below national, as was progress at key stages two, three and four.
- In over half the sixth forms, achievement was inadequate. The LA had been unsuccessful in engaging with many of the academies¹.

- The in-year pupil performance/progression data held by the LA was not comprehensive so the LA were unable to accurately predict end of year outcomes for a "significant minority of schools".
- The inspectors found some inconsistencies in the effectiveness of the school improvement advisers.
- The LA was not taking decisive and robust action to improve outcomes for pupils and schools were not receiving appropriate advice on how to improve.
- The LA did not know enough about the quality of governance in a significant proportion of schools which hindered any targeted support.

The Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee will use the above concerns as benchmarks against which subsequent progress has been made and **can be demonstrated with evidence to have been made.** It will monitor the impact of the School Improvement Strategy and the Action Plan for School Improvement by holding to account those responsible for its implementation, which could include The Chief Executive, the Leader of the Council, The Executive Director for Children's Services, the appropriate Portfolio holder and/or any other senior officers with responsibilities in these and related areas.

This approach will underpin and shape the core agenda items for the year 2015-16 and will be to a large extent, shaped by the priorities set out in a report entitled "Walsall School Improvement Strategy Action Plan" which was considered by the Scrutiny Panel on 14/10/14.

Agenda items for scrutiny by for Education & Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2015-16:

It is anticipated that these items will be prioritised and considered early on the agenda and will take up to approximately 50% of the time allocated for the meeting. A private pre-meeting (without Council officers) of members of the Scrutiny Committee will take place in the same room from 5.30pm to 5.55pm to consider the approach to the Scrutiny agenda items in particular such as a "strategy of questioning" (recommended by Prof Leach in para 3.14 of his Report)

With regard to the following scrutiny topics, it will be expected that:

- 1) The most appropriate person/s is/are present to make comments and answer detailed questions on the Report/topic under scrutiny. The Committee /its Chair may have views on particular persons who should be invited with regard to particular agenda items.

- 2) That Reports will be specific to Walsall rather than generic (unless comparative data/information is relevant) and will be evidence based and sourced.

SCRUTINY AGENDA ITEMS DURING THE YEAR 2015 to 2016:

- **Walsall School Improvement Strategy Action Plan: Priorities 1 to 3**
(Scrutiny of the extent to which the success criteria has been measured and met) SEE EXPANSION BELOW
- **Walsall School Improvement Strategy Action Plan: Priorities 4 to 6**
(Scrutiny of the extent to which the success criteria has been measured and met) SEE EXPANSION BELOW
- **Pupil Premium and its impact on Walsall schools:**
(Scrutiny of its impact on narrowing the attainment gap between disadvantaged learners and their more affluent peers)
- **Key Stage 1, 2 Overview...**
Success/progress/areas for improvement/concern

Key Stages 3, 4 Overview.....
Success/progress/areas for improvement/concern
- **16-18 provision Overview.....**
Success/progress/areas for improvement/concern

Monitoring Priority 1: Ensuring strong leadership in all Walsall Schools

Progress to date on the following success criteria reported to Scrutiny Panel on 14/10/15:

- An appropriate and targeted training programme for school leaders (senior leaders, middle leaders and governors) is implemented by January 2015.
- Action taken to remove weak school leadership is decisive and robust so that by July 2015 inadequate leadership in Walsall LA maintained schools is eradicated.
- By July 2015 no LA maintained school or sponsor led Academy is judged to be in an Ofsted category 4.

- By July 2015 less than 25% of 6th form provision will be judged to be inadequate. No Sixth form provision will be judged to be inadequate by July 2016.
- No EYFS provision will be judged to be inadequate by July 2016.
- Ofsted monitoring visits to schools requiring improvement, report leadership (including governance) to be improving from January 2015.
- Leadership is judged to be good or better in 72%+ of schools by July 2015 and 78%+ of schools by July 2016.

- LA maintained schools 75%+ good or better by July 2015.

- Academies (sponsor led) 100%+ to be RI or better by July 2015 and the decline in proportion of good or better leadership is halted

- Academy converters secure 85% good or better leadership by July 2015 and 100% by July 2016.

Monitoring Priority 2: Ensuring the LA improvement strategy is fit for purpose.

Progress to date on the following "success criteria" reported to Scrutiny Panel on 14/10/15?

- HMI re-inspection judges the LA arrangements for school improvement are effective.
- The Walsall School Improvement Strategy (SIS) has measurable success criteria and milestones to facilitate regular evaluation of impact.
- The SIS is focused on improving outcomes for children and young people, reducing gaps in achievement between pupil groups and preparing children and young people for their next stage in education/employment as citizens of a modern Britain.
- The proportion of Walsall children and young people attending good or better schools increases by 10% in 2014/15 and by a further 5% in 2015/16. (Walsall currently at 65%; national 79.8%)
- By July 2015 no LA maintained school or sponsor led Academy is judged to be in an Ofsted category 4.
- All stakeholders have clarity on how the school improvement strategy is to be implemented and have confidence in the school improvement team.

- By July 2015 no school will be below floor standards in all three of the measures
- By July 2016 LA average attainment in KS1, KS2 and KS4 will be at or above national average. By July 2016 LA average progress across KS2 or KS2-4 will be at or above national average.

