

SCRUTINY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 MARCH 2018 AT 6.00 P.M. AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE

Panel Members Present Councillor Murray (Vice-Chair in the Chair)
Councillor M. Bird
Councillor R. Burley
Councillor S. Ditta
Councillor L. Hazell
Councillor Towe

Officers Present: James Walsh – Executive Director – Resources
and Transformation
Craig Goodall – Senior Democratic Services
Officer

Portfolio Holders Councillor S. Coughlan – Leader
Councillor Robertson - Health
Councillor I. Shires – Community, Leisure and Culture

87/17 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors K. Hussain and A. Ditta.

88/17 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions.

89/17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

90/17 MINUTES

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 January, 2018 a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

91/17 PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee was informed of the outcome of the Parliamentary inquiry in local government Overview and Scrutiny (O&S).

The Senior Democratic Services Officer highlighted the principle findings of the inquiry and its recommendations. The Government's response to the recommendations contained in the inquiry report was tabled at the meeting (annexed).

The Committee discussed the findings of the inquiry. Members noted the necessary drive and willpower to make scrutiny successful and felt that opposition chairs had made scrutiny locally more robust. It was felt that training for Members was important particularly in terms of questioning skills. Mentorship was discussed as another method of improving Member skills. The Committee noted that the Government had agreed to update the guidance for O&S and resolved to consider how to improve scrutiny at Walsall once this guidance was available.

Resolved:

That the updated Government guidance on Overview and Scrutiny be considered once it is available.

91/17 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MODELS**

The Committee considered a report that highlighted different O&S Committee models.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer introduced the various models and highlighted different approaches to scrutinising children's services and education at authorities that were rated either 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted.

Members discussed the report. The following are the principle points from the ensuing discussion:

- Task and finish groups were noted as an effective method of delivering valued scrutiny;
- The importance of adequate support for Members was discussed including expert external advice;
- The directorate based model was noted as straightforward to understand although some members noted this could weaken scrutiny of cross cutting areas;
- The importance of sufficient capacity for committees and members was noted.
- A discussion took place regarding the recommended split of the remit of the existing Education and Children's Services OSC into two.
- Further information was requested regarding scrutiny exemplars.

Resolved:

That further information be provided to Members on any national scrutiny exemplars.

93/17 **FEEDBACK FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

The meeting received feedback from all Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee was informed about the call-in heard regarding the Cabinet decision to create a selective licensing scheme. Members were informed that a good debate had taken place and recommendations had been made back asking Cabinet to reconsider its decision.

Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Members were informed that the Committee had considered a report on child sexual exploitation and missing children. Members had concerns about children being home educated. A working group had been established to look at the Ofsted Action Plan. The Committee was going to hold its next meeting at Willenhall E-Act Academy as a follow up to see how it had improved since its high profile 'inadequate' Ofsted inspection.

Social Care and Inclusion Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Members were informed that the Committee had continued to hear large agendas, Members had been consulted on changes to local Dental Hospital arrangements, stoke services and prescriptions. Members were also going to look at 16-18 year old mental health provision. The benefits of Hollybank House and the support it provides to residents was discussed.

West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny

Members were informed that the Committee had been holding discussions about the WMCA budget, Devo 2 and policing. The next meeting of the committee was going to receive reports from its various task and finish groups. Limitations with the resources available to WMCA OSC were raised.

Resolved:

That the feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees be noted.

94/17 **FORWARD PLANS**

Members considered the forward plan of key decisions form Cabinet and the Black Country Joint Executive (annexed).

A Member requested further information regarding the Metro.

Resolved:

That the forward plans be noted;

95/17 **AREAS OF FOCUS 2017/18**

Resolved:

That the Areas of Focus 2017/18 be noted.

86/17 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the date of the next meeting would be set at Annual Council.

The meeting terminated at 7.29 p.m.

Chair:

Date:.....