

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 Val Evans
Cllr Phil Page
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Wendy Thompson
Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal

In Attendance

David Pattison, Director of Governance
Luke Dove, Strategic Asset Manager
Sarah Campbell, Customer Engagement Manager
Julia Cleary, Scrutiny and Systems Manager
Earl Piggott Smith, Scrutiny Officer
Martin Stevens, Scrutiny Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Apologies for absence**
Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Singh.
- 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.
- 4 **Matters arising**
Members referred to page 7 of the minutes where the Board commented on Microsoft Teams and printing facilities. This was in relation to Cllrs struggling to print paperwork at home.

Members referred to page 6 of the minutes and the use of food banks. It was confirmed that information had been sent out following the previous meeting and would be re-circulated for information. The Director for Governance stated that a further update could be provided in relation to the use of foodbanks in the City.

It was also noted that some Cllrs who had iPhone 6 devices were unable to download and use the Covid alert app. The Scrutiny and Systems Manager agreed to take this up with the ICT department.

Resolved:

1. That an update be provided to members in relation to the printing of paperwork.
2. That updated information on the use of foodbanks be distributed to members of the Board.
3. That the issue regarding the use of iPhone 6 devices and the Covid alert app be looked into.

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

The Board welcomed Sarah Campbell, Customer Engagement Manager to the meeting.

An overview was provided of the Annual Social Care, Public Health and Corporate Complaints report. The Board considered Appendix 2, which highlighted Stage 1 Annual Corporate Complaints. There had been a 36% decrease in stage 1 corporate complaints compared to the same time the previous year and out of the 185 received at stage 1, 54 were upheld. A customer could then escalate to stage 2 if they remained dissatisfied and there had been 19 stage 2 complaints of which 4 had been upheld.

The Board considered Appendix 1 to the report which dealt with Childrens' Services. There was a 17% decrease in stage 1 complaints. There were 58 stage 1 complaints and 8 were upheld and 26 partially upheld. No stage 2 or 3 statutory cases had been received.

In relation to Adults and Public Health there was again a decrease of 28%, there were 53 stage 1 complaints of which 3 were upheld and 27 partially upheld.

The Board considered the Ombudsman enquiries that had been received. During 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 the council received 10 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman enquiries, this was in comparison to 26 the previous year. The Ombudsman published annual complaint statistics for each local authority in England. The Ombudsman received 61 complaints and enquiries in 2019/20 in relation to the City of Wolverhampton Council, this was in comparison to 71 complaints and enquiries received during 2018/19. From the 61 enquiries received from the Ombudsman, 12 detailed investigations were carried out in comparison to 19 detailed investigations received for 2018/19. Out of the 12 detailed investigations carried out, the Ombudsman had recorded seven (58%) findings of fault (upheld) for the council during 2019/20 (this compared to an average of 67% in similar authorities).

The annual report confirmed that the council was 100% compliant with carrying out the Ombudsman's upheld recommendations. The report also highlighted where

things had gone wrong and heads of service, managers and the customer feedback team were required to identify these areas, implement remedies and review processes/procedures where necessary.

When a complaint was upheld (council at fault) and the findings of a subsequent investigation was for a financial remedy, change to policy or service delivery, the Customer Feedback Team produced an action plan report. Recommendations within these reports were agreed with appropriate Heads of Service and shared with the relevant Service Manager/Director to ensure appropriate remedies and changes to policy/service delivery were implemented.

The Board welcomed the information in the report and the fact that the figures were reducing but considered that targets during a pandemic could be challenging and that it was vital that complaints regarding childrens' services, adults' services and public health were acted on with haste and requested assurance that this was the case. It was confirmed that this was the case and that all enquires were being dealt with as would normally be the case.

The Board noted The Council's statistics in relation to other local authorities but queried whether there was any duplication in complaints from previous years. It was confirmed that if there were any trends or concerns then these were addressed. It was stated that the data was interrogated for any such trends. At the moment there were not any identified duplicated complaints.

The Board queried the context for some of the information such as the number of staff who had received training and any trends associated with the outcomes of the complaints that were being discussed.

The Board queried where the greatest number of complaints came from. It was noted that the top trends for corporate complaints were waste services, council tax and waste services. There had been no increase in tree enquiries.

The Board also noted that a number of compliments had also been received.

The Panel thanked the Customer Engagement Manager for the report.

Resolved: That the report be received and noted.

6 **Community Asset Transfer Policy and Strategy Review**

The Board welcomed Luke Dove, Strategic Asset Manager to the meeting.

The Board considered a report highlighting the most significant changes to the revised Community Asset Transfer Strategy.

A Community Asset Transfer (CAT) was where a public body transferred the management and/or ownership of an asset, sometimes including associated services to a voluntary community organisation (VCO). The CAT Strategy provided guidance for both the public body transferring the asset and VCO taking on the same in line with relevant legislation and policies.

In the current climate a CAT supported community empowerment and offered an opportunity for assets and/or services to be retained in areas where the Council

might not be able to develop or continue to fund itself. It also allowed for a more innovative approach to be explored through community lead initiatives with the support of the Council.

The Council currently had an existing CAT Strategy, however given the fluid nature of both the economic and social environments, an updated version was required to ensure all applicable outcomes were addressed in line with current Council policies and met the needs of both the public body and VCO's.

The new CAT Strategy was customer focused and was intended as a guidance document to inform its users. The new Strategy provided clear direction on what a CAT involved for all parties including highlighting associated benefits and risks so that there was complete transparency from the outset. There was a clear timeline for the CAT process which was also supported by the Council's governance and recently updated asset management and disposal process to allow management of stakeholder expectation and appropriate forward planning. The new Strategy was Flexible to allow for differentiating circumstances as no two Community Asset Transfers were the same. The new Strategy allowed for a more innovative approach to be explored through community lead initiatives with the support of the Council.

The Board referred to 3.2 of the report and queried whether the previous Strategy had not been fit for purpose. Officers stated that the previous strategy was fit for purpose at the time that it was in force but given contextual changes, it needed to be adaptable and more flexible to the ever-changing environment that we now experienced.

The Board queried how the Council monitored any areas where there had been a CAT and ensured that the VCO was managing the asset in line with the agreement and Council policies. It was noted that all applications were considered in a robust manner and that there were teams in the Council that provided ongoing support. It was acknowledged that the actual transfer was only the start of the process and that ongoing management support was provided with any key changes to stakeholders on both sides being updated accordingly. Areas such as building compliance and management were constantly monitored and updated where appropriate.

Resolved:

That the revised Community Asset Transfer Strategy be endorsed and progressed to Cabinet for approval.

7 **Work programme**

The Scrutiny and Systems Manager introduced the scrutiny work programme and the individual work plans set by the separate scrutiny panels.

The topic of E-scooters was considered and how the City would react to a possible increase in E-scooters. It was noted that there was a pilot being carried out by the West Midlands Combined Authority and it was agreed that an item in relation to this could be considered by the Vibrant and Sustainable Cities Scrutiny Panel in the autumn and an update on the pilot provided.

Resolved:

1. That an item be added to the work plan of the Vibrant and Sustainable Cities Scrutiny Panel in relation to E-scooters.

[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]

2. That the work programme and individual work plans be agreed.