Monitoring Priority 3: Ensuring that the LA maintains an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the performance of all schools.

Progress to date on the following "success criteria" reported to Scrutiny Panel on 14/10/15?

- The increase in exclusions indicated in HMI report is reversed and exclusions decline by 25%
- A greater collaboration between school improvement and other LA departments including attendance/admissions, governor services, HR, finance and resources.
- The proportion of schools graded good or better increases.
- By July 2015 no LA maintained school or sponsor led Academy is judged to be in an Ofsted category 4.
- No Sixth form provision will be judged to be inadequate by July 2016.
- No EYFS provision will be judged to be inadequate by July 2016.
- From 2015 no Walsall school will drop a category in an Ofsted inspection.

Monitoring Priority 4: Ensuring a robust and unambiguous approach to school categorisation, intervention and support.

- LA knows the schools' key strengths and areas for improvement and is able to support school improvement through a strategic and targeted approach.
- Resources are well matched to impact on improving outcomes for pupils and intervention proportional to need.
- Standards at each key stage improve and by July 2016 outcomes in at least two key stages will match or exceed national average.

- The proportion of Walsall children and young people attending good or better schools in Walsall increase by 10% in 2014-15 and by a further 5% in 2015-16 to reach 80% by summer 2016
- All schools engage with the LA in sharing data, concerns and attending appropriate training by Summer 2015.
- New robust categorisation facilitates timely support so that there is no decline in Ofsted outcomes for inspected LA maintained schools from January 2015 or any Walsall school from July 2016.

Monitoring Priority 5: Ensure high quality school improvement across all sectors:

Progress to date on the following "success criteria" reported to Scrutiny Panel on 14/10/15?

- New staffing structure and clear roles, responsibilities and accountability for all School Improvement Team (SIT) staff are linked extricably with school performance and priorities of the service.
- Schools across the LA improve so that by July 2015 no LA maintained school or sponsor led Academy is judged to be in an Ofsted category 4.
- An increase in the proportion of schools judged to be Outstanding by 5% in 2014-15 and a further 8% in 2015-16.
- By July 2016 all Academy converters are graded as good or outstanding by Ofsted.
- Improvement in schools' engagement with the LA as confidence in the quality of provision and support increases. All schools engaging fully with the LA by April 2016.
- LA targets achieved
- Profile of Ofsted judgements on Walsall schools matches that of the more successful West Midlands LAs by July 2017.
- LA strategy for improvement moves significantly to being more proactive than reactive.
- Achievement in EYFS matches national by July 2015.

- Achievement in 6th form matches or exceeds national by July 2016. All schools should be above DfE post 16 floor standards by July 2016

Monitoring Priority 6: Ensure effective school to school support across the LA

Progress to date on the following "success criteria" reported to Scrutiny Panel on 14/10/15?

- The capacity for school improvement intervention in Walsall is increased as evidenced in Improving Ofsted outcomes.
 - A trend of improvement in the proportion of good and better schools to exceed the improvement found nationally.
 - The success criteria within the Walsall School Improvement Strategy are met by 2016.
 - Schools have greater autonomy in selection of quality school improvement partnerships.
 - School leaders have a greater shared ownership and accountability for the children and young people outcomes across Walsall.
 - School to school support is recognised as a strength when the LA is re-inspected in Summer 2015.
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Other agenda items/part of work programme 2015/16.

Although the above will be the main areas of concentration by the Committee, there will be a need to consider many more areas, not only related to education & skills but also to the Care and Safeguarding provision and hence the working programme (which is not set in stone) set out after my paper reflects this.

Furthermore, as the year progresses there will be other necessary items on the agenda that may not necessarily be predictable at this stage. The Chair, in consultation with relevant officers will determine the agenda for each meeting to reflect such.

Working groups:

The Committee will need to consider whether or not it wishes to have working groups (task & finish), looking at certain topics/issues in depth, bearing in mind the other calls on each member's time. If it is the wish of the Committee that working groups

are to be set up, then a decision needs to be taken as to how many, which topics and membership. The membership of any such working party (that will report back to this Committee) will elect its own Chair and set its own timetable and agenda.

Openness/ Transparency/Members of the public/Minutes of meetings:

On every past agenda the following statement is included: [Walsall Council encourages the public to exercise their right to attend meetings of Council, Cabinet and Committees](#). Therefore I think we should think of ways and means of making this statement more meaningful.

Minutes of meetings: Minutes mainly record decisions of meetings. However previous minutes show that where the Chair or Officers make comments /observations/asks questions, the Minutes identify the Chair and indeed Officers. However when other members make comments/observations/ask questions, the Minutes refer only to "a member said....."

I believe that in the interest of openness and transparency, if there is need a need to record a particular observation/comment/question/comment, then the Minute should identify the member concerned. After all any member of the public present at the meeting can observe "who said what", therefore those who want to look back at records should also be in a position to see this (if what is said is deemed important enough to be mentioned in the Minutes) This would not be inconsistent with how many other local authorities record Minutes of Scrutiny Committees.

Cllr. Pete Smith
Chair, Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
(2015-16)