

2nd September 2021.

Areas of focus for 2021/22

Ward(s) All

Portfolio: Councillor T. Wilson.

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 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

The remit of the Committee has been agreed as follows:

All aspects and general services related to serving children and young people (excluding education and learning). The scrutinising of performance in relation to the following Corporate Plan priority:

- *Children have the best start in life and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well.*

A presentation will be provided at the meeting on 2nd September 2021 providing more detail about the Committee's remit and the services that fall within it.

Items recommended for consideration:

The following items are recommended for consideration by the Committee in the coming municipal year (2021-2022):

- Holiday Activity Fund update
- Summary Of Performance
- Family Safeguarding
- Family Drug and Alcohol Court
- Participation Update
- Neglect
- Finance

Items previously considered by the Committee (2019-2021):

- Recruitment and retention of social workers
- Child exploitation (partnership approach)
- Family safeguarding model
- Right for children transformation programme
- Performance items
- Finance
- Family Drug and Alcohol Court
- Youth justice
- Preventing children coming into care
- Safeguarding children board annual report
- Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
- Transition into adult services.

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.

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 as an Appendix 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. Due to the availability of resources, it is recommended that only one working group be established at a time.

Prioritisation

It is important for those issues that are the most important to be prioritised 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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