

16 September 2021

Areas of focus for 2021/22

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor A. Andrew – Deputy Leader of the Council and
Regeneration
Councillor O. Butler – Clean and Green
Councillor G. Perry – Deputy Leader and Resilient Communities
Councillor C. Towe – Education and Skills

Report:

The purpose of this report is to provide relevant background information for Members so that the Committee's areas of focus can be agreed for 2021/22.

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

The Remit of this Committee is as follows:-

All aspects and general services related to the economy and environment.

Responsibility of scrutiny of flood risk management functions which may affect the Local Authority's area as required by the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 within the functions set out in Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 (As amended).

Items recommended from previous year

The following main items of business were considered by the Committee during the 2020/21 municipal year:

- M6 Junction 10 Update
- Council Run Events – Bonfires/Fireworks
- Cycling in Walsall
- Petition: Road Safety at Doe Bank Lane
- Town Deal Board
- Presentation from Transport for West Midlands

- Carbon Neutral Council Strategy
- A34 Walsall to Birmingham SPRINT
- Black Country Transport Teams Collaboration
- West Midlands Enhanced Partnership Scheme
- Black Country Consortium

The Committee has the following pending items for 2021/22:

- Employment, Growth and Skills;
- District Town Centres Update;
- M6 Junction 10 Update
- Carbon Neutral Council – Scheduled update for 2021
- Town Deal Board – Scheduled update for 2021
- The Council's Waste Strategy – In tandem with the Environmental Bill 2020, scheduled for late 2021/early 2022.
- Road safety action plan – Delayed until June 2021
- Partnership working with West Midlands Police on traffic speed enforcement.
- School Streets – New Item suggested by the former Councillor Shires
- Cycling provision – Outreach/Government
- Ban on evictions for social landlords
- Phoenix 10 Project update
- Off-Road Bikes Working Group
- Council's Tree Planting Strategy
- Willenhall Masterplan
- Black Country Plan
- Electric Vehicle Charging

Budget scrutiny

Monitoring the financial performance of the Council is a valuable and important task. It assists Members in identifying areas that are underperforming that may require scrutiny. Therefore it is suggested that the Committee receives a financial end of year outturn report and quarterly updates and outturn forecasts throughout the year.

Quarter 1 and Quarter 3 Financial reports will be circulated via e-mail to Members of the Committee and will not form part of the Committee's Agenda.

Council performance

The Council's Corporate Budget Plan 2018/19-2021/22, as agreed by the Council in February 2019, 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.

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. Updates of these will be provided to the Committee 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. Resource wise it is recommended that only one working group be established at a time.

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.

Recommendation:

That Members consider the range of issues within this report and formulate and agree a work programme for the year.

Contact Officer:

Matt Powis
Democratic Services Officer
 01922 654764
 matthew.powis@walsall.gov.uk

Craig Goodall
Senior Democratic Services Officer
 01922 654765
 craig.goodall@walsall.gov.uk