

Meeting of the City Council

20 September 2017

Report title	Annual Scrutiny Report and Work Plan	
Referring body	Scrutiny Board, 5 September 2017	
Councillor to present report	Councillor Steve Simkins	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Milkinder Jaspal Cabinet Member for Governance	
Wards affected	Not Applicable	
Accountable Director	Kevin O'Keefe, Director of Governance	
Originating service	Scrutiny and Systems	
Accountable employee(s)	Julia Cleary	Scrutiny and Systems Manager Julia.Cleary@wolverhampton.gov.uk 01902 555046
Report to be/has been considered by	SEB	15 August 2017

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Council is recommended to:

1. Receive the Annual Scrutiny Report and Work Plan 2017-18.

Recommendations for noting:

The Council is asked to note:

1. The on-going developments in relation to the scrutiny function.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The report will provide an overview of the ongoing developments and improvements that are being made in relation to the scrutiny function and the introduction of new processes and ways of working.
- 1.2 Feedback will be provided at the meeting from Councillors in relation to specific areas of scrutiny where a significant impact has been made over the last year.
- 1.3 The report highlights some of the key achievements of the Scrutiny function over the 2016-17 municipal year including details of the progress and outcomes from a selection of Panel meetings and Reviews.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Scrutiny is a vital component of good governance and the work carried out by Councillors through scrutiny this year has been invaluable in influencing policy. This has been through representing the concerns and interests of the public and by providing challenge to the Cabinet. Scrutiny also undertakes reviews of partners working with the Council through detailed and critical analysis of their annual plans and reports. The Board and all the Panels undertook thorough scrutiny of the budget savings proposals.
- 2.2 Wolverhampton operates a model similar to that used by most unitary councils across England. The Scrutiny Board provides the overall co-ordination of the work programme with the six Panels focussing on key areas of priority. This is also supplemented by a series of reviews into key issues.
- 2.3 The Scrutiny Board and six Panels have been involved in both pre-decision, policy development and post decision scrutiny throughout the year. A copy of the Scrutiny Work Plan for 2017-2018 is attached to this report. The Work Plan is a living document and must remain so to enable Councillors and employees to adapt to changes in external legislation, events or internal policy development.

3.0 Good scrutiny

- 3.1 Good scrutiny tackles issues of direct relevance to local people and issues where, through the unique perspective of Councillors, it can add the most value. Scrutiny is about talking to a wide range of people, drawing them together and building consensus. It is also about challenging the accepted ways of doing things and acting as a champion for developing a culture of improvement in the local area.
- 3.2 When considering whether an item should be considered by scrutiny the following questions should be asked:
 - Is it an issue of concern to partners, local residents, local communities or the City of Wolverhampton Council?
 - How can scrutiny add value? How will outcomes be improved as a result of scrutiny activity?

- Will scrutiny work be duplicating work being done elsewhere?

4.0 New developments in Scrutiny 2017-2018

4.1 Pre-decision scrutiny and policy development

4.2 After researching examples of national good practise of Overview and Scrutiny the opportunity has been taken to look at how Overview and Scrutiny could be run differently this year.

5.0 Scrutiny Board

5.1 The role of the Scrutiny Board will be to focus on the wider cross-cutting issues affecting the City and its residents. Items for Scrutiny Board to consider may be taken from various published documents including the Council's Forward Plan and Risk Register.

5.2 The Scrutiny Board will establish task and finish groups to look in detail at specific issues over a set number of meetings.

5.3 The Scrutiny Board has already set up a group this year to carry out a scoping exercise in relation to the Council's response to the Grenfell Tower Tragedy and the first meeting of this group has already been held with both internal and external witnesses in attendance. The group is chaired by Councillor Greg Brackenridge with representation from both tenant representatives and representatives of disability groups.

5.4 Where Scrutiny Board undertakes pre-decision Scrutiny of an item that is due to go to the following Cabinet meeting and it has concerns regarding the approach being taken in the report, the Chair of the Scrutiny Board should attend the Executive meeting to make sure that Scrutiny views can be considered.

5.5 The Scrutiny Board will have a regular item on its agenda that gives an update on the progress being made against recommendations so that it keeps an eye on the issues and can take action when it is needed.

6.0 Scrutiny Panels

6.1 It is intended that the Scrutiny Panels will have more of an overview role taking on detailed policy work through looking at one or two substantive items at each meeting. This will enable the Panels to look at issues with a narrow and deep approach and gather information from external witnesses as well as internal.

6.2 An example of this was the Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel held on 29 June 2017 that looked at how the Private Housing Sector could be improved. It allowed the Panel to develop detailed evidence based recommendations which were as follows:

Recommendations – that the Cabinet Member for City Assets and Housing be requested to report to the Council's Cabinet within six months (with a briefing note to be made

available to the Scrutiny Panel on current progress before its meeting on 28 September 2017) on how the Council could work with landlords, tenants and stakeholders to improve Private Sector Housing in Wolverhampton to include specific proposals on how to improve:

- A. The Rent with Confidence Scheme through the introduction of an enhanced rent guarantee scheme, including covering rent in advance, and/or off-setting rent loss as well as training, support and vetting processes for landlords and tenants, to be drawn up in conjunction with the Private Sector Housing Forum referred to in (B) below;
- B. Engagement with the sector to include the setting up of a Private Sector Housing Forum, to comprise of Councillor representatives, estate agents, landlords, tenants, client side representatives and community/charity groups such as Citizens Advice with the aim of the Forum to improve standards in the private rented housing sector; and
- C. Publicity of the Rent with Confidence Scheme to include a communications and marketing process and plan that enhances the scheme in a way that covers all parts of the City, to be drawn up in conjunction with the Private Sector Housing Forum referred to in (B) above.

7.0 Agreeing items for the Scrutiny Panels and Scrutiny Reviews

- 7.1 An Annual Scrutiny Planning Event will continue to be held in May each year to which all Councillors, Directors and Heads of Service are invited.
- 7.2 At the event Councillors are split in to workshops and asked to choose a long list of policy development items for each Panel to consider during the upcoming municipal year. Senior employees from the Council are also available at the workshops to offer advice when required. The workshops are facilitated by employees from the Scrutiny team and Democratic Services team.
- 7.3 Agenda planning meetings are then arranged with each Panel's Chair and Vice Chair to finalise how the issues that have been chosen can be shaped in that Panel's workplan. Relevant directors and senior employees will also be invited to attend the agenda planning meetings.
- 7.4 When considering each potential item at the agenda planning meeting the following areas will need to be considered:
 - Is it an issue of concern to partners, local residents, local communities or the City of Wolverhampton Council?
 - How can scrutiny add value? How will outcomes be improved as a result of scrutiny activity?
 - What is scrutiny looking to address through doing the piece of work?
 - Will scrutiny work be duplicating work being done elsewhere?
 - Which Councillors and employees will need to be involved?

- Which Directorates and organisations are best able to provide evidence to meet the objectives and the process that will be used to gather evidence?

7.5 The draft work plan will then be considered by the directorate leadership teams and Strategic Executive Board (where appropriate) before being agreed and signed off by the Scrutiny Board.

8.0 Agreeing additional items for Inclusion on a Scrutiny Panel Work Plan or for a Review outside of the Annual Planning Event

8.1 Additional items for Scrutiny to consider may sometimes be requested by Councillors or employees; this could be at a meeting or through discussions with a Scrutiny Officer.

8.2 Once a potential item has been identified the following process should be followed to ensure that the item is thoroughly scoped before being formally added to the work plan:

8.3 The Scrutiny Officer will arrange a meeting with the Chair and Vice Chair of the relevant Panel, the relevant director and any other relevant employee(s) from the service area.

8.4 A scoping document will then be prepared by the relevant Scrutiny Officer in conjunction with the Chair and relevant director.

8.5 The scoping document will outline the following:

- How is the item best considered - Scrutiny Review, Scrutiny Panel or Scrutiny Board meeting or briefing with the Chair?
- Is it an issue of concern to partners, local residents, local communities or the City of Wolverhampton Council?
- How can scrutiny add value? How will outcomes be improved as a result of scrutiny activity?
- What is scrutiny looking to address through doing the piece of work?
- Will scrutiny work be duplicating work being done elsewhere?
- Which Councillors and Employees will need to be involved?
- Which Directorates and organisations are best able to provide evidence to meet the objectives and the process that will be used to gather evidence?

