

## **CORPORATE & PUBLIC SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

22 OCTOBER 2015 AT 6.00 P.M. AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE

### **Panel Members Present**

Councillor I. Shires (Chair)  
Councillor S. Cooper  
Councillor S. Craddock  
Councillor K. Ferguson  
Councillor A. Nawaz  
Councillor L. Jeavons  
Councillor L. Rattigan

### **Portfolio Holder**

Councillor A. Andrew – Deputy Leader and Economy, Infrastructure and Development  
Councillor M. Bird – Leader  
Councillor A. Harris – Community, Leisure and Culture  
Councillor C. Towe – Learning, Skills and Apprenticeships

### **Officers Present**

Rory Borealis – Executive Director (Change and Governance)  
Mark Holden – Head of Street Pride  
Steve Pretty – Head of Engineering and Transportation  
Keith Stone – Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)

Simon Neilson – Executive Director, Economy & Environment  
Sue Grainger – Head of Libraries, Heritages and Art  
Paul Leighton – Group Manager  
Nikki Gough – Committee Business and Governance Manager

### **28/15 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors M. Nazir, G. Sohal L. Harrison.

### **29/15 SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

### **30/15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

There were no declarations of interest or party whip identified at this meeting.

### **31/15 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting that took place on 10 September 2015 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

### **32/15 LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 (AS AMENDED)**

There were no agenda items that required the exclusion of the public.

The panel agreed to receive items 10 and 9 prior to item 6.

### **32/15 UPDATE ON THE COMBINED AUTHORITY FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS**

The Committee received a further update on matters relating to proposals to form a Combined Authority across the West Midlands. The Leader informed the Committee that he attended regular meetings on the establishment of the combined authority. Members were assured that there would be a scrutiny process to hold the combined authority to account, however, the details needed to be finalised. A Member expressed the wish to empower the leader to speak on behalf of the Council at the combined authority meetings through a formal mechanism. It was agreed that the Committee should have a standing item on the agenda in relation to the combined authority. Members were informed that the Secretary of State had the power to transfer a Local Authority service to the combined authority and in consideration of this it was considered beneficial to be involved in the combined authority.

**Resolved that;**

**A standing item on the combined authority is placed on the Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee agendas.**

### **33/15 WELFARE REFORM WORKING GROUP**

Councillor Jeavons introduced himself as the Lead Member for the welfare reform working group, and stated that it was important for the group to focus on their objectives as it was such a wide ranging area of work.

**Recommendations:**

**That:**

- 1. the terms of reference for the Welfare Reform Working Group be approved;**

**2. Councillor P. Bott be appointed to the Welfare Reform Working Group;**

**and;**

**3. The Education and Children's Services and Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees be invited to appoint 1 Member of each Committee to the working group, as a co-opted member.**

### **34/15 A SUSTAINABLE LIBRARY SERVICE FOR THE FUTURE**

Officers explained that this was the Committee's opportunity to consider options explored for a sustainable library service over the next five years. Volunteers from the library service had been invited to describe their experiences to Committee Members.

The Portfolio Holder stated that there was a determination to keep libraries open but that this had to be done within the budget. Options considered included; -

- Reduced opening hours,
- Closure of smaller libraries to leave a core service in major district centres,
- Community partnerships,
- Greater use of volunteers,
- Use of new technologies and shared services.

Officer stated that a combination of options seemed to offer the most effective way forward. A Member asked if those geographical areas with lower levels of educational attainment were prioritised. The Portfolio Holder reiterated that the ambition was to keep all libraries open.

A Member stated that in a multi-functional centre the removal of a library could destabilise the operation of other services running in the building. Officers stated that it was hoped that a spread of accessible libraries would be achieved and where other services were also provided from the same site it was beneficial.

Officers were asked if they had approached companies such as Costa Coffee to investigate the potential for partnership working. The Portfolio Holder stated that this was a good idea and may be explored. It was also stated that the Schools Library Support Service could increase the price of some of the additional services provided to schools, over and above the basic offer.

The Committee were informed that under the Libraries and Museum Act 1964 the Council had responsibility to provide a library service.

The Committee were informed that Bentley Community Library opened in September by Old Hall Peoples Partnership. It was hoped that this could be a model for other areas. Library staff would provide support but would

not be present on a daily basis. Open Plus technology allowed a library to be accessible without staff being present in the building.

In response to a Member query about the mobile library service Officers clarified that the service visited areas where there were no available static sites. Members also suggested that people who did not utilise libraries should also be consulted to find out why they did not use them. Officers stated that they did endeavour to canvas non-members through telephone surveys and youth groups. Officers stated that they would do their best to ensure a representative view of non users.

The Chair invited volunteers from Pheasey Library to address the Committee and describe their experiences of volunteering. The Committee were informed that volunteers initially had reservations in applying to volunteer because of concerns that people may lose their jobs as a result. The Committee were informed of their achievements to date and the types of activities that they participated in. The Committee commended the volunteers for their contribution to the community.

### **Resolved**

#### **That:**

- 1. The report be noted, and;**
- 2. A special meeting of the Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee is arranged, prior to the next ordinary meeting, to consider the future of the library service along side budget proposals**

### **35/15 Alternative weekly collections of residual household waste – outcomes of public consultation**

The Committee were informed that the report (annexed) detailed the outcome of the public consultation on the proposal to empty household waste (rubbish) bins every other week instead of weekly. Members were informed that the consultation results indicated that approximately half of respondents preferred option 2 and a third of respondents preferred option 1. The remainder of responders preferred another option. The Committee were invited to make a recommendation on its preferred option which would go to Cabinet in December. The consultation had received a 31% response rate which was considered appropriate to be representative for the Borough. The following points were prominent issues which had been raised by respondents to consultation; -

- Option 1 – concerns had been raised around garden waste,
- Option 2 – families of 3 or 5 had expressed concern about capacity, this would affect around 17,000 households in Walsall,

The Chair reminded members that the decision was made in February 2015 to move to alternative weekly collections and this was an opportunity for the Committee to consider how it was implemented. Officers informed the Committee that the current contract for recycling was being re-tendered. This may provide opportunities to include an education programme to increase recycling rates and decrease contamination rates.

Members asked if the Council held any existing stock of 240 litre bins. Going forward it was suggested that the Council would try to audit the need for a larger bin rather than assume all qualifying families would require one.

### **Resolved**

#### **That:**

- 1. The Committee noted the 'outcomes of public consultation on alternative weekly collections of residual household waste', and;**
- 2. The Committee expressed a preference for option 2 as contained within the report.**

### **36/15 Winter Services Operational Plan**

The Council has a statutory duty to develop and implement a winter service operational plan to ensure so far as reasonably practicable, that traffic keeps moving even in unforeseen weather conditions and that safe passage is not endangered by snow and ice. The report (annexed) detailed the arrangements in place to discharge that duty, outlines minor changes to the plan and details potential future changes that may be necessary during the life of the plan. Although the Council held a stock of salt, for bad conditions, the Government could dictate where the salt stock was held. The Portfolio Holder stated that community volunteers had been recruited last year (to assist clearing snow) and not required due to the mild winter it was hoped that volunteers could be used this year if needed. It was also noted that schools were responsible for the choice to close to children when it snows.

### **Resolved**

**That the report was noted.**

### **37/15 AREAS OF FOCUS 2015/16 AND FORWARD PLANS**

The Committee reviewed their areas of focus for 2015/16 and the forward plans for the Walsall Council and Black Country Joint Committee.

Following the earlier item on the Combined Authority proposals Members requested a standing item on the agenda.

**Resolved:**

**That:**

- 1. A standing item on the Combined Authority be placed on future agendas of the Committee;**
- 2. the Walsall Council Forward Plan be noted;**  
**and;**
- 3. the Black Country Joint Committee Forward Plan be noted.**

**38/15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that a special meeting would be arranged prior to the next meeting which would take place at 6pm on 26 November 2015.

The meeting terminated at 8.15 p.m.

Chair: .....

Date:.....