

Scrutiny Overview Committee

26 September 2024 at 6:00PM

Meeting Venue: Council Chamber at the Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall

[Livestream Link](#)

Membership:

Councillor J Murray (Chair)
Councillor K Hussain (Vice-Chair)
Councillor P Bott
Councillor J Chapman
Councillor M Follows
Councillor A Hicken
Councillor N Latham
Councillor K Sears
Councillor G Singh Sohal
Councillor M Ward
Councillor V Waters

Portfolio Holder:

Councillor G Perry - Leader of the Council
Councillor M Statham – Deputy Leader and Finance
Councillor A Garcha – Resident Access and Housing Support
Councillor E Lee – Internal Resources

Quorum:

4 Members

The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012
Specified pecuniary interests

The pecuniary interests which are specified for the purposes of Chapter 7 of Part 1 of the Localism Act 2011 are the interests specified in the second column of the following:

Subject	Prescribed description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	<p>Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by a member in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of a member.</p> <p>This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Regulations (Consolidation) Act 1992.</p>
Contracts	<p>Any contract which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority:</p> <p>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and</p> <p>(b) which has not been fully discharged.</p>
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	<p>Any tenancy where (to a member's knowledge):</p> <p>(a) the landlord is the relevant authority;</p> <p>(b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.</p>
Securities	<p>Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where:</p> <p>(a) that body (to a member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and</p> <p>(b) either:</p> <p>(i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</p> <p>(ii) if the share capital of that body is more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.</p>

Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 (as amended)

Access to information: Exempt information

Part 1

Descriptions of exempt information: England

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the authority proposes:
 - (a) to give any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.
8. Information being disclosed during a meeting of a Scrutiny and Performance Panel when considering flood risk management functions which:
 - (a) Constitutes a trades secret;
 - (b) Its disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice the commercial interests of any person (including the risk management authority);
 - (c) It was obtained by a risk management authority from any other person and its disclosure to the public by the risk management authority would constitute a breach of confidence actionable by that other person.

Part 1 – Public Session

- 1. Apologies**
To receive apologies for absence from Members of the Committee.
- 2. Substitutions**
To receive notice of any substitutions for a Member of the Committee for the duration of the meeting.
- 3. Minutes of the previous meeting**
To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2024.
(Enclosed – Pages 5-7)
- 4. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**
To receive declarations of interest or the party whip from Members in respect of items on the agenda.
- 5. Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended):**
To agree that the public be excluded from the private session during consideration of the agenda items indicated for the reasons shown on the agenda.
- 6. Portfolio Holder Presentations**
To receive verbal presentations from Portfolio Holders on their priorities for the municipal year.
(Enclosed – Pages 8-9)
- 7. Housing Allocation Policy**
For the Committee to consider the Council's Housing Allocation Policy.
(Enclosed – Pages 10-16)
- 8. Scrutiny Survey**
For Members to consider the draft scrutiny survey.
(Enclosed – Pages 17-23)
- 9. Areas of focus – 2024/25**
To consider the areas of focus for the Committee during the 2024/25 municipal year.
(Enclosed –Pages 24 -25)
- 10. Forward Plans**
To receive the latest Forward Plans in respect of the following:
 - Executive Forward Plans.
 - Black Country Joint Executive Committee.
 - West Midlands Combined Authority Board.*(Enclosed -Pages 26-44)*
- 11. Recommendations Tracker**
To consider progress on recommendations from the previous meeting.
(Enclosed – Page 45)
- 12. Date of next meeting**
To note that the date of the next meeting will be on 7 November 2024.

Minutes of the Scrutiny Overview Committee held in the Council Chamber at Walsall Council House

Monday, 17 June 2024 at 6.00p.m.

Committee Members present: Councillor J Murray (Chair)
Councillor P Bott
Councillor J Chapman
Councillor S Cheema
Councillor M Follows
Councillor T Jukes
Councillor A Hicken
Councillor G Singh-Sohal
Councillor V Waters

Portfolio Holder present: Councillor M Statham – Deputy Leader and Finance
Councillor A Garcha – Resident Access and Housing Support

Officers present: Judith Greenhalgh – Executive Director of Resources and Transformation
Elise Hopkins – Director of Customer Engagement

87. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor K Hussain, Latham, Sears and Ward.

88. Substitutions

Councillor Cheema substituted on behalf of Councillor Ward and Councillor Jukes substituted for Councillor Latham

89. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest or party whip.

90. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

There were no items to consider in private session.

91. **Minutes**

A copy of the minutes of the meeting held on the 18 April 2024 was submitted [annexed].

Resolved

That, the minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2024, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

92. **Areas of Focus 2024-2025**

The Chair highlighted that the Executive Portfolio Lead presentations would be presented at the next meeting of the Committee. This was due to recent appointment of a new executive administration. As such, Members welcomed and received presentations from the Executive Director of Resources and Transformation and the Director of Customer Engagement on services within the remit of the Committee. [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 Chair confirmed that there would be only three working groups for the municipal year across all Scrutiny Committees. Members discussed the approach to be taken regarding working groups it was agreed that proposed topics would be discussed at all overview and scrutiny committees with feedback to be taken to the next meeting of Scrutiny Overview Committee.

The Democratic Services Officer provided an overview of the outstanding items identified in the previous municipal year. Following a lengthy debate, it was resolved that the following items be included in the work programme for the 2024/2025 municipal year:

- Housing Allocation Policy
- GreenSquare Accord and Longhurst Group
- WMCA Mayor and Housing
- Member Enquiries
- Budget Setting Process
- Council Local Plan
- Scrutiny Survey
- WMCA Corporate Update
- Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring
- Draft Budget and Capital Programme
- Walsall Pound and Social Value
- WMCA Scrutiny Annual Report
- Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Superintendent discussion
- Customer Dashboard

1. Resolved, that the work programme for 2024/25 municipal year be updated with the following items:

- a. Housing Allocation Policy**
- b. GreenSquare Accord and Longhurst Group**
- c. WMCA Mayor and Housing**
- d. Member Enquiries**
- e. Budget Setting Process**
- f. Council Local Plan**
- g. Scrutiny Survey**
- h. WMCA Corporate Update**
- i. Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring**
- j. Draft Budget and Capital Programme**
- k. Walsall Pound and Social Value**
- l. WMCA Scrutiny Annual Report**
- m. Customer Dashboard**
- n. Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Superintendent discussion**

93. Recommendations Tracker

The Committee received the tracker of recommendations from the previous municipal year including progress made and outstanding items. [Annexed].

Resolved:

That the recommendation tracker be noted.

94. Date of next meeting

It was noted that the date of the next meeting would be on 26 September 2024.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 7.33p.m.

Signed:

Date:

26 September 2024

Portfolio Holder Presentations

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor Perry – Leader of the Council and Strategy, Partnerships and Communities
Councillor M Statham – Deputy Leader and Finance
Councillor Garcha – Resident Access and Housing Support
Councillor E Lee – Internal Resources

Report

At the previous meeting of the Committee, it was noted that Portfolio Holder presentations would be presented at the next scheduled meeting, due to recent appointment of a new executive administration.

This item aims to inform the Committee about the Portfolio Holder priorities for the municipal year. The following Portfolio Holders have been allocated to the Committee in accordance with its remit:

Councillor Perry – Leader of the Council and Strategy, Partnerships and Communities
Councillor M Statham – Deputy Leader and Finance
Councillor Garcha – Resident Access and Housing Support
Councillor E Lee – Internal Resources

Following consideration of the presentations, the Committee may decide to consider any additions to the work programme for the municipal year. However, when debating items, it is important for the Committee to prioritise work based on strategic importance, data and timing.

Remit

Scrutiny Overview Committee shall have consider all aspects and general services related to Council resources and transformation. Including taking an overarching view on strategic plans and services such as:

- *Delivery of the Council Plan and its priorities*
- *The Council transformation programme*
- *Corporate finances*

The scrutinising of performance in relation to the achievement of the Council Plan vision and the following priorities:

- *Internal focus – Council services are customer focussed, effective, efficient and equitable.*
- *Communities – empower our communities so that they feel they are connected and belong in Walsall, creating safe and healthy places whilst building a strong sense of community.*

Scrutiny of the responsible authorities in terms of how they are tackling crime and disorder for the benefit of the local communities (no less than once a year) as required by the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 which came into force for local authorities in England on 30 April 2009:

In addition, the Scrutiny Overview Committee shall:

- *Lead on the planning and co-ordination of the programme of activities and in depth studies of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees;*
- *Hold discussions with Portfolio holders over matters such as pre-decision Scrutiny and the programme of policy reviews;*
- *Act as a vehicle of mutual learning.*

Recommendation:

That, the Committee consider presentations from Portfolio Holders and determine whether to add or amend any items in the work programme for the municipal year.

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26 September 2024

Review of Housing Allocations Policy

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Councillor Garcha – Resident Access and Housing Support

1. Aim

The aim of this report is to provide the Scrutiny Overview Committee with a detailed overview of the Council’s review of its Housing Allocations Policy (“the Policy”). and seek feedback on the proposed amendments. .

2. Recommendations

That the Scrutiny Overview Committee consider the proposed amendments to the Housing Allocations Policy contained within section 3.4 of this report, and provide feedback to be considered by Cabinet.

3. Report detail – know

Context

3.1 Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) sets out the legislative framework through which Local Authorities should maintain and operate their Housing Allocation Schemes. The Act gives ‘reasonable preference’ to certain categories of applicant, namely households who are:

- Statutorily homeless
- occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions,
- needing to move on medical or welfare grounds, including grounds relating to a disability, and
- needing to move to a particular locality in the administrative area of the housing authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others).

As part of this requirement the Council maintains a Housing Allocations Policy and as a non-stock owning authority, the Policy sets out who qualifies to join the Council’s Housing Register and how the Council will prioritise households to nominate to vacant properties supplied to the Council from housing associations who operate in Walsall.

3.2 In February of last year whg notified the Council of their intention to close the waiting list that had previously served to source households from which the Council nominated to vacant properties supplied to it from local housing associations. This meant it was necessary for the Council to launch a new housing register to ensure that customers were still able to apply for housing supplied to the Council. In September 2023 the Council launched its Housing Register and commenced

nominations from the new Register from February 2024. By April of this year 3,840 households had joined the register, with 1,995 (52%) qualifying for Reasonable Preference and the remainder being assessed as having no specific housing need as identified in law.

- 3.3 In compliance with the Housing Nominations Agreement, housing associations operating in Walsall are obliged to forward at least 50% of their vacant properties to the Council from which it can nominate households selected from the housing register. Last year (2022/23), 734 housing nominations were completed by the Council from a total of 1,365 social housing lettings across the borough. By way of context and in line with the national picture the number of social housing lettings in Walsall has declined by 46% since 2017/18 when 2,530 relets were achieved, as households remain in their tenancies for longer. This overall decline has been a consistent trajectory since 2012.

Review of and recommendations for the Housing Allocations Policy

- 3.4 The current Housing Allocations Policy essentially dates back to 2010, though minor revisions to the policy were completed in 2022 and early 2024. Last year, the Council undertook to complete a full review of the current Policy, and following an initial scoping review the following key areas were identified as in need of review:

- To Review the residency test set out in the local connection test – currently two years
- To explore the potential benefits of increasing the number of bands within the policy applicable to those who would qualify for statutory Reasonable Preference in order that the Policy could fully differentiate between higher and lower levels of housing need. Currently the Policy has 2 priority bands to accommodate those in Reasonable Preference with the third band (Band C) catering for those households registering with no identified housing need
- To consider whether those without a recognised housing need (in statute) should be excluded from joining the register, particularly in view of continuing supply and demand issues that seem unlikely to subside.
- To consider whether the Council should prioritise households who wish to downsize their home or release an adapted property.
- To consider adopting a choice-based lettings approach or to continue with making direct nominations.
- To make the Policy more navigable and to introduce greater clarity over who qualifies for Reasonable Preference and the level of priority to be awarded
- To consider any other emerging themes that come from the consultation.

- 3.5 Officers commenced a comprehensive period of consultation in April 2024 that involved both a programme of targeted focus groups and stakeholder meetings as well as a web-based survey that commenced on 07 May 2024 and concluded on 22 July 2024. The web-based survey achieved a total of 615 responses including 402 directly from households registered or in the process of registering with the housing register, representing 6% of applicants contacted. In addition, 213 responses were from a combination of residents (115) and third sector organisations and officers of the Council (98). In all a total of twelve focus groups/stakeholder meetings were concluded.

- 3.6 In line with both the scoping review (set out in 3.4 above) and the conclusion of the public consultation the following recommendations are made by officers in 3.7 to 3.21 below to enable a fully revised Housing Allocations Policy to be reported to Cabinet.

The residency test

- 3.7 The current residency test forms one of three independent qualifications applied to the Local Connection Test (LCT) with close family members (currently resident in Walsall) and employment in Walsall being the other two. To meet the LCT at least one of these tests must be fulfilled as a gateway to joining the Housing Register. By far the most commonly used LCT is the Residency Test which is currently set at two years uninterrupted residency in Walsall although it should be noted there are a series of exemptions to applying this test, including members of the Armed Forces, persons owed a homeless duty by the Council, care leavers supported by the Council, or persons fleeing domestic abuse or hate crime. Guidance in applying a residency test is set out in the statutory code *Providing social housing for local people (2013)*. The statutory code recommends a two-year residency test. Of note, recent case law (*Khayyat and Ibrahim v Westminster City Council 2023*) has confirmed that a local housing authority can lawfully exclude individuals when applying a residency test who would otherwise be entitled to receive a statutory Reasonable Preference in an Allocations Policy (and therefore be placed on the housing register).
- 3.8 Broadly speaking respondents from the focus groups were in favour of retaining the two-year residency test on condition that the exempted groups, in particular care leavers, homeless households and victims of domestic abuse were retained and regularly reviewed. For the web-based survey there is overwhelming support for the retention of the two-year residency requirement, where 73% of register applicants were in favour, with 78% from the remaining respondents (officers, residents and third sector organisations) also in favour. It is therefore proposed to retain the two-year residency test and apply existing exemptions as set out in Appendix One of the current policy.

Increase number of bands

- 3.9 The proposal to increase the number of bands within the Housing Allocations Policy is to enable the Policy to be more responsive to the varying degrees of applicant housing need, providing greater flexibility to differentiate between higher and lower levels of need. Currently the Policy is restricted in its ability to do this as it only has 2 priority bands, with the third band (Band C) for those households registering with no identified housing need. In compliance with the Policy this latter band is currently suspended at present in order that the Council can meet its statutory housing duties. It is very rare for available properties to be nominated to this group anyway in view of the acute supply and demand issues.
- 3.10 In addition to the above, Section 166A(3) of the Housing Act 1996 gives housing authorities the power to frame their allocation scheme to give *Additional Preference* to particular descriptions of people who fall within the statutory Reasonable Preference categories who have *urgent* housing needs. For example this includes those who need to move urgently because of a life threatening illness or sudden disability or those who are homeless and require urgent re-housing as a result of violence or threats of violence. The *Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England* advises that 'all housing

authorities must consider, in the light of local circumstances, the need to give effect to this provision' (i.e. Additional Need).

- 3.11 With only two priority bands (Band A and B) it is difficult to apply Additional Need, added to which the Policy has limited differentiation between those with varying needs in Reasonable Preference, for example those overcrowded by two or more bedrooms and those overcrowded by one. From the consultation there has been overwhelming support to increase the number of priority bands within the Policy, with 70% of housing applicants in favour, and 76% from the remaining pool of respondents (officers, residents and third sector organisations) also in favour. The focus groups who took part in the consultation were also broadly in favour of increasing the number of priority bands. It is therefore proposed to introduce four housing need bands within the Policy that will award varying degrees of priority within the Policy. This proposal with the designated housing need bandings is detailed in Appendix One. A fifth band could also be applied to households with no specific housing need (as identified in law), however operating such a band (currently Band C) has been reviewed as per 3.12 below.

Exclude households with no statutory housing need

- 3.12 Given the current supply and demand issues for social housing accommodation in the borough the review has also considered the option to exclude those without a recognised statutory housing need from joining the housing register. At the present time, and future projections for available relets, suggest the demand for vacant properties far outweighs supply and this places significant pressures on the Council's ability to house those who have a recognised statutory housing need, leaving the overwhelming majority of those without a statutory need unlikely to ever receive an offer of accommodation.
- 3.13 In compliance with the Housing Nominations Agreement, housing associations operating in Walsall are obliged to forward at least 50% of their vacant properties to the Council (a National standard) from which it can nominate households selected from the housing register to occupy. This target is consistently achieved. Last year (2022/23), 734 housing nominations were completed by the Council. To illustrate the supply/demand issue, 3,840 applicants were registered on the Council's housing register at April 2024, of which 1,995 (52%) qualified for a statutory Reasonable Preference. In line with the national picture the total number of social housing relets in Walsall has declined by 46% since 2017/18 with only 1,365 relets in 2022/23, meaning only 682 properties (50%) were available to the Council for nomination. This overall decline has been on a consistent trajectory since 2012.
- 3.14 From the consultation, those who took part in the focus groups had mixed views about the proposal to exclude those with no statutory housing need from joining the register. Those in favour of this proposal cited the 'false hope' that allowing any individual to join the register can generate, whilst others thought that as a matter of principle any person regardless of need should be able to join the register. Preference for the proposal was expressed in the survey, where 62% of housing applicants were in favour of exclusion with a similar 65% from the remaining pool of respondents (officers, residents and third sector organisations) also in favour. It should be noted that a revised whg Housing Allocations Policy (the largest stockholder in the borough) has been recently introduced. This excludes non whg tenants who would qualify for Reasonable Preference (i.e. those recognised with

a statutorily recognised housing need) and offers the ability for households without a recognised housing need to register for housing, particularly those impacted by affordability, thus providing some options for those households with no statutory housing need in Walsall.

- 3.15 In view of the current acute supply and demand issues it is recommended to proceed with this proposal and to exclude households from joining the housing register who have no lawfully recognised housing need. This will enable the Council to focus more on its statutory duties in relation to housing and from the customer perspective will avoid the inevitable raised hopes from this applicant group of acquiring a social rented property via the Council when in reality the prospect of doing so is very minimal.

Prioritise households who wish to downsize or release either an adapted or single level property

- 3.16 Aside of the overall supply and demand issue outlined elsewhere in this report there is also a distinct mismatch between supply and household need by property type, largely centred on a shortage of larger properties needed by households with families and the need for adapted or single level properties on account of medical need (often related to mobility). To partly address this, it is proposed to prioritise households who wish to downsize or release either an adapted or single level property. In order to maximise this option a high degree of priority is needed to encourage such moves. This proposal received a strong response in favour in the consultation, with 76% of housing applicants in favour and 82% of the remaining pool of respondents also in favour (officers, residents and third sector organisations). All the focus groups supported this proposal.

- 3.17 It is unlikely that the above proposal will generate a large volume of properties however it is important where possible to stimulate any strategy aimed at making the best use of existing stock. Of note, any property 'released' under this priority will be nominated to directly by the Council exclusively to households on the Council's housing register. It is proposed that the following levels of priority be awarded to households either downsizing or releasing an adapted home, a single level property or a property designated as a 'sanctuary home' (adapted to meet the needs of persons experiencing domestic abuse, e.g. the installation of a strong room):

- **Band A:** Housing Association tenants currently under-occupying a property by at least two bedrooms or currently under-occupying a house or who wish to release an adapted property where the said adaptations are no longer in use
- **Band B:** Housing Association tenants who currently occupy an Intermediate or Advanced Level Sanctuary Scheme property
- **Band C:** Housing Association tenants currently resident in a flat or maisonette under-occupying by one bedroom

Choice based lettings or direct nominations

- 3.18 The last segment of the review has focussed on whether to adopt a choice-based lettings approach to nominations or to continue with making direct nominations. The Council currently offers vacant homes by making a direct offer of accommodation to the applicant who is top of the list for each vacant property. The

list is drawn up by applying the rules of the Policy. Another way of allocating properties – choice-based lettings - is to enable applicants to express an interest in a vacant property that has been advertised as vacant either on a website or through a newsletter. In this system, whoever comes top of the list from those who have expressed an interest in a particular property (often referred to as a ‘bid’) based on their need and in full accordance with the rules of the Policy will be offered the vacant property once the closing date for ‘bids’ has been reached.

- 3.19 The introduction of a choice-based (CBL) scheme received support through the consultation programme both in the focus groups and through the web-based survey. The choice-based lettings approach received 47% support from housing applicants with 28% preferring to remain with the Direct Offer approach. From the remaining pool (officers, residents and third sector organisations) 41% were in favour of CBL with 37% remaining in favour of continuing with Direct Offers. The focus groups were divided on this issue, largely on the basis of drawing out specific groups who it was felt might benefit (not unfairly) from a CBL scheme set against those who would not. It was felt that CBL would help care leavers, persons with learning disabilities and young people. Other focus groups had mixed views on the impact of CBL specifically on people moving on from temporary accommodation or people affected by domestic abuse.
- 3.20 The consultation feedback on CBL and Direct Nominations has been less conclusive compared with the other proposals. A CBL or Direct Nomination approach will not impact on how the Policy will determine who qualifies to join the Council’s Housing Register and how the Council subsequently prioritises households within the Policy. Due to the considerable alterations to both the Councils administrative and software systems incurring associated costs and extending policy rollout timescales, it is proposed not to introduce CBL at this time. This can be reconsidered in any future Policy review, when there will be further information available on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Direct Nomination approach and whether this needs to be changed.

Other themes / groups

- 3.21 In considering any other themes that came from the consultation two clear concerns emerged centred on how the Policy would treat Care Leavers and those households who wish to foster and who need larger accommodation to do so particularly as the former group were often directed via the homeless route to acquire accommodation. Consequently, it is proposed that the new Policy will place all Care Leavers supported by the Council into Band A, and those not supported by the Council but who would meet the Local Connection Test into Band C. Officers have also worked closely with colleagues in Children’s Services to ensure that the policy enables households who wish to foster to be awarded Band A priority whilst at the same time safeguarding against as far as possible the allocation of a larger home to a household who subsequently withdraws or declines from fostering.

4. Financial information

There are not anticipated to be any long-term additional costs incurred by the Council as a result of implementing and administering the above policy changes. There will however be some additional short-term financial burdens associated with completing a comprehensive review of all current housing applications on the

Register and any software changes needed to improve the customer-facing on-line portal. In consideration of the current Council budget position, officers will seek to carry out the review of all existing housing applications using current staffing resources. This will however need to be closely monitored, with the aim of avoiding any in-year over-spends. A capital bid may also be needed to fund costs associated with enhancing the Customer Facing on-line portal to reflect the policy changes; a separate business-case will be produced outlining any costs associated with improving the customer-facing portal, which will be considered by the Capital Improvement Board. There is the potential to achieve long term efficiencies as a result of implementing the proposed policy changes, as proposals include no longer allowing households without a recognised statutory housing to join the register. That change, will mean a large number of applications rejected at the first point of contact through the online portal so will not require manual processing by officers.

5. *Reducing Inequalities*

A full EQiA has been completed as part of the review. No negative impacts were identified in the assessment. Positive impacts were identified for Care Leavers (now formerly recognised in the new policy), young people, persons affected by disability and gender.

6. *Decide*

That the Scrutiny Overview Committee consider the contents of this report and provide feedback.

7. *Respond*

Any recommendations made by the Committee, will be included in the relevant Cabinet Report.

8. *Review*

There will be an annual Lettings Review report which will monitor and assess the impact of the Policy.

Background papers

None

Author(s)

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26 September 2024

Scrutiny Survey

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: All

1. Aim

To give Members the opportunity to comment on a draft scrutiny survey of all elected members.

2. Recommendations

That:

1. **subject to any comments Members may wish to make, the scrutiny survey, attached at Appendix 1 to this report, be approved.**
2. **the results of the survey be report back to a future meeting to enable areas for improvement to be identified.**

3. Report detail – know

The Council has continually reviewed its scrutiny process and sought to make improvements over recent years.

In 2021, to gain deeper insights into enhancing scrutiny in Walsall, the Committee conducted a survey. This piece of work focused on ascertaining the voice of Councillors to determine how to strengthen and improve the role of scrutiny.

