

## **SCRUTINY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**15 March 2022 AT 6.00 P.M. AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE**

**Committee Members Present** Councillor Murray (Chair)  
Councillor Nawaz (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Ali  
Councillor Bott  
Councillor Hicken  
Councillor Samra  
Councillor Singh-Sohal  
Councillor Robertson

**Officers** Simon Neilson – Executive Director (Economy, Environment and Communities)  
David Elrington – Regulatory Services Manager  
Stephen Gunther – Director – Public Health  
Emma Thomas – Public Health Intelligence Manager  
Paul Gordon – Director – Resilient Communities  
Steve Gittins – Team Leader Community Protection  
Elise Hopkins – Director – Customer Engagement  
Nikki Gough – Democratic Services Officer

**Others in attendance** Phil Dolby – Chief Superintendent (West Midlands Police)

**Portfolio Holders** Councillor Andrew – Deputy Leader and Regeneration  
Councillor Perry – Deputy Leader and Resilient Communities  
Councillor M. Statham – Internal Services  
Councillor Towe – Education and Skills  
Councillor Craddock – Health and Wellbeing  
Councillor Butler – Clean and Green

### **378/21 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Harrison, Hussain, and Rasab.

### **379/21 SUBSTITUTIONS**

Councillor Robertson substituted for Councillor Hussain.

### **380/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

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

381/21 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 (AS AMENDED)**

There were no items in private session.

382/21 **MINUTES**

**Resolved:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2022, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved.**

383/21 **COVID-19 INFECTION AND VACCINATION RATES UPDATE**

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing introduced the update on Covid-19 infection and vaccination rates in the Borough, explaining that the Covid-19 dashboard indicated a falling rate of infection since the last meeting, however it was suggested that this may be due to a reduction in individuals testing.

The Public Health Intelligence Manager presented the report and highlighted the salient points (annexed). An overview of the current situation was provided, the Committee was informed that despite a decrease in positive cases since the last meeting, there had been a recent increase, with the weekly number of new cases up to 662. The rate in Walsall was 231 cases per 1000,000 and the ranking for Walsall had decreased to 284 out of 309. The vaccination uptake in Walsall remained higher than regional level with a similar level of booster uptake. There had been a reduction in the number of inpatient Covid-19 inpatients, which was currently at 31, and 2 Covid-19 patients in ITU. Further information was provided on rates by age and ward - it was stressed that rates changed regularly and that testing rates had decreased, which may impact data. Vaccination update by age and area was considered, and action was needed to encourage certain cohorts to be vaccinated.

The Committee was advised that consideration was being given to how data was presented on the local situation to ensure it remained meaningful for understanding the level of risk from Covid-19 locally.

The Authority had been successful in securing support with Covid-19 vaccinations from the National Surge Rapid Response Team. The Team would be encouraging uptake of vaccination in the Blakenall, Birchills and Leamore wards. A detailed overview of the project was provided.

The Director of Public Health described the communication and engagement to share and amplify information and guidance. Messaging relating to the Governments 'Living with Covid-19 Plan' had been shared across a wide range of channels within the community. The situation will continue to be monitored, in particular the impact on acute settings - it was noted that it was possible that the positive cases indicated those individuals who were continuing to test. The role of Covid-19 champions was acknowledged and the importance of building resilience in the community.

The Portfolio Holder (Health and Well Being) advised Members that the mass vaccination site in the Saddlers Centre was closing and moving to a smaller site.

A Member raised the issue of long Covid, and questioned how many people were suffering with this condition in Walsall. The Director of Public Health responded to state that to a certain extent this was not known, however modelling had taken place to identify the number of people suffering from this condition. It was noted that support was available locally, and services to respond to this issue were being considered.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be noted.**

**384/21 WEST MIDLANDS POLICE**

The Committee welcomed the Chief Superintendent to the meeting. He presented the report (annexed) and highlighted the salient points of the presentation. The following were described as priorities for the Safer Walsall Partnership, (which was the strategic organisation with responsibility for addressing crime, disorder and drug and alcohol abuse in Walsall):

- Serious Youth Violence.
- All Violence.
- Vulnerability.
- Neighbourhood Crimes.
- Legitimacy of the Force.

The boundary sector was presented (annexed), and the Committee was informed that the data relating to areas in Walsall allowed resources to be allocated according to need. It was noted that there was a natural variation in the data, with control limits in relation to crimes set tolerances which flagged up when further analysis was needed.

The following examples evidence that the average number of crimes committed in Walsall was lower than the regional average. The following figures relate to daily average number of crimes:

- Incidents of violence with injury in Walsall was 9.2 compared to the West Midlands average of 106.8.
- Violence (committed by those under 25 years) in Walsall was 2.0 compared to 23.4 in West Midlands.
- Robbery in Walsall was 0.8 compared to 22.7 in West Midlands.
- Incidents of domestic abuse in Walsall was 18.1 compared to 184.2 in West Midlands.
- Incidents of burglaries (residential) in Walsall were 4.1 compared to a West Midlands daily average of 45.7. Further information on vehicle crime was provided and how the value of commodities affected crime in the area, analysis was carried out cross-border to ensure that those patterns were identified.
- Hate crime/discrimination was 2.4 in comparison to 27.9 in West Midlands. Consideration was given to whether this was due to an under representation, in particular in LGBT communities and work continued to tackle this and work in partnership to reduce this type of crime.

- The total recorded crime in Walsall was 92.6 compared to 1011.6 in West Midlands.

In the future the severity of the crime would be reported to detail the harm of the crime, the complexity of this was acknowledged. Further information could be provided once this was implemented.

Heat maps for each type of crime consistently indicated that activity was highest in the St Matthews ward due to the location of the town centre (a dense population). Work was being carried out to focus efforts in areas that were shown as 'hot spots' for crimes.

The Chief Superintendent informed the Committee of the unprecedented rise in demand for services across all emergency services, which was indicative of vulnerabilities in society. Investment had been made to recruit Officers, including some located in schools and as part of early help teams to work with families as part of a hub model.

The Portfolio Holder (Resilient Communities) addressed the Committee to describe the Partnership work that had taken place, as Chair of the Safer Walsall Partnership he described the work carried out to set priorities and the impact of resilient communities on the work which underpins work done by the Partnership.

A Member raised the importance of continuity in neighbourhood policing officers and asked for further information on Special Police Officers. The Chief Superintendent responded to stated that there was natural movement in neighbourhood policing and this was a challenge, however efforts were made to ensure that Sergeants remained constant. There had been five new Special Police Officers recruited in Walsall.

A Member challenged how community confidence in policing could be increased and how positive messages could be communicated. The Chief Superintendent acknowledged the influence of the media and stated that it was harder to communicate the hard work and dedication of Police Officers.

A discussion ensued on police presence and the model of neighbourhood policing, a description on the way police were deployed was provided. Members were asked to encourage residents to report crimes as this provided intelligence to the force. A Member asked if many crimes were not reported, and it was acknowledged that there were complex reasons for individuals not doing so and work was being done to resolve this and improve relationships between the public and the police.

The Committee discussed restorative justice and reoffending of criminals, the Chief Superintendent described a range of measures to prevent reoffending. Offender Managers did a great deal of work to support people, prevent crime and rehabilitate. The impact of mental health issues was noted, and the role of the partnership in relation to this.

In response to a statement made by a Member, the Chief Superintendent stated that he had instructed all neighbourhood teams to reinstate police surgeries although it should be remembered that teams were smaller than they were previously.

A Member asked for further information on how the police worked with schools, the Committee was informed that monthly meetings were held with Head teachers of local schools, a new initiative meant that schools were informed of any crimes that young people had been involved in to ensure they were supported.

The Leader commended the Chief Superintendent for his commitment to Walsall and the difference he had made, he noted the impact that the Authority could have in relation to licensing of establishments and other regulatory committees. The Chief Superintendent stated that he would welcome support in relation to the reducing the negative impact of the night time economy.

## **Resolved**

**That the report has been noted.**

### **385/21 FLY TIPPING ENFORCEMENT**

The Director (Resilient Communities) presented the report and highlighted the salient points. The report set out the progress made in tackling fly tipping and littering in Walsall. The priorities for the service were described, and the role of volunteers in litter picking was commended. The use of crime scene tape would be used as a tool to highlight that fly tipping was a crime, and work was being done with schools to educate young people.

The Portfolio Holder (Resilient Communities) addressed the Committee to state that there was a focus on improving the service. The work of the voluntary sector was acknowledged and the impact that the sector made in Walsall. The message of the Authority was that enforcement would happen where ever possible, it was stressed that tips were open seven days a week and people would be encouraged to report fly tippers alongside the increased use of technology.

The Portfolio Holder (Clean and Green) described measures taking place to encourage residents to dispose of waste appropriately, this included increased opening times for refuse sites, bulky waste collection, increased frequency in collection of brown bin collection (free of charge) and the availability for larger bins. The use of stickers on those items left outside homes was also described to redirect waste to an appropriate service. In response to a query from a Member the Portfolio Holder agreed to consider the incentives that could be offered to residents in relation to composting.

A Member suggested that all schools should be involved to ensure that all young people were educated in relation to fly tipping, and the Director confirmed that this was the ambition. It was questioned why notice boards in parks were not used to educate the community on fly tipping and littering, Officers agreed to progress this.

A Member described issues with fly tipping that occurred on land owned by Registered Social Landlords and asked if any form of agreement had been considered to ensure waste was cleared quickly. The Portfolio Holder stated that the Fly Tipping Taskforce

was a method of working more closely with landlords and dealing with issues raised. Where ever possible recharging took place to recover costs.

The Executive Director informed the Committee that there was a large demand on a small team the service, and the Authority was recognised nationally for its work. In consideration of this the team needed to consider where resources were best allocated to have the most impact.

The Director agreed to provide further information on timescales for bulky waste collection to the Committee. Work with Partners, in particular WHG, was described and the importance of relationships in resolving issues was stressed.

#### **Resolved that**

- 1. That the report be noted.**
- 2. Notice boards in parks should be used to educate the community on fly tipping and littering.**
- 3. Timescales on bulky waste collection to be provided to the Committee**
- 4. Consideration of the incentives available to encourage residents to compost.**
- 5. A report on the use of 'electric refuse collection vehicles' at a future meeting.**

#### **386/21 FEEDBACK FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

The Committee noted the reports of the Chairs of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees on meetings of their Committees.

#### **Resolved:**

**That the report be noted.**

#### **387/21 RECOMMENDATION TRACKER**

#### **Resolved:**

**That the recommendation tracker be noted.**

#### **388/21 AREAS OF FOCUS**

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

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

- Update on Covid-19 infection and vaccination rates;
- Follow up on sprint bus;
- Update on Domestic abuse;

- Feedback from Overview & Scrutiny Committees;
- Affordable Housing and section 106 spend.

In addition, it was agreed that a report on the use of Electric refuse vehicle would be taken to a future meeting of the Committee.

**Resolved:**

- **That the areas of focus and forward plans be noted.**
- **An update on the establishment of working groups is provided to the Committee.**

**389/21 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as 28 April 2022.

The meeting terminated at 8.30 p.m.

Chair: .....Date:.....