

## **Scrutiny Overview Committee**

**Thursday 15 June 2023, 6:00pm**

**In the Council Chamber at the Council House, Walsall**

### **Committee Members present:**

Councillor Murray (Chair)  
Councillor Nawaz (Vice Chair)  
Councillor Bains  
Councillor Cooper  
Councillor Bott  
Councillor Ditta  
Councillor Follows  
Councillor Hicken  
Councillor K. Hussain  
Councillor Sears  
Councillor Singh-Sohal

### **Portfolio Holders present:**

Councillor Bird  
Councillor Ali  
Councillor Ferguson  
Councillor Perry

### **Officers present:**

Kerrie Allward	Executive Director, Adult Social Care
Dave Brown	Interim Executive Director, Economy, Environment and Communities
Judith Greenhalgh	Interim Executive Director (Resources)
Sally Rowe	Executive Director, Children's Services
Shaun Darcy	Director - Finance Corporate Performance & Corporate Landlord
Elise Hopkins	Director – Customer Engagement
Nikki Gough	Democratic Services Officer
Edward Cook	Democratic Services Officer

#### **1 Apologies**

There were no apologies.

#### **2 Substitutions**

There were no substitutions.

#### **3 Declarations of interest and party whip**

No declarations of interest or party whip were received.

#### 4 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)**

There were no agenda items requiring the exclusion of the public.

#### 5 **Minutes**

A copy of the minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2023 was submitted.

[Annexed]

#### **Resolved:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2023, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.**

#### 6 **Areas of Focus 2023-24**

The Committee received presentations from Cabinet Portfolio Holders and Officers on services within the remit of the Committee. This included the Executive Director - Adult Social Care, the Interim Executive Director – Resources, the Interim Executive Director - Economy, Environment and Communities and Director - Customer Engagement.

[Annexed].

The presentations outlined the key services within directorates which fall under the remit of the Committee, the structure of directorates, priority focuses within service areas, and suggested areas of focus for the Committee.

The Leader of the Council highlighted the delivery of a balanced budget, staff retention (especially within legal and financial services areas), spending the Walsall pound in Walsall to support local businesses, and continued digitisation of services coupled with taking services out to residents as priorities for the forthcoming year. Members were informed that, priorities for the Hub included the 'We Are Walsall 2040' strategy, brand management, continued revenue-generation opportunities through digital advertising, contract management, and supporting children and families throughout the Borough.

The Deputy Leader highlighted priorities for his service areas as tackling violent crime by working with the local police team and other partner organisations but also to consider issues surrounding the night-time economy and licensing arrangements. Members were advised that deepening and strengthening partnerships with voluntary and community organisations continued to be a priority, as did the continued strengthening of enforcement. A review into temporary accommodation was expected to ensure it was fit for purpose which included the private sector. It was stated that the housing waiting list would be managed by the Council in the near future, and appropriate central government funding would be sought to help migrants and asylum seekers arriving in the Borough.

The Portfolio Holder for Customer highlighted the digitisation of services and rollout of the Walsall Connected programme as key areas for the year, recognising the need for

digitisation whilst also teaching and engaging residents. This included continued efforts to reset the relationship with Citizens Advice to support residents with benefits would also be undertaken.

The Portfolio Holder for Internal Services described priorities for the service as ensuring that the Civic Centre was fit for purpose, both for the Council and also to facilitate revenue generation by renting space to external partners such as the police.

The Democratic Services Officer provided an overview of the outstanding items identified in the previous municipal year and it was suggested that the Committee engage with budget scrutiny and Council Plan performance review through periodic updates. The Democratic Services Officer explained that due to staffing challenges Democratic Services would be able to support one working group at a time for the 2023-24 Municipal Year (across all scrutiny committees). The Committee discussed the approach to be taken regarding working groups and suggested housing strategy as a possible area for scrutiny. It was agreed that this would be discussed at all overview and scrutiny committees with feedback to be taken to the next meeting of Scrutiny Overview Committee.

The Committee considered the Forward Plans of Walsall Council and the Black Country Joint Executive Committee. There then followed a period of extensive discussion regarding proposed areas of focus and priorities for scrutiny during the 2023/24 Municipal Year, including those raised by members earlier in the meeting.

**Resolved:**

- 1. That Overview and Scrutiny Committees discuss working group topics at their next round of meetings and feedback be considered by the Scrutiny Overview Committee at its next meeting.**
- 2. That the following items be included as areas of focus for the Committee in the 2023-24 Municipal Year:**
  - a. Housing strategy and housing waiting list**
  - b. Walsall Local Plan**
  - c. Recruitment and employee retention**
  - d. Section 106/Infrastructure Levy monitoring**
  - e. Violent crime (extending an invitation to West Midlands Police for this item)**
  - f. West Midlands Combined Authority and the West Midlands Mayor**
  - g. Enforcement (all-encompassing)**
  - h. Marketing and advertising (money spent and outcomes achieved)**
  - i. Social housing providers**
  - j. Budget monitoring**
  - k. School Gate Parking Working Group update**
- 3. That the climate change and electric vehicles (including refuse vehicles) be referred to the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

**4. That school admissions be referred to the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

**5. That officer presentations be shared to members in advance of meetings**

**7 Recommendation Tracker**

The Committee received the tracker of recommendations from previous meetings, including progress made and outstanding items.

[Annexed]

**Resolved:**

**That the recommendation tracker be noted.**

**8 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting would be 28 September 2023.

There being no further business this meeting was terminated at 7:41pm.

Signed:

Date: