

SCRUTINY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 OCTOBER 2016 AT 6.00 P.M. AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE

Panel Members Present

Councillor K. Hussain (Chair)
Councillor J. Murray (Vice Chair)
Councillor D. Barker
Councillor C. Creaney
Councillor A. Ditta
Councillor M. Longhi
Councillor S. Wade

Officers Present:

David Haley -	Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Neil Picken –	Senior Democratic Services Officer

Portfolio Holder

Councillor I. Shires (Agenda for Change)

44/16 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Bird, Towe and Chambers.

45/16 SUBSTITUTIONS

None

46/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

47/16 MINUTES

Members considered the minutes of the meetings held on 14 July, 2016.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July, 2016, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

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

Social Care and Health

The Chair of the Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee (SC&H) advised that the Committee had a busy work programme noting that there were significant challenges in Walsall given that:-

- The Healthcare Trust was in Special Measures;
- Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) were in Special Measures;
- Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Trust had received a rating of 'inadequate';
- The Black Country Foundation Trust from which Walsall commissions beds had been advised by MONITOR that they were not fit for purpose.

There was also an increase in demand which continued to put pressure on services.

The Chair of the SC&HC explained that Dudley CCG had been rated 'excellent'. It was clear that the CCG in Walsall was not holding providers to account.

In terms of Scrutiny, the Chair was clear that whilst the Committee would continue to work as a critical friend with monitoring and challenge, a tougher line would be required.

In addition, a letter had been sent to NHS England to request a meeting to set out the concerns of the Committee and make it clear that any proposals to passport NHS budget pressures to the Local Authority was unacceptable.

The Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee asked whether Scrutiny was adequate or whether it required changes to improve. In response, the Chair of the SC&HC advised that the system in Walsall had been historically established to have a strong Cabinet and less strong Scrutiny. Over time Scrutiny Committees had been merged which led to heavy work programmes and the need to hold special meetings to ensure that matters could be debated. That said, Scrutiny has strengthened, understands and implements a stronger accountability monitoring and challenge role. There was, however, need for some dedicated Policy support.

Education and Children's Services

The Committee were advised that the number of Looked After Children (LAC) continued to put pressure on the budget. It was also the case that it took too long to discharge individuals once they were in the system. A number of young people were on care orders at home or with family and friends and so alternative approaches could be taken. This was being discussed with the Court to ensure that the correct level of intervention is undertaken.

In terms of the Scrutiny Committee, it was becoming stronger and providing greater challenge to officers, portfolio holders and external witnesses. The Committee continued to focus on both social care and education. The latter continued to be challenging in light of the performance of some Academies.

Corporate and Public Services

The Vice Chair of the Corporate and Public Services Committee (C&PSC) advised that Remembrance Day Parades continued to be a focus. The final report of the working group established to consider this matter in depth would be reported to the next full meeting of the C&PSC. The Working Group were keen to identify both short and long term solutions to ensure that Parades continue to take place this year and in future years.

Other areas considered had included options for bin collections, Network Rail and future of Willenhall Post Office.

Resolved:

That the updates be noted.

49/16 AREAS OF FOCUS 2015/16

Members considered the areas of focus for each of the Scrutiny Committees.

Resolved:

That the areas of focus be noted.

50/16 FORWARD PLANS

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

It was suggested that Corporate Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the Solihull Contract (reference 2/16) at a future meeting.

Resolved:

That Corporate Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the Solihull Contract (reference 2/16) at a future meeting.

51/16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was 13 December, 2016.

The meeting terminated at 7.00 p.m.

Chair:

Date:.....