

CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
COUNCIL

Our Council Scrutiny Panel

20 January 2021

Time 6.00 pm **Public Meeting?** YES **Type of meeting** Scrutiny

Venue Microsoft Teams Meeting

Membership

Chair Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal (Lab)

Vice-chair Cllr Udey Singh (Con)

Labour

Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Cllr Milkinderpal Jaspal
Cllr Susan Roberts MBE
Cllr Dr Paul John Birch J.P.
Cllr Roger Lawrence
Cllr Hazel Malcolm

Conservative

Cllr Payal Bedi-Chadha
Cllr Simon Bennett

Quorum for this meeting is three Councillors.

Information for the Public

If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact the Democratic Services team:

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Agenda

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

1 Welcome and Introductions

[The Chair to welcome everyone to the meeting. The Scrutiny Officer will then read out a list of those invited to the meeting to confirm who is in attendance.]

2 Meeting procedures to be followed

[The Chair will explain how the meeting will proceed, how questions are to be asked and any matters of meeting etiquette.]

MEETING BUSINESS ITEMS

3 Apologies

4 Declarations of interest

5 Minutes of previous meeting (Pages 5 - 12)

[To approve the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record]

6 Matters arising

[To consider any matters arising from the minutes]

DISCUSSION ITEMS

7 Treasury Management Strategy (Pages 13 - 22)

[Alison Shannon, Chief Accountant, to present report]

8 CWC Employee Equalities Update Briefing (report to follow)

[David Pattison, Director of Governance, to present report]

9 Our Council Scrutiny Panel 2019 20 - Draft Work Programme (Pages 23 - 32)

[Earl Piggott-Smith, Scrutiny Officer, to present report]

EXEMPT ITEM

PART 2 - ITEMS CLOSED TO THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Exclusion of press and public

[To pass the following resolution:

That in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business as they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information on the grounds shown below.]

(Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

The MS Teams Live Event will now end and the panel will meet in closed session to discuss the following exempt report.

- 10 **CWC Asset Disposal Programme (Pages 33 - 38)**
 [Julia Nock, Head of Assets, to present report]

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Attendance

Members of the Our Council Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Alan Bolshaw
Cllr Milkinderpal Jaspal
Cllr Susan Roberts MBE
Cllr Simon Bennett
Cllr Roger Lawrence
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal (Chair)
Cllr Udey Singh (Vice-Chair)

In Attendance

Cllr Louise Miles – Cabinet Member Resources

Employees

Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer
David Pattison	Director of Governance
Charlotte Johns	Director of Strategy
Claire Nye	Director of Finance
Michelle Howell	Finance Business Partner
Julia Cleary	Scrutiny and Systems Manager
Martin Stevens	Scrutiny Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

1 **Welcome and Introductions**

Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal, Chair, welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting and advised it was being live streamed to the press and public. Cllr Gakhal advised that he was not expecting any exempt or restricted items on the agenda. A recording of the meeting would be available for viewing on the Council's website at a future date

2 **Meeting procedures to be followed**

Cllr Gakhal explained the protocol to be followed during the meeting for asking questions and reminded everyone that microphones should be muted and cameras off, unless they have been invited to speak. Earl Piggott-Smith, Scrutiny Officer, invited all attendees to introduce themselves to confirm they were present at the meeting.

Please note that the following employees were also in attendance at the meeting:

Claire Nye
Charlotte Johns
Michelle Howell

David Pattison
Martin Stevens
Julia Cleary
Cllr Louise Miles – Cabinet Member Resources was also in attendance

3 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from the following:

Cllr Payal Bedi-Chadha

Cllr Paula Brookfield – Cabinet Member Governance

4 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

5 **Minutes of previous meeting**

The panel members voted and approved the minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2020, as being a correct record.

6 **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

7 **Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-2022 to 2023-2024**

Michelle Howell, Finance Business Partner, presented the report and referred the panel to recommendations asking for comments on the draft budget and medium-term financial strategy and also the budget relevant to the remit of the panel and how that budget is aligned to the priorities of the Council. The comments will be included in a report to Scrutiny Board for their consideration after they have been approved by the Chair and Vice Chair as part of the response to the annual budget scrutiny.

The Finance Business Partner gave an overview of the Council's financial position as detailed in Section 2 of the report and advised the panel that the Council has a legal requirement to set a balanced budget and that the 2020-2021 budget was set without the use of the General Reserves.

The Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2020-2021 to 2023-2024 was presented to Full Council for approval on 4 March 2020. The Council was able to set a balanced budget for 2020-2021 without the use of General Reserves. However, it was projected that the Council would be faced with finding further estimated budget reductions totalling £15.5 million in 2021-2022 rising to around £20 million over the medium term to 2023-2024.

The Finance Business Partner advised the panel that the budget was prepared prior to the Covid-19 pandemic which has had a significant international, national and regional impact. The panel were advised that work has been ongoing across the Council since March 2020 to review corporate resources assumptions, growth and inflation in line with the Five-Year Financial Strategy to support the budget strategy for 2021-2022.

The Finance Business Partner advised the panel that an updated Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy was published in November 2020 and is attached as an appendix to the main report. The report includes details of the projected

financial implications of the Covid-19 pandemic and the next steps that will be taken in order to address the financial pressures faced by the Council over the medium term. The panel were reassured that the Council has a strong track record over many years of managing its finances and outlined the work being done to balance the budget and also respond to the financial impact of the pandemic.

The Finance Business Partner commented that based on current projections of the cost implications of Covid-19 in 2020-2021 there will be a £324,000 cost pressure. This figure does not take account of the impact on the second national lockdown and future Government announcements on its response to the pandemic.

The Finance Business Partner commented on the challenges going forward when considering the impact of Covid 19. The Council is assuming that Government will provide sufficient grant funding to cover the cost of Covid-19 related cost pressures. Assuming this is the case, the budget deficit is estimated to be in the region of £4.5 million in 2021-2022, rising to £19.6 million over the medium-term period. A range of options will be considered to bridge the gap needed to set a balanced budget, for example efficiency targets being allocated to directorates.

However, in the event that sufficient grant funding is not provided to meet the cost implications of Covid-19 then this would have a significant impact on the Council and require a fundamental review of services in order to identify budget production sufficient enough to set a balanced budget. The projected budget deficit in 2021-22 could rise to a minimum of £23.2 million in the event that one-off Government funding for Covid-19 cost pressures is not received. This figure could increase to £40 million over the medium-term period.

The Finance Business Partner invited Director's responsible for services within the remit of the panel to comment on the relevant sections of the budget report.

Claire Nye, Director of Finance, initially briefed the panel on the Government announcement on Spending Review 2020 announced earlier in the day, and the main headlines. Further details of the spending plans will be shared with Cllrs when available. The Council welcomed the Government commitment to provide local authorities with extra funding. Further work will be done to assess if the proposals will be sufficient as more details are expected from Government in the next few weeks.

The Director of Finance commented on the Finance and Corporate Budgets that she is responsible for, and described work done to ensure budgets are managed well by introducing changes to systems that deliver both savings and more efficient services that benefit residents and businesses. The service has invested in changes to achieve efficiency savings into developing new systems and working practices which has helped to reduce budget expenditure and improve outcomes.

Charlotte Johns, Director of Strategy, commented on how the work of her directorate contributes to the delivery of the outcomes referred to by the Director of Finance. Investment in ICT and technology and the use of data and has helped to drive efficiencies across the whole council, to deliver better outcomes and value for local people. The Director of Strategy outlined how work to link performance data and financial reporting is key, and this continues to be a focus of work going forward.

David Pattison, Director of Governance, advised the panel that his responsibilities include Legal and Governance and that the focus of the service was looking to see how to do things differently to achieve the desired outcomes for the City. The service is finding ways to make sure that it can help deliver those outcomes and aspirations. He gave examples of this such as agendas on enforcing car cruising injunctions and also taking legal action against businesses who have not complied with Covid-19 restriction rules. The Director of Governance commented on progress in recruiting apprentices in Legal Services which is part of a policy of growing people in the Council and supporting them to progress their career.

Councillor Louise Miles, Cabinet Member for Resources, commented that a further update on the implications of the spending announcement by the Chancellor can be brought to a future meeting of the panel if that would be helpful.

Resolved:

The panel agreed to note the report.

8 **Harnessing the power of digital for the future and agile working (report to follow)**

Councillor Miles, Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the presentation and gave a definition the term 'agile working'. The presentation will give more details about agile working in the Council in the future.

The Cabinet Member advised the panel the Civic Centre is the Council's headquarters where the majority of Council employees are based and will continue to be based. The working environment has changed as result of pandemic restrictions and it is expected that home working will be part of future flexible and agile work plans for immediate future. The Cabinet Member commented on the challenges of home working under lockdown conditions and explained that the Council has developed new working practices in the past few months in response the challenges presented by the pandemic.

