

26 November 2018

Feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees

Portfolios: All

Wards: All

1. Summary of report

This report provides a short summary of the activity of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

2. Recommendation

That, subject to any comments Members may wish to make, the feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees be noted.

3. Report

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

On 8th November, the Committee considered the statutory annual complaints report, Draft Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2018/19 – 2021/22 and the Corporate Financial Performance – Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring Performance for 2018/19.

The annual complaints report highlighted that In 2017/18, there was a 7.5% reduction compared with the previous year in the number of statutory complaints responded to at Stage 1, continuing the falling trend over previous years.

Members considered the draft revenue budget and capital programme 2018/9 - 2021/22. Three individuals representing the FACE (Families and Carers Empowered) group attended the meeting and spoke on the savings proposal 'Review of residential short break provision for children and young people with a disability'. They spoke to ask that the provision was not reduced, praised the service and described the difficulties faced by families with disabled children. It was agreed that further consultation would take place with members of the group who were not currently service users.

Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee considered the following items at its most recent meeting:

- Willenhall E-ACT Academy
 - Meeting attended by 2 reps from E-ACT (Joanna Hall, Regional Education Director, and Linda Gregory, Regional Operations Director); the Head teacher, Kirsty Jones, was invited to attend and initially indicated that she would do so, but the 2 other reps submitted apologies for non-attendance for

- ‘personal reasons’. This is the third occasion when the head has been invited to attend the Committee, has initially agreed to do so and then reneged at the last minute.
- Overall, the E-ACT reps talked about the progress that had been made at Willenhall and were confident that it would soon be taken out of special measures by Ofsted.
 - Concerns were raised by the Committee, however, regarding:
 - The number of exclusions taking place at Willenhall, i.e. more than any other school in the Borough (E-ACT response that won’t compromise where there had been bad behaviour)
 - The shortage of specialist Maths teachers at Willenhall (E-ACT response that also a national problem)
 - How Willenhall can re-engage with the local community that has lost confidence in it (E-ACT response that Ambassadorial Advisory Group has been re-formed and will tackle this)
 - Committee resolved:
 - (1) to note and congratulate Willenhall E-ACT on the progress made;
 - (2) to look forward to receiving evidence of improvement in attainment that would be at the national standard.
- Right for Children Transformation Programme
 - Overview of programme provided by Isabel Vanderheeren, with the report being noted.
 - Three year programme with 3 streams to re-orientate Children’s Services to reduce the need for statutory intervention
 - Children’s Services working with Education Services to implement plan to identify children at risk of exclusion and support them
 - Relocation of social workers to the four locality hubs
 - Also discussion by Committee of ways to improve pupil attendance
 - Working Group on SEND, pupil exclusions and children not accessing education
 - Committee agreed initiation document and received progress report on meetings of working group held to date

Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee considered a petition on the implementation of a weight restriction at Barns Lane, Walsall. The Committee debated representations from the Lead Petitioners and the Officer response. As a result, the Committee recommended that officers carry out a survey and consultation for the implementation a weight restriction on Barns Lane, Walsall.

During an item on Areas of Focus, the Committee recommended that Sarah Middleton, Chief Executive of Black Country Consortium be invited to a future meeting of the Committee to consider an item on the Black Country LEP Assurance Framework.

In addition, the Committee consider an item on the Council’s Strategic Transport Policy as well as delivery of transportation in Walsall and the West Midlands.

A discussion commenced and the following points were outlined:-

- Concerns were raised by the Committee regarding air pollution around schools in the Borough. The Portfolio Holder for Education and Skills confirmed that the Cabinet would be informed of concerns by the Committee and highlighted that the issue was a national problem not unique to Walsall. A Member requested that issues with air quality around schools be included within the remit of the Air Quality Working Group;
- A Member highlighted that schools should encourage other methods of transportation during drop off times such as biking and walking;
- A Member informed the Committee that the Council had been involved with 'Movement for Growth: The West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan' which oversaw joined up working with transportation arrangements and the announcement of Willenhall and Darlaston Rail Stations;
- A Member congratulated the Economy and Environment teams in developing a regeneration strategy which focused on connectivity whilst promoting the Borough as a place to invest, live, work and play;
- The Chair highlighted that the Borough received a high footfall of people into the Town Centre which opened up advantages for investment and regeneration;
- The Chair highlighted that he would like to see an extension of SPRINT into Bloxwich and linking into Willenhall North, Wednesfield and Wolverhampton;
- The Head of Planning, Engineering and Transportation informed the Committee that following submission of a targeted feasibility study (TFS) to investigate proposals on Nitrogen Dioxide reduction it was confirmed that the Council had received positive feedback from Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). In addition, the Government confirmed that the Council had demonstrated a challenging study model and noted M6 Junction 10 upgrade proposals.

On 13 November 2018 the Committee held a call-in meeting regarding the Financial Penalties Policy. As part of their considerations the Chair informed the Committee about the reasons for the 'call in' and heard representations from the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council.

Following a debate the Committee agreed to note the implementation of the Financial Penalties Policy, receive a progress update on the policy at a future meeting of the Committee and referred the policy for consideration to the Private Rented Sector Housing and Selective Licensing Working Group.

Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

At its meeting on 25th October 2018 the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee held a meeting to consider the Sustainability of the Health and Care Workforce in Walsall. Members challenged what was being done to ensure that local people and young people had the opportunity to achieve a professional qualification in health and social care.

The Chief Officer from Walsall CCG attended to present the report along with colleagues from Walsall College. The Assistant Principal informed the committee that the College was working with Walsall CCG and Walsall Healthcare Trust to develop a Health Social Care and Public Health service qualification, which was designed to prepare students to work in a health and social care setting. The Committee were informed that the college were keen to work with employers in the

Borough to ensure that the qualifications offered in health and social care meant that students would have access to employment and progression in careers once employed. Work was also taking place with Wolverhampton University to ensure that students could access health and social care university courses within the Borough. Members were reassured that work was under way to progress this issue.

The Committee received the community alarm service report which was considered by Cabinet on 24th October 2018. Members debated the decision made at Cabinet.

The Committee met to consider a call in of the Cabinet decision regarding the Future of the Community Alarm Service on 14 November 2018. The Chairman invited a range of interested parties to the meeting. A representative from Walsall Pensioners Convention, the Head of Service - Age Matters and a Service User addressed the Committee.

The following motion having being put to the vote was declared carried: - 'The Committee approve of the recommendation as set out in item 5, section 2.2 as set out by the Cabinet report'.

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