

# Scrutiny Board

## Minutes - 9 October 2018

### Attendance

#### Members of the Scrutiny Board

Cllr Stephen Simkins (Chair)  
Cllr Paula Brookfield  
Cllr Peter O'Neill  
Cllr Arun Photay (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman  
Cllr Linda Leach  
Cllr Philip Bateman MBE  
Cllr Greg Brackenridge  
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar  
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre  
Cllr Sohail Khan  
Cllr Martin Waite  
Cllr Alan Bolshaw

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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 Jaspal. Cllr Bolshaw was in attendance as a substitute.
- 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**  
Cllr Simkins referred to the Customer Services concerns that had been raised by Cllr Hardacre and other councillors regarding access to the building and queried whether the problems had been resolved. The question was also raised as to where the Council was regarding the proposals for savings in customer services as members of the public were complaining about phones not being answered. It was noted that this was due to be considered at the next meeting of the Confident Capable Council Scrutiny Panel on 28 November 2018.

It was noted that there had been a change in the composition of Customer Services and that it now fell under the remit of the Director of Commercial Services, Andy Moran and the Head of Customer Services, Lisa Taylor.

The Board noted that Democratic Services and the Scrutiny Team were opening up democracy through webcasting and the use of modern.gov but that the access issues were then making it hard for members of the public to come into the building for public meetings.

It was suggested that relevant officers produce a plan to show what they wanted to achieve with the new modelling. The Board stated that it was important not to lose people coming into the building or on the telephones; at the moment the process was not working. It was suggested that a piece of scrutiny could be undertaken jointly with the Confident Capable Council Scrutiny Panel.

The Panel also noted that it was important to understand exactly what the Council wanted to achieve. It was considered that there might be circumstances where people wanted to remain anonymous and did not want to have their photograph taken when checking in.

The Director for Governance stated that the concerns being expressed were not lost on senior officers and that a balance was required between keeping the premises secure and the democratic element of the process. Courts for example did not require visitors to give a name and address so there was a balance to be struck somewhere.

## 5 **Update from the Equalities Champion**

The Chair welcomed Cllr Gakhal to the meeting. Cllr Gakhal updated the Board on the work that had been carried out in relation to equalities in the Council including the 2011 census and the breakdown of ethnicity and religion.

Cllr Gakhal stated that since he had been appointed the Council had undergone a peer assessment and achieved excellent status which he was very pleased about and which highlighted how well the Council was doing. Cllr Gakhal expressed his thanks to the Head of Equalities and all his team who had worked tirelessly to achieve this excellent status.

Cllr Gakhal updated the Board in relation to the new Maternity and Paternity buddy scheme which was now starting and meant that when people come back from maternity leave they would not feel alienated, It was thought that this was a significant change for the Council.

In September 2018 the Council had achieved Pledge 5 in British Sign Language and were now the only council in the United Kingdom with Pledge 2 and Pledge 5.

Cllr Gakhal highlighted the wonderful work that had been carried out in the Windrush Citizen Project and that this had not just been for the Afro Caribbean community, it had been a fantastic job.

Unconscious bias training continued to be rolled out through the Council making us one of a few organisations to do this along with the introduction of name blind job applications.

The Equality Advisory Group continued to do great work including scrutinising work force profile reports to help identify any gaps.

Cllr Gakhal stated that he had attended the last Deaf Forum meeting and that he hoped to take this group back into the community to help increase participation.

Other events of note included the Ceremony for Sri Lankan genocide victims, the Windrush exhibition at the library showing immigrants working in industry and an event on being a female councillor which 14 women had attended.

The Board agreed that the Council was on a journey, and many of them had been there at the beginning with out of date human resources information which was not meaningful. The Council should be very proud of the accreditation and seek to build on it as the job was not yet finished regarding gender, disability or sexuality. Return figures from employees regarding LGBT information were lower than the national and there was still some concern that people were fearful of saying.

The Board congratulated Cllr Gakhal and the Head of Equalities as well as Cllr Paula Brookfield and Ian Claymore who had been at the helm of equalities in the Council.

Cllr Paula Brookfield expressed some concerns regarding feedback from the Future Leaders programme as there appeared to be a real dearth of people from ethnic groups applying to go on it. Cllr Brookfield stated that if the Council could not engage with them at this stage how would they have a chance to move up the organisation?

It was agreed that there should be a bi annual report to Scrutiny Board regarding work being done by the Equalities Champion and the Council. It was also agreed that the Council could look internally at promotion and training packages.

Resolved: That the update be welcomed

## 6 **Schedule of Petitions**

The Chair welcomed the Democratic Services Manager to the meeting.

The Board were requested to note the actions taken in relation to petitions received by the Council during the last six months.

The Democratic Services Manager confirmed that all petitions had been dealt with in line with the Council's Petition Scheme and that all petitions had been sent to the relevant Cabinet Members and Ward Members

The Chair thanked the Democratic Services Manager for the report.

Resolved: That Scrutiny Board notes the actions taken in relation to all petitions received by the Council during the last six months.

## 7 **Work programme and Forward Plan**

The Board considered the Workplan and the Forward Plan.

Some concern was expressed in relation to cuts that had been made in the Street Scene Team and that some officers were expected to be on call 24/7 and were

expected to be on call for £60. Cllr Waite stated that his Panel would look at this and were also looking at WV Active.

The suggestion was made that there could be a Council Wide Briefing session on the WMCA and Fire Authority.

Resolved: That the workplans be agreed.

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**Quarter 1 Social Care, Public Health and Corporate Complaints Report**

The Board noted that there were some extremely positive statistics in the report and that the complaints under Children and Young People were very low considering the number of young people the Council dealt with.

The Board noted Page 5 of the report and the graph which members considered could be interpreted to show that there was at least one complaint in every area of activity which was not the case as there were a whole host of categories where there were no complaints.

Resolved: 1. That Scrutiny Board notes the Statutory Complaints Activity for Adult Social Care, Children and Young People and Public Health, as listed in section 1 of the report.

2. That Scrutiny Board notes all the other complaints activity governed by the Corporate Complaints Procedures as listed in section 2 of the report.