

24 June 2021

Areas of focus for 2021/22

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr. M. Bird - Leader
Cllr Andrew – Deputy Leader and Regeneration
Cllr Perry – Deputy Leader and Resilient Communities
Cllr Statham – Internal Services

Report:

The purpose of this item is to provide relevant background information for Members so that the Committee's areas of focus can be agreed for 2021/22.

It is important for Members to consider the wide range of potential issues within their remit and which of these they could consider during the year.

When agreeing items, it is important that consideration is given to the level of value the Committee could add taking into account the tools and performance measures available to support them in their work.

Remit

Following Annual Council, the remit of the Committee has been agreed as follows:

All aspects and general services related to Council resources and transformation.

The Scrutiny Overview Committee shall:

- *Take an overarching view on strategic plans and services, including:*
 - *Delivery of the Corporate Plan and its priorities*
 - *The Council transformation programme*
 - *Corporate finances*

- *Scrutinise performance in relation to the following Corporate Plan priorities:*
 - *Internal focus – all council services are efficient and effective.*
 - *Communities are prospering and resilient with all housing needs met in safe and healthy places that build a strong sense of belonging and community cohesion.*

- *Scrutinise the responsible authorities in terms of how they are tackling*

crime and disorder for the benefit of the local communities (no less than once a year) as required by the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 which came into force for local authorities in England on 30 April 2009;

The Scrutiny Overview Committee shall:

- *Lead on the planning and co-ordination of the programme of activities and in depth studies of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees ;*
- *Hold discussions with Portfolio holders over matters such as pre-decision Scrutiny and the programme of policy reviews;*
- *Act as a vehicle of mutual learning.*

A presentation will be provided at the meeting providing more detail about the Committee's services that fall within the committee's remit.

Items recommended from previous year

The following items were recommended for consideration by the committee in the last municipal year:

Scrutiny survey

Getting the basics right member communication review

Covid-19 rates and vaccination updates

Establish a working group to develop policy on diversity in the workforce and how it can be improved to reflect the area's diverse communities

Budget scrutiny

Monitoring the financial performance of the Council is a valuable and important task that Scrutiny Committees are ideally placed to perform. It assists Members in identifying areas of operation that are underperforming that may require scrutiny.

It is suggested that all Scrutiny Committees consider the financial outturn and quarter 2 updates at a formal meeting. It is also suggested that quarter 1 and quarter 3 updates be circulated to Members outside of a formal meeting for information. Subject to the caveat that Members can request the reports to come to a Committee meeting if they wish, and that any significant budget pressures or changes will be raised with the Chair, to discuss the issue being formally reported to a Committee meeting.

Council performance

The Council's Corporate Plan, as agreed by the Council, sets the strategic direction for the authority by reference to five priorities. Each priority has a number of measures allocated to it. Scrutiny committees may wish to consider monitoring progress against the measures that sit within their remit. It is the role of the Scrutiny Overview Committee to take an overarching view of performance against all measures included in the Corporate Plan.

Pre-scrutiny

A copy of the Forward Plans of key decisions from Walsall Council's Cabinet and the Black Country Joint Executive Committee are attached at Appendix 2 to this report. Updates of these will be provided to Committees at subsequent meetings. Members should consider the forthcoming decisions and consider if there are any issues that they may wish to review and seek to influence prior to the Cabinet making a decision on these matters.

Working Groups

A working group is an effective method for Members of Scrutiny Committees to consider an issue in depth over a number of months and to produce a final report and recommendations to the Committee. In due course the report and recommendations can be considered by the Cabinet and/or Council. The challenge for Members is selecting the right topic at the right time and to provide the working group with an achievable brief. Resource wise it is recommended that only one working group be established at a time.

Prioritisation

The remit of the Committee is very broad and the range of issues that could be considered during the year is vast. The challenge that Members face is in prioritising those issues that are the most important whilst still leaving sufficient capacity to address other issues that may arise during the year. To assist Members to manage the broad topics available, it is important that alternative methods of being informed and updated, away from Committee meetings, are used effectively. For example, Members could request briefing notes on particular topics thereby helping to create additional capacity for more substantial items at Committee meetings.

In terms of scheduling items, it is important that an agenda includes a manageable amount of business to enable the Committee to focus on topics in depth rather than to carry out superficial treatment that may require the Committee to revisit the topic at a later date.

Recommendations:

That Members consider the range of issues within this report and formulate and agree a work programme for the year.

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