

Council – 18 November, 2013

Annual Scrutiny Report 2012/13

Service: Legal and Democratic Services

Wards: All

1. Summary of report

This is the annual report to Council outlining the work of scrutiny in 2012/13.

The report provides a case study analysis of the work undertaken during the municipal year by the panels and their respective working groups.

A copy of the annual report is attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

2. Recommendations

Council is recommended to:

Note the annual scrutiny report for the 2012/13 municipal year (annexed).

3. Resource and legal considerations

Scrutiny is a key aspect of the governance framework and an integral part of how the council makes effective decisions. Good scrutiny can help to inform policy making and help ensure that decisions taken by the cabinet are in effectively considered prior to implementation. The role of Scrutiny is defined in Walsall's constitution, Article 6.

4. Citizen impact

Effective scrutiny enables the public to fully engage in the topics under review. Ensuring that the items for consideration are effectively communicated via the council's website and public notice boards encourages citizens to become involved in the scrutiny process. Any potential work item that will have citizen impact will be fully scoped and include the opportunity for public involvement.

5. Environmental impact

The work of scrutiny picks up on a range of environmental factors across the whole borough. There are no direct environmental considerations as a result of this report.

6. Performance and risk management issues

The role of Scrutiny is fundamental in ensuring that the most effective and informed decisions are taken whilst delivering value for money for residents.

This report provides an overview of the work undertaken by the Scrutiny and Performance Panels which helps to achieve these objectives.

Asking members to recognise and review past achievements and consider the potential items to scrutinise helps to ensure that the Scrutiny and Performance Panels focus their attention on the main issues that have strategic relevance and importance to the council as a whole. Incorporating an effective scoping process enables a risk based approach to be taken in the development of potential work programmes; focussing on the key issues that affect the performance of the council, impact on service delivery or potentially result in service delivery that does not meet resident expectation or offer value for money. The Council's priorities and pledges are all considered when looking at potential work programmes for the following year and frequent performance monitoring reports are presented to individual Scrutiny and Performance Panels.

7. Equality implications

This report details all of the work that has been across the whole borough. Scrutiny Members represent a number of wards across the borough and actively work with residents to best represent their views at Scrutiny.

8. Consultation

Individual panels have sought the expert opinion and views from witnesses to ensure that a balanced perspective is provided against any of the work topics under consideration. This year, evidence has been brought to the panels by officers, members of the public, officers from other authorities, partners and independent experts.



Jamie Morris
Executive Director (Neighbourhood Services) & Statutory Scrutiny Officer
28 June 2013

Author:
Neil Picken
Senior Democratic Services Officer
☎ 01922 652018
✉ pickenn@walsall.gov.uk



Scrutiny Annual Report 2012/13



Walsall Council

Foreword

I am very pleased to introduce the 2012-13 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for Walsall Council. This report provides the opportunity to review last year's activity within overview and scrutiny and to highlight some of the key developments.

Scrutiny is a Councillor-led statutory function within the Council. It is responsible for holding decision makers to account on behalf of Walsall residents. It does this by reviewing and scrutinising decisions, by monitoring the performance of the Council and partner organisations, and by assisting in developing new policies to make Walsall a better place.

Scrutiny is currently operating in a rapidly changing landscape. Major reductions in funding, the impact of new legislation, welfare reform and the changing shape of other public services such as schools, the NHS and the police, all impact significantly on the work of the council. Scrutiny panels have monitored these developments closely and have continued to carry out effective scrutiny in this changing landscape.

2012/13 was a busy year for scrutiny and this report highlights some of the many ways it has been carrying out its role, helping to ensure that the Council continues to provide an effective and efficient service to Walsall residents.

Jamie Morris
Executive Director – (Neighbourhood Services)
& Statutory Scrutiny Officer





Contents

1.	Introduction	
2.	Community Services & Environment	
3.	Regeneration	
4.	Health	
5.	Children's & Young People	
6.	Social Care & Inclusion	
7.	Corporate	
8.	Annual Scrutiny Survey	
9.	Panels for 2013/14	
10.	All items considered during 2012/13	

Introduction

Scrutiny and Performance Panels are made up of non-executive members from across all political parties and they exist to provide accountability to the council and its partners. They have four key roles:

- Holding the Executive to account for their decisions;
- Scrutinising local partners (e.g. NHS Walsall);
- Reviewing and developing policies and making recommendations to Council and Cabinet on these; and
- Reviewing services to ensure they are providing value for money and meeting local needs.

