

2 February 2021

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

The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report updating Members on the recruitment and retention of social workers and were assured that the direction of travel was positive with staff turnover reducing and the use of agency staff reduced. This had been achieved by a culture of staff wellbeing and a 'pay and retention structure'. The Committee heard the benefits of the Family Safeguarding model, the model focused on the best way to help the family and achieve stability for the child. The structured programme assisted parents to overcome difficulties in their lives. Members were also informed of Covid-19 related financial pressures that were regularly reviewed by officers and discussed with the DfE. The Annual complaints report was also presented which provided an overview and analysis of all compliments and complaints received and to summarise the issues that have arisen. Further detail was requested by the Committee on the time taken to respond to complaints which were responded to after 10 days of receipt. Members considered performance data and compared data to consider improvements. The draft capital programme was presented and noted by the Committee.

Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee met on 5 January 2021. Members received a report on the Walsall Right 4 Children Inclusion Strategy 2020-25, also included, to be read in conjunction with this, were the SEND Strategy and the Accessibility Strategy. The Committee received a presentation summarising the

background to the report, core priorities and aims for ensuring a step changed in improved outcomes for children/young people. The Committee resolved to note the contents of the report and adopt and endorse the Inclusion Strategy 2020-25.

The Committee received a report on the programme and progress being made to address the areas of concern identified by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission in the February 2019 SEND local area inspection. The report dealt with DfE monitoring visits, programme updates and progress and improvement relating to EHCPs and the clearance of the backlog. Members resolved to note the report and thanked the officers involved in reducing the backlog of EHCPs.

The Committee received a report summarising the law on elective home education, explaining how the Council meets its statutory responsibilities regarding EHE, and providing data on EHE. Members noted the issues around EHE monitoring and support, child protection, EHCPs and the reasons for children becoming electively home educated.

Members received an update on the draft revenue budget process and received the draft capital programme for services within the Committee's remit. The Committee considered the draft capital budget proposals relating to its remit and noted that consultation was continuing on all revenue policy proposals previously reported, with feedback being presented to the Cabinet on 10 February 2021, together with further revenue options to close the gap and ensure a balanced budget in 2021/22.

For a future meeting the Committee resolved to request officers to produce a brief report on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on schools, testing and Council strategy – including attendance/opening of schools, remote learning and the roll out of digital devices – and to provide data regarding the number of schools where have had Covid cases, etc. so can see trends and what's happening in schools

Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Members considered four topics in relation to Transportation in Walsall and the wider West Midlands. The Committee invited a number of representatives from Transport for West Midlands and Black Country Transport.

The Committee noted proposals for a SPRINT network on the A34 between Walsall and Birmingham which will enable fast travel into Birmingham in preparation for the Commonwealth Games in 2022.

Transport for West Midlands were engaging in proposals for a West Midlands Enhanced Partnership Scheme which would create a roadmap for cooperation with transportation providers.

The Committee were provided an update on bus vehicular carbon emissions and how the Black Country Transport team collaboration was managing key investments in the Black Country.

The Committee were provided with an update on the Councils Carbon Neutral strategy. Members asked a number of questions and requested clarification on certain aspects of the report.

The Committee were provided with an overview of the Town Deals fund which aims at driving sustainable economic regeneration of Walsall towns to deliver long term economy and productivity growth. The Committee then received a private presentation regarding a number of upcoming projects using the Town Deals fund.

Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee is scheduled to meet on 28 January 2021. Items on the agenda include:

- Draft capital programme;
- Covid-19;
- Outpatient service redesign;
- Stroke pathways
- Walsall Together update.

A verbal update on the meeting will be provided at SOC on 1 December 2020.

Authors:

Craig Goodall
Senior Democratic Services Officer
☎ 01922 654765
✉ Craig.Goodall@walsall.gov.uk

Paul Fantom
Democratic Services Officer
☎ 01922 653484
✉ Paul.Fantom@walsall.gov.uk

Nikki Gough
Democratic Services Officer
☎ 01922 654767
✉ Nikki.Gough@walsall.gov.uk

Matt Powis
Democratic Services Officer
☎ 01922 654764
✉ Matthew.Powis@walsall.gov.uk