9.0 Improvements in relation to making and tracking recommendations

9.1 In terms of recommendations from Scrutiny and how these are actioned it is intended that:

10.0 Monitoring of recommendations

10.1 Following a request from the Chair of the Scrutiny Board, employees have introduced new and improved methods in relation to the tracking and monitoring of recommendations.

11.0 Recommendations from Review Groups

- 11.1 Review Groups will continue to present their final review report and recommendations back to their parent body, normally Scrutiny Board, which will then have an opportunity to comment on the report before it is submitted to Cabinet.
- 11.2 The Chair of the Review Group will be expected to present the Group's recommendations to Scrutiny Board and to Cabinet. The Chair of Scrutiny Board may wish to attend Cabinet as well depending on timescales and the subject matter.
- 11.3 It is good practise for review groups to set out either milestones to check progress or specific timescales for when a recommendation should have been implemented.
- 11.4 It may be appropriate to have a briefing note on the progress being made on recommendations in the scrutiny document Library prior to a report being submitted to Scrutiny Board.

12.0 Recommendations from Scrutiny Panels

- 12.1 Where Scrutiny Panels have been considering items for policy development and have developed a series of recommendations they should include what action the Cabinet Member or Cabinet are being asked to take.
- 12.2 Scrutiny Panels are not decision making bodies but when looking at policy development they can agree principles and potential approaches and ask the Cabinet to draw up details to achieve the outcomes sought. It is of course up to the Cabinet how they wish to proceed.
- 12.3 The Panels should be setting specific timescales for reports or action by the Cabinet or Cabinet Members in a similar manner to that detailed in 6.2 above.

13.0 Online Digital Library

- 13.1 Information items will no longer be required to go to Scrutiny Panels
- 13.2 The scrutiny team has developed a digital library for Councillors through modern.gov for documents including briefing notes, presentations, update reports and any others that are intended to provide useful information to Councillors and employees. An e-mail alert is sent when new items have been added to the library
- 13.3 If a councillor would like information about a service the Scrutiny Team should be approached and they will request that the information be provided from the appropriate department.

14.0 Training

14.1 There will be a series of training sessions rolled out to the scrutiny Councillors on critical thinking and questioning skills starting from early September 2017. It is intended that all Scrutiny Councillors should attend one of these sessions. The overall aim of the training sessions will be to help make scrutiny more effective and focused. The sessions have been developed and will be led by the scrutiny team and will be interactive and aimed at helping Councillors get more out of Scrutiny Panel meetings.

15.0 Highlights 2016/2017

15.1 One area that has stood out for the Scrutiny Board over the last year is the continuous improvement in the management and reporting in relation to Information Governance.

16.0 Scrutiny Reviews 2016-2017

16.1 Infant Mortality

- a. The recommendations of the scrutiny review on infant mortality that were approved by Cabinet in March 2015 were incorporated into the work of the Infant Mortality Working Group and therefore remain relevant even though the review has concluded.
- b. The group has representatives from all key agencies and there is multi-agency commitment across acute and community service provision to improve outcomes for children and their families and to work towards reducing the number of avoidable deaths in Wolverhampton.
- c. Progress in relation to the infant mortality action plan and scrutiny review recommendations is a standing agenda item of the working group.

16.2 Electoral registration and participation

- a. The report and recommendations were presented to cabinet on 8 June 2016. The majority of recommendations were accepted by Cabinet. A specific report on a concern highlighted in the review about improving public engagement was presented to Scrutiny Board on 4 July 2017.
- b. The report set out a range of proposals for working with key partners to target under registered groups and areas in Wolverhampton in response to the issues detailed in the review report.

16.3 The City Apprenticeships Offer and the Adult Mental Health Review Group

- a. The review of the City apprenticeships offer has been completed. The recommendations will be presented to Cabinet in September 2017.

- b. The Adult Mental Health Review will be submitting a report with recommendations to Cabinet by the end of the year.

17.0 Effective Partnership Working

- 17.1 The Council works with a multitude of external partners including West Midlands Police, West Midlands Ambulance Service, Wolverhampton University and the College and the Wolverhampton NHS Trust and CCG.

18.0 West Midlands Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee

- 18.1 The Scrutiny Team will be supporting Councillors who are the representatives of the City of Wolverhampton Council on the West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee (WMCAO&SC) and provide briefings to Councillors when appropriate.
- 18.2 The Scrutiny Team will be working with colleagues in partner authorities to co-ordinate information and the work of the Combined Authority. Employees and Councillors may also be required to respond to calls for evidence from the WMCAO&SC.
- 18.3 The Scrutiny Team will be attending meetings of the WMCAO&SC to support Councillors to put agreed principals of scrutiny into practice.
- 18.4 The Chair of the Scrutiny Board has been appointed as the Chair of the Budget Task and Finish Group for the WMCAO&SC and which has led the Scrutiny Team to arrange a visit to the London Assembly to look at its approach to budget scrutiny in preparation for the Mayors question time in November when the Task and Finish Group will present its recommendations.

19.0 Black Country Sustainability and Transformation Plan

- 19.1 The Health Scrutiny invitation to the accountable employee for Black Country Sustainability and Transformation Plan to update the panel has been accepted. The panel plan to discuss progress in taking forward the proposals and the implications for health and social care provision in Wolverhampton.
- 19.2 [The Black Country Sustainability and Transformation Plan](#)

20.0 Evaluation of alternative options:

- 20.1 There is a strong desire amongst Councillors and employees to continue to develop and improve the scrutiny function and therefore the alternative option which would be to do nothing and continue to use the scrutiny function as it has been previously used is not considered preferable.
- 20.2 There have been resource changes within the Scrutiny Team which mean that the structure and management of the scrutiny function can continue to adapt and develop to

meet the specific requirements of each separate scrutiny topic and remain flexible to address when appropriate new developments both internally and externally.

21.0 Reasons for decision(s):

21.1 To continue to develop and improve the scrutiny function.

22.0 Financial implications

22.1 There are no financial implications associated with the recommendations here as Councillors are being requested to review the annual scrutiny report and workplan. Any financial implications associated with scrutiny processes through the year are incorporated in reports taken to the Scrutiny Board and panels. The on-going scrutiny function developments are being implemented utilising existing resources within the Scrutiny Team.

[GE/07082017/W]

23.0 Legal implications

23.1 This report provides an overview of the scrutiny which has taken place during 2016/17 and future plans for the on-going improvement and development of the service. For legal implications, specific to each project please refer to the reports taken to Scrutiny Board and Panels during the year.

[RB/07082017/C]

24.0 Equalities implications

24.1 In scrutinising issues, the members of the Board, Panel or group are required to consider the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different groups of people in order to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. This should be considered when deciding on an issue to be scrutinised, so that as a whole, scrutiny does not discriminate against any of the protected characteristics.

24.2 This report provides an overview of the scrutiny which has taken place during 2016/7 and future plans for the on-going improvement and development of the service. For equalities implications relating to each issue considered, please refer to the reports taken to Scrutiny Board and panels during the year.

25.0 Environmental implications

25.1 This report provides an overview of the scrutiny which has taken place during 2016/7 and future plans for the on-going improvement and development of the service.

25.2 There are no environmental implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

26.0 Human resources implications

- 26.1 This report provides an overview of the scrutiny which has taken place during 2016/7 and future plans for the on-going improvement and development of the service.
- 26.2 There are no human resources implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

27.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 27.1 This report provides an overview of the scrutiny which has taken place during 2016/7 and future plans for the on-going improvement and development of the service.
- 27.2 There are no corporate landlord implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

28.0 Schedule of background papers

- 28.1 [Copies of all agendas and minutes for scrutiny panel meetings can be found here.](#)

29.0 Appendices

- 29.1 Appendix: Work programmes for:
- Scrutiny Board
 - Confident, Capable Council Scrutiny Panel
 - Stronger City Economy Scrutiny Panel
 - Vibrant and Sustainable City Economy Scrutiny Panel
 - Health Scrutiny Panel
 - Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel
 - Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel