

Attendance

Members of the Scrutiny Board

Cllr Paul Sweet (Chair)
Cllr Jonathan Crofts (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Philip Bateman MBE
Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Cllr Greg Brackenridge
Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Stephen Simkins
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman

In Attendance

Cllr Louise Miles (Portfolio Holder for Resources)

Employees

Martin Stevens (Scrutiny Officer) (Minutes)
Tim Johnson (Chief Executive)
Claire Nye (Director of Finance)
Alison Shannon (Chief Accountant)
Martyn Sargeant (Head of Governance)
Jaswinder Kaur (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 Val Evans and Cllr Wendy Thompson.

Cllr Alan Butt substituted for Cllr Val Evans.
- 2 **Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest.
- 3 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2019 be approved as a correct record.

4 **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

5 **Schedule of Petitions**

A Member of the Panel referred to paragraph 3.3 in the report, he asked for the removal of the words “where appropriate” in relation to Ward Members being notified of the response to petitions. The Democratic Services Manager responded that Ward Members were always kept informed about the status of petitions and confirmed that the words “where appropriate” could easily be removed in future reports.

Resolved: That the words “where appropriate” in relation to Ward Members being notified of the response to petitions be removed in future reports and replaced with words to the effect that Ward Members will always be informed about the status of petitions effecting their area or originating in their area.

6 **Quarter 2 Social Care Public Health and Corporate Complaints Report**

Panel Members praised the Officers’ for the work that had taken place in relation to complaints.

Resolved: That the Quarter 2 Social Care, Public Health and Corporate Complaints report be noted.

7 **Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy**

The Portfolio Holder for Resources introduced the report on the Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy. She said she would welcome Scrutiny Board’s comments.

A Member of the Panel asked if there had been any update received from Government since the General Election on the Local Government Financial Settlement and the reward of any future grant money. The Cabinet Member for Resources responded that one of the main reasons the budget had moved to a red risk was because of the uncertainty on the national position. Ordinarily the Council would anticipate hearing confirmatory financial figures from Government in December, but it was now expected in January. A draft budget had been drawn up based on previous indications from Government.

The Director for Resources commented that she expected the financial settlement from Government to be in line with previous announcements. Finance Officers had been studying the promises from recent Conservative Manifestos to help obtain a clearer picture of potential funding. At the LGA (Local Government Association) Conference in January they expected to hear from Junior Ministers on their plans for the future.

The Chief Executive commented that he wanted to make sure every opportunity was taken to put forward the Council’s propositions to the new Government. He cited as an example the Town funds which had been announced in the last budget, where notionally up to £25 million per geographical place had been promised. Wolverhampton had been identified as one of the place’s, but Civil Servants had indicated that Wolverhampton would probably not receive the maximum £25 million. The Council would however be pushing the limits on all potential funding streams,

which would help to rebalance the economy in the City. As an example, he cited City Learning Quarter as a project to champion.

Members of the Panel thanked Officers for how the budget had been presented to the Scrutiny Panels, which had been greatly improved from previous years.

A Member of the Panel asked about the costs of Norovirus in the City, in relation to social care. The Portfolio Holder for Resources commented that in the past the costs of care provision associated with the Norovirus had been reflected in the figures for social care. There was in fact an adult social care quarterly financial briefing taking place the following day, which would enable effective monitoring of the latest position.

A Member of the Panel remarked that the future of the Towers Outdoor Activity Centre was uncertain. They knew that no final decision had been made, but they were keen to know of the future plans and any alternatives to potential closure. The Portfolio Holder for Resources responded that she was aware of recent comments on social media about the future of the Towers Outdoor Activity Centre. She assured Members that no formal decision had been made. She added that it was felt important to spend as much money as possible on local youth provision. One of the issues for the Towers was the take up of use, which was dependent on the schools. They were asking for updated information on the Towers following a meeting that had been held the previous day.

Resolved: That the new format in how the Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy is presented to the Scrutiny Panels be reported back to Cabinet as a positive change.

8 **Work programme**

The Scrutiny Officer commented that the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) would be attending the next meeting of the Scrutiny Board. If Members of the Panel had anything in particular they wanted to be addressed with the LEP they could contact him and the Scrutiny and Systems Manager. Of particular note on the Scrutiny Work Programme was the Accident and Emergency Department item for the next meeting of the Health Scrutiny Panel. In the previous week, it had been reported in the local press that the Trust had declared a Level 4 status for the department.

A Member of the Panel remarked that at the Annual Scrutiny Away Day he had raised the potential of a scrutiny review on neighbourhood Policing and on the Safer Wolverhampton Partnership. He asked for an update on the status of the proposition. The Scrutiny Officer responded that the Safer Wolverhampton Partnership had been added as an item for the Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel. On the matter of Neighbourhood Policing, he would speak to the Scrutiny and Systems Manager and ask her to provide an update to the Member. The Panel Member suggested that Neighbourhood Policing could be addressed as an item on a Scrutiny Board agenda for later in the year. The Chair responded that he would discuss the best approach for the scrutiny of Neighbourhood Policing with the Scrutiny and Systems Manager and would send a note to the Panel accordingly.

Resolved: That the Scrutiny Work Programme be agreed.

9 **Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

Resolved: That the Forward Plan be noted.

Meeting closed at 6:20pm.