

## **SCRUTINY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**17 MARCH 2016 AT 6.00 P.M. AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE**

### **Panel Members Present**

Councillor J. Murray (Chair)  
Councillor R. Burley  
Councillor S. Coughlan  
Councillor B. Douglas -Maul  
Councillor E. Hazell  
Councillor I. Robertson  
Councillor I. Shires  
Councillor P. Washbrook

### **Officers Present:**

David Haley -	Director (Children's Services)
Nikki Gough –	Committee Business and Governance Manager

### **28/16 APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor M. Nazir.

### **29/16 SUBSTITUTIONS**

None.

### **30/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

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

### **31/16 MINUTES**

Members considered the minutes of the meetings held on 1 December, 2015.

### **Resolved:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December, 2015, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

## 32/16      **FEEDBACK FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

The Chair invited each of the Scrutiny Committee Chairs to provide feedback on the recent round of meetings.

The Chair of the Education and Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee provided feedback on the recent work of the Committee. The Committee had considered its first 'call-in' which, due to timescales and school holidays, had been received at its ordinary meeting. As a result of this other agenda items needed to be deferred until the next meeting. Attendees at this meeting included Head teachers and their contribution to debate had been valuable. Members suggested that Head teachers may have misunderstood the role of the scrutiny committee and it may have been thought that the committee were able to make decisions. It was suggested that awareness of the decision making process, including scrutiny, needed to be improved. Also the importance of the call in, as part of the process, was acknowledged. Although frustration was also expressed that changes were rarely made to decisions as a result of 'call in' meetings.

Members discussed a letter which had been circulated on behalf of the Leader. This letter requested that questions of a technical nature were requested from officers prior to the meeting. Members expressed some concerns that this would lead to a more 'stage managed' process. The view was also expressed that the Scrutiny Overview Committee would have been better placed to send the letter. It was noted that the Chair felt that the Committee operated most effectively in Conference room 2.

The strengths and weaknesses of the Cabinet system were discussed. It was suggested that a strong constitution was needed to ensure that the appropriate checks and balances were in place. Frustration was expressed that Cabinet appeared to make decisions very quickly and did not appear to consider recommendations from scrutiny committees.

The Director informed the Committee of the 'parliamentary project' which aimed to raise awareness of democratic processes in junior schools. He also committed to involving elected members in these types of initiatives, where possible, to strengthen the programme. Members were also informed that all primary schools operated school councils. It was also hoped that the 'youth parliament' could be further developed.

The Chair asked for feedback on the recent Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016. Members fed back that this had been a particularly good meeting. The main item of discussion was Walsall Healthcare Trust Special Measures and Recovery Plan with representatives from Walsall Healthcare Trust (WHT), The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the Trust Development Agency (TDA) in attendance. The success of the meeting was attributed to having the right people in attendance to respond to scrutiny. Their willingness to participate and attend in a timely manner was acknowledged and they had been invited to present progress at the first meeting of the Social Care and Health Committee. The scrutiny committee was successful in bringing out issues around the appointment of NHS Chairs.

Members discussed holding Head teachers to account through scrutiny. It was noted that the Chair of the Education Challenge Board reported to scrutiny.

**Resolved:**

**That the Scrutiny and Overview Committee receives best practice on support to backbench Members and how this could be applied to Walsall at a future meeting.**

**33/16 AREAS OF FOCUS 2015/16**

Members considered the areas of focus for each of the Scrutiny Committees. It was noted that the Community Cohesion Working Group report would be taken to the next Corporate and public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Resolved:**

That the areas of focus be noted.

**34/16 FORWARD PLANS**

Members considered the forward plan of key decisions from Cabinet and the Black Country Joint Executive (annexed).

**Resolved:**

That the Forward Plans be noted.

**35/16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting would be agreed by Council in May 2016.

The meeting terminated at 7.40 p.m.

Chair: .....

Date:.....