

SCRUTINY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 MARCH 2017 AT 6.00 P.M. AT THE COUNCIL HOUSE

Panel Members Present

Councillor Murray (Vice Chair in the Chair)
Councillor Barker
Councillor Bird
Councillor Chambers
Councillor E. Hazell
Councillor Longhi
Councillor Towe
Councillor Wade

Officers Present:

David Haley - Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Neil Picken – Senior Democratic Services Officer

Leader of the Council Councillor S. Coughlan

Portfolio Holders Councillor I. Shires (Personnel and Business Support /
Agenda for Change)
Councillor A. Nawaz (Children's Services and Education)

52/17 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Hussain, Creaney and Longhi.

53/17 SUBSTITUTIONS

None

54/17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

55/17 MINUTES

Members considered the minutes of the meetings held on .

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 December, 2017, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

56/17 **FEEDBACK FROM THE SCRUTINY SURVEY**

Members considered responses to the scrutiny survey. The Executive Director (Children's Services) confirmed that a summary of the findings had been submitted to Government.

Members discussed the responses noting that it was positive that staff in Democratic Services acted impartially. There followed discussion as to the effectiveness of Scrutiny and it was noted that whilst some good work was undertaken, scrutiny lacked real power. It was highlighted that when Scrutiny arrangements were implemented, the Council adopted a strong Cabinet and weak Scrutiny model. Children's scrutiny and Health Scrutiny were considered to be most effective. A member stated that he would be undertaking a visit to Wokingham to see how they operate scrutiny. He would feedback his findings to the Scrutiny Overview Committee.

It was suggested that Members, particularly new members, should be offered further training on scrutiny skills to provide them with the skills require to scrutinise effectively. In addition, it was suggested that the recently established cross party member training development group considers whether:-

- Members should complete a set number of training hours each year;
- Members should report back to Group meetings on the activity of the meetings they attend;
- Compulsory training should be rolled out to more committees;
- Scrutiny Skills should be included within the training package to members.

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer advised that Member Training would be discussed at Corporate Management Team and that the Scrutiny Overview Committee may wish to take an active role in overseeing the implementation of its implementation.

Debate ensued and it was suggested that the Scrutiny Overview Committee may wish at some point in 2017/18 municipal year choose to revisit the Professor Leach review of Scrutiny arrangements in Walsall and the Survey to identify key actions.

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer advised that Scrutiny in Walsall was effective when compared to other authorities. He advised that Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee had recently scrutinised a range of partners on the important issue of child sexual exploitation.

Recommended

1. That the cross party member training development group be requested to consider whether:
 - Members should complete a set number of training hours each year;

- Members should report back to Group meetings on the activity of the meetings they attend;
 - Compulsory training should be rolled out to more committees;
 - Scrutiny Skills should be included within the training package to members.
2. That the outcome of the Government Survey be reported back to the Scrutiny Overview Committee when released.

57/17 **FEEDBACK FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

The Chair invited each of the Scrutiny Committee Chairs to provide feedback on the recent round of meetings.

Social Care and Health

It was reported that the Committee had recently considered:-

- Walsall Healthcare Trust Recovery Plan;
- Mortality at Walsall Healthcare Trust;
- Infection rates at Walsall Healthcare Trust.

The meeting had been attended by the Chief Executive of Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust along with other representatives from the Trust including the Director of nursing. The committee provided robust challenge on a number of matters and held the Trust to account.

The Committee noted that infection and mortality rates were improving and that progress was being made with the public to improve awareness of the work being undertaken to improve the Trust.

Education and Children's Services

The Chair of Education and Children's Services advised that the committee had held three meetings since the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

On 10th January, the Committee considered:-

- Draft Revenue Budget and Draft Capital Programme 2016/17 to 2019/20
- Special Education Needs Review – Including Education, Health and Care Plan Progress;
- Five Year Sufficiency Strategy Plan
- Children's Services Performance Reporting and Monitoring Progress
- Children and Young People – Annual Complaints Report

On the 26th January 2017, a special meeting was convened to consider child sexual exploitation (CSE). This was attended by West Midlands Police, NHS organisations (NHS England, Walsall Healthcare Trust, Dudley & Walsall Mental Health Trust, CCG), Street Teams, CSE Regional Co-ordinator and demonstrated that there was a joined up approach by the agencies to tackling CSE

In February, 2017 the committee considered

- Corporate Financial Performance – Quarter 3 Financial Monitoring Position for 2016/17.
- Early Help 0-19 Locality Delivery Model
- Primary and Secondary School Educational Attainment 2016
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- Youth Employment Initiative (IMPACT) and Walsall Works Apprenticeship Programme Update
- Children’s Services Performance Reporting End of Quarter 3 (April to December 2016)

The Chair advised that Children’s services continued to face challenges in respect of overspends. It was challenging as the number of looked after children was costly. However, it was important that the council provides the appropriate level of care.

In addition, the Chair highlighted that Academies were not performing and in some cases were worse than when they were under local authority control. The council continued to provide support and guidance but this was challenging as it could only be offered. In closing, the Chair stated that the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service remained under significant pressure with over 2,000 referrals per year.

Corporate and Public Services

The Committee were advised that the committee had considered:-

- A petition in respect of Rushall, Pheasey and Bloxwich libraries;
- A petition in respect of Remembrance Day Parades
- An interim report of the Remembrance Day Working Group
- Active living centre performance

In terms of the Remembrance Day Parades it was explained that discussions were ongoing with the Police and Crime Commissioner to ensure that Parades would continue in future years.

Members were advised that at the meeting to be held in April, the committee would consider:-

- Elections and proposed pilot to require voters to use identification;
- Petition scheme review
- Changes to staff terms and conditions
- CCTV in Walsall

- Discussion on engagement with social housing providers

In relation to CCTV it was made clear that any CCTV needed to be of sufficient quality that it could be used in prosecutions.

A debate followed on the impact of Welfare Reforms which was considered to be ill thought through and impacted heavily on a number of residents in Walsall. A member commented on the excellent work undertaken by the council's welfare rights team who support those in need. This was re-iterated by several members who stated that the service brought real benefit to many people.

Members then discussed the Willenhall Gas works site. It was suggested that communication with councillors could be strengthened, particularly with such important matters. It was suggested that once a decision had been made on the site that the matter should be debated at Scrutiny.

Resolved:

That once a decision has been reached in respect of the Willenhall Gas Works site, the matter be considered by Corporate and Public Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

58/17 FORWARD PLANS

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

Resolved:

That the forward plans be noted.

59/17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting would be agreed at Adjourned Council on 24th May, 2017.

The meeting terminated at 7.20 p.m.

Chair:

Date:.....