Charlotte Johns, Director of Strategy, commented on the key questions that she would like the panel members to consider during the presentation. The overall context of the presentation was to brief the panel about the work being done to harness the power of digital connectivity for the Council in the broadest sense.

The Director of Strategy presentation covered two main areas, lessons learnt from the use of agile working and harnessing the power of digital in the government mandated lockdown and then looking longer-term on how the Council should take forward the use of agile working and technology to inform its policies going forward. The Director of Strategy listed three areas of work, citizens and businesses, employee and the environment with specific examples of agile working and the use of digital technology during the pandemic.

The Director of Strategy commented on the work done to ensure a rapid mobilisation of agile working. The Council had done preparation in advance of the formal lockdown to deliver mobile working technology. A number of test days were used make sure the organisation was ready for the change to home working. In addition, there was a rapid rollout of new systems such as Microsoft Teams to support home

working. At the start of the 2020 it was reported that 300 people were using Microsoft Teams, that figure has now increased to over 3,700 people. ICT has collaborated with employees and Councillors to help develop these systems.

The Director of Strategy commented on work done to make sure that people had the right devices and equipment to enable them to work from home, while also recognising the difficulties faced by some employees during the lockdown. The Director of Strategy commented that using new developments in technology has enabled the Council to quickly introduce the Stay Safe Be Kind telephone service to ensure that vulnerable residents were supported during the first national lockdown.

The Director of Strategy reassured the panel that the safety and security of the Council's ICT systems is a priority and the work done has led to the award of Cyber Essentials plus certification. The award gives external accreditation and assurance about the security and resilience of current ICT systems. The service is continuing to roll out key infrastructure changes such as the 5G network which will connect 170 public sector premises in the City and work on this continued during the lockdown.

The Director of Strategy commented on key ICT systems such as the Eclipse. The system has been now live and working well in bringing together a number of key systems and data sets to make sure that children social care workers have timely information when needed. The Director of Strategy commented on other changes to key ICT systems which have enabled the continued delivery of Council services to the public during the lockdown and other restrictions.

The Director of Strategy commented on the extensive engagement work done with members of the Citizen Panel and the feedback highlighted the need for flexibility in how the Council respond and deliver services going forward; while recognising concerns about the level of digital exclusion across some areas of the City. The feedback from the employee Life in Lockdown survey had 1270 respondents, which is the highest response rate than any other previous employee survey. The survey findings were important in helping to understand how lockdown restrictions has impacted on the lives of employees that responded.

The panel discussed the benefits and challenges presented by employees working in agile way and remotely. The panel expressed concern that current remote working has limited the opportunity for people to talk informally to either develop ideas to solve problems or share ideas. The panel wanted to look at ideas for capturing and sharing such knowledge. The panel also highlighted the importance of team working in physical locations where possible and considered that a balance needs to be found that will allow people to work in a building.

The Director of Strategy agreed with the view of importance of finding a balance. The issue was highlighted in the response from employees in Life in Lockdown survey about the issue of flexibility during lockdown. There is a desire to take the best aspects of having to work in this way but also not to lose benefits of working collaboratively in the same physical location at some future date. The value of informal networking and problem solving was highlighted. The importance of Civic Centre as being the key employee base for Wolverhampton was also highlighted.

The panel discussed whether the evidence presented was intended to support the idea of employees using Council buildings and working from home will continue into

the near future and the implications for employee wellbeing of the continued agile working arrangements.

The panel discussed the profile of people who took part in the survey and how representative the views expressed were of the majority of Council employees. The Director of Strategy accepted that while the survey did not cover the majority of the employees it has been the highest response to an employee survey. The panel expressed concern about making decisions about future agile working arrangements without considering the possible impact on the use of buildings and on the working conditions of employees, who may be affected. The issue of employees working at home with poor broadband connectivity was given as an example.

The Director of Strategy reassured the panel that findings are a work in progress and work will continue to reflect on future agile working arrangements. The findings from the employee Life in Lockdown survey is part of the evidence collected at a point in time and the latest survey is intended to present an update to these findings.

The Director of Strategy commented that the Our People Strategy report is the agenda for the next meeting of the panel. This report will respond to some of the issues of concern highlighted by members of the panel about agile and flexible working, particularly for employees who may be struggling with managing work and their caring responsibilities. The panel discussed the issue of the long-term mental effects of working from home for employees.

The panel commented on the need to continue to consider the needs of the population who cannot afford the cost of connecting online to different services and the linked issue of loneliness linked to home working.

The Director of Strategy commented in the importance of digital inclusion and referred to the reason for suggesting the issue of connectivity as a cross-cutting theme across all the scrutiny panels. The issue is considered to be critical to ensuring the best outcomes for local people and a significant amount of work is ongoing to support this aim.

The Director of Strategy reassured the panel that the Council has put a lot of effort into raising the awareness of the challenges created by having to work from home during national lockdowns, and gave examples of the range of practical support offered to employees in recognition of the importance of maintaining good health and well-being. Furthermore, learning from the experience of the first lockdown is being used to inform the current response to what Councillors, employees and other stakeholders are saying about the way the Council delivers services to local people. The panel discussed the importance of delivering good quality services to residents regardless of the method chosen.

The panel discussed the issue of employee appraisals during the lockdown and other restrictions. The issue of performance management is an issue which can be included as part the presentation to the panel at the next meeting. The Director of Strategy commented on the new employee appraisal process of professional conversations, which is focused on outcomes. The new process includes specific detailed sections for managers and employees to talk about health and well-being issues.

The Cabinet Member welcomed the contributions of panel and offered to present an update on progress of the issues detailed in the presentation to a future meeting. The panel suggested the report should also include update on findings from employee welfare checks. The Cabinet Member acknowledged the importance to the Council of creating informal spaces for employees to discuss issues and to share ideas.

Resolved

1. The panel agreed to note the report.
2. The Director of Strategy to consider the panel comments on agile working in the future report to the panel on the Our People Strategy.

- 9 **Our Council Scrutiny Panel 2019 20 - Draft Work Programme**
Earl Piggott-Smith, Scrutiny Officer, presented the draft work programme and invited panel members to comment.

The panel queried the timing of the annual scrutiny planning event. The Scrutiny Officer advised the panel that no decision made about format and timing of the scrutiny planning event. There are discussions about presenting a review on the annual report of work done by scrutiny panel members. There is a plan to present a report to outline work done across panels linked to the connected city theme, which was agreed as a priority issues earlier in the year. Julia Cleary, Scrutiny and Systems Manager, commented on the need to assess the impact of scrutiny on the work of the Council and including this information as part of the annual review.

Resolved:

The panel agreed to note the report.

- 10 **Treasury Management Activity Monitoring Report 2020-21 Quarter 1**
The Director of Finance introduced the report and briefed the panel about the key points in the document.

Resolved:

The panel agreed to note the report.

- 11 **Treasury Management Activity Monitoring – Mid Year Review 2020-2021**
The Director of Finance introduced the report and briefed the panel about the key points in the document.

Resolved:

The panel agreed to note the report.

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Treasury Management Strategy

Treasury Management

- The Local Government Act 2003 and supporting regulations require the Council to 'have regard to' the CIPFA Prudential and Treasury Indicators to ensure that the Council's capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable.
- Main treasury management functions include the management of:
 - Borrowing
 - Investments
 - Cash flows
- The Treasury Management Strategy is approved annually
- Performance reported quarterly to Cabinet and Scrutiny Panel

Treasury Management

The Strategy incorporates six elements:

- Treasury Management Strategy
 - Summaries in strategic terms the approach the council will take in performing its treasury management activities
- Annual Investment Strategy
 - Sets out the conditions under which the council will place investments
- Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators
 - Lists the prudential indicators
- Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement
 - Details the formula used for calculating MRP
- Certainty Rate
 - This enables the council to access cheaper borrowing rates of 20 basis points below the standard rate
- Treasury Management Policy Statement and Practices
 - Policy statement and practices as required by the CIPFA Code of Practice on TM

Treasury Management

- Local authorities undertake borrowing to fund the capital programme
- Borrowing requirements are detailed in the TM Strategy
- We have statutory duty to determine and keep under review how much we can afford to borrow.
- Capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council, essentially the longer-term cash flow planning, to ensure the council can meet its capital spending obligations
- Management of the longer-term cash may involve long / short term loans or using cash flow surplus.
- Our policy is to use cash balances to fund capital expenditure to avoid the need for borrowing
- Capital programme is also funded by
 - Grants
 - Capital receipts – from asset disposals
 - Other contributions
- Prudential Code requires authorities to set and observe a range of prudential indicators

Prudential Indicators

PI 1 - Estimates and actual capital expenditure.

Full details of capital expenditure plans and funding can be found in the quarter three capital budget monitoring 2019-2020 report.

	As at 19 February 2020			
	2019-2020 Forecast £000	2020-2021 Forecast £000	2021-2022 Forecast £000	2022-2023 Forecast £000
General *	111,998	168,620	56,009	15,474
HRA	63,596	79,708	82,828	83,790
	175,594	248,328	138,837	99,264
* Commercial activities / non-financial investments included in General figure. These relate to areas such as capital expenditure on investment properties and loans to third parties etc.	25,662	27,257	10,000	10,000

- Updated forecasts are reported during the year
- Capital Programme report will show detailed list of projects
- Includes all financing requirements – borrowing, grants, capital receipts etc

Prudential Indicators

PI 2 - Estimates and actual capital financing requirement General and HRA.

The capital financing requirement measures the authority's underlying need to borrow for a capital purpose.

	As at 19 February 2020			
	2019-2020 Forecast £000	2020-2021 Forecast £000	2021-2022 Forecast £000	2022-2023 Forecast £000
General *	679,931	740,334	730,838	710,618
HRA	263,734	297,250	335,264	376,117
Total capital financing requirement	943,665	1,037,584	1,066,102	1,086,735
* Commercial activities / non-financial investments included in General figure. These relate to areas such as capital expenditure on investment properties and loans to third parties etc.	18,712	26,399	15,078	14,670
Movement in capital financing requirement represented by:				
New borrowing for capital expenditure	91,720	127,037	65,759	63,075
Less minimum revenue provision/voluntary minimum revenue provision	(41,441)	(33,118)	(37,241)	(42,442)
Movement in capital financing requirement	50,279	93,919	28,518	20,633

- Updated forecasts are reported during the year
- Shows the underlying need to borrow

Prudential Indicators

PI 3 - Authorised limit for external debt.

These limits apply to the total external debt gross of investments and separately identify borrowing from other long term liabilities such as finance leases including Private Finance Initiatives (PFI).

	As at 19 February 2020			
	2019-2020 Limit £000	2020-2021 Limit £000	2021-2022 Limit £000	2022-2023 Limit £000
Borrowing	1,054,931	1,049,311	1,100,137	1,162,140
Other Long Term Liabilities	86,553	87,249	84,637	81,939
Total Authorised Limit *	1,141,484	1,136,560	1,184,774	1,244,079
Actual and Forecast External Debt as at 19 February 2020	896,876	1,032,794	1,063,389	1,084,023
Variance (Under) / Over Authorised limit	(244,608)	(103,766)	(121,385)	(160,056)
Commercial activities / non-financial investments included within this figure.	40,438	45,893	43,867	43,867

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- Sets the authorised limits for external debt
- Actual debt is update at the time of reporting
- Shows if we are under or over our authorised limit

Prudential Indicators

PI 4 - Operational boundary for external debt.

This is based on the same estimates as the authorised limit but directly reflects the Director of Finance's estimate of the most likely, prudent but not worst case scenario, without the additional headroom included.

	As at 19 February 2020			
	2019-2020 Limit £000	2020-2021 Limit £000	2021-2022 Limit £000	2022-2023 Limit £000
Borrowing	1,013,398	1,018,328	1,083,775	1,146,467
Other Long Term Liabilities	86,545	85,247	82,635	79,937
Total Operational Boundary Limit *	1,099,943	1,103,575	1,166,410	1,226,404
Actual and Forecast External Debt as at 19 February 2020	896,876	1,032,794	1,063,389	1,084,023
Variance (Under) / Over Operational Boundary Limit	(203,067)	(70,781)	(103,021)	(142,381)
Commercial activities / non-financial investments included within this figure.	35,760	43,867	43,867	43,867

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- As per the previous indicator – but without the headroom

Prudential Indicators

PI 5 - Gross debt and the capital financing requirement.

"In order to ensure that over the medium term debt will only be for a capital purpose, the local authority should ensure that debt does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of capital financing requirement in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional capital financing requirement for the current and next two financial years".

	As at 19 February 2020			
	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
	Forecast £000	Forecast £000	Forecast £000	Forecast £000
Forecast Capital Financing Requirement at end of Second Year	1,066,104	1,086,737	1,102,383	1,102,383
Gross Debt	896,876	1,032,794	1,063,389	1,084,023
Capital Financing Requirement Greater than Gross Debt	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

PI 6 - Estimates and actual ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream.

This represents the cost of financing capital expenditure as a % of net revenue for both the General and HRA.

	As at 19 February 2020			
	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast
General *	14.2%	14.9%	18.1%	17.9%
HRA	28.8%	30.3%	30.9%	31.8%
* Commercial activities / non-financial investments included in General figure. These relate to areas such as capital expenditure on investment properties and loans to third parties etc.	0.7%	0.9%	0.9%	0.8%

Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) - Future Lending Terms

- HM Treasury announced future lending terms from PWLB
- Local authorities will need to submit a high level description of their capital spending and financing plans including the expected use of PWLB
- Section 151 Officer required to confirm that there is no intention to buy investment assets primarily for yield purposes.
- Plans need to include a breakdown expenditure under the following categories:
 - **Service Spending** – activity on areas such as education, highways & transport, social care, public health, cultural & related services, environmental & regulatory services
 - **Housing** – General Fund and HRA
 - **Regeneration** – to address economic or social market failure, developing an asset, generating additional activity (e.g. job creation)
 - **Prevention Action** – intervention prevents a negative outcome (e.g. assets that would otherwise fall into disrepair, or supporting economic activity which would otherwise cease)
 - **Treasury Management** – refinancing or extending existing debt.
 - **Debt of yield** – buying land / buildings to let out at market rates, or continue to operate on a commercial basis without any additional investment



Scrutiny Work Programme (draft)
Our Council Scrutiny Panel
2020-2021

Theme – Connected City

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Scrutiny – A New Approach (Connected City)

1. A new approach to scrutiny was agreed at Scrutiny Board on 14 July 2020. Scrutiny Board agreed a cross cutting theme for all panels. The agreed theme was '**Connected City**'. Connectivity and digital considerations will be considered as part of all items added to the work programme.
2. **Roles and expectations** have been defined for the Chairs of Scrutiny Panels, Strategic Executive Board (SEB) leads and Scrutiny Officers; creating a collective understanding of scrutiny's role within the Council. These can be seen in Appendix A.
3. Effective **work planning and agenda setting** will take place to produce **jointly owned work plans**.
4. The first panel meetings will receive an update on the areas that fall within the scope of the panel. There will then be an introduction to the **connected city theme**. This will enable the Panel to consider items for the work programme in line with the '**Connected City**' scrutiny theme.
5. Regular briefings will be arranged with the Scrutiny Panel Chair, Vice Chair, SEB lead and scrutiny officer to enable a shared understanding of priorities and reviews of progress and recommendations.
6. **Improved communication:** 'You said we did' updates and publicity (including social media)
7. Creation of a **strong organisational culture** that supports scrutiny work that **adds real value** and **evidences impact**.
8. Outcomes and recommendations from all panels will then be fed back to Scrutiny Board to unify into one comprehensive report based on the connected city theme.

Work Programme considerations:

1. Is the issue in the public interest?
2. How does it link to the Connected City theme?
3. How can scrutiny add value by looking at it?
4. Where is the evidence to support looking at this issue?
5. Can we evidence impact?
6. Is there a change to National Policy?
7. Does it affect citizens across the City?
8. Are there performance concerns?
9. Is it a safety issue?

Our Council Scrutiny Panel

Chair: Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal	Vice Chair: Cllr Udey Singh	SEB Lead: Claire Nye	Scrutiny Lead: Earl Piggott-Smith
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Date of Meeting	Agenda Publication	Item Description	Lead Report Author	Council Plan Priority	Notes
30 September 2020	22 September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Council update presentation • Future Work planning • Our Assets Programme • Treasury Outturn Quarter One • Minutes from the Specific Reserves Working Group 9.1.20 (for information) 	SEB Lead(s) Scrutiny Lead/ SEB Lead/ Scrutiny Chair Julia Nock/ Mark Bassett Alison Shannon		

25 November 2020	17 November 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget • Harnessing the power of digital for the future and agile working • Treasury Management Activity Monitoring Report 2020-21 Quarter 1 (Information Report) 	<p>Claire Nye/ Alison Shannon</p> <p>Charlotte Johns</p>		
20 January 2021	12 January 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treasury Management Strategy Report • CWