

# Scrutiny Board

## Minutes - 6 March 2018

### Attendance

#### Members of the Scrutiny Board

Cllr Stephen Simkins (Chair)  
Cllr Jasbir Jaspal  
Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur  
Cllr Louise Miles  
Cllr Peter O'Neill  
Cllr Arun Photay  
Cllr Lynne Moran  
Cllr Zee Russell  
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman  
Cllr Barry Findlay (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr Linda Leach  
Cllr Philip Bateman MBE

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## Part 1 – items open to the press and public

*Item No.*      *Title*

- 1      **Apologies for absence**  
Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Leach and Cllr Angus.
- 2      **Declarations of interest**  
There were no declarations of interest.
- 3      **Minutes of the previous meeting**  
Resolved:  
        That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
- 4      **Matters arising**  
The Chair thanked the Board for its hard work over the year and in particular expressed thanks to Cllr Barry Findlay who was standing down from his role as a councillor.
- 5      **Recommendations from the Scrutiny Fire Safety Scoping Group**  
The Board received a presentation from Cllr Greg Brackenridge in relation to the work of the Fire Safety Scoping Group. The final report and recommendations from the Group were due to be considered by Cabinet on 20 March 2018.

Cllr Brackenridge thanked the members of the Group for their hard work and stated that one of the main focuses of the Group had been to engage with tenants and to include representatives of tenants at the meetings.

The interim Hackitt report had now been published with the final report expected in late Spring. So far it appeared clear that the current building regulations were not fit for purpose.

Cllr Brackenridge updated the Board as to the Group's recommendations which included a recommendation that a restructure take place in Corporate Landlord to allow for less reliance on consultants.

Cllr Brackenridge commended the work being carried out by some departments in the Council and Wolverhampton Homes and in particular the work done by Darren Baggs' team in Wolverhampton Homes. Cllr Brackenridge and the Group had also been very impressed by the work carried out by the Emergency Planning team which had been recognised nationally.

The Chief Executive of Wolverhampton Homes, Mr Shaun Aldis stated that fire safety was taken very seriously and that he welcomed the findings of the Group. An action plan was already being drawn up based on the report and recommendations and his team were keen to participate.

Mrs Sue Roberts (MBE) stated that by sitting on the Group she had been able to ask more questions and take information back with her in her role as Chair of the Tenants Association.

The Board agreed that the Group had been well led and thanked Cllr Brackenridge for his hard work. The Board considered that this was an extraordinary piece of work.

Mr Aldis confirmed that sprinklers were to be fitted in Wolverhampton Homes tower blocks at a cost of £19.2 million.

Cllr Brackenridge stated that the plan would be for the group to reconvene following the publication of the final Hackitt Report and that an update would be brought back to the Board in around six months.

The Group queried what powers the Fire Service or Council had in relation to the private sector. It was stated that powers were limited in that the Fire Service would only be able to access communal areas and was not able to access private property to carry out checks.

The Group considered that it was very important to keep on top of the recommendations and to keep all lines of communication open and to ensure that findings and outcomes were communicated to all parties.

Resolved: That an update be brought back to the Scrutiny Board in six months.

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### **Scrutiny Review of the City's Apprenticeships Offer - update**

A report was submitted requesting Scrutiny Board to consider progress made to implement the recommendations from the City's Apprenticeships review which had concluded in September 2016.

The take up of apprenticeships had been very slow in the City. Council employees were now working more with schools and providers and the City Apprenticeship Group had drawn up a plan of action shaped by the recommendations from the scrutiny review.

The issue of apprenticeships was considered a huge and complex challenge and the City Apprenticeship Group was working on areas including:

1. How to support levy payers,
2. How to encourage young people to choose the apprenticeship route
3. How to ensure quality in what was being delivered.

The Board considered that there was a weakness in schools regarding the promotion of apprenticeships with a focus on more traditional routes leading toward a university education. The Board queried the current take up of apprenticeships with Jaguar Landover and it was confirmed that this had been a slow starter but that local schools were now participating.

It was stated that schools did have increasing budgetary constraints and that they did seek to keep pupils to help maintain the funding. The Board considered that schools had an ethical commitment to encourage students down the path that was best for them not the establishment. The Board also expressed concern in relation to the way that apprenticeships were perceived in contrast to A levels and degree courses and that this came down to a cultural issue that may take some time to change.

Officers agreed that the A-Level/University route was easy to define whilst vocational routes were not always so clear. It was however emphasised that the new scheme had only been in place for one year.

The Board queried where the overarching, strategic strategy was in relation to apprenticeships and it was confirmed that this was the Strategic Economic Plan. The Board considered that the issue could therefore be included on the work plan for the Stronger City Economy Scrutiny Panel.

Officers considered that the Council was very good at joined up working and that National Apprenticeships Week was being held in conjunction with Residents Week and that all Councillors had been requested to publicise and spread the word in relation to the event.

The Board considered the importance of having role models and champions for the service. Youngsters needed some inspirations to encourage them down the apprenticeship route. Officers stated that this was happening to some extent with business advisors in 19 schools who were tasked with amongst other things, promoting the available opportunities and a number of these advisors were ex apprentices. Representatives from the business world were also being recruited as

apprentice ambassadors. The Board considered that it was vital to make the service relevant.

Resolved a) That Stronger City Economy Scrutiny Panel add the issue of apprenticeships to the work plan.

**7 Dukes Park Petition - Update**

A report was submitted to the Scrutiny Board to provide an update on anti-social behaviour (ASB) linked to the Dukes Park play area following implementation of the Petitions Committee recommendation.

A petition was received on 30 January 2015 requesting the removal of the children's play area at Duke's Park estate located in the Bilston East ward due to issues of ASB by young people. The petition contained 85 signatures from residents of the Duke's Park estate and the surrounding area seeking the removal of the children's play equipment within the centre of the estate.

In comparison with January 2014 and February 2015 when 58 police logs were made there were a total of 9 calls/emails to Police and 1 to ASB team between January 2017 and February 2018 .

The later reports referenced youths congregating, playing football, moped riding, littering and damage to play equipment. (Eight of these reports stemmed from one caller). Police received the latest call in February 2018.

Issues of minor damage to play equipment and riding of a motorcycle were raised at PACT July 2017; no issues have been raised at PACT since.

The Panel congratulated Officers on their hard work.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

**8 Work programme and Annual Scrutiny Event Planning**

The Board considered plans for the Annual Scrutiny Planning Event and it was agreed that there would be a Council Wide Briefing Session followed by a Scrutiny Planning Evening to which only non executive councillors would be invited.

**9 Briefing Paper - Summary of Communities and Local Government Select Committee Scrutiny Report**

Resolved: That the document be noted.