

## **Scrutiny Overview Committee**

## **Agenda Item No. 6**

**27 June 2023**

### **Areas of focus for 2022/23**

**Ward(s)** All

**Portfolios:** Councillor S. Elson – Children’s Services

### **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 2023/24.

It is important for Members to consider the wide range of potential issues within their remit and which of these 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**

Following Annual Council, 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 Council Plan priority:

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

### **Presentations from Leader and Portfolio Holders on their priorities**

The Scrutiny-Cabinet Protocol encourages dialogue and communication between Scrutiny Committees and the Cabinet at all times; but especially with selecting items to scrutinise during the ensuing year. To assist with this priorities for the service will be set out by the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services.

### **Presentation on services within the remit of the Committee**

A presentation will be provided at the meeting providing more detail about the Committee’s services that fall within the committee’s remit.

## **Items considered in the 2022 - 2023 municipal year**

The following items were considered by the committee in the last municipal year:

- Budget setting process
- Locality hubs and working
- Early Help Strategy
- Social Worker recruitment and retention
- Private fostering
- Youth Justice priorities
- Child exploitation
- Family hubs update and progress
- Early Help update
- Child and Young People Alliance
- Young Carers
- Child neglect strategy

## **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 quarter 2 updates at a formal meeting. It is also suggested that the financial outturn for the previous year, 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 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. It is the role of the Scrutiny Overview Committee to take an overarching view of performance against all measures included in the Council Plan.

## **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 at Appendix 2 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.

In terms of resourcing working groups Democratic Services are expected to continue to have reduced capacity during the municipal year.

## **Prioritisation**

The remit of the Committee is very broad and the range of issues that could be considered during the year is vast. The challenge that Members face is in prioritising those issues that are the most important 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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