

SCRUTINY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Tuesday 2 February 2021 at 6.00 pm

Virtual meeting via Microsoft Teams

Held in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020; and conducted according to the Council's Standing Orders for Remote Meetings and those set out in the Council's Constitution.

Committee Members present: Councillor J. Murray (Chair)
Councillor A. Nawaz
Councillor S. Ditta
Councillor K. Ferguson
Councillor L. Harrison
Councillor K. Hussain
Councillor L. Jeavons
Councillor W. Rasab
Councillor S. Samra
Councillor I. Shires
Councillor M. Statham

Portfolio Holders present: Councillor M. Bird - Leader
Councillor A. Andrew – Deputy Leader and Regeneration
Councillor G. Perry – Deputy Leader and Resilient Communities
Councillor B. Chatta – Personnel and Business Support
Councillor S. Craddock – Health and Wellbeing
Councillor C. Towe – Education & Skills

Officers present: Deborah Hindson - Executive Director – Resources & Transformation
Stephen Gunther – Director of Public Health
Vicky Buckley – Interim Director of Finance, Corporate Landlord and Performance
Geraint Griffiths-Dale – Walsall Managing Director, Black Country and West Birmingham CCGs
Emma Thomas – Public Health Intelligence Manager
Craig Goodall - Senior Democratic Services Officer

WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming everyone, and explaining the rules of procedure and legal context in which the meeting was being held. He also directed members of the public viewing the meeting to the papers, which could be found on the Council's Committee Management Information system (CMIS) webpage.

Committee Members confirmed that they could see and hear the proceedings.
293/21 **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

294/21 **SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitutions.

285/21 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

There were no declarations of interest or party whip for the duration of the meeting.

295/21 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
(AS AMENDED)**

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

296/21 **MINUTES**

Resolved (by roll call):

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2020, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record subject to the inclusion of Councillor L. Harrison as in attendance and the deletion of Councillor G. Perry who was listed as in attendance twice.

297/21 **DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET AND DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME
2021/22 TO 2023/24**

The Committee were informed of the draft revenue budget and capital programme for 2021/22 – 2023/24.

The Leader provided an update on the draft revenue budget highlighting changes that had taken place since it was presented to the Committee in December. He reported that the Government settlement had been received including an additional £10m in one off grants. He also highlighted new investments in planning enforcement and hybrid meeting technology. A Council Tax rise of 4.99% was proposed with 3% ring-fenced for adult social care. These changes had reduced the funding gap and savings required for future years.

The Leader, Deputy Leader for Regeneration, Deputy Leader for Resilient Communities and Portfolio Holder for Personnel and Business Support presented capital programme proposals in their remits. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairs presented feedback from their meetings that had considered the capital programme.

Resolved (by assent):

That the report be noted.

298/20 COVID-19 UPDATE

The Committee were provided with an update on the Covid-19 management response in Walsall.

The Portfolio Holder (Health and Wellbeing) provided Members with an overview of the latest figures for the borough. He noted that the case rate had declined since the publication of the report to 515 cases per 100,000 people. Willenhall currently had the highest case rates and there were currently two outbreaks in care homes. The majority of cases were in 18-39 and 39-49 age brackets. Care home staff had been offered the vaccine and take up by care home residents was high. He thanked all medical staff and volunteers for their work at vaccination centres.

He continued to explain details of surge testing that was taking place after a case of the South African Covid-19 variant was found in the WS2 area of Walsall. It was thought this variant was more infectious than other Covid-19 variants therefore additional testing had been provided to the area. All adults in the WS2 area and some surrounding postcodes were being asked to undertake a test to understand if the new variant had spread.

Following questions the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the surge testing was for over 18's only and that residents in the affected area could still travel for work purposes. A Ward Member in the surge testing area was informed that the testing had been established at short notice and information for residents provided online.

The Walsall Managing Director provided an update on the vaccination programme. He outlined that vaccinations had begun in December via the hospital and GP operated sites. Two vaccines were being used from Pfizer and AstraZeneca. By 15 February all over 70s and those deemed to be clinically extremely vulnerable would have been offered a vaccine. Work was taking place to engage those that declined a vaccine and mobile clinics were being established for hard to reach groups.

Following questions the Walsall Managing Director reported that the refusal rate for vaccines was up to 20% but the majority of appointments that were booked were used. Reserve lists were in place to prevent wastage. Those who refused a vaccine received follow up calls. The highest levels of refusals were in the south of the borough. Mobile clinics had visited faith buildings to engage those who may be reluctant to take a vaccine for religious reasons. It was believed that existing vaccines would provide protection against the South Africa variant. Vaccination centres were spread across the borough to assist access. If supply was available up to 10,000 vaccines a day could be delivered.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

299/20 **FEEDBACK FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

The meeting received feedback from recent meetings of the remaining Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

300/20 **AREAS OF FOCUS**

The Committee considered its work programme and the Forward Plans of Walsall Council and the Black Country Joint Executive Committee.

Following a discussion the Committee agreed that it should lead on receiving data updates on Covid-19 and that the remaining Overview and Scrutiny Committees should focus on the impact of Covid-19 for areas within their remits.

The following items were identified for the next meeting of the Committee:

- Equalities;
- Section 106;
- Discussion with the Police.

Resolved (by assent):

That the Areas of Focus and Forward Plan be noted.

301/20 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would be held on 15 April 2021.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 8.15 p.m.

Chair.....

Date.....