

Attendance

Members of the Scrutiny Board

Cllr Paul Sweet (Chair)
Cllr Jonathan Crofts (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Cllr Greg Brackenridge
Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Val Evans
Cllr Phil Page
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Stephen Simkins
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman
Cllr Wendy Thompson

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Apologies for absence**
Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mak Singh and Cllr Phil Bateman.

- 2 **Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest.

- 3 **Minutes of the previous meeting**
Resolved:
 That the minutes of the meeting be approved as a correct record and signed
 by the Chair.

- 4 **Matters arising**

Reference was made to page 4 of the minutes where it was confirmed that the asbestos had been removed as part of the first phase of the project and that payment had been made to the contractor for completion of this work.

Concerns were expressed by Cllr Thompson that this might not be the case and a query was raised as to whether the appropriate certificates had been issued. A request was made for some additional information to clarify the situation.

The Chief Executive responded he was unaware of this claim and confirmed that he would look into the concerns raised and report back to councillors.

The Board considered that if there were ongoing issues regarding the required certificates, that these should be reported to a future meeting of the Board.

Resolved: That the Chief Executive look into the concerns raised by the Board and report back to the Board with the findings.

5 **Annual Social Care, Public Health and Corporate Complaints Report**

The Board welcomed Cllr Sandra Samuels, Cabinet Member for Governance and Sarah Campbell, Customer Engagement Manager.

Scrutiny Board received a report requesting it to review complaints management and performance for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

The report provided a summary of the complaints, compliments and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman enquiries received by the Council during the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

The Customer Engagement Manager presented the report and highlighted specific areas of interest. It was stated that there had been an increase in the number of complaints about waste management, which reflected the changes in refuse service and policy. It was stated that by working closely with the service area, the customer services department had been able to resolve many potential complaints prior to them entering the formal complaints process.

Children and Young People had received 70 complaints which was a decrease of 22% on the previous year and the team would always try to resolve any issues in the first instance before moving to stage 1.

There were 74 complaints for Adult Social Care and Public Health which was a decrease of 9% on the previous year.

It was noted that the Ombudsman annual report recorded nineteen complaints out of which nine were upheld. This was an upheld rate of 47% and was up 3% on the previous year; the national average was over 60% for upheld complaints.

The Board queried whether timescales between each complaint stage were being met and it was confirmed that they were in the majority of cases and where this was not possible the customer was kept informed. Breaches were minimal, and the Council was hitting 95% of the timescales.

The Board considered that it might be useful to include some additional contextual information regarding departments and service areas where no complaints had been received. It was also requested that in future reports, information be provided in relation to upheld complaints and follow up action that had been taken. This would include areas where there had been a breach in confidentiality.

The Board agreed that the Council should be proud of the report and the work of the officers

Resolved:

1. That the Statutory Complaints Activity for Children's Services, Adult Services and Public Health, as listed in section 1 of the report be noted.

2. That all the other complaints activity governed by the Corporate Complaints Procedures as listed in section 2 of the report be noted.

3. That future reports include additional contextual information regarding departments and service areas where no complaints have been received.

4. That future reports include information in relation to upheld complaints and any follow up action taken. This would include areas where there had been a breach in confidentiality.

6 **Update on Brexit Preparations**

The Board received a presentation from the Head of Governance and designated Brexit lead regarding the Council's preparations for Brexit.

The Board agreed that there was clearly a huge amount of work going on and queried how the risks were being communicated to the public so as to not create panic.

The question was raised as to whether the issues were similar to and being addressed in a similar manner by most authorities; it was confirmed that yes this would be the case in most areas.

Some Board members considered that the Council should be basing preparations on a worst-case scenario and that an audit of risk was required with the appropriate resources allocated to achieve this.

It was stated that the information provided highlighted just a fraction of the work that was going on and had been going on for some time and that preparations had accelerated given a hardening of the government's position.

The Board noted that there were many cross-cutting issues that would require coordination. It was explained that the Resilience Team was working to aggregate these areas and draw the strands together. This would then feed into the oversight group.

The Board queried whether the Council would be able to respond and react quickly if required to do so. The Chief Executive stated that this was why the Council retained reserves within the organisation and that the Section 151 Officer and her colleagues had made provision for certain eventualities. It was agreed that the pace of response was vital and issues such as how to get food to people who most needed it were high priority. The Council was currently working with the relevant people and organisations to address these issues and talking to other organisations about the provision of quick short-term funding support for small businesses.

The Board considered the importance of communications and the issues that may arise around food and medicine. It was considered important that the communications systems in place at the Council be robust and that it be made clear to the public how and when they should seek to contact the Council. The Council needed to ensure that plans were in place to provide enough staff to deal with public enquiries.

The Board queried whether the issues referred to in the presentation could be prioritised and it was confirmed that this could be done and that information from a number of working groups could help to inform this.

The Board expressed concern regarding the potential shortage of prescription drugs for long term illnesses.

The Director for Public Health stated that health was a key partner who the Council were in direct and constant contact with and that checks were being carried out to confirm what we had and what systems were in place.

In relation to the supply of medicine, equipment and staff the Director for Public Health explained that the NHS provided oversight on this. It was thought that the greater concern was not the supply of medicines but the perception of the supply of medicines. It was not so much about protecting the supply but about managing the message and the public perception.

The Board queried what work was being carried out by the Local Resilience Forum and how robust their plans were. It was stated that in the run up to March, there had been two exercises across the region based on a worst case scenario. This had included weekly conference calls at a strategic and tactical level and direct links to Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, which had a division to deal with resilience issues. The Council had been stood down about May/June, but things were now starting up again.

The Board questioned the financial implications and impacts that some of the issues raised would have. The Chief Executive stated that some of these financial inflationary factors would arise regardless of Brexit and that risks associated with these were already factored in. It was stated that in any event the Council would consider all of the intelligence available to it and factor this into any financial plans and ensure that appropriate provision was made following a comprehensive risk assessment. The main issue with Brexit was one of scale and this was as yet unknown, but it was confirmed that each part of the organisation had a resilience plan and that this had been taken into account.

The Board considered how best councillors could assist in the planning and it was thought that the real impact from councillors would be in the communication of plans and arrangements to constituents and in engaging community groups, so they could help out as well. The role of councillors would be to signpost their constituents and provide a balanced and factual line of communication.

Resolved: That a communications plan be drawn up to consider the involvement of councillors in Brexit preparations and that this be brought back to Scrutiny Board when appropriate.

7 Surface Water Flooding Scrutiny Review Update

The Director for Public Health introduced a briefing note providing an update on progress to improve the City of Wolverhampton Council's response to out of hours emergencies and strengthen resilience to manage such incidents effectively.

Following an incident of surface water flooding in parts of the City on 26-27 May 2018, a Scrutiny Panel convened to consider the effectiveness of plans and

procedures designed to manage surface water flooding. This included the out of hours emergency response process. The Scrutiny Panel made 16 recommendations.

Key issues identified included the need to address the on-call resilience function and response to surface water flooding. The review established that due to technical disruption to the Wolverhampton Homes 24 Hour Contact Centre, Ward Councillors were unable to get through to the Duty Manager or Duty Director on-call.

The Director for Public Health stated that in many cases the responsibility was not to respond to an incident as this was more often the responsibility of the emergency services; but to ensure that we responded appropriately. This was something that was embedded within the resilience team, which had been working with the emergency services to develop a more visible, local response.

It was confirmed that training had been carried out with duty directors and the 24 hour contact centre staff and that to date the service appeared seamless and was doing well. The plan was now to look to shrink down the number of duty managers and this was detailed in section 3.1 and 3.2 of the Briefing Note.

It was noted that there was also a resilience group being formed across the Black Country to share expertise and that training and development sessions were to be carried out for staff and councillors.

The Board considered that there had been a lot of good work on the review and that communication channels had greatly improved along with some prevention work (clearing of gulleys). One concern remained and that was the capacity of the old Victorian pipes to contain the flood water and it was agreed that this be picked up with Severn Trent Water.

The Board raised the issue of drop curves and having paving instead of grass in front gardens and queried whether areas such as flooding should be looked at when these alterations were applied for.

The Director for Public Health considered that this was a matter of communication and building relationships to mutually solve issues and he suggested his team go away and work on this and bring a report back to Board

Resolved: That a report be brought to a future meeting in relation to communicating issues to the public relating to drop curbs and the paving of front gardens.

8 **Work Programme**

Resolved: That the work programme be noted.

9 **Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

Resolved: That for Forward plan of Key decision be noted.