

Council – 21 May 2007

Annual Scrutiny Report 2006/07

Portfolio: Performance Management – Councillor Longhi

Service: Corporate Performance Management

Wards All

Summary of report

This is the annual report to Council outlining the work of scrutiny for 2006/07. The report provides an overview of the work undertaken during the municipal year by each of the panels and their respective work groups. The report also highlights the work streams that will be carried over into the new municipal year.

The report also details how scrutiny is structured and considers the potential impact of new legislation and statutory duties and how these could impact on the panel structure.

Recommendations

Council are recommended to:

- (1) note the annual scrutiny report for the 2006/07 municipal year (annexed) and that this will inform the further developments of the council's scrutiny function.

Resource and legal considerations

Scrutiny is a key aspect of the governance framework and an integral part of how the council makes effective decisions. Good scrutiny can help to inform policy making and help ensure that decisions taken by the cabinet are in effectively considered prior to implementation. The role of Scrutiny is defined in Walsall's constitution, article 6.

Citizen impact

Effective scrutiny enables the public to fully engage in the topics under review. Ensuring that the items for consideration are effectively communicated via the council's website and public notice boards encourages citizens to become involved in the scrutiny process. Any potential work item that will have citizen impact will be fully scoped and include the opportunity for public involvement

Environmental impact

The work of scrutiny picks up on a range of environmental factors across the whole borough. There are no direct environmental considerations as a result of this report.

Performance and risk management issues

The role of Scrutiny is fundamental in ensuring that the most effective and informed decisions are taken whilst delivering value for money for residents. This report provides

an overview of the work undertaken by Scrutiny which helps to achieve these objectives.

Asking members to recognise and review past achievements and consider the potential items to scrutinise helps to ensure that Scrutiny focus their attention on the main issues that have strategic relevance and importance to the council as a whole.

Incorporating an effective scoping process enables Scrutiny to take a risk based approach to the development of their potential work programmes; focussing on the key issues that affect the performance of the council, impact on service delivery or potentially result in service delivery that does not meet resident expectation or offer value for money. The Council's priorities and pledges are all considered when looking at potential work programmes for the following year and frequent performance monitoring reports are presented to individual Scrutiny and Performance Panels.

Equality implications

This report details all of the work that Scrutiny has been involved with across the whole borough. Scrutiny Members represent a number of wards across the borough and actively work with residents to best represent their views at Scrutiny.

Consultation

Individual panels have sought the expert opinion and views from witnesses to ensure that a balanced perspective is provided against any of the work topics under consideration. This year, evidence has been brought to the panel by officers, members of the public, officers from other authorities, independent experts and consultants. In addition the specific panel input from the end of year report had been considered by each panel prior to publication.

Vision

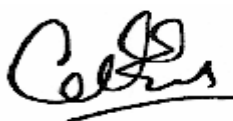
Effective Scrutiny will touch on each of the priorities identified within the council vision. These priorities are all considered during the scoping exercise of establishing of a work programme. Outcomes identified within this report and delivered through Scrutiny can help the council to achieve its stated ambition of becoming an excellent authority.

Background papers

Scrutiny Annual Report at **Appendix 1**.

Carole Evans – Executive Director

1 May 2007

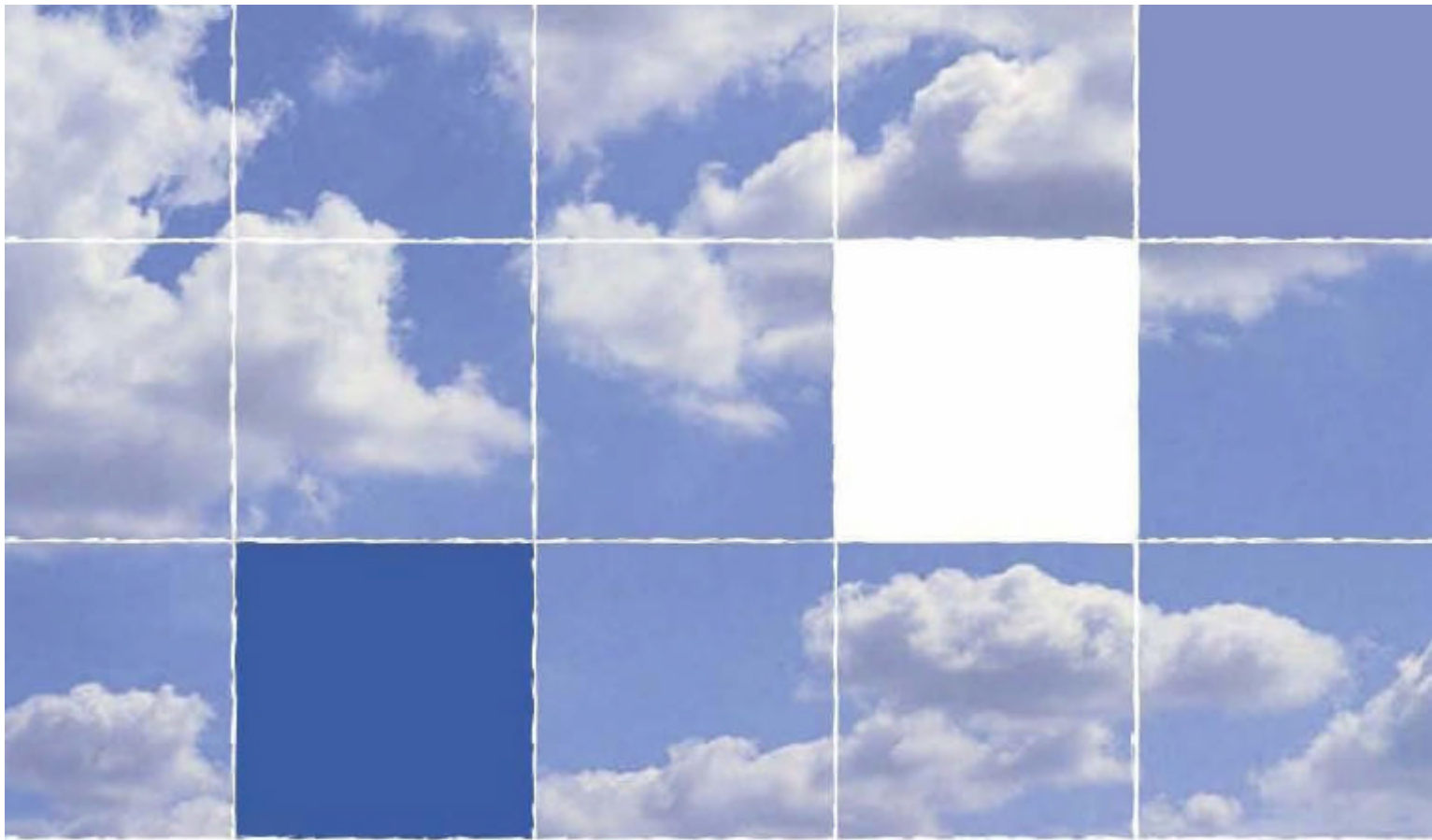


Author

Simon Evans – Principal Performance and Scrutiny Officer

☎ 01922 652140

✉ evanssimon@walsall.gov.uk



Scrutiny Annual Report 2006-07



Walsall Council

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Introduction

Scrutiny is about helping the Council achieve its priorities and making the Council more accountable for the decisions they make on behalf of the local community by questioning key decisions made by the council's executive (cabinet) and officers.

Scrutiny provides the opportunity for councillors to examine the various functions of the council, to ask questions on how decisions have been made, to consider whether service improvements can be put in place and make recommendations to this effect.

Scrutiny panels can invite those who they believe can help with their investigations to give 'evidence' and the public attending are welcome to participate in asking questions of those making submissions to the panel. Scrutiny needs to be fully focussed on those things that matter most and on outcomes that make a real difference to local citizens.

Scrutiny and performance panels carry out their role through:

- Monitoring of Cabinet decisions and challenging Cabinet Members as to why they have taken a particular decision and, if not satisfied, asking them to think again.
- Undertaking investigation into specific service areas or issues. These can be in-depth inquiries into specific subjects, leading to substantial recommendations for how things need to change.
- Making recommendations to Cabinet/Council.
- Contributing towards policy development and scrutinising draft policy and project plans before they are implemented by the executive.
- Health consultations – by law we have a responsibility to respond to the NHS when they are proposing changes to health service delivery.
- Monitoring the financial and service performance of the Council.
- Tracking progress in implementing approved scrutiny recommendations.

Further information on the role of scrutiny in the authority can be found in our "Tool-Kit for Scrutiny" which can be requested from our scrutiny team (see contact details).

You can also suggest a topic for a scrutiny review using our review form at appendix A.

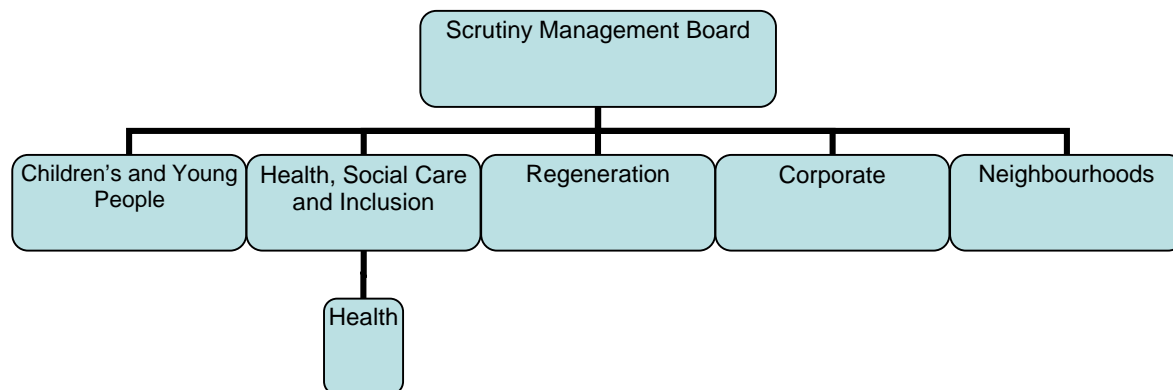
Structure of Scrutiny

Walsall has five scrutiny and performance panels, each one shadowing a strategic theme of the Council's work.

The panels are:

- Children's and Young People
- Corporate
- Health, Social Care and inclusion – the Health Scrutiny Panel operates as a sub-committee of this panel.
- Neighbourhoods
- Regeneration

The panels are overseen by a Scrutiny Management Board (SMB), consisting of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the scrutiny and performance panels.



Scrutiny Management Board

The Board operates with a rolling chair between the chairs of the scrutiny and performance panels:

Councillor Arif
Councillor Burley
Councillor Griffiths
Councillor Oliver
Councillor D Pitt
Councillor E Pitt
Councillor M Pitt
Councillor Sarohi
Councillor I Shires
Councillor Towe

The panel's role is:

- To co-ordinate the work of the Council's scrutiny and performance panels
- To act as a forum to share good scrutiny practice and to ensure that scrutiny procedures are maintained in accordance with the constitution
- To ensure that referrals from scrutiny to Cabinet, either by way of report or for consideration following a call-in, are managed effectively
- To proposed amendments to the scrutiny arrangements within the Constitution to Council
- To make decisions about the priority of referrals made to the executive in the event of the number of reports exceeding the limits in the Constitution
- To raise the profile of scrutiny

The newly established Board has considered a variety of issues throughout the year.

Terms of Reference

The Board agreed terms of reference, its remit, and a rotating chair for the municipal year 2006/7. However, as scrutiny has evolved and matured, it is now recommended that the chair be a fixed position supported by 2 vice chairs.

Value for Money (VFM) Framework

The Board was introduced to the VFM framework developed by Corporate Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel and piloted by the Revenues and Benefits service. The intention was that, once completed by the service, the information would be reported back to the relevant panel. It was agreed that each panel would adopt the use of the framework to provide consistency across the panels in how a value for money review was completed where capacity allowed.

Scrutiny and Cabinet

The Board discussed the frequency of the production of Cabinet's Forward Plan in relation to the cycle of scrutiny meetings. Following debate around the possibility of incorporating a specific date for scrutiny prior to Cabinet, the focus moved to the level of communication and the relationships between scrutiny and Cabinet portfolio holders. There was agreement that it was important to ensure Cabinet's Forward Plan was given due consideration as soon as possible after it has been produced in order to decide if items should be scrutinised and to clearly define the expectations of scrutiny panels on portfolio holders. They also felt that it was important that scrutiny members presented scrutiny reports at Cabinet meetings.

Resources for scrutiny and the structure of scrutiny.

The Board expressed their concerns over the turnover of staff in the scrutiny team and the impact on continuity this could have. The Board was assured that turnover of staff was due to promotions and continued career progression which reflected well on the service. The service and the directorate within which it sits has a strong and well founded reputation for the successful development of staff.

The Board also stated that difficulties could arise in terms of the level of support and continuity of staff from directorates when supporting the scrutiny process. There was some discussion about the remits of the panels and their impact on the depth of scrutiny. Officers explained that the remits of all scrutiny panels was set by annual council and contained within the Constitution and mirrored the directorate structure



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of the Council. The Board discussed several possible structures as it is within their remit to recommend changes but no proposals have yet been presented.

The Budget Process

Members expressed frustration regarding their engagement in budget consultation and that they felt they received budgetary information too late for them to actually be able to make recommendations that could be given full consideration. The budget process is a whole year consideration and directorates are aware of the issues that they were facing over the next 12 months or more that were likely to have budget implications. Furthermore, whilst detailed financial information would not be available, services should be able to brief scrutiny panels on the issues they are facing early in the municipal year. Members agreed this would be valuable information to receive.



Scrutiny and Performance Panels

Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel



Chairman:
Councillor Arif

Others members are:

Councillor E.E.Pitt
Councillor Bird
Councillor Cassidy
Councillor Chambers
Councillor Creaney
Councillor Martin
Councillor Micklewright

Vacancy

And representatives from:

Lichfield Diocesan Education
Archbishop of Birmingham
Parent Governors
Primary Teachers
Secondary Teachers

The panel's remit includes

- All responsibilities of the Council under the Children Act
- Educational opportunities
- Schools
- Support to schools and other bodies in collaboration with Education Walsall
- WEB, SERCO contract interface
- Education Walsall
- Homes and families
- Carers
- Looked after children
- Corporate parenting
- Health and social care needs of care leavers
- Disabled children and young people
- Service planning and provision
- Assessment
- Inclusion and family support
- Child protection and review
- Children's placements
- District youth work
- Specialist youth work
- Youth Opinions Unite
- Staff training & development
- Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme
- Children and Young People Partnership
- Print and design
- Procurement



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The panel has considered a variety of issues from the work programme agreed at the start of the year. Key areas of work were:

Section 106 contributions

The panel received a draft report outlining how the Council was seeking to alleviate the impact of the new development in terms of the additional pressure it would put on existing educational provision by requiring developers to make reasonable compensation to the Council for any additional capacity required.

The panel were concerned over how the monies raised would be distributed and spent. The panel requested information on section 106 contributions, including the formula for the education contributions and a breakdown of all such monies received over the preceding 24 months and where this money had been spent. Members questioned who received payments, where they were used and sought assurance that the money received through section 106 was invested into children's education.

To safeguard the distribution of section 106 monies the panel resolved that should Cabinet refuse Serco permission to spend any section 106 contributions the panel were informed of the reasons why.

The panel requested that in the future the panel received quarterly information on section 106 detailing contributions received where they were intended for, and where they were actually spent.

Change for children – education option appraisal

The panel had agreed that it should be involved in the 'change for children programme' from an early stage. The education options appraisal was taken to members and the panel recommended that:

- The service should not be transferred back to the Council
- The contact should not be an intervention contract
- The panel supports the pursuit of option 4 Part EU Procurement (Part B) as detailed in the 'Change for Children' presentation.

The panel will continue to oversee the procurement of the contract.

Joint Area Review (JAR)

A detailed overview of the JAR was considered by the panel. At a subsequent meeting the panel received information on the cost of the JAR, based on the experiences of other authorities. The panel requested that up to £200,000 be made available to Children's Services to support the facilitation of the JAR. As a result of the panels' request, Cabinet included £50,000 in the draft 2007/08? corporate budget plan

(that was subsequently approved by full Council) towards the preparation for the JAR.

Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks

The panel recognised the importance of CRB checks for all elected members. Members revisited the recommendation that all elected members should undergo enhanced police checks (CRB) as endorsed by Cabinet on 1 March 2006. Officers recommended that Cabinet and Scrutiny members should be given priority in the first instance. Members suggested that elected members who were not up for election in May 2007 should be CRB checked in the first instance. The panel received CRB forms and guidance on completing the forms. Completion of the forms has been monitored by the panel.

School uniforms

The panel considered information brought to it, by a local resident, on the issues surrounding the cost of school uniforms and restrictions on supply that a number of parents faced. The issue was raised with head teachers at the West Midlands Directors meeting and with the Department of Education and Skills (DfES.) It recommended that a model charging policy for schools, outlining good practice, was produced and that the government make funds available to enable local authorities to provide school uniform grants as a statutory duty for low income families. This was subsequently raised this issue in a meeting with a Government minister.

It was agreed that the panel would receive feedback following discussions with head teachers about the production of a good practice guide, which would include the broad principles of the DfES guidance.

School organisation matters

The panel considered this item following a request from a Councillor who had been approached by local residents with concerns about the consultation process and eventual closure of the Beechdale School. It was requested that the panel ensured that the lessons learnt from this exercise had been taken on board so that residents felt listened to. To ensure that this happened the panel requested a further report, which gave a chronology of events. Parents of children who had attended Beechdale School were present at the meeting and explained the problems that they had experienced.

It was agreed that where a school is closed, the panel monitor the replacement of the children where possible to identify if the closure of a school has had an impact on the child's performance. Also a report was sent to Cabinet requesting that in the future, the contents of any



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Cabinet report on schools closures are discussed with parents and a report detailing how the closure has been handled is provided to the panel.

In addition, the panel has:

- Received regularly monitored performance issues
- Received an update on teenage pregnancy
- Received information on NRF relating to Children's projects
- Received the youth service action plan
- Been provided with updates on Fibbersley Park and Mary Elliot
- Considered the budget and made comments and recommendations to Cabinet

Working Groups

The panel also constituted two working groups looking at the social inclusion agenda and safeguarding children.

The social inclusion working group focused on scrutinising the issues around the under-achievement of children of Pakistani / Bangladeshi heritage. The panel agreed that the working group be constituted until 2008 so to track the implementation of children's trusts.

The safeguarding children working group set its remit to review the factors that contribute to abuse categories and to determine what this information signifies.

Corporate Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel



Chairman:
Councillor Griffiths

Other members are:

Councillor Sarohi
Councillor Bird
Councillor J. Phillips
Councillor Rochelle
Councillor D. Shires
Councillor Towe
Councillor Turner
Councillor Young

The panel's remit includes

- Accountancy, financial planning, funding
- Financial systems
- Local taxation (council tax & business rates)
- Housing and welfare benefits, anti poverty
- Insurance and treasury management
- Payrolls and pensions
- Debtors and creditors
- Beacon index, performance reporting
- Performance analysis and review
- CPA inspections
- Best value (BVPP, reviews, policy etc)
- Complaints
- Freedom of Information
- Legal services (including monitoring officer) – contracts, non-contentious, conveyancing, advice, litigation, social services team
- Democratic services (including constitutional and member support services)
- Human Resources and Organisational Development
- Process re-engineering
- Improving customer experience



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The panel considered a number of items before deciding on its work programme for the year. This year, five main themes have been scrutinised, two of which have been delivered through work groups.

Value for Money Framework

The panel have recognised the importance of the value for money (vfm) agenda and the need to ensure that the principles of economy, effectiveness and efficiency are built into operational processes. Members have worked closely with officers to produce a vfm framework. This is an assessment tool which asks the selected service to provide financial data, benchmarking information, customer and user feedback and performance information. This enables the members and officers to make an assessment as to whether or not the service is providing vfm, and perhaps more importantly embedding the principles of vfm within its operations. The framework also enables members to offer constructive commentary and guidance based on the information.

Following a successful pilot within the Revenues and Benefits service, the vfm framework has been presented to the Scrutiny Management Board who have adopted the framework. This will now be considered for use by every panel that undertakes a service review.

Review of the Welfare Rights Service

Following a resolution at the Revenues and Benefits work group, a motion was passed at full Council requesting the panel to review the possible benefits of changing the status of the Welfare Rights Service to an independent trust.

The panel have worked closely with officers to agree a process for fully evaluating the proposal and ensuring that the decision is reached at the earliest possible opportunity in order to maximise the potential benefits.

Members have provided input to the draft consultants report when it was delivered at their final panel meeting in April, they will also have the opportunity to scrutinize the findings of the final report when it is delivered in the new municipal year.

Budget Consultation

In order to better prepare for the budget consultation, members requested and received training on Overview of the Budget Setting Process and An introduction to Local Government Finance.

The panel had a number of opportunities to consider the draft budget proposals for 2007/08. They undertook a decision conference event over 2 evenings in November and held a further special budget meeting in January. This covered both the Council wide proposals and specific proposals relating to services within their remit. The panel approved

the investment proposals in full, and made a number of recommendations in respect of savings proposals. In addition, scrutiny raised other ideas for identifying savings, of which one was taken on board. The two proposals which caused major concern (reducing litter sweeping frequencies and reducing central library opening hours) were taken on board by Cabinet and removed from their final budget proposals

Working Groups

Performance Related Pay (PRP)

This panel explored the PRP scheme that operates at the Council. Members questioned who the scheme applies to, how it works and how targets were measured. Having been satisfied that the PRP scheme is working effectively and that targets are challenging, outcome focussed and are frequently reviewed, the panel were happy to conclude that the PRP scheme was making an effective contribution to the continuous improvement of Walsall Council.

Following the evidence presented within the work group, members were minded to suggest that the scheme be developed further to extend to other staff groups within the Council. The group also suggested that the Council build on the success of the PRP scheme and look to provide incentives as a means to help reduce sickness levels and absenteeism.

The outputs from the group were put forward as part of feedback towards a new pay and rewards strategy.

Revenues and Benefits

The revenues and benefits work group have looked at a number of items this year as part of a performance review of the service.

This has included:

- Member visit to Telford Council to look at their Electronic Document Management System (EDMS)
- Received presentations from potential EDMS suppliers
- Completion of the VFM assessment tool
- Consideration of the benefits service options appraisal
- Review of the Benefits Fraud Inspectorate Report and service action plan
- Monitoring of action plans
- EDMS implementation plan



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As a result of this work and through excellent co-operation between members and officers the following recommendations have been made to Cabinet and subsequently supported:

1. That the “mixed economy” option be endorsed as the way forward for the Revenue and Benefits Service and that
2. That the requirement for front-loaded investment of £400k be noted and the proposed sources of this funding be endorsed.

In addition, throughout the year officers have regularly delivered progress updates on the revenues and benefits improvement plan; officers have found this process to be constructive and supportive which has led to detailed discussion and input from members which has helped to make a positive impact on the service performance.

Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel



Chairman:
Councillor Oliver

Other members are:

Councillor D.Pitt
Councillor Ault
Councillor Barton
Councillor Griffiths
Councillor McCracken
Councillor Micklewright
Councillor Robertson
Councillor Woodruff

The panel's remit includes the following services

- Adult Care
- People with learning disabilities
- People with physical disabilities/ sensory impairment
- Older people
- People with mental health problems
- Strategic housing
- Homelessness and housing advice
- Gypsies and travellers
- Supporting People
- Aids and adaptations
- Renovation grants
- Access to housing
- Private sector housing
- Domestic energy efficiency
- Housing Strategy and partnerships
- Health
- tPCT



Health, Social Care and Inclusion

The panel commenced this year's deliberations by scoping its work programme and establishing its health sub-committee to scrutinise the services provided by the NHS. A variety of issues from the work programme were considered. Key areas of work were:

Community Meals

This item was a continuation from last years work stream, which it had contributed to during the 2004/5 and 2005/6 municipal year. The tender process and the options open to potential bidders were discussed. Union representation was invited to each panel meeting, and their views were sought accordingly. Following concerns that the tender process did not specify that the hot meal option would be delivered through the provision of a prime cooked meal a report was sent to Cabinet recommending that the process was re-tendered or an alternative means to achieving the same outcome of a prime cooked meal was sought.

The panel called in Cabinets decision to re-affirm the decision that the option to provide the service as either a prime cooked meal or a regenerated frozen meal should remain open and subject to the tendering process and that the tendering process already commenced would be completed. Following a resolution at the panel call-in, the item was sent to Council for its consideration.

Council called upon Cabinet to reconsider pursuing all (legal and imaginative) avenues to ensure that users of our meals-on-wheels service retain the option for a freshly (prime) cooked daily meal. Cabinet noted the concerns raised by Council, and reaffirmed its original decision that the service should remain open and subject to the tendering process.

Modernisation of learning disability day services

The results of consultation with service users were shared with the panel. The panel agreed to receive twice yearly updates on the progress of the modernisation of learning disability day services together with being informed of any significant concerns expressed by service users or carers.

Cabinet agreed that this Panel should be provided with updates on progress together with being informed of any significant concerns expressed by service users or carers.

Walsall's inspection of Social Care Services for older people action plan

The panel received the report of social care services for older people inspection and considered the results. The panel agreed to scrutinise the inspection action plan which was formulated to address the issues raised by the social care services for older people inspection report. It was agreed that the panel would monitor delivery of the action plan at 4, 8 and 12 months.

Reprovision of residential and day care services for older people

The panel received information as part of the ongoing gateway review, the panel considered

1. Outcome of formal consultation with residents
2. Site selection
3. TUPE proposals
4. Project timescales

Members received information and questioned elements of the contract.

Strategic Housing

The panel has received an overview of homelessness issues in Walsall and decent homes in the private sector.

Performance Monitoring

In addition, the panel has actively monitored measured performance and financial performance through:

- Regularly monitored a performance scorecard
- Received the Adult Social Care services delivery and improvement statements
- Considered the budget and made comments and recommendations to Cabinet

Aids and Adaptations Working Group

The panel also constituted a working group looking at Aids and Adaptations.

Working Groups

The group received a historical overview of housing services, when it was inherited by Social Care and Inclusion as a failing service. Contact details of the team were sent to members. Members considered a variety of information including the following;

- How the adaptations were maintained and insured.
- Current policy and procedures for aids and adaptations.



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Health Scrutiny Panel



Chairman:
Councillor Woodruff

Other members are:

Councillor D.Pitt
Councillor Micklewright
Councillor Robertson
Dr Sam Ramiah – Director of
Public Health
Mr Jim Weston – Patient Forum
Mrs D. Russell – PALS (NHS)
Ms Louise Mabley – PALS
(PCT)

The panel's remit includes

This panel is a sub-committee of the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel. The remit of this panel is to scrutinise the services provided by the NHS.

Health Scrutiny Panel

The Health Scrutiny Panel was re-established with full delegated powers to scrutinise the local health service. It scoped its own work programme and commenced consideration of issues from it.

The consultation documents set out below were also considered by the Health Scrutiny Panel and the panel's views were submitted to the tPCT and the Hospital trust as appropriate:

- Health Care Commission Annual Health Check
- Future configuration of mental health services in the Black Country
- Foundation Trust Status for Manor hospital
- Private Finance initiative (PFI)

NHS Bank

Council requested that the Health Scrutiny Panel scrutinised the Council and its partners' ability to deliver improved community health outcomes in light of the NHS Bank. The panel monitored the impact of the NHS Bank on Council and Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets. Performance monitoring reports were taken to the panel on a quarterly basis.

Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Manor Hospital

The panel were kept updated on the progress of the PFI at the Manor Hospital, and given detailed plans on the future of the hospital. The panel provided advice on consulting with stakeholders; recommending that more consideration was given to seeking the views of young people and the Black Minority Ethnic community. The panel also requested that the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel were asked to consider the issue of transportation around the area of the hospital, in consideration of the development.

Goscote Hospital

The panel received the site specification and operational plans of the Goscote site and discussed plans for a dementia care unit. The panel agreed that it should continue to monitor this item.

Mental health services

The panel received the estates strategy and considered it in relation to the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). The panel received information on changes in the way services are delivered as a result of national guidance, such as single sex wards and the stripping of smoking rooms.



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The panel were regularly verbally up-dated on progress in exploring the reconfiguration of mental health provider services with the options of developing a cross authority provider trust, initially across 3 LA areas (Walsall, Dudley and Sandwell). The panel received a report on the implementation of new Section 31 Partnership Agreements to formalise the lead commissioning arrangements with the tPCT and to formalise the existing arrangements for integrated provision.

Foundation Trust Status

Members have provided input into the Manor Hospitals application for Foundation Trust status. The panel were informed that the hospital will gain much more independence from central government, have a far larger say in how its services are developed in the future and it will be more accountable to the people it serves. The panel learnt that hospitals have more responsibility for their own financial affairs and have new opportunities to borrow money to invest in improving services that meet the needs of the population they serve.

Members considered the proposed membership of the foundation trust, posed challenging questions about Black Minority Ethnic (BME) and voluntary sector representation. The panel commented on the proposed partner organisations that would be represented on the Council of governors and agreed with the name change of the hospital to Manor Hospital Walsall NHS Foundation Trust.

Healthcare Commission Annual Health Check

Each financial year, the Healthcare Commission is required to review the provision of healthcare across England and publish a performance rating of all NHS organisations in England that commission and provide healthcare. The annual health check is designed to answer two questions:

- are healthcare organisations getting the basics right?
- are healthcare organisations making and sustaining progress?

The panel has the responsibility of providing a third party commentary on the teaching Primary Care Trust (tPCT) and Hospital Trust self declaration. The chair of the panel provided the background to the annual health check, and the panel established a work group to provide its third party commentary on the core standards of the Hospital, tPCT, and West Midlands Ambulance Service.

Falls prevention

This item was chosen for scrutiny by the panel as a target for the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to increase life expectancy, and key to this was reducing the incidence of falls (consequently a Local Area Agreement target). The panel received detail on the national service

framework, and were notified that a falls prevention coordinator would be appointed, to bring about a multi-agency approach. Members discussed how falls could be prevented and the panel suggested that the environment in which an older person lives, needed to change and risk assessment of homes may be needed to prevent falls.

The panel also considered the following as part of their work programme:

- Hospital discharges
- Intermediate care strategy
- Falls prevention
- Psychology action plan

Working Groups

The panel constituted an obesity working group.

The obesity working group considered the 'Healthy Walsall Workforce: Promoting Health in the Workplace' paper. The group set its remit to consider how to help to create opportunities to reduce obesity levels in employees working in the public sector in Walsall. Officers provided information on leisure facilities in the borough. External witnesses presented National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance and what this meant for Walsall. The panel considered 'A Toolkit for Evaluating Walsall's Progress in Addressing Overweight and Obesity.'

A further working group will be arranged to allow detailed consideration of this toolkit.



Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel



Chairman:
Councillor Towe

Others members are:

Councillor Burley
Councillor Ault
Councillor Beeley
Councillor Beilby
Councillor Bott
Councillor Griffiths
Councillor K.Phillips
Councillor Woodruff

The panel's remit includes

- Safer Walsall Borough Partnership (including crime and disorder strategy)
- Libraries and heritage
- Sports and leisure
- New Art Gallery
- Green Spaces
- Arts events and marketing
- Customer contact
- College of Continuing Education
- Electoral registration and administration
- Neighbourhood Partnerships merged with Programmes Team
- Programme Team - manages a range of external funds including, SRB, ESF, ERDF, and NRF
- LNPs
- Community development
- Voluntary and community sectors
- Equalities
- Emergency planning and business continuity
- Pollution
- Highways maintenance and traffic management
- Refuse collection and waste disposal
- Street cleansing; grounds maintenance
- Managing land and property
- Public protection in relation to public health / consumer issues
- Registrar
- Coroner

The panel has considered a variety of issues from the work programme agreed at the start of the year. Key areas of work were:

Highways maintenance options appraisal

A special meeting of the panel was held to consider the report regarding highways repair and maintenance (HRM). The panel received a draft copy of the Cabinet report and a presentation from officers that detailed three (3) proposed options.

The panel recognised that action was required to ensure improvements in HRM occurred that demonstrated value for money and better met the expectations of residents.

The panel supported, in principle, the recommendations as detailed in the Cabinet report but recommended that Cabinet only proceed providing each phase of development to enter into a partnered framework contract was subject to full scrutiny, including costings by the panel.

Sustainability of the Wardens Service

The panel were informed of the critical finding of the report, by the Neighbourhood Renewal Advisor's, that although the Wardens' programme was perceived as making a significant contribution to the Neighbourhood Renewal agenda, it could not be evidenced. The report contained an appraisal of four options and made comment on significant management and operational matters. The work was undertaken at a time when a new role for Police Community Safety Officers (PCSOs) and a move towards community policing was emerging.

The panel were informed that the issue would go forward to the executive board of the Local Strategic Partnership for consideration and prioritisation through the target action plan, with a decision likely to be made in February 2007.

The panel were broadly supportive of the service and heard from members of the service and other key stakeholders.

The Portfolio holder informed the panel that Council had amended and agreed a motion supporting the option "to seek funding for a further year using NRF resources linked to a review and evaluation programme", including a service level agreement, in order that the service could be evaluated.



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In addition, the panel has:

- Received regularly monitored performance issues
- Considered the budget and made comments and recommendations to Cabinet
- Received updates from the Citizen's Panel
- Received presentations on the Safer Walsall Borough Partnership, the discarded needles scheme and the Library service

Working Groups

The panel also constituted working groups to consider; Walsall Illuminations, the Greenspaces Strategy, Community Associations lease arrangements and decriminalised parking enforcement.

The Walsall Illuminations Working Group

This group was constituted to input into a consultation process following the final report of SQW Ltd. on the future of the Illuminations. The Group met in September and made a number of recommendations that were incorporated into a report to Cabinet in December. Following the agreement of the recommendations in this report, the Working Group has evolved into a steering group to develop and oversee a 5 year plan for Walsall Illuminations. The steering group will continue to meet, but has transferred from scrutiny into the service.

The Greenspaces strategy

The group was constituted to consider the greenspaces action plan with a view to prioritising the strategic objectives as part of the consultation process.

Subsequently, the group recommended that:

- The Council will ensure that greenspaces are safe and attractive places for children and young people to play and socialise.
- The Council will produce clear maintenance schedules with demonstrable outputs and communicate these to staff, friends groups and the wider community.
- The Council will produce clear minimum service standards so that friends groups and local people know what to expect from grounds maintenance works and also levels of support in developing new projects.
- The Council will review the role and location of frontline staff employed as park rangers and mobile patrol staff.

- The Council will consider how new investment in parks and greenspaces can be sustained in the long term to a high standard.
- The Council will develop models of good practice and make everyone aware of them.
- The Council will continue to provide dog bins and signage on green spaces and promote the message of responsible dog ownership and use its powers to enforce the current legislation.
- The Council will review the structure of the Greenspaces Service especially in relation to creating opportunities for development, policy and strategic planning.
- The Council will consider management and maintenance planning at the earliest stage of developing new capital projects and it should do this with other partners, service providers and stakeholders.
- The Council will continue to provide a range of opportunities for local people to take part in practical conservation activities that encourage participation and physical activity.
- The Council will review the role of frontline staff and their location.
- The Council and its partners will continue to promote the health benefits of allotments.
- The Council will put in place appropriate mechanisms to ensure that up-to-date and accurate GIS data is shared across directorates.
- The Council will review its expenditure on green space maintenance linked to the management planning process

The Community Associations lease arrangements Working Group

This group was constituted to help develop lease arrangements for those community associations currently without a lease.

The group, along with representatives from the associations, have discussed issues around the level of rent, the length of lease and the liabilities of both the Council and the associations. The results of these discussions have informed a draft lease document for further consultation with the associations.

The Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) Working Group

This group was constituted following a recommendation from Cabinet, with particular reference to:

- (1) The merits of introducing DPE with the management of service, notice processing and appeals service undertaken in house and the enforcement service contracted out.



Walsall Council

- (2) The opportunity to investigate the extent that consistency of implementation and economies of scale can be realised through the shared utilisation of the Sandwell enforcement contract, in collaboration with other Black Country authorities.
- (3) The extent to which DPE wardens can be used as multi-functional enforcement wardens.
- (4) The merits of introducing limited on street charging for Walsall town and district centres, taking account of the implications of its introduction both in financial and traffic management terms.

Following detailed discussions around the issues the panel recommended to Cabinet that:

1. The implementation of DPE proceeds and is monitored by scrutiny on a regular basis.
2. The application to the Secretary of State for DPE powers is received by scrutiny prior to seeking Cabinet approval.
3. The implementation of DPE proceeds in the following way:
 - i. DPE is implemented with the management of service, notice process and appeals service undertaken in-house with the enforcement service contracted out.
 - ii. Further work is undertaken to ensure, as far as possible, that consistency of implementation and economies of scale can be realised through the shared utilisation of the Sandwell enforcement contract.
 - iii. The multifunctional enforcement/ambassadorial role is encompassed and developed within the DPE enforcement remit as legislation permits.
 - iv. The introduction of limited on street charging is initially implemented within Walsall Town Centre, with charges comparable to neighbouring authorities operating on street charging. This will be to ensure the Network Management Duty requirements imposed by the Traffic Management Act 2004 are achieved. Further evaluation of the need to widen on street charges to the District Centres to be undertaken and the findings reported to scrutiny and Cabinet after year one of DPE operation.

Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel



Chairman:
Councillor I. Shires

Other members are:

Councillor M.Pitt
Councillor Anson
Councillor Arif
Councillor Clarke
Councillor Coughlan
Councillor Hughes
Councillor Robinson
Councillor Yasin

The panel's remit includes

- Promotion of the borough as a desirable area for business investment
- Developing an integrated approach for local people to access jobs and training
- Initiating special projects designed to improve the economic regeneration of Walsall
- Policy
- Conservation and improvement of the borough's natural and built environment

- Provision of landscape planning and arboriculture advice to the Council and general public
- Provision of Landscape and Urban Design support for Council
- Delivery of Environmental Improvements throughout Walsall
- Markets
- Contribution to regional and sub-regional planning
- Preparation of the Local Development Framework
- Preparation of transport strategy
- Facilitation and support of major development proposals
- Support of Walsall-based regeneration agencies
- Strategic Transportation
- New Deal for Communities
- Developing the community strategy
- Administering neighbourhood renewal fund (NRF)
- Local Area Agreement administration
- Development control
- Building control
- Local land charges
- Black Country Consortium West Midlands Groups



The panel has considered a variety of issues from the work programme agreed at the start of the year. Key areas of work were:

The Transport Innovation Fund

The Panel received an overview of the issues arising from the Transport Innovation Fund agenda and the subsequent feasibility study and there was general agreement that there was a congestion problem, which was getting worse, and this needed to be tackled.

There then followed discussions around flexible / home working and the scope to move services out to the districts, which would help regenerate the district centres and reduce the volume of traffic concentrated on Walsall town centre. This would need a much better IT system requiring a bid within the next budget round.

There was also agreement that there needed to be a step change improvement in public transport provision before people would be happy to leave the car at home. There were also issues around park & ride and how it could be facilitated. It was suggested that it might be necessary to focus, primarily, on the predictable travel routes, like the routes to work and school.

The panel also thought that road pricing would be in place by 2015, regardless of current public opinion, so plans should be made now. This raised issues about how to change people's perceptions around transportation.

Subsequently, the views of the Panel were incorporated in a report to Cabinet, 20 December. Cabinet approved the report for submission to the West Midlands Transport Innovation Fund.

The Healthcare Supplementary Planning Document

The panel received a draft report outlining how the Council was seeking to mitigate the impact of the new development in terms of the additional pressure it would put on existing health care provision ostensibly by requiring developers to make reasonable compensation to the tPCT for any additional capacity required.

The panel broadly welcomed the report but there were concerns over how the monies raised would be distributed and spent. The panel asked that the report to Cabinet include reference to an accountability and consultation framework in order to satisfy the Council and local residents that any moneys raised were spent appropriately.

This recommendation was subsequently ratified by Cabinet at its meeting of 17 January 2007.

In addition, the panel has:

- Received regularly monitored performance issues.
- Considered the budget and made comments and recommendations to Cabinet.
- Received presentations on; the Local Authority Business Growth Incentives (LABGI), Prospectus for Growth – The Walsall Regeneration Company, Evaluation and impact of past regeneration projects, the planning framework, Transitional funding for Community Wardens, Contract with BT for 3G telecoms, Walsall local accessibility action plan, LNP review of the corridors strategy and the management plans for Walsall locks conservation area.

Working Groups

The panel also constituted three working groups looking at; the proposed Leather Heritage conservation area, Walsall Market and Strategic Transportation issues.

The Leather Heritage Working Group.

This was a continuation from the previous years work stream looking at how the regeneration of the proposed conservation area could be achieved.

The meeting agreed that pursuing conservation status for the area concerned was no longer the preferred option with the Council looking to address heritage needs through updates to the local list of historic buildings. It was explained that buildings were assessed against criteria within the Unitary Development Plan (UDP), to determine if they were eligible for local listing status, stressing that public consultation would include owners and occupiers of selected properties.

The landowners expressed concerns over the restrictions on regeneration these proposals would have. Members and officers reassured the landowners that they had similar aspirations for the area and were willing to work in partnership to move things forward. However, the Council had a duty of care to preserve the local heritage.

It was suggested that the landowners produce a scheme before pursuing local listing status for building within the proposed leather heritage area. This proposed scheme, developed in consultation with the Urban Regeneration Company (URC) would then be taken to the Assistant Director of Regeneration and his team to discuss a way forward for this area.



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It was agreed that in the event of any difficulty in finding a way forward, the working group would reconvene to deal with the issues.

The Walsall Markets Working Group

This group was constituted to review Walsall Market following deteriorating performance spanning over several years.

The group met on 5 occasions, to gather evidence from the service, the Citizen's Panel, the developers and the key stakeholders; such as the market traders. The group also visited examples of best practice in Bury and Sheffield. The group concluded that:

- the current location of the market was a barrier to trade and its relocation could be considered subject to considerable safeguards being in place;
- the current market design was considered a magnet for anti-social behaviour;
- a modern market should be safe, with appropriate parking and toilet facilities;
- the quality of market management was of great importance, regardless of who provides it;
- a modern market should be clean, diverse and be of high quality;
- a modern market should not be a barrier to retailers in and around the market or a barrier to pedestrian movement;
- a modern market should balance with the town centre and help generate foot-fall;
- the market should be constituted of high quality stalls that were either demountable or form an integral part of the street furniture when not in use;
- a modern market should be a core part of the whole town and offer a high quality urban landscape easily accessible from the rest of the town.

At their final meeting the group recommended that Cabinet make funding available to engage a consultant to independently appraise draft plans for the market produced by the developers and that the Scrutiny Panel continue to engage with the developers and stakeholders, to produce a 'fit for purpose' market design for Walsall.

They also wanted to highlight;

- that the market could move location subject to safeguards;
- that the costs of the do-nothing option meant there was not a do nothing option;
- the success of partnership working with the developers and stakeholders;
- the need to re-invest in the quality of the public realm, including Park Street.

These recommendations were subsequently endorsed by Cabinet at its meeting of 28 February 2007.

The Strategic Transportation Working Group

Council requested that the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel investigate and develop a rail service and facilities improvement plan for the borough of Walsall, in order to inform future decisions made by the Department of Transport (DfT), network rail and the operators, and to assist an investigation by the Department of Transport for improved rail services and facilities.

Subsequently the panel referred the matter to this group who in turn held two meetings with key partners and stakeholders, such as Network Rail, Centro, Central Trains and the new franchise bidders to inform the establishment of a process for the production of rail service and facilities improvement plan.

These meetings have informed the development of a Rail Development Plan for the Council.



Walsall Council

The future of scrutiny

As ever, there are many exciting challenges facing both Scrutiny and Walsall Council. Not least amongst these are the demands placed upon the council as a result of forthcoming statutory duties. These include:

- Strong and Prosperous Communities – The Government White Paper on Local Government reform
- Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill
- Police and Justice Act

This will enable the Scrutiny function to look more closely at total community issues and not just those specific to the Council and any associated delivery partners. By ensuring that public opinion is engaged and that all partners are involved, if necessary through the new powers afforded under “duty to co-operate”.

The Local Area Agreement (LAA) provides an existing opportunity to work in close partnership with partner agencies who help to deliver services to residents across the borough. However, developing stronger partnerships should help to ensure that those partners who don't have a statutory duty will also want to engage with scrutiny, looking to ensure that effective local decisions are being made that incorporate the views and needs of residents.

Other considerations that face the council directly is the move away from Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), towards the new performance framework; Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). Once again putting the focus on the place of Walsall and the outcomes residents receive as opposed to the measurement of processes to achieve outcomes. This will provide a further opportunity for the Scrutiny function to fully engage in this topic and to consider how performance management information is considered at every level of decision making.

Community engagement is vital for effective scrutiny. Members of the public already have an opportunity to suggest items for a Scrutiny Review using the online form (appendix A). To help reach out to an even wider audience, a scrutiny leaflet has been produced entitled “Getting your voice heard in Walsall – *A residents guide to Scrutiny at Walsall Council*”. From May 2007 this leaflet will be available for all council libraries and leisure facilities.

In addition, there will be the on-going work of Scrutiny that reflects the practical issues that both residents and members alike, are keen to understand. Items already included on the work programme for Scrutiny panels for 2007/08 include:

- Youth service action plan
- Proposed Mental Health services merger
- Local Involvement Networks (Public involvement in Health)
- Development of Walsall Illuminations
- Performance management information
- Potential Trust Status for the Welfare Rights Service
- Development of the Manor Hospital and Foundation Trust Status
- Adult obesity
- Community associations
- Community meals service
- Day services for people with learning disabilities
- Development of Walsall market
- Strategic transportation issues affecting Walsall



Walsall Council



Walsall Council

REQUEST FOR A SCRUTINY REVIEW BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY	
I would like to register a request for the following matter to be reviewed: Subject:*	
.....	
Reason for Review:*	
.....	
*Please continue on separate sheet if required	
I am (please tick the appropriate circle):	
<input type="radio"/> a Voluntary Group with an interest in the Borough; or <input type="radio"/> a local business situated in the Borough; or <input type="radio"/> a resident of the Borough, who has the support of 9 other local residents whose names and signatures are listed overleaf.	
Name (print):	Signature:
Daytime Tel No.	E-mail Address:
Evening Tel No.	Fax No.
Address:	
Would you like to make a statement to the Council's Scrutiny and Performance Panel in support of your scrutiny request?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Date of request:	





Walsall Council

Support for this review request

	Signatures in support of review request	Name (IN BLOCK CAPITALS)	Address (IN BLOCK CAPITALS)
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			

Please complete and return this form to The Scrutiny Team, Corporate Performance Management, the Council House, Walsall, WS1 1TW

For office use only below:

To be completed by Chair/Vice Chair of the Scrutiny and Performance Panel only.

- Agreement to scrutiny review
 Refusal of scrutiny review

Reasons for refusal:

.....

.....

Signature of Chair/Vice Chair of Scrutiny and Performance Panel

Date:.....





Corporate Performance Management

Walsall Council
The Council House
Walsall
West Midlands
WS1 1TW



01922 65 3527



PerformanceandScrutiny@walsall.gov.uk

Helen Dudson
Corporate Performance and Scrutiny Manager



01922 65 3618



dudsonh@walsall.gov.uk

Simon Evans
Principal Performance and Scrutiny Officer



01922 65 2140



evanssimon@walsall.gov.uk

Nikki Ehlen
Scrutiny Officer



01922 65 2080



ehlenn@walsall.gov.uk

Colin Teasdale
Performance and Scrutiny Officer



01922 65 2998



teasdalec@walsall.gov.uk



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