

SCRUTINY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

27 SEPTEMBER 2018 AT 6.00 P.M. AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE

Panel Members Present

Councillor Murray (Chair)
Councillor Hussain
Councillor A. Ditta
Councillor Ferguson
Councillor James
Councillor Rasab
Councillor Samra
Councillor Shires
Councillor Singh Sohal

Officers Present:

Tony Cox – Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Paul Gordon – Head of Business Change
Helen Dudson – Corporate Assurance Manager
Craig Goodall – Senior Democratic Services Officer

Portfolio Holders

Councillor Bird – Leader
Councillor Harris – Personnel and Business Support
Councillor Towe – Education and Skills

105/18 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Kudhail and Nawaz.

106/18 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

107/18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

108/18 MINUTES

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June, 2018 a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

109/18 CORPORATE PLAN MONITORING – 6 MONTH PERFORMANCE/PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered performance information for the 37 measures relating to the delivery of the Councils corporate plan and priorities.

The Leader highlighted existing performance information across the five priority areas as contained within the report (annexed).

A discussion took place regarding begging and homelessness in Walsall town centre. It was acknowledged that there were challenges in assisting the vulnerable and managing those that were seeking to take advantage of good local people. It was noted that street drinking was also a challenge. A Member noted that Ipswich had reduced problems with street drinking by preventing the sale of single cans of high strength alcohol. The cleanliness of the town centre was also discussed with a Member suggesting that cleaner streets would help support businesses and the night-time economy.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

110/18 PARTNERSHIPS IN WALSALL

The Committee was informed about the existing partnership board structure in Walsall.

The Head of Business Change highlighted the overall structure of the partnership boards, the role of Strategic Locality Partnership Boards (SLPBs) and Locality Panels. He explained that there were no hierarchical links between boards and decisions were taken by consensus. He noted that the effectiveness of SLPBs was currently being considered with a view to refining and improving them. He also reported that a review of the Walsall Plan was taking place in order to refresh the priorities within it.

Members expressed the view that the current structure was too large and involved too many different people. It could be streamlined and made more accessible to Members and the public; for example where could minutes and agendas for each Board be read?

A discussion took place on SLPBs. Some Members felt that there was a lack of clarity as to their purpose, that Boards were looking at issues in too much detail, that the membership required streamlining and engagement from partners required improvement. Others noted that SLPBs were working differently to how they were set up and needed to focus on strategy and services.

It was discussed and agreed that invitations would be sent to the Chairs of Boards to attend future meetings of the committee to help build an understanding of the work that was taking place.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. the Chairs of the Partnership Boards within Walsall be invited to attend future meetings of the committee to enable a greater understanding of the work they do to be established;**
- 2. feedback on the review of the Walsall Plan and partnership structures be provided to the Committee at a future meeting.**

111/18 MAYORALTY

The Committee considered whether it was possible to remove the ceremonial functions of the Mayoralty from the requirement to Chair council meetings.

The Chairman explained he had requested this report as he wished to explore alternative courses of action that could be taken to avoid the situation that had occurred at the Annual Council meeting where there had been a contested election for the Mayoralty.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services provided the background on the legislation regarding the appointment of the Mayor. He advised Members that it was not legally possible to separate the Mayoralty from the requirement to Chair Council meetings.

A short discussion took place. Following a suggestion from a Member it was agreed to recommend that if there is a contested Mayoral election in future any invited guests should be asked to wait outside the Council Chamber until it was appropriate to invite them in.

Resolved:

That if there is a contested Mayoral election in future any invited guests should be asked to wait outside the Council Chamber until it was appropriate to invite them in.

112/18 FEEDBACK FOR NEW OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY GUIDANCE

The Committee considered a number of issues that the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government were seeking views on to inform the drafting of new overview and scrutiny guidance.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer provided further background on the issue and highlighted the questions being asked by the Government.

The Committee felt that the resources available to support scrutiny were key; this includes the same level of access for advice and support from senior officers as Cabinet Members. Members also believed it was important for scrutiny members to have support from officers to undertake work and research on their behalf. Access

to up-to-date data, with the resource to break it down and analyse it, is an important tool to assist members in delivering effective challenge. Member development was thought to be another key angle to encourage. Informed Councillors make good scrutiny members.

The committee focused on allowances and stated that higher allowances would assist in recruiting higher calibre members to scrutiny positions.

With regard to external bodies the committee were in agreement that further powers to call partners and other important organisations to scrutiny meetings would assist in improving the quality of the function.

Resolved:

That the Chairman write to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government regarding the views expressed by the Committee.

113/18 SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the draft Scrutiny Annual Report 2017/18.

Resolved:

That the Scrutiny Annual Report 2017/18 be forwarded to Council.

114/18 FEEDBACK FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The Committee discussed activity at recent meetings of the Councils Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved:

That the feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees be noted.

115/18 AREAS OF FOCUS 2018/19

The Committee considered their work programme and the Forward Plans from Walsall Council and the Black Country Joint Executive Committee.

Members requested that the Chair of the Walsall Economic Board be invited to the next meeting. A Member requested information on the work of West Midlands Police.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. The Chair of Walsall Economic Board be invited to the next meeting of the Committee;**

2. The following information on policing in Walsall be sent to committee members:

- a. Number of officers across the borough and localities;**
- b. Performance statistics on police response times;**
- c. Information on crime statistics for the borough and localities;**
- d. The police view on the effectiveness of 101.**

116/18 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date of the next meeting would be 27 September 2018.

The meeting terminated at 7.43 p.m.

Chair:

Date:.....