

Attendance

Members of the Scrutiny Board

Cllr Philip Bateman
Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Craig Collingswood
Cllr Barry Findlay (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre
Cllr Peter O'Neill
Cllr Arun Photay
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Stephen Simkins (Chair)
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss
Cllr Andrew Johnson

Employees

Mark Taylor	Director of Finance
Abby Vella	Graduate Management Trainee
Adrian McCormick	Head of Transformation
Sue Handy	Head of Customer Service
Sarah Campbell	Complaints Manager
Anna Zollino-Biscotti	Senior Information Governance Officer
Gareth Payne	Policy Officer
Penny Williams	Interim Democratic Services Manager

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1** **Apologies for absence**
Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Angus who was represented by Cllr Hodgkiss.
- 2** **Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest.
- 3** **Minutes of the previous meeting (3 November 2015)**
Resolved:
That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 November be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 **Matters arising**

Councillors enquired about resolution three in minute item five from the previous meeting which referred to a ward by ward break down of accessibility to computers in Wolverhampton. Abby Vella, Graduate Management Trainee, advised that she would follow this up following the recent departure of the Group Manager – Democracy.

Councillors also requested that the national review of the freedom of information be circulated to Councillors. Penny Williams, Interim Democratic Services Manager, advised that she would look into this.

Resolved:

1. That the Graduate Management Trainee circulate ward by ward details of accessibility to computers in Wolverhampton to the Board.
2. That the Interim Democratic Services Manager circulate results of the national review of freedom of information to the Board.

5 **Draft Budget 2016/17**

Councillor Andrew Johnson, Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report. He advised that although the provisional local government finance settlement was to be announced in due course, an additional £4.1 billion of expenditure cuts for local government was expected. The Cabinet Member for Resources outlined the Council's saving proposals and progress and reported that it was working with a revised savings target of £24 million. These projections were to be confirmed once central government had released the local government finance settlement.

The Cabinet Member for Resources highlighted that seven million pounds had been saved through treasury management and financial transaction arrangements, without which, the impact of cuts on the Council would be much greater. He thanked the officers involved in making these savings.

Councillors discussed the need for additional funding to pay for the reshaping of Older People Services outlined on page 13 and the impact of this on savings proposals. The Cabinet Member for Resources and the Director of Finance advised that this was a subject of consideration in the budget process and further details would be reported to scrutiny once the settlement was announced.

A discussion took place between the Board and the Cabinet Member for Resources about the new funding formula for Public Health. Councillor O'Neill advised that these questions were asked at Health Scrutiny Panel and officers were going to investigate these details.

Referring to page 25 of the report, the Cabinet Member for Resources outlined proposals to ensure that City venues such as the Art Gallery, Bantock House and Bilston Art Gallery were generating considerable income. Councillor Collingswood was concerned about the length of time this was taking, since these City Venues formed part of Wolverhampton's cultural heritage. In response, the Cabinet Member for Resources advised that development proposals were being driven forward by

officers. Councillors requested that these proposals come back to the relevant scrutiny panel.

Councillor Brookfield announced that she was unable to comment on the recommendations of other panels. Since these had already been scrutinised once, she was happy to accept the recommendations of other panels but felt unable to comment without all the details. The Chair requested that future budget reports have details of figures appended to the report.

A discussion took place about grounds maintenance reductions and efficiencies in service, in particular, ceasing annual bedding outside the City centre outlined on page 42 of the appendix. Following debate around the positive, visual impact the bedding had, Councillor Bateman was concerned that the reputation of the Council could potentially be compromised by this small saving. The Director of Finance advised that £22,000 would be saved over two years, with bedding converted into shrubbery or lawn. The Cabinet Member for Resources advised that this service was faced with financial saving necessity but would welcome the option of the relevant scrutiny panel re-visiting this. The Chair requested that the Chair of Vibrant and Sustainable City be informed.

Councillors suggested that the development of City sites, such as West Park, should be collated as a business proposition either by the appropriate officer, relevant scrutiny panel or particular champion. The Chair recommended that the possibility of utilising the City's assets across the City, starting with West Park, be looked into.

A discussion took place between Councillors about the review of stray dog procedures outlined on page 45-46. Councillors requested that this come back to Scrutiny Board with further cost details of this procedure, that alternative provision be investigated and scoping of other local authorities be considered.

Councillors discussed the review of school crossing patrols on page 47 and whether schools could be charged to maintain this service. Cllr Johnson advised that advice would need to be sought regarding the statutory requirement for school patrols. Moreover, this would continue to be reviewed in light of schools moving out of local authority control.

Cllr Bolshaw enquired about the review of allotment costs outlined on page 47. Cllr Johnson advised that a mechanism needed to be implemented to charge residents realistically and incrementally.

In response to a question regarding the review of the council tax scheme and discount, the Cabinet Member for Resources clarified that the 21 day discretionary discount was to be removed following consultation.

The Board discussed corporate savings proposals, including charges for late payment of invoices and the review of staff training. The Director of Finance advised that the performance of paying invoices had greatly improved since the introduction of Agresso. He reported that there had been a reduction in escalated queries and it was being monitored closely. In response to the review of staff training, Councillors discussed the role of interim positions within the Council. The Cabinet Member for

Resources highlighted that interim officers were highly beneficial and allowed time for the authority to find a suitable, permanent replacement.

The Chair requested an additional meeting to address the recommendations set out below once Cabinet had considered all consultation and scrutiny responses.

Resolved:

1. That the details of savings proposals on Older Peoples Services be reported back to scrutiny.
2. That Health scrutiny panel look into the implications of a new funding formula for Public Health.
3. That development proposals for City venues come back to Vibrant and Sustainable City scrutiny panel.
4. That future budget reports have details of figures appended to the report.
5. That the proposed cessation of annual bedding be revisited by Vibrant and Sustainable City and the Chair be informed.
6. That the possibility of utilising the City's assets across the City, starting with West Park be looked into.
7. That cost details of the review of stray dogs be reported, alternative provision be investigated and scoping of other local authorities take place.
8. That legal advice be sought regarding the statutory requirement for school patrols, in light of proposals to move schools out of local authority control.

6 **Corporate Performance Report - Quarter Two 2015/16**

Adrian McCormick, Head of Transformation and Gareth Payne, Policy Officer, presented the quarter two Corporate Performance Report, drawing attention to the summary of performance in section 4.0.

Councillors were concerned with and enquired about the low completion level of appraisals. It was suggested that the value of appraisals should be highlighted. The Head of Transformation advised that the system was not proportionately reflecting the number of appraisals that had been completed. He reported that this was being looked into by officers and the quarter three report should be more accurate. The Head of Finance advised that performance management efforts were taking place to ensure that managers were recorded information on the system correctly.

Councillors discussed the red indicator in 4.4 of the report which referred to the rate of alcohol related emergency admissions. It was agreed that a focus on this should be put on next year's work programme for Adults and Safer City.

Referring to equalities, Cllr Hardacre requested that a scrutiny review of equalities implications in public premises take place. This was agreed by the Chair.

Resolved:

1. That the level of alcohol related emergency admissions be revisited by Adults and Safer City in next year's work programme.
2. That a scrutiny review of equalities implications be put on next year's work programme.

7 **Information Governance Performance Report - Quarter 2 2015/16**

Anna Zollino-Biscotti, Information Governance Manager, presented the quarter two Information Governance report drawing attention to the infograph on page 117.

In response to a question requesting clarification on quarter two training levels, the Information Governance Manager reported that managers needed to be more proactive in ensuring that new starters complete training in the first month. The Director of Finance advised that this was being looked into and reports were now going to managers which listed the training completion details of their staff.

Resolved:

1. That the Board reviewed and commented on the quarter two performance for information governance.
2. That the Director of Finance review the Agresso report of levels of training completion.

- 8 **Quarter 2 Corporate, Social Care and Public Health Complaints Report**
Sue Handy, Head of Customer Service and Sarah Campbell, Complaints Manager, presented the quarter two Social Care and Public Health Complaints Report.

Councillors requested further details of the 30 compliments received in section 4.8 of the report. The Head of Customer Service agreed to circulate details of compliments to Councillors.

A discussion took place between Councillors about complaints where the Council is/is partially/is not at fault. The Complaints Manager advised that improvement reports for corporate complaints had been implemented which highlighted a reduction in corporate complaints. Reporting on adult social care complaints was in its early stages, but the Complaints Manager advised that a reduction in complaints was expected as this was implemented. The Chair requested a verbal update on this once the figures were obtained.

Resolved:

1. That the Head of Customer Services circulate details of compliments to Councillors.
2. That Councillors receive a verbal update on the improvement reports for corporate and adult social care complaints.

- 9 **Work Programme**
Scrutiny Board received a copy of the work programme and noted its content. It was requested that for future meetings, completed agenda items be removed.

Resolved:

1. That the format of the work programme be amended to include only present and future agenda items.

- 10 **Vote of thanks**
The Chair thanked Adam Hadley, Group Manager – Democracy, for his work with Scrutiny Board.