

SCRUTINY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 16 MARCH 2023, 6:00pm

In the Council Chamber at the Council House, Walsall

Committee Members present:

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

Portfolio Holders present:

Councillor Bird
Councillor Andrew
Councillor Ali
Councillor Ferguson
Councillor Flint
Councillor M. Statham

Officers present:

Simon Neilson	Executive Director, Economy & Environment and Communities
Judith Greenhalgh	Interim Executive Director (Resources & Transformation)
Stephen Gunther	Director – Public Health
Elise Hopkins	Director - Customer Engagement
Elizabeth Connolly	Senior Policy and Performance Officer
Edward Cook	Assistant Democratic Services Officer
Nikki Gough	Democratic Services Officer
Joanne Gray	CAM Service Design Lead
Claire Hill	Project Manager
Marcus Hobbs	Programme Director for CAM
Kathryn Moreton	Head of Highways Transport & Operations
David Williamson	Strategy Policy and Performance Officer

457/22 **Apologies**

Apologies were received for Councillor Bains and Councillor Samra.

458/22 **Substitutions**

There were no substitutions.

459/22 **Declarations of interest and party whip**

No declarations of interest or party whip were received.

460/22 **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)**

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

461/22 **Minutes**

A copy of the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2023 was submitted.

[Annexed]

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2023, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved and signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

462/22 **School Gate Working Group**

Councillor Cooper introduced the report of the School Gate Parking Working Group, highlighting the key findings of the report and thanking officers for their support.

[Annexed]

Members of the Working Group explained that some of the issues identified would be challenging to address but that it was important to continue working towards solving these problems. Members raised questions about parking on grass verges and enforcement. The Head of Highways Transport & Operations explained that grass verges would be included in the Street Scene Strategy scheduled to be published in coming months and that enforcement could only be performed by the Council at present on 'keep clear' markings, with yellow lines parking being the responsibility of civil enforcement.

Schemes such as 'walking buses', included in the A*Stars programme suite of initiatives, encouraged people to park further from schools and seek safer routes, however, Members agreed that awareness of these policies needed to be increased

to encourage a behavioural shift amongst parents. Various possible solutions including cameras outside schools; training residents in enforcement; making Council car parks more accessible; and more traffic contravention powers were discussed. Concerns regarding school admissions arrangements and the placement of children in schools in different areas, especially siblings, were also raised.

Resolved:

- 1. That the report be noted;**
- 2. That the report of the School Gate Working Group be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration.**

463/22 **Member Enquiries**

The Programme Director for CAM introduced a report, which provided an update on the new Members' enquiries platform, previously discussed at the meeting of the Committee in December 2022.

[Annexed]

Following the discussions at the Committee in December 2022 several changes had been introduced to ensure that member enquiries would be logged, regardless of the way in which they were raised, to ensure visibility responsibility and consistency. A video demonstration of the app was provided, as were timescales and the proposed training arrangements which would be flexible to members' needs. It was proposed that training on the new system be provided to newly elected Members as part of their induction and to existing Members during May 2023.

Responding to questions, the Programme Director for CAM and Director for Customer Engagement explained that the timescale for launching the app was flexible and would be negotiated with Members, but it was unlikely to be ready prior to the May 2023 elections. It was anticipated that the new system would lead to efficiencies, but resource sufficiency would be continually monitored. It was emphasised that the app was not designed for reporting emergencies and Members would be encouraged to contact officers directly in such events.

Resolved:

- 1. That Members agreed the approach and planned development, as set out in the accompanying presentation and report;**
- 2. That an out-of-hours contact for use by Elected Members in case of emergencies be incorporated into the app.**

464/22

Our Council Plan: Markers of Success Q2 22/23

The Strategy Policy and Performance Officer and Senior Policy and Performance Officer introduced a report which outlined the Council's performance during Quarter 2 of the 2022-23 municipal year (July to September 2022) against the priorities set out in the Council Plan.

{Annexed}

Performance reporting measures were still being improved however, no significant concerns had been identified except one measure in Children's Services regarding the time taken to assess Educational Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Internal services, including customer engagement was an area where work on improving data collection was required, whilst more data was now available regarding Communities. Improving performance monitoring in areas presently difficult to measure would be a priority for 2023-24.

Responding to questions, the Senior Policy and Performance Officer explained that there would always be opportunities to 'stretch' and 'deepen' targets to ensure they were appropriate and sufficiently challenging. This would become easier as data improved. Regarding the issue of concern related to EHCPs, the Portfolio Holder for Education and Skills explained that this was related to a historic departmental restructure but that these changes were now embedded. By the end of the 2022-23 academic year, it was expected that all EHCP assessments over twenty weeks old would have been dealt with.

Resolved:

- 1. That the Quarter 2 22/23 performance against the Markers of Success as set out in Our Council Plan 2022-25 be noted;**
- 2. That the plans for developing the performance process from 2023/24 onwards be noted;**
- 3. That the presentation and report submitted to the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21 February regarding Childhood Obesity, be distributed to all members of the Scrutiny Overview Committee.**

465/22

Feedback from Overview & Scrutiny Committees

The Committee received feedback from the Chairs of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees on meetings of their committees since 7 February 2023.

[Annexed]

Resolved:

- 1. That the feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees be noted;**

466/22 **Recommendation Tracker**

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

[Annexed]

It was noted that several actions marked on the report as 'in progress' had completed since the papers were published.

Resolved:

That the recommendation tracker be noted.

467/22 **Areas of Focus 2022-23**

Members received the Committee's Work Programme and considered the Forward Plans of the Council and the Black Country Executive Joint Committee.

[Annexed]

Members also discussed the topic of those observing Ramadan being able to break their fast during the next scheduled meeting.

Resolved:

- 1. That the following items be considered at the meeting of 20 April 2023:**
 - a. Election reforms;**
 - b. Corporate Peer Challenge**
 - c. We are Walsall 2040 Draft Strategy**

- 2. That the Forward Plans be noted.**

468/22 **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting would be held on 20 April 2023 at 6pm.

There being no further business this meeting was terminated at 8:07pm.

Signed:

Date: