

SCRUTINY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 March 2019 AT 6.00 P.M. AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE

Committee Members Present Councillor Murray (Chair)
Councillor Hussain (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Hicken
Councillor Ferguson
Councillor James
Councillor Nawaz
Councillor Samra
Councillor Shires
Councillor Singh-Sohal
Councillor Waters

Officers Present James Walsh – Executive Director (Resources & Transformation)
Paul Gordon – Head of Business Change
Andy Parsons – Chief Superintendent, West Midlands Police
Laura Terry – Locality Manager
Stuart Wootton – Financial Planning Manager
Susan Wright – Electoral Services Manager
Paula Bayes – Deputy Electoral Services Manager
Craig Goodall – Senior Democratic Services Officer

Portfolio Holders Councillor Bird – Leader
Councillor Andrew – Deputy Leader and Regeneration
Councillor Martin – Social Care
Councillor Perry – Community, Leisure and Culture
Councillor Towe – Education and Skills

142/18 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Kudhail and Rasab.

142/18 SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor Waters substituted for Councillor Rasab and Councillor Hicken substituted for Councillor Kudhail.

143/18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or party whip identified at this meeting.

144/18 LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 (AS AMENDED)

There were no items to be considered in private session.

145/18 MINUTES

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2019 a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

146/18 SAFER WALSALL PARTNERSHIP

The Committee learned about the role and activity of Safer Walsall Partnership (SWP). The Portfolio Holder (Communities, Leisure and Culture), as Chair of the SWP Board, gave a presentation (annexed) on the role, remit, membership and achievements of the Board.

The Committee had a long discussion on the activities of the Board including:

- The approach to tackling knife crime including preventative work with young people and offenders and the long term strategy to reduce knife crime in Scotland;
- The wish to secure more funding for Walsall from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC);
- The importance of partnership work to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour;
- Work with young people, through youth services, was required to improve prevention;
- Substance misuse and the need to tackle users in Walsall Town Centre. A request was made for more detailed figures on the number of individuals who had successfully completed substance misuse programmes;
- Members felt that more should be done to manage rough sleepers and beggars in the town centre. It was noted that enforcement of the Public Space Protection Order was problematic;
- The need to update the boroughs Community Safety Plan.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. Members be provided with detailed figures on the number of individuals who had successfully completed substance misuse programmes;**
- 2. the report be noted.**

147/18 WEST MIDLANDS POLICE AMBITION PLAN 2020

The Committee considered the West Midlands Police Ambition Plan 2020 (the Plan).

Chief Superintendent Parsons introduced the Plan and highlighted the strategic focus and plans to implement them. He noted how the Plan supported other police priorities and the support of partners was critical to reducing crime.

Following questions regarding how the Police responded to reports of crime Chief Superintendent Parsons explained that all reports were prioritised and officers were deployed to more serious incidents. Even if officers did not attend an incident, police work was ongoing to challenge organised crime, for example, luxury car theft where investigations could focus on the resale markets.

The Committee discussed the importance of building resilient communities to assist in preventing crime, turnover in police personnel and the importance of the police promoting successful prosecutions.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

148/18 FOUR YEARLY ELECTIONS

The Committee considered a report on four yearly elections.

The Chair introduced the item explaining that it was programmed following a recommendation to reconsider the issue made by the former Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2018. He highlighted that out of the 33 Metropolitan Boroughs three had moved to four yearly elections, namely Birmingham, Doncaster and Rotherham. He added that he had written to Group Leaders at each of these Councils for their views and the responses he had received were tabled (annexed).

The Electoral Services Manager reported the process that would need to be completed to amend the Councils electoral arrangements. She informed Members that all out elections were more expensive and resource intensive to manage than elections by thirds but estimated financial savings of £500,000 over a five-year period could be achieved subject to any by-elections that may be required.

The Leader and Deputy Leader spoke in support of four yearly elections noting that due to the political make up of Walsall it would assist in providing stability to political decision making in the borough.

The Committee had a long discussion on the issue with some Members favouring a switch believing that four yearly elections could increase voter turnout and engagement. Other Members spoke in favour of allowing local people to be able to express their views at the ballot box more regularly as more democratic.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

149/18 HOMELESSNESS

The Committee received an update on how homelessness was addressed in Walsall.

The Head of Business Change highlighted the work of the night shelter over the last three winters. The night shelter provided the opportunity to engage and assist local rough sleepers. The engagement work was very challenging, and not always successful, but this approach, along with Housing First pilot, had seen support provided to 150 rough sleepers and 25 of the most complex entrenched rough sleepers securing accommodation.

The Leader of the Council highlighted that a former rough sleeper, engaged by the night shelter, was now a Council employee. He congratulated the Head of Business Change and his team for their hard work.

The Committee added their praise and some Members reflected on their personal visits to the night shelter and the impressive support of volunteers. The intensive support provided was necessary for these individuals and the persistence of the team had clearly paid off. They highly commended the service and asked the Chair to write to the Head of Business Change with their regards.

Resolved:

That the Chair of the Committee write to the Head of Business Change to commend the work completed to tackle homelessness in the borough.

150/18 FORECAST REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN FOR 2018/19 – QUARTER 3 PERIOD ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2018

The Financial Planning Manager highlighted the forecast revenue and capital outturn up 31 December 2018 for the Council as a whole and the Resources and Transformation Directorate.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

151/18 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

The Committee discussed activity at recent meetings of the Councils Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Updates were provided on meetings that had taken place since the agenda was published. Members were informed that the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee had met and discussed missing children. At their next meeting a report would be considered on Jane Lane School following the publication of a critical Ofsted report. Members were also informed on a meeting of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee which had discussed unauthorised encampments and a third sector hub.

Resolved:

That the feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees be noted.

152/18 AREAS OF FOCUS 2018/19

The Committee considered their work programme and the Forward Plans from Walsall Council and the Black Country Joint Executive Committee.

Resolved:

That the reports be noted.

153/18 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date of the next meeting would be 23 April 2019.

The meeting terminated at 8.11 p.m.

Chair:

Date:.....