Following, this consultation, four recommendations were made based on the feedback gathered from the survey:

- The Member Learning and Development Programme is enhanced to include training for Members on financial scrutiny, scrutiny legislation, chairing meetings and asking questions.
- Due to mixed comments in relation to the scrutiny of the council's budget setting process, the Scrutiny Overview Committee review the existing approach and consider how it could be improved.
- A recommendation tracker be developed to assist systematic follow up of recommendations made by overview and scrutiny committees to monitor progress on specific actions and information requested at meetings.

- Further development of the scrutiny report template takes place to include model recommendations which encourage outcomes and avoid requesting that reports are noted.

All four recommendations garnered positive feedback and were successfully put into action. For instance, one initiative involved finance training for Members, which was conducted in July 2024 by the LGA alongside a Peer Member.

The Committee should review and update the Scrutiny survey, and reach out to stakeholders for their concerns, comments, and feedback.

The survey enclosed is representative of how the finished article would look. Further work is required before placing it online. For example, routing will be applied to give members different pathways dependent on the answers that they provide when undertaking the survey.

4. *Financial information*

There are no financial implications directly related to this report.

5. *Reducing Inequalities*

None directly related to this report.

6. *Decide*

Members are asked to consider the draft survey and offer any comments that they may have. If the survey does not meet the expectations of Members then other methods of gaining information and/or reviewing scrutiny can be explored.

7. *Respond*

If Members are in agreement with the survey, then it is planned for this to take place in late 2024.

8. *Review*

If Members are in agreement with the survey, then the findings can be reported to the Committee's next available meeting.

Background papers

None

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Scrutiny Survey 2024

Intro...

A summary of the results will be included in the scrutiny annual report and presented to Council.

The deadline for responding is (Insert Date)

Scrutiny Overall

Q1 What overview and scrutiny committees, if any, are you a member of? Tick all that apply.

Children's Services

Social Care and Health

Education

Scrutiny Overview

Economy and Environment

None of these

Q2 Thinking about the location of working groups, which of the following would you prefer? Tick one only.

	<i>In person</i>	<i>Virtual</i>	<i>The most suitable location for the topic</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Working Group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q3 What do you think were the most successful examples of scrutiny from 2023/24 and why?

Q4 What are your priority issues for future consideration at scrutiny in 2024/25?

Q5 Please rate each of the following aspects of scrutiny. Tick one only on each row.

	<i>Very good</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Very poor</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Scrutiny structure	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work programme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Forward plan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Frequency of meetings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Effectiveness of committees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Effectiveness of working groups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Number of Committee Members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Portfolio Holder involvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Budget scrutiny	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Length of agendas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scrutiny work programmes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cabinet forward plan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cabinet / Portfolio Holder involvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q6 Why do you say that this / these aspects of scrutiny are poor or very poor? Please briefly explain.

Scrutiny structure	
Work programme	
Forward plan	
Frequency of meetings	
Effectiveness of committees	
Effectiveness of working groups	
Number of Committee Members	
Portfolio Holder involvement	

Budget scrutiny	
Length of agendas	
Scrutiny work programmes	
Cabinet forward plan	
Cabinet / Portfolio Holder involvement	

Q7 Generally, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following aspects of reports that are presented to scrutiny meetings? Tick one only on each row.

	<i>Very Satisfied</i>	<i>Fairly Satisfied</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Very Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Don't Know</i>
Length	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clarity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recommendations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Appendices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Training

Q8 Training is widely recognised as a method in which to improve scrutiny.

Which of the following would you like to receive training in? Tick all that apply.

- Subject specific
- Chairing meetings
- Technical skills
- Questioning
- Legal issues
- Adult Social Care
- Children's Services
- Finance
- Resilient Communities and Partnership
- Other
- None of these

Other training, please specify

Q9 If necessary, how would you prefer to access / receive training?

- Online self guided e-learning module
- Face to face
- Booklet / written material
- Other

Other, please specify

Q10 And should training be delivered using in house resources or an external training provider? Tick one only.

- In house resources
- External training provider
- Depends on the topic
- No preference

Budget Setting

Q11 How do you suggest that scrutiny should examine the process of setting the budget?

- Considered by all scrutiny committees
- Scrutiny Overview Committee
- Specialist working group
- Don't know
- Other

Other, please specify

Officer support and reports

Q12 How, if at all, could the different levels of officer support to scrutiny be improved / more effective? Please briefly explain.

Senior Officer (Head of Service and above)

Non-senior officers

Democratic Services

Engagement of partners in scrutiny

Q13 Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the engagement of partners in scrutiny? Tick one only.

- Very satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Fairly satisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know

Q14 How, if at all, could partners be more effectively engaged in scrutiny?

Q15 Do you have any other comments about scrutiny? Please specify below.

Thank you for your response.

Please click 'submit' or the tick below to send us your answers.

Scrutiny Overview Committee – Area of Focus – 2024/25

17 June 2024	26 September 2024	7 November 2024	9 December 2024	4 February 2025	13 March 2025	17 April 2025
Prioritisation of work programme	Portfolio Holder Presentations Housing Allocation Policy Scrutiny Survey	WMCA Corporate Update Draft Budget and Capital Programme and Budget Setting Process (New approach for 2025/26 onwards) Council Plan Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring	Walsall Pound and Social Value <i>(Pending)</i> Member Enquires Portal <i>(Pending)</i> Customer Dashboard <i>(Pending)</i>	Housing Standards Working Group Recommendations Monitoring WMCA Work in Walsall (Transport specifically)	WMCA Scrutiny Annual Report WMCA – Housing Focus	Crime and Disorder Focus Police and Crime Commissioner <i>(Pending)</i> Chief Superintendent <i>(Pending)</i>

*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 unless specially requested by the Committee.

Scrutiny Overview Committee – Area of Focus – 2024/25

Items to be scheduled	Notes
Council Local Plan	
GreenSquareAccord and Longhurst Group – Housing in Walsall	

*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 unless specially requested by the Committee.



FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

**Council House,
Lichfield Street,
Walsall, WS1 1TW**
www.walsall.gov.uk

2 September 2024

FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan sets out decisions that are termed as “key decisions” at least 28 calendar days before they are due to be taken by the Executive (Cabinet). Also included on the plan are other decisions to be taken by the Cabinet (“non-key decisions”). Preparation of the forward plan helps the Council to programme its work. The purpose of the forward plan is to give plenty of notice and an opportunity for consultation on the issues to be discussed. The plan is updated each month with the period of the plan being rolled forward by one month and republished. Copies of the plan can be obtained from Democratic Services, Walsall MBC, Council House, Walsall, WS1 1TW craig.goodall@walsall.gov.uk and can also be accessed from the Council’s website at www.walsall.gov.uk. The Cabinet is allowed to make urgent decisions which do not appear in the forward plan, however, a notice will be included on the agenda for the relevant Cabinet meeting which explains the reasons why.

Please note that the decision dates are indicative and are subject to change. Please contact the above addressee if you wish to check the date for a particular item.

The Cabinet agenda and reports are available for inspection by the public 7 days prior to the meeting of the Cabinet on the Council’s website. Background papers are listed on each report submitted to the Cabinet and members of the public are entitled to see these documents unless they are confidential. The report also contains the name and telephone number of a contact officer. These details can also be found in the forward plan.

Meetings of the Cabinet are open to the public. Occasionally there are items included on the agenda which are confidential and for those items the public will be asked to leave the meeting. The forward plan will show where this is intended and the reason why the reports are confidential. Enquiries regarding these reasons should be directed to Democratic Services (craig.goodall@walsall.gov.uk).

“Key decisions” are those decisions which have a significant effect within the community or which involve considerable expenditure or savings. With regard to key decisions the Council’s Constitution states:

- (1) A key decision is:
 - (i) any decision in relation to an executive function which results in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant, having regard to the Council’s budget for the service or function to which the decision relates or
 - (ii) any decision that is likely to have significant impact on two or more wards within the borough.
- (2) The threshold for “significant” expenditure/savings is £500,000.
- (3) A decision taker may only make a key decision in accordance with the requirements of the Executive Procedure Rules set out in Part 4 of this Constitution.

**FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS
OCTOBER 2024 TO JANUARY 2025
(02.09.2024)**

7 1	2	3	4	5	6	
Reference No./ Date first entered in Plan	Decision to be considered (to provide adequate details for those both in and outside the Council)	Decision maker	Background papers (if any) and Contact Officer	Main consultees	Contact Member (All Members can be written to at Civic Centre, Walsall)	Date item to be considered
42/24 (2.7.24)	<p>Article 4 direction for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs):</p> <p>To approve the making of a borough-wide, non-immediate Article 4 direction to remove permitted development rights for the change of use from dwellinghouses to smaller HMOs.</p> <p>To issue public notice of the Article 4 direction for a period of at least 6 weeks to allow for representations.</p>	Cabinet Key Decision	David Holloway David.Holloway@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	11 September 2024
44/24 (5.8.24)	<p>Walsall Electric Vehicle Chargepoint Strategy:</p> <p>To approve the Walsall Electric Vehicle Chargepoint Strategy.</p>	Cabinet Key Decision	Nicola Byrne Nicola.Byrne@walsall.gov.uk Matt Crowton Matt.Crowton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	11 September 2024

23/24 (18.3.24)	Commercial Strategy: To agree the strategic approach to generating income, reducing costs, fostering an entrepreneurial culture, forming partnerships, and investing in businesses to support local economies and social objectives	Cabinet Key Decision	Michele McPherson Michele.McPherson@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	11 September 2024
33/24 (4.6.24)	West Midlands Children's Residential Homes Framework: To agree call off contracts with Residential Children's Homes providers under the West Midlands Regional Framework.	Cabinet Key Decision	Sally Gamston Sally.Gamston@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services Regional stakeholders (during tender development)	Cllr Elson	11 September 2024
45/24 (5.8.24)	Walsall Youth Justice Strategic Plan 22/25 Annual Update Report: To receive and recommend to Council for approval, the annual youth justice plan and update report.	Cabinet Council Non-key Decision	Phil Rutherford Philip.Rutherford@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Elson	11 September 2024
50/24 (5.8.24)	Black Country Family Drugs and Alcohol Court (FDAC) Partnership contract: To approve a variation to the Black Country Family Drugs and Alcohol Court (FDAC) Partnership contract, to further extend the original term by 12 months.	Cabinet Key Decision	Paula Wilman Paula.Wilman@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Elson	11 September 2024
34/24 (4.6.24)	Temporary Accommodation Regulator Registration: To approve registration with the Regulator of Social Housing for the purpose of providing additional	Cabinet Key Decision	Neil Hollyhead Neil.Hollyhead@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Garcha	11 September 2024

	Temporary Accommodation for homeless people.					
43/24 (2.7.24)	<p>Secondary School Sufficiency:</p> <p>To consider the expansions of secondary schools in Walsall to support the requirement for additional school places to meet the Local Authorities statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places available across the borough for all Walsall residents.</p>	Cabinet Key Decision	Alex Groom Alex.Groom@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Kaur	11 September 2024
51/24 (12.8.24)	<p>Community Reablement Service Procurement:</p> <p>To delegate authority to the Executive Director for Adult Social Care to award a contract for the provision of support to the community reablement service.</p>	Cabinet Key Decision	Andrew Osborn Andrew.Osborn@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services Community Providers	Cllr Pedley	11 September
32/24 (4.6.24)	<p>Appointment of Contractor for Civic Centre and Council House Decarbonisation Works:</p> <p>To appoint a contractor for decarbonisation works at the Civic Centre and Council House.</p> <p><i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i></p>	Cabinet Key Decision	Nick Ford Nick.Ford@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	16 October 2024

46/24 (5.8.24)	Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD): To approve a draft SPD for consultation.	Cabinet Key Decision	David Holloway David.Holloway@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	16 October 2024
52/24 (2.9.24)	Disposal of Links to Work Building, Stephenson Avenue, Beechdale, Walsall, WS2 7HF To approve the disposal of the Links to Work Building. <i>This will be a private session report containing commercially sensitive information.</i>	Cabinet Key Decision	Ian Jeavons Ian.Jeavons@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Andrew	16 October 2024
40/24 (1.7.24)	Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2028/29: To provide an updated medium term financial outlook, draft revenue budget and capital programme for 2025/26 to 2028/29, including savings proposals.	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Ross Hutchinson Ross.Hutchinson@walsall.gov.uk	Council tax payers, business rate payers, voluntary and community organisations, Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	16 October 2024
41/24 (1.7.24)	Corporate Financial Performance 2024/25: To report the financial position based on 6 months to September 2024.	Cabinet Non-key Decision	Ross Hutchinson Ross.Hutchinson@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr M. Statham	16 October 2024
53/24 (2.9.24)	Children and Young People Strategy:	Cabinet Key Decision	Isobel Vanderheeren Isobel.Vanderheeren@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services Children and young people	Cllr Elson	16 October 2024

	To approve the Children and Young People 2040 Strategy.					
35/24 (4.6.24)	Walsall Housing Allocations Policy: To approve Walsall's Housing Allocations Policy which details how the Council will prioritise applicants for nomination to housing association properties.	Cabinet Key Decision	Neil Hollyhead Neil.Hollyhead@walsall.gov.uk	Public Consultation Internal Services Housing Associations	Cllr Garcha	16 October 2024
54/24 (2.9.24)	Local Area Network (LAN) contract award: To award a contract for provision and support of the Council's Local Area Network (LAN).	Cabinet Key Decision	Sharon Worrall Sharon.Worrall@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Lee	16 October 2024
55/24 (2.9.24)	Service Channel Management Platform contract award: To award a contract for the continued provision the Councils Service Channel Management Platform.	Cabinet Key Decision	Sharon Worrall Sharon.Worrall@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Lee	16 October 2024
56/24 (2.9.24)	Middlemore Lane Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC) & Waste Treatment Service Operational Arrangements: To approve a short-term service contract for the operational management of the new waste facility at Middlemore Lane and the existing HWRC at Fryers Road and approve a new finance lease agreement for the operational equipment, HWRC	Cabinet Key Decision	Kathryn Moreton Kathryn.Moreton@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Murphy.	16 October 2024.

	containers, and other physical resources at Middlemore Lane.					
47/24 (5.8.24)	Council Plan 2025-2029: To consider the final version of the Council Plan following consultation and recommend this to Council for approval.		Karen Griffiths Karen.Griffiths@walsall.gov.uk Elizabeth Connolly Elizabeth.Connolly@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services, external stakeholders, other interested parties (via Public Consultation exercise)	Cllr Perry	11 December 2024
48/24 (5.8.24)	Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2025/26 to 2028/29 – Update: To provide an updated medium term financial outlook, draft revenue budget and capital programme for 2025/26 to 2028/29, including update to savings proposals, impact of Autumn Statement, and progress on budget consultation to date including feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees on the draft revenue and capital budget.		Ross Hutchinson Ross.Hutchinson@walsall.gov.uk	Council tax payers, business rate payers, voluntary and community organisations, Internal Services	Cllr Perry	11 December 2024
49/24 (5.8.24)	Treasury Management Mid Year Position Statement 2024/25: To note and forward to Council, for consideration and noting (and in line with the requirements of the Treasury Management Code of Practice (2017), the mid year report for treasury management activities 2024/25	Cabinet Council Non-key Decision	Richard Walley Richard.Walley@walsall.gov.uk	Internal Services	Cllr Perry	11 December 2024

	including prudential and local indicators.					
39/24 (1.7.24)	<p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029:</p> <p>To approve the final version of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy following consultation.</p>	Cabinet Key Decision	<p>Karen Griffiths Karen.Griffiths@walsall.gov.uk</p> <p>Elizabeth Connolly Elizabeth.Connolly@walsall.gov.uk</p>	Internal Services, external stakeholders, other interested parties (via Public Consultation exercise)	Cllr Lee	11 December 2024
57/24 (2.9.24)	<p>IT Goods, Software and Associated Services contract awards:</p> <p>To award a contract for the provision of IT Goods, Software and Associated Services.</p>	Cabinet Key Decision	<p>Sharon Worrall Sharon.Worrall@walsall.gov.uk</p>	Internal Services	Cllr Lee	11 December 2024

Black Country Executive Joint Committee
Forward Plan of Key Decisions

Published up to January 2025

Date Created	Key Decision	Contact Officer	Main consultee	Date of meeting
	Black Country Enterprise Zone			
05/08/2024	<p>Gasholders</p> <p>Approval of the Gasholders project (Walsall Council) for grant funding from the Black Country Enterprise Zone (BCEZ) business rate surpluses.</p> <p>Approval for the City of Wolverhampton Council and Walsall Council to proceed to enter into a separate Grant Agreement which will set out the terms and conditions of the funding.</p>	<p>Simon Tranter simon.tranter@walsall.gov.uk</p>	Walsall Council	30/09/2024
	Land and Property Investment Fund (LPIF)			
02/09/2024	<p>Approval for the remaining £1,203,740 of the Land and Property Investment Fund (LPIF) programme funds to be awarded to the 2 selected projects - Alfred Gunn House (Sandwell Council) and Oxley Health & Wellbeing Facility (Wolverhampton City Council).</p>	<p>Tammy Stokes tammy_stokes@sandwell.gov.uk</p> <p>Simon Tranter simon.tranter@walsall.gov.uk</p> <p>Richard Lawrence Richard.Lawrence@wolverhampton.gov.uk</p>	<p>Sandwell Council</p> <p>Walsall Council</p> <p>Wolverhampton City Council</p>	30/09/2024

	<p>Approval for the Accountable Body (Walsall Council) for the LPIF programme to proceed to enter into grant agreement with the Alfred Gunn House project (Sandwell Council).</p> <p>Approval for the Accountable Body (Walsall Council) for the LPIF programme to proceed to enter into grant agreement with the Oxley Health & Wellbeing Facility project (Wolverhampton City Council).</p>			
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**West Midlands
Combined Authority**
Forward Plan

Forthcoming key decisions

Title of key decision:	Decision to be taken by and date:	Open or Exempt:	Executive Director:
<p>Bus Depot Strategy To approve the funding strategy for Transport for West Midlands to acquire sites for bus depots.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 11 October 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)</p>
<p>Provision of Ring & Ride and Demand Responsive Transport for the Region To consider the proposed outcome of the introduction of the revised target operating model of the West Midlands Ring & Ride and Demand Responsive Transport service.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 11 October 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)</p>
<p>Regional Road Safety Action Plan 2024-2030 Endorsement of the Regional Road Safety Action Plan 2024-2030 following completion of public consultation and validation from the Regional Road Safety Strategic Group.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 11 October 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)</p>
<p>Update on Bus Network Proposals from January 2025 To consider proposals for the region's bus network in 2025.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 11 October 2024</p>	<p>Part exempt</p>	<p>Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)</p>
<p>WMCA Brownfield Land Remediation - Report of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee To consider the findings of Overview & Scrutiny Committee's review into how the WMCA exercises its powers and funding in respect of brownfield land redevelopment and how the region's communities have benefited from this.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 11 October 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Interim Executive Director of Housing & Regeneration (John Godfrey)</p>

Title of key decision:	Decision to be taken by and date:	Open or Exempt:	Executive Director:
WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the latest financial position.	WMCA Board 11 October 2024	Open	Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub (Linda Horne)
WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the latest financial position	WMCA Board 15 November 2024	Open	Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub (Linda Horne)
Bus Franchising: Audit Outcome and Decision To Consult To consider the outcome of the audit, and to agree to undertake public consultation on the next steps.	WMCA Board 15 November 2024	Open	Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)
Local Transport Plan Adoption To consider recommendations to approve the final version of the LTP suite of documents (including Area Based Strategies) which have been adapted to align fully with the WMCA Functional and Place Based Strategies.	WMCA Board 15 November 2024	Open	Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)
Key Route Network Review 2023/24 To gain approval to update the Key Route Network.	WMCA Board 15 November 2024	Open	Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)

Title of key decision:	Decision to be taken by and date:	Open or Exempt:	Executive Director:
<p>Best Value Fare Capping for Bus (cEMV Broker) To consider the Full Business Case for the national cEMV Broker pilot and West Midlands roll-out which will enable best value fare capping for bus users to be delivered for travellers using their contactless debit card or other device. The Board will also be asked to approve the legal partnership arrangements with the collaborating delivery entities.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 November 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)</p>
<p>Wednesbury Brierley Hill Metro Extension Phase2 Report to seek approval to release funding to complete construction of the Phase 2 WBHE Metro.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 November 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands (Anne Shaw)</p>
<p>Culture, Creative and Heritage Infrastructure Programme To seek permission to undertake the Culture, Creative & Heritage Infrastructure programme of activity.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 November 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Executive Director of Strategy, Economy & Net Zero (Ed Cox)</p>
<p>Exemplary Region for Disabled People To consider the evidence, purpose, ambitions and recommendations to make the West Midlands an exemplary region for disabled people, focusing on on the WMCA's core functions, data and intelligence, health and wellbeing.</p>	<p>WMCA Board 15 November 2024</p>	<p>Open</p>	<p>Director of Employment, Skills, Health & Communities (Clare Hatton)</p>

Title of key decision:	Decision to be taken by and date:	Open or Exempt:	Executive Director:
Innovation Update To provide an update on recent highlights from the Innovation Board, including the current position regarding the Innovation Accelerator.	WMCA Board 15 November 2024	Open	Executive Director of Strategy, Economy & Net Zero (Ed Cox)
Regional Energy Strategy To consider the WMCA's Regional Energy Strategy.	WMCA Board 15 November 2024	Open	Executive Director of Strategy, Economy & Net Zero (Ed Cox)
A Review of the Effectiveness of Member Engagement and Development within the WMCA To consider the findings of a scrutiny review undertaken to examine the effectiveness of member engagement and development within the WMCA.	WMCA Board 15 November 2024	Open	Director of Law & Governance (Helen Edwards)
Draft WMCA Budget 2025/26 To consider the draft budget for the 2025/26 fiscal year.	WMCA Board 10 January 2025	Open	Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub (Linda Horne)
WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the latest financial position	WMCA Board 10 January 2025	Open	Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub (Linda Horne)
Contract Procedural Rules Update To update the Contract Procedural Rules	WMCA Board 10 January 2025	Open	Director of Law & Governance (Helen Edwards)
WMCA Budget 2025/26 To approve the 2025/26 budget.	WMCA Board 7 February 2025	Open	Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub (Linda Horne)

Title of key decision:	Decision to be taken by and date:	Open or Exempt:	Executive Director:
WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the latest financial position	WMCA Board 14 March 2025	Open	Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub (Linda Horne)
Local Investment in Natural Capital Local Investment in Natural Capital	WMCA Board 13 June 2025	Open	Executive Director of Strategy, Economy & Net Zero (Ed Cox)
WMCA Financial Monitoring Report To provide an update on the latest financial position and provisional outturn for the 2024/25 financial year.	WMCA Board 13 June 2025	Open	Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub (Linda Horne)

The Forward Plan

This document sets out known 'key decisions' that will be taken by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) over the coming months.

Forthcoming key decisions are published online to meet the statutory 28 day notification rule for each meeting where a key decision will be taken. Where it has not been possible to meet the 28 day rule for publication of notice of a key decision or an intention to meet in private, the relevant notices will be published as required by legislation as soon as possible.

What is a key decision?

A 'key decision' means a decision of the Mayor, WMCA or officer which is likely:

- (a) to result in the WMCA incurring expenditure, making savings or generating income amounting to £1m or more; or
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the WMCA.

The report relating to a decision, together with any other documents being considered, will be available five clear working days before the decision is to be taken (unless the documentation contains exempt information).

Title of key decision:	Decision to be taken by and date:	Open or Exempt:	Executive Director:
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The forward plan also provides notice of when the WMCA may decide to exclude the press and public during consideration of a particular matter due to the potential for disclosure of confidential or exempt information. The grounds upon which local authorities can exclude the press and public are specified by law and details of the exempt categories are available on request from the Governance Services team (governance.services@wmca.org.uk).

Councillors or members of the public wishing to:

- make a representation about why a matter should be heard in public, or
- submit information to the decision-making body about an item in the forward plan, or
- request details of relevant documents, or
- seek advice about the WMCA's decision-making arrangements,

should contact the Governance Services team: governance.services@wmca.org.uk

Scrutiny Overview Committee – Recommendation Tracker (24/25)

Committee Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Action/Recommendation	Officer responsible	Status	Target Completion Date	Notes
9 November 2023	WMCA Annual Report	That those members appointed to the West Midlands Combined Authority, Transport for West Midlands, Fire Authority and the Police and Crime Panel provide an annual report to full Council.	Democratic Services	In progress	September – December 2024	