Scrutiny also has a vital role in enabling the voice of local residents through community engagement. All meetings are open to the public to attend (except in exceptional circumstances where something has to be taken in private session). The public can also suggest items for scrutiny to consider. More details on the role of scrutiny can be found on our website www.walsall.gov.uk/scrutiny.

At its annual meeting in May 2012, Council set the Scrutiny panel structure and remit for the year ahead which included 6 panels:

- Children's and Young People
- Community Services & Environment
- Corporate
- Health
- Regeneration
- Social Care and Inclusion

This report details how the work of Scrutiny and Performance panels during 2012/13. It is not an exhaustive account of the work Members have undertaken but gives an overview of the wide variety of work that has taken place throughout the year. There are many other issues that have also been looked at that are not mentioned here but details of all meetings can be found on the [council's committee website](#).

A full list of items discussed at Panel meetings is included within the report. Members of the Scrutiny team would be happy to provide more detail in relation to any of these items.

For any queries you may have or just for a discussion about Scrutiny you can contact any of the team:-

Neil Picken

Senior Committee Business and Governance Manager

➤ Children's & Young People

Tel :01922 654369

Email: pickenn@walsall.gov.uk

Craig Goodall

Committee Business and Governance Manager

➤ Community Services & Environment;
➤ Corporate

Tel: 01922 654765

Email: goodallc@walsall.gov.uk

Nikki Gough

Committee Business and Governance Manager

➤ Health

01922 654767

goughn@walsall.gov.uk

Matthew Underhill

Committee Business and Governance Manager

➤ Social Care & Inclusion;
➤ Regeneration

01922 654766

Underhillm@walsall.gov.uk

Community Services and Environment

How Scrutiny has added value in 2012/13?

Previously two separate Panels the newly formed Community Services and Environment Panel had a wide remit of matters to consider. The Panel also responded to a number of petitions submitted by concerned residents. This provision ensures that discussion is held at a public meeting and allows residents to have their say. Debates were held in relation to a request for the provision of parking outside the convenience store located at 22/23 Blockall, Darlaston and also when a petition was submitted objecting to Walsall Council and Natural England's proposal to fell trees on Brownhills Common to encourage the growth of lowland heather.

The Panel also welcomed a representative from the Canal and Riverside Trust to one of its meeting to raise awareness of the work undertaken. This resulted in opportunities being identified for further partnership working.

School Catering Working Group

In the knowledge that improving achievement and aspirations remains a key driver for the Council and its partners the Community Services and Environment Scrutiny Panel, when considering the financial pressures in the Council's school catering service, established a cross-Panel working group to consider school catering across the borough.

A detailed investigation into the value of school meals and the Council's school catering service left no stone unturned as the group considered strategy and alternative delivery models as well as sampling school meals for themselves!

Members visited schools and discussed the topic with teachers, catering staff and most importantly, pupils. Approaches from other countries were also taken into account, discussing universal free school meals with the Finnish National Institute for Health and Wellbeing to understand the impact of different approaches in an international context.

Linking with the work of the Children's and Young Peoples Panel, the school catering working group noted that Walsall is below the West Midlands and England averages in Key Stage 2 attainment. A study of primary school children in Durham and Newham showed that attainment levels increased when free school meals were provided on a universal basis. Moreover, the attainment gap between children receiving free school meals and those who did not substantially reduced.

The Working Group found that:-

- Walsall has high levels of child poverty and obesity as well as a significant proportion of hungry and underweight children when compared to its statistical neighbours and the rest of England.
- The number of children taking free school meals is high but has room for improvement.
- For many children their free school meal is their only decent meal of the day. The take up of paid meals is low reportedly due to cost, quality and choice.
- There was widespread support for school meals, particularly in those premises where the service had been refreshed and provided high quality meals. Packed lunches were a concern to Members as informal observation in school dining halls indicated a lack of nutritional food.

Recommendations to try and contribute towards drastically altering Walsall's cycle of deprivation and disadvantage included:-

- There should be substantial improvement in the number of paid meals as this will help with economies of scale.
- In the interests of improving long term health and educational attainment school meals should preferably be provided free of charge to all primary school children. Members felt that if this was not possible then the maximum charge for a school meal for primary school children should be £1.

Much of the evidence and conclusions reached by the working group were reinforced within the national 'School Food Plan' published in July 2013. The School Food Plan draws similar conclusions to the working group and aspires for all primary aged children to have a free school meal.

This piece of work was recognised in the scrutiny survey with a member commenting that:

'the working group was extremely successful. It helped me gain an understanding of the importance of a school meal for children'.

Regeneration

How has Scrutiny added value in 2012/13?

The Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel continued to ensure that the Council strived to improve the economy for both businesses and residents. Areas considered included improving job prospects and employability for Walsall people, growing the creative industries, starting a business in Walsall, the Walsall Site Allocation Document and Walsall Town Centre Action Plan. The Panel also closely monitored the impact of welfare reform and its impact on the economy.

Markets Working Group

The activity of this working group included consideration of the proposed development of the town centre market. The working group discussed the matter with a range of consultants including GVA and The Retail Group. They also met with representatives of Walsall Market Traders. A key element of this work was determining the most appropriate long term location for the market. This was a challenging process for Members as the new location had to help enhance the market and respond to two key retail developments within the town centre. The working group also wanted the new market to have a layout that was both helpful to shoppers but also made a strong impression on consumers. It would also be important for the location of the market to provide it with the capacity to support its long term development. Members were supported in this process by both officers and by a retail and property consultancy.

The recommendation of the working group to consolidate the future location of the market on The Bridge, which might include the possible relocation of the fountain, was supported by the Panel and Cabinet.

The other area of the working group's activity focused on seeking to develop the district centre markets. The working group considered consultations undertaken with local traders and local people. The feedback provided the working group with guidance regarding the type of products people bought and the average spend. The consultation work also identified that the catchment areas for district markets was small.

A key element of the ongoing work of the working group was to seek to extend the catchment areas and ensure that the right products are available to meet local demand.

Key recommendations of the Working Group included that:-

- **Cabinet request officers to commission a feasibility and design study to assess the design and financial implications of creating a new market square on The Bridge, including the possible relocation of the fountain;**
- **that all stakeholders, including Walsall Market Traders Association are consulted regarding the proposals;**

Site Allocation Document (SAD) and Walsall Town Centre Area Action Planning (AAP) Local Development Framework Working Group

This working group was established to help to determine the allocation of land uses in line with legislation. A key challenge of this work was to ensure that a balance was struck between the competing demands for Walsall including economic regeneration and development, while also meeting new housing legislation statutory requirements.

The working group's activity included shaping the format of the consultation documents that have been used by officers to gather local views. They also considered how to address the number of empty retail units in the town centre and the size of warehouses the council should encourage to be built in order to meet commercial demand.



Health

How has Scrutiny added value in 2012/13?

Members of the Health Scrutiny and Performance Panel covered a wide range of issues during 2012/13 including the Public health transfer to the Council, dementia programme; ambulance service transformation and the redesign of the learning disability forensic service pathway. Specific focus was given to mortality rates as the Walsall Healthcare Trust and the SURGE plan.

Mortality rates

The Panel were concerned that Walsall Healthcare Trust was named as having one of the highest mortality rates in the country for 2011/12. Members of the Panel have repeatedly sought assurances from health colleagues at meetings, including the Chief Executive of Walsall Healthcare Trust, about mortality rates. The Health Scrutiny Panel commissioned consultants Mott MacDonald to conduct a four month review to investigate the issue of mortality rates. The review had been commissioned to provide a snapshot of the overall direction of travel of mortality rates and to describe findings to the Panel fully and transparently.

The report looked at the relationship between mortality rates within the hospital and mortality rates elsewhere in the borough. It indicated that a range of initiatives to address issues regarding quality of care 'would be expected to have a positive effect in reducing mortality'. These initiatives include consultants being available six days of the week for ward rounds, staff increases in the Acute Medical Unit and the appointment of two new palliative care consultants.

The Panel were reassured that hospital mortality rates had improved and are now better than expected for a hospital of its size. The review helped to identify further areas of investigation for the Panel to consider in the 2013/14 municipal year; including -

Ongoing work on mortality rates by the Clinical Commissioning Group work includes,

- The Accident and Emergency review at Walsall Healthcare Trust;
- Discharge as part of rapid discharge;
- Information on Urinary Tract Infections and related mortality rates.

SURGE plan

The Health Scrutiny Panel wished to receive reassurance that sufficient arrangements had been made for the increased activity seen during winter within the Healthcare Trust and further detail on the response needed for health services. The Walsall Surge Plan contains the details of health and social care services which have been commissioned to manage these predicted increases in activity. It builds on the lessons learnt from previous years and for the short term, temporary, reactive measures which were implemented in response to those pressures at that time.

Members challenged healthcare professionals to ensure that the health economy was ready for a surge in activity. In response, they were given information on: -

- How senior managers and Local Authorities are updated on a weekly basis;
- The 'GP in a car service' which responded to category green calls;
- The falls car service, which attends 999 **calls** which are **falls** related. This had been successful in resolving issues with repeat callers;
- Additional capacity had been made available to purchase beds in nursing homes, along with 'spot purchasing' for complex discharge and end of life patients.

The Panel were reassured that arrangements were in place to respond to increased activity. Members and Officers agreed that work needed to begin earlier during the 2013/14 municipal year to plan for the surge in activity in the winter months.

Dr Amrik Gill, Chair of Walsall CCG added: "We welcome the independent report for care at Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust and are reassured that good progress has been made at the hospital.

"As healthcare commissioners, we will be looking at the recommendations of this report and ensuring that the hospital continues to improve mortality rates for patients.

"As a new NHS organisation, we can reassure the public that we have put in place robust ways to ensure that all types of patient feedback are reviewed routinely to assure ourselves about quality and safety of care.

"This feedback this will be used to help inform that understanding."

Children's & Young People

How has Scrutiny added value in 2012/13?

Councillor Cassidy, Chair of the Children's and Young Peoples Panel explains:-

Children's and Young Peoples Scrutiny and Performance Panel has challenged many areas of children's services to ensure the best outcomes are delivered for young people.

An in depth review was carried out by the Safeguarding Working Group which looked across all services within Children's Social Services including the Initial Response Team, Children with Disabilities Team, Adoption and Fostering and Safeguarding and Families Support.

Progress made by the Council in relation to the improvement notice has been closely monitored and challenged to ensure that every effort is being made to improve all services.

The need to ensure that every member was aware of their responsibilities as corporate parents was recognised by the Panel and training for all Members of the Council was delivered. Further in – depth training for Panel Members was also undertaken to assist them to effectively carry out their role.

Elsewhere, the Panel has closely monitored pupil performance taking an important overview of attainment within the Borough. The Panel emphasized the need to ensure that schools were supported and challenged to ensure high expectations and standards enabled children and young people to achieve their ambitions. Early Years, Parenting and School Readiness was also considered in depth whilst significant discussion was held in relation to borough wide attainment levels. Robust questioning also took place regarding schools which had been underperforming for a number of years.

The Panel welcomed a presentation by a head teacher which provided a real insight into the process of the school improvement journey and helped them understand the realities behind headline data.

Safeguarding Working Group

Walsall received an overall effectiveness rating of 'Inadequate' by Ofsted in June, 2012 in relation to its provision of safeguarding services for children and young people. Since then a raft of changes have been implemented to ensure that services improve. The Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel have closely monitored improvement activity and provided robust and constructive challenge. Whilst receiving reports and updates is important and valued, the Panel indicated a wish to experience, first- hand, some of the changes for themselves and speak directly to staff. Establishing a Safeguarding Working Group - Members visited each social work team recognising that each member of staff has an important role to play in transforming the service to deliver better outcomes for the young people of Walsall.

The Ofsted inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of Children published on 2 August, 2013 recognises the role of Scrutiny:-

“The children and young people's scrutiny and performance panel is working to enhance their understanding of current issues to ensure that they provide effective challenge. Most recently, they have published a safeguarding working group report following visits to frontline social work teams to consider issues affecting the workforce such as: high caseloads, use of agency staff, training and the electronic children's recording system. “

And that:-

“... Members of the scrutiny panel are committed to their role and have taken action to improve their understanding of current issues through recent training on missing children and child sexual exploitation provided by another local authority with detailed experience of these”.

The working group held three meetings with the focus placed on understanding how social work teams are constructed and where they sit geographically within the borough. Visits to teams were also arranged with each member of the group opting to visit a social work team of their choice. Each Member visited a different team to better understand the work undertaken and identify areas of strength and difficulty.

The working group then identified key themes and produced a number of recommendations based on the information received including the need to:-

Issue all social workers with laptops to enable them to work more flexibly preventing time wasted travelling to and from the office from visits.

That the Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel receives regular updates on caseloads to enable them to monitor levels and assess the impact of the screening team in assisting teams to reduce the backlog.

Revisit the workload weighting tool to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

Establish a social work community to develop understanding and communication between teams and services with a view to improving understanding around thresholds and reducing tension at transfer points

Completely refurbish the family Room at The Quest in order to make it more child friendly and welcoming thereby creating a good impression of Walsall Council at 'the front door'.

Undertake an in depth investigation of the PARIS system in consultation with all levels of staff within social services to understand its limitations and identify potential areas for improvement with a view to producing an options appraisal for the provision of an alternative system.

Consider the relocation of social work teams.

Revisit the One off Direct Payment Scheme to ensure that it is best administered within the Children with Disabilities Team or whether alternative resources, such as The Welfare Rights Team, are best placed to deliver.

The working group has committed to monitoring the implementation of these recommendations to ensure that the best possible service is provided to the residents of Walsall.



Social Care & Inclusion

How has Scrutiny added value in 2012/13?

The Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel considered a number of important issues including disability facility grants, commissioning for mental health services (including the review of Broadway North Resource Centre) and monitoring complaints.

Broadway North Resource Centre

The Panel maintained a close watching brief on the review of services at Broadway North. The key proposals from the review, which involved a number of key stakeholders including the Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Trust (DWMHT), were to decommission the ten crisis and respite care beds. It would be intended to use alternative provision from other providers, with many service users making choices regarding their individual care via Individual Budgets. Members of the Panel also sought clarity on the cost of provision and impact on personal budgets given the cuts in welfare benefits. Extracts from the Minutes highlight challenge:-

'Following a query from the Chair officers confirmed that the financial costs of bed provision for the council at over £414k. It was also confirmed that even if occupancy rates were significantly increased alternative comparative residential provision in the independent sector represented a significant saving to the council.'

'Members queried how individuals would be able to purchase respite residential care from the independent sector at £615 per week, particularly given the proposed additional cuts in welfare benefits.'

The Panel was proactive in inviting the views of service users, carers and staff. This included holding a Panel meeting at the Centre to better understand the facilities available. An extract of the minutes demonstrates inclusive debate:-

'Following a query from a service user, the Executive Director for Social Care explained that a review of services had been prompted by significant changes, including anticipated reductions in the level of benefit entitlement for those with mental health problems and a growing number of people with mental health issues.'

After reviewing the options and enabling users and carers and staff to have a voice, the Panel welcomed the changes to day care services introduced which included the move of a Community Association to the Centre and a widening of the activities available for both those with specific mental health needs and the wider local community.

The Panel continued to challenge officers regarding the proposed removal of residential care services at the Centre, particularly regarding the importance of any alternative provision being fit for purpose.

Disabled Facility Grants (DFGs) Aids and Adaptations

The Panel represented the needs of some of the borough's more vulnerable residents by reviewing the DFGs and Aids and Adaptations services. At its meeting on 7 October 2010 the Panel received guidance from officers regarding efforts to address historical issues which included a significant waiting list from referral to approval of schemes. It was explained that the average period of time from referral to approval was 49 weeks, although officers were implementing plans to address these issues. The Panel received an update at its meeting on 15 February 2011 where it was explained that streamlining of schemes under £12,000 and a reduction in waiting times from referral of schemes to approval (49 in September 2010 to 30 January 2011) had been achieved. ***"The Chair expressed strong support for the success achieved by officers in significantly reducing the time from referral to scheme approval"***. However, the Panel requested regular updates to enable them to monitor progress.

