

## **SCRUTINY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**7 February 2022 AT 6.00 P.M. AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE**

**Committee Members Present** Councillor Murray (Chair)  
Councillor Nawaz (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Ali  
Councillor Harrison  
Councillor Hicken  
Councillor K. Hussain  
Councillor Rasab  
Councillor Samra  
Councillor Singh-Sohal  
Councillor Robertson

**Officers** Simon Neilson – Executive Director (Economy, Environment and Communities)  
Stephen Gunther – Director – Public Health  
Emma Thomas – Public Health Intelligence Manager  
Christine Williams – Specialist Project Manager  
Elise Hopkins – Director – Customer Engagement  
Isabel Vanderheeren – Transformation Lead – Children’s Services  
Craig Goodall – Principal Democratic Services Officer  
Sian Lloyd – Democratic Services Officer

**Others in attendance** Geraint Griffiths-Dale – Clinical Commissioning Group

**Portfolio Holders** Councillor Bird – Leader  
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

### **365/21 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors P. Bott and Jeavons.

### **366/21 SUBSTITUTIONS**

Councillor Robertson substituted for Councillor Jeavons.

### **367/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

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

368/21 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 (AS AMENDED)**

**Resolved:**

**That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the items set out in the private part of the agenda for the reasons set out therein and Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972.**

369/21 **MINUTES**

**Resolved:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2021, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved.**

370/21 **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 a comprehensive report had been prepared containing lots of detail on the current situation.

The Public Health Intelligence Manager acknowledged that since the report had been published there had been a 22% decrease in case rates but that they still remained in the region of 1000 per 100,000 people. She advised this placed Walsall 174 out of 309 local authorities in terms of case rates and that positivity within in the borough was calculated at 20.1% which was slightly higher than the national average. It was highlighted that every ward in the borough had positive cases at present and there were 90 confirmed Covid19-positive in-patients at Walsall Manor hospital, 2 of which were in acute care. The amount of cases in different wards within the borough was discussed and it was noted that there had been a significant increase in cases in Pelsall and pockets of higher case numbers in wards such as Bloxwich and Willenhall. She demonstrated the use of the Covid dashboard which contained the most up-to-date data relating to a number of key measurements such as vaccination uptake and number of Covid-related deaths.

The Public Health Intelligence Manager explained that there was significantly less testing occurring at present and it was important to emphasise that testing was still very much encouraged as it was important to understand the spread of Covid.

In relation to vaccination rates it was reported that generally within Walsall uptake had been good but that the 18 – 29 age bracket had the highest number of unvaccinated people. Pleck and Palfrey had lower uptake in comparison to the average. The Leader of the Council added that elected Members in wards with lower uptake such as Blakenall, St Matthews, Palfrey and Pleck should be encouraging residents to get their vaccinations. Following a question from a Member of the Committee the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing clarified that efforts to encourage vaccination were being made in areas of the borough with lower vaccination uptake rates in partnership with Covid champions. He asked that ward councillors also supported these efforts within their communities. The Managing

Director emphasised that community pharmacies still had capacity for vaccinations and there was still opportunity to come forward for a first, second or booster vaccine.

The Walsall Managing Director of the Black Country and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group (the Managing Director) gave further information on the situation in the Manor Hospital, noting that the NHS had declared a critical incident but that the Manor Hospital had performed amongst the best in the Black Country and case numbers were decreasing.

Following a question from a Member of the Committee the Director of Public Health advised that the Government were still considering plans to remove free provision of lateral flow tests and that when any Government announcements were made there would be a proactive approach to the communication of these to residents. It was highlighted that the communications strategy provided for the use of a mix of media across a wide range of channels to get the message out. This included the use of different languages and targeted social media campaigns to reach residents in wards who are hesitant to be vaccinated. The Director of Public Health emphasised the communication of national guidance with local amplification.

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing added that Walsall had reached a tragic milestone of over 1000 Covid-related deaths.

Following a question from a Member of the Committee the Managing Director clarified there were 2 main impacts on the NHS at present which were the increase in number of people being hospitalised and the levels of staff absences which were at the highest levels ever. He elaborated that there were approximately 160,000 people waiting for planned care across the West Midlands and for non-urgent planned care waiting times were up to 2 years, with a significant number of people waiting over 52 weeks for their treatment. The Director of Public Health added that Covid was also having an impact on when people decide to come forward to their GP for other health concerns.

The Director of Public Health responded to a question regarding advice to schools, explaining that the Council continued to recommend wearing face coverings in communal areas as allowed within Department of Education guidelines.

Following a question the Director of Public Health explained that the pandemic had impacted on the take up of childhood vaccinations such as MMR. He reported that uptake was below target for the borough and work was ongoing to tackle this challenge through the Health Protection Strategy.

**Resolved:**

**That:**

- 1. The report be noted.**
- 2. The Committee be provided with the link to access the Covid dashboard.**

## 371/21 **CORPORATE PLAN MONITORING (Q2)**

The Leader of the Council presented a report demonstrating the progress in quarter 2 with the Marker of Success as contained within the 2021/22 Corporate Plan. He congratulated Children's Services for achieving a GOOD rating from Ofsted.

The Director of Public Health stated that progress had been made from quarter 1 to quarter 2 with a 4% reduction in red markers and 50% of markers being in the green category. He advised that the quarter 3 report would soon be published and progress had been seen across the whole authority.

The Committee was advised that the new Council Plan was currently going through internal processes on its way to being approved. The Leader of the Council emphasised that he had requested that the Corporate Plan be renamed the Council Plan as all Members were also involved in the delivery of outcomes.

Following questions from Members of the Committee the Director of Public Health explained that Cabinet and each Portfolio Holder monitor the markers of success within their portfolios to ensure the details are captured and monitored.

The Leader of the Council summarised that it was important to ensure people are aware that the pandemic hasn't gone away and that the Council would need to move towards a facilitator role rather than that of service provider due to budgetary constraints.

### **Resolved:**

**That the progress with the markers of success be noted.**

## 372/21 **PROPOSED ACTION TRACKER FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

Following a request from the Committee at the previous meeting in relation to the outcomes of the Scrutiny Survey the Principal Democratic Services Officer presented a proposed action tracker for their comment. He reminded the Committee that the Scrutiny Survey had found that the systemic follow up of recommendations at each committee would assist members in monitoring outcomes.

The Committee were presented a selection action trackers in use by other Committees and authorities which had been researched for best practice purposes. The Principal Democratic Services Officer submitted the proposed action tracker created following this research and had inserted the actions from the previous meeting so that it could be seen as a working document.

Members of the Committee provided their feedback on the drafted proposal, stating that they would like the inclusion of a column for a targeted completion date.

### **Resolved:**

**That:**

- 1. A column for targeted completion date be added to the draft recommendation tracker.**
- 2. Subject to suggested amendments, Members approve the draft recommendation tracker for use across all Overview and Scrutiny Committees to assist the systematic follow up of recommendations.**
- 3. The effectiveness of the recommendation tracker be reviewed in 12 months' time.**
- 4. The actions from the last meeting of the Scrutiny Overview Committee be noted.**

### **373/21 FEEDBACK FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

The Committee noted the reports of the Chairs of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees on meetings of their Committees since 13 December.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be noted.**

### **374/21 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;
- Feedback from Overview & Scrutiny Committees;
- Chief Superintendent Phil Dolby – West Midlands Police; and
- Fly-tipping Enforcement

**Resolved:**

**That the Areas of Focus and Forward Plan be noted.**

### **375/21 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the date of the next meeting would be 15 March 2022.

*Whilst the item below was discussed in private session due to exempt information under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the minute below is a full and open account of the discussion that took place.*

## 376/21    **DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES DELIVERY MODEL**

The Deputy Leader (Regeneration) introduced the Domestic Abuse Services Delivery Model, stating it was of paramount importance that all Members and officers were fully engaged with this very important duty.

The Director of Customer Engagement advised that the delivery model was in response to the Domestic Abuse Act which came into force in 2021 and conferred on the Council new duties requiring the commissioning of sufficient and effective safe accommodation to victims of Domestic Abuse and effective support to victims of domestic abuse and their children. She emphasised that a lot of work had been undertaken to ensure that this was provided in as joined-up a way as possible. It was noted that consultation had been completed with a large amount of current service users to understand their needs, particularly focusing on those who need specific types of accommodation that are traditionally more difficult to source. Part of the feedback received has identified that some victims wanted to stay in the borough rather than flee to other areas.

The Transformation Lead for Children's Services added that she welcomed the inclusion of children as victims of domestic abuse and that the service areas were working together to ensure efficient and effective provision.

Following questions from Members on whether the support offered by the contract was adequate the Director of Customer Engagement confirmed that there had been a reported 19% increase in instances of domestic violence since 2020. She reassured the Committee that there was significantly more access to and better provision of support but that this would be continually reviewed. It was emphasised that all cases were considered on their individual requirements and that not all victims would benefit from moving out of the borough. The Director of Customer Engagement also stated that the consultation had shown different victim profiles wanted different options and bidding agencies had advised what types of accommodation they could offer.

The Deputy Leader (Resilient Communities) added that there was an important distinction between domestic violence and domestic abuse and that there were unfortunately a large proportion of repeat victims alongside much wider reporting of domestic abuse. He emphasised that the Resilient Communities model reached into multiple different support services and aimed to add to the joined up nature of the provision. The Transformation Lead for Children's Services echoed that it was important that the right support was provided in the right place and with the centralisation of the pathway the Council was looking to have more effective service provision and build on the good results shown by the Family Safeguarding Model and early intervention for children in domestic abuse situations.

**Resolved:**

**That:**

- 1. The report be noted.**

**2. Cabinet be requested to ask for Scrutiny to consider Domestic Abuse Service Provision in 12 months.**

The meeting terminated at 7.31 p.m.

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