

## **SCRUTINY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**3 JANUARY 2018 AT 6.00 P.M. AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE**

### **Panel Members Present**

Councillor Hussain (Chair)  
Councillor Murray (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor M. Bird  
Councillor P. Bott  
Councillor R. Burley  
Councillor L. Hazell  
Councillor Towe

### **Officers Present:**

Tony Cox – Head of Legal and Democratic Services  
Craig Goodall – Senior Democratic Services Officer

### **Portfolio Holders**

Councillor L. Jeavons – Deputy Leader and Regeneration  
Councillor Robertson - Health  
Councillor I. Shires – Community, Leisure and Culture

### **78/17 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors A. Ditta and S. Ditta.

### **79/17 SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitutions.

### **80/17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

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

### **81/17 MINUTES**

#### **Resolved:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September, 2017, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.**

### **82/17 SCRUTINY OF EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

The Committee considered a recommendation from the Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (E&CSOSC) recommending that its remit be split and two Overview and Scrutiny Committees be created. One to scrutinise education. The other to scrutinise Children's Services.

The Chair of the E&CSOSC, Councillor Towe, introduced the report and explained that he was disappointed with the comments made by Ofsted. The Committee worked hard to scrutinise services and took their responsibilities seriously. He added that the committee time spent preparing for the Ofsted inspection meant that there was limited time to focus on education related issues. Therefore, in considering now to move forward and improve scrutiny in light of Ofsted's feedback, the E&CSOSC were recommending the creation of an additional scrutiny committee to create extra capacity.

The Committee discussed the benefits and challenges of the recommendation from the E&CSOSC. The benefits included:

- Additional capacity for scrutinising education and children's services. Further to the remits for all scrutiny committees were too large;
- By creating additional capacity it will provide Members the opportunity to increase their knowledge about services;
- Demonstrate to Ofsted the desire to change and improve the scrutiny of children's services;

The challenges included:

- Member capacity to fulfil an additional committee;
- Ensuring that the new committee met the requirements of Ofsted in terms of scrutinising the quality of services. It was argued that Ofsted could be satisfied under the existing arrangements through agenda planning and working groups;
- Identifying funding for an additional special responsibility allowance and the potential for negative publicity at increased member costs;
- Officer resource to fully support scrutiny;

Members undertook a more general discussion on the role and structure of scrutiny in Walsall. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services highlighted the previous review of scrutiny undertaken by Professor Steve Leach which felt that scrutiny at Walsall, despite room for improvement, was satisfactory. He noted that nationally there was a low perception of the value of scrutiny and this had led to a Parliamentary inquiry through the Department for Communities and Local Government Select Committee.

The Committee debated the benefits and challenges in depth. It was **moved** by Councillor Bird and **seconded** by Councillor Murray that:

1. *As part of the annual review of the Constitution the size and remit of all overview and scrutiny committees be reviewed. This review should include consideration of splitting the remit of the existing Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to create two Overview and Scrutiny Committees one to scrutinise Education and the other to scrutinise Children's Services.*

2. *Following the consideration of recommendation 1 (above) the Chief Executive review the resources available to Overview and Scrutiny Committees with the view to providing additional research support through Democratic Services.*

On being put to the vote the motion was duly carried.

**Resolved:**

**That:**

1. **As part of the annual review of the Constitution the size and remit of all overview and scrutiny committees be reviewed. This review should include consideration of splitting the remit of the existing Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to create two Overview and Scrutiny Committee one to scrutinise Education and the other to scrutinise Children's Services.**
2. **Following the consideration of recommendation 1 (above) the Chief Executive review the resources available to Overview and Scrutiny Committees with the view to providing additional research support through Democratic Services.**

## 83/17      **FEEDBACK FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

The meeting received feedback from all Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

### *Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee*

Members were informed that the Committee had considered the 2018/19 revenue budget in detail at its meeting in November 2017.

### *Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee*

Members were informed that the Committee had held two meetings. The first had received the report from Ofsted following the inspection of services for looked after children. This included a presentation from the LGA on addressing the recommendations. Consideration had also been given to the 2018/19 revenue budget. It was reported that the 2017/18 revenue budget for Children's Services was overspent.

The Committees second meeting had been convened to consider the call-in of the decision regarding 0-19 early years services.

### *Social Care and Inclusion Overview and Scrutiny Committee*

Members were informed that the Committee had been hearing large agendas on high profile issues including: changes to stroke services, urgent care provision, maternity services and public engagement regarding the merger of four GP practices.

**Resolved:**

**That the feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees be noted.**

**84/17 FORWARD PLANS**

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

A Member requested further information regarding the Metro.

**Resolved:**

**That:**

- 1. the forward plans be noted;**
- 2. Councillor Bott be provided with further information on the Metro.**

**85/17 AREAS OF FOCUS 2017/18**

**Resolved:**

**That the report of the Department for Communities and Local Government Select Committee into local government overview and scrutiny be considered at the next meeting.**

**86/17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was noted as 19 December 2017.

The meeting terminated at 7.15p.m.

Chair: .....

Date:.....