At its meeting on 18 April 2013 the Panel welcomed guidance that 27% more schemes were approved in 2011/12 than in the previous year. They were pleased that the time from referral to scheme approval was 22% faster than in 2011/12. The Panel acknowledged the significant strides made by officers in improving performance noting that regional collective procurement arrangements had delivered savings of 39%. Members considered and welcomed initiatives such as adaptations to the homes of private residents that could be funded through a land charge being placed on the property. This meant a wider group of individuals could be assisted. Many Panel Members expressed strong support for the performance of the DFGs and adaptations service. The Panel were advised that as a consequence of the continuing reductions achieved by the service in cost of adaptations, the full capital allocation received from the council may not be used. Members noted that this was positive however, it was important that capital funding remained sufficient to meet demand and fluctuations in cost.

Corporate

How has Scrutiny added value in 2012/13?

Corporate Scrutiny Panel received frequent updates on the Working Smarter programme which governs all significant change activity within the Council. The Panel also gave detailed consideration to national welfare reforms, particularly the localised council tax support scheme and social sector size criteria (also known as the bedroom tax). Particular scrutiny was given to the introduction of the crisis support scheme which saw local arrangements to be put in place by the Council to replace the existing provision of Community Care Grants and Crisis Support Loans for general living expenses.

Localised Council Tax Support Scheme

The Panel considered options for a localised council tax support scheme in light of the information received that government funding was expected to be £3.3 million less than funding received for the existing council tax benefit scheme. The Panel were aware that should the Council fail to implement a local scheme this would result in the government imposing the default scheme.

Members considered three options including:-

- Option 1 –** Apply a cap on the maximum liability eligible for localised council tax support;
- Option 2 –** Apply a cap on the maximum liability for localised council tax support with protection for a number of vulnerable groups.
- Option 3 –** Fully fund the reduction in grant from other council efficiencies, savings or other income streams, and adopt the current council tax benefit scheme rules.

In September, 2012, the Panel considered the options and expressed concerns that any future changes to the benefit system could increase reliance upon payday loan companies. Further concern was expressed as option 3, in which the Council fully funded the reduction, was not sustainable. The Council would need to make decisions about future priorities in relation to spend as alternate savings would be required in order to sustain option 3 in future.

Despite their reservations the Panel recommended that, on balance, option 3 should be supported as it would enable the council to develop a more considered scheme for 2014/15 onwards and prevent any immediate impact on residents.

The Panel continued to monitor progress of the localised council tax support scheme with a view to establishing a Welfare Reform Working Group in the 2013/14 municipal year to consider the impact of the reforms.

Crisis Support Scheme

A local scheme was required as the scheme administered by the Department for Work and Pensions would be abolished by April, 2013. The Panel were instrumental in shaping the crisis support scheme prior to its approval. Noting that timescales to develop and implement a scheme had been challenging the Panel raised no less than 15 areas which required attention ranging from the appeals process to systems for payment of awards and measures in place to prevent fraudulent claims and duplications.

In relation to staffing, structure and processing applications reassurance was sought as to where applications would be submitted, whether there would be an online presence, how the workforce would be organised and whether there would be sufficient staff to meet demand.

'The Panel suggested that until a full online presence was available there should be an opportunity available to download a form for completion.'

Risk Management – Members expressed concern that the legislative changes and the decisions required to support those changes posed a significant financial and reputational risk. Members sought assurance that a suitable risk management plan was in place and that this matter was on the risk register.

As a result of the initial discussion the Panel recommended:

That the Panel's concerns in relation to risk management be brought to the attention of Cabinet. Specifically that a risk management plan should be put in place swiftly and provided when available.

Annual Scrutiny Survey 2012/13

An annual scrutiny survey is undertaken each year to seek the views of Members on the successes and areas for improvement in scrutiny over the last 12 months. A full analysis is attached as appendix 1.

This year the survey was sent out to all 60 Members (including co-opted Members) electronically to be completed online. A paper based version was also distributed. A range of questions were posed focusing on different scrutiny themes: A total of 17 responses were received including 10 online and 7 via post. At least one member from each Scrutiny Panel responded.

Successful Topics - The recent Safeguarding Working Group was recognised by 5 separate respondents as the most successful example of recent scrutiny. A Member stated: ***'[the] working group was able to focus on the issues relating to front line social work provision thereby making creditable, necessary and well thought out recommendations...'***

Several Members cited the independent review of hospital mortality rates as the best scrutiny topic of 2012/13. A Member commented that the review showed ***'a determination not to be fobbed off professionally'***.

Other mentions included the School Catering Working Group, Markets Working Group, scrap metal, working smarter, joint strategic needs assessment, leisure, health and wellbeing, school improvement, hospital foundation status, budget planning, smarter workplaces, assistive technology for dementia sufferers, social care complaints, children services improvement plan and social care aids and adaptations.

Overall results of scrutiny – 80% of respondents were positive or neutral about overall results whilst 13.33% were fairly dissatisfied.

Structure of Panels - 66.67% of respondents agreed that panel structure was good. One respondent felt structure was very poor although no comment was recorded as to why.

Forward Plan - Nearly half of all returns thought the 'Forward Plan' was 'neither good nor poor' and the majority of responses indicated that the frequency of meetings and effectiveness of panel meetings were good. Again results were split as two people felt that the effectiveness of meetings was poor with commenting that :-

'Panels [should]...examine policies before they are implemented instead of after' and 'we need to involve real people on panels'.

Budget scrutiny - Respondents indicated some satisfaction with budget scrutiny but an equal number of returns were either 'fairly dissatisfied' or 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied'. When considering how best to consider the budget support for a specialist working group was the most popular single answer but there was strong support for other methods too including leaving budget setting as a matter for Council.

'I feel a working group can challenge and ask more questions and perhaps have more time for in depth discussions. More time for clear thinking'.

'One panel should adopt the budget...and look at all elements...no one looks from a scrutiny point of view at the majority of the budget or helping to identify further improvements in [future] years'.

'all members need to be involved', 'maximises elected member input' and 'every member needs an opportunity to influence the decisions that are to be taken'.

'the budget setting Council is a separate political process', 'scrutiny can play an informing role but this is subsidiary to the formal budget setting process'.

Scrutiny Panel Membership in 2013/14

Community Services & Environment

Chair: Councillor Woodruff

Vice-Chair: Councillor Creaney

Membership:

Councillors Azam, Douglas Maul, Hussain, Illmann-Walker, Rattigan.

Corporate

Chair: Councillor S. Coughlan

Vice-Chair: Councillor Rochelle

Membership:

Councillors Douglas – Maul, Illman-Walker, Longhi, D. Shires, Worrall.

Regeneration

Chair: Councillor Harrison

Vice-Chair: Councillor Azam

Membership:

Councillors Anson, Barker, Flower, Wade, Worrall.

Social Care & Inclusion

Chair: Councillor Oliver

Vice-Chair: Councillor Douglas-Maul

Membership:

Councillors Barker, D.Coughlan, Nazir, Rattigan, Rochelle.

Health

Chair: Councillor Longhi

Vice-Chair: Councillor James

Membership:

Councillors Bennett, Burley. Flower, Russell, Woodruff.

Children & Young People

Chair: Councillor Cassidy

Vice-Chair: Councillor Martin

Membership:

Councillors Jukes, Hughes, Lane, Perry, D. Shires together with representatives from

1 representative – Lichfield Diocesan (voting)

1 representative - Archbishop of Birmingham (voting)

3 parent governors (voting)

1 Primary Education Teacher (non-voting)

1 Secondary Education Teacher (non-voting)

Items – 2012/13

Corporate	*Financial Monitoring; * Help me with my money, my home, my job;* Help my business grow and be successful; *Business Support Services Portfolio; *Central Support Services 2012/13; *Update on Localised Council Tax Support Scheme; *Sale of School Freeholds; *Walsall Sustainable Community Strategy – The Corporate Plan; *Operation of the Post Room; Electoral Service; *Update on Walsall Crisis Support Scheme; *Benefits Service; *Draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy
Health	*Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group project plan for reducing Hospital Mortality Ratios at Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust; *End of Life Strategies; *Merger of Wharf and Sai Medical Practices; Financial Monitoring; * Walsall Manor Hospital Foundation Trust Status; * Healthwatch tender specification; * NHS Midlands and East Review of stroke services; * Learning disability forensic service pathway – service redesign; * SURGE plan; * Dudley and Walsall Mental Health NHS Trust – service Transformation; * Public Health Transfer to the Council; * Nursing and Residential Care Quality Assurance Framework; * Independent review of mortality rates at the Manor Hospital; * Primary care talking therapies; *Dementia Programme; * Ambulance service transformation; * Community End of life strategies and pathways; * Draft Health and Well Being Board Strategy; * Active Living, Sport and Leisure (Leisure Centres); * Walsall Community based end of life strategies and pathways; * Care Quality Working Group terms of reference; * West Midlands Ambulance Service Service Transformation; *
Social Care & Inclusion	*Statutory Complaints; *Adult safeguarding; *Community social work model; * Community alarms; *Financial monitoring; *Health and wellbeing board; *Support for living at home service; * Benefits-Based Charging; * Community Social Work Model; *Healthwatch; *Housing 21 – future of rushall mews; * Broadway North – commissioning led review; * Learning Disability Specialist Health Services;*Decommissioning of Sutton's Drive; * Winter Surge Plan; * Welfare Rights; * Quality Assurance Team; * Carers' Strategy; * Budget Planning 2013/14; * The effects of the government's Benefit Changes on Walsall Borough; * Taste for Life; * Carers' Strategy; * Social Care and Inclusion Annual Complaints Report; * Restating Personal Budgets in Walsall; * Local Healthwatch; * Aids and Adaptations; * Mental Health Services Commissioning led Review; * Draft Health and Well Being Board Strategy; * Learning Disability & Specialist Health Services; *
Community Services & Environment	*The new art gallery working group; *Finance monitoring; *Area partnership working group; *West Midlands Police Authority; *Petition relating to Convenience Store at Blockall, Darlaston submitted to Council on 9 July 2012; *Winter Services operational Plan; *Litter Working Group – Final Report; *Draft Greenspaces Strategy; *School Catering Working Group; Canal and Riverside Trust; * Sports and Leisure Update; * Police and Crime Commissioners; * Estimated Costs of Road Alterations at Blockall, Darlaston; * Area Partnership Working Group – Terms of Reference; *School Meals in Walsall; * Recycling; * Update on Flood Risk Management; * Devolution Through Area Partnerships; Scrap Metal Working Group Monitoring Report; * Recycling and Contamination; * The Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Walsall 2013 – 2016; * Tackling Environmental Crime; * Police and Crime Commissioner; * Active Living (Sports Centres) Update; * Petition regarding trees on Brownhills Common.
Children's and Young People	*United Kingdom Youth Parliament Priorities; *Integrated Young People's Support Service; *Peer Review Findings; *Raising Awareness and Clarifying the role of the Panel in relation to the Local Safeguarding Board; *Financial Monitoring; *Education Contract; *Safeguarding Vulnerable and Looked after Children Inspection and Improvement Plan; * Pupil performance in Walsall (2012); * Monitoring school performance; * Safeguarding and Vulnerable Children Services; * School Improvement Supporting Strategy for Intervention in Underperforming Schools; * HMCI Report – presentation on key parts; * Performance at Key Stage Two in 2012; * Outcomes for Looked After Children and Impact of the Virtual School; * Children's Services Complaints - Annual Report; * Children's Services Improvement Activity; * School Improvement and Effectiveness; * Key stage 4 and Key Stage 5 Results in 2012; * Draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy; * Safeguarding Working Group; * Sexual Exploitation; * Transition (Serco Contract);

Regeneration	<p>Starting a business; *Growing the creative industries in Walsall; *Financial monitoring; * Council Policy and Powers regarding Empty Properties, Derelict Properties and Listed Buildings; * Review of 'Make Business Your Business'; * Markets Working Group; * Black Country Enterprise Zone; * Walsall Town Centre; * Economic and Employment Trends in Walsall, together with emerging opportunities; * The Effects of the Government's Benefit Changes on Walsall Borough; * Supporting Business Creation & Growth in Walsall; * Supporting Business Growth and Remodelling of Delivery to meet Customer Needs; * Introduction to the Site Allocation Document (SAD) and Walsall Town Centre Area Action Planning (AAP) Local Development Framework; * Improving Job Prospects and Employability for Walsall People; * Black Country City Deal Expression of Interest; * Railway Investment; * Walsall Economic Board; * Draft Health and Well Being Board Strategy</p>
---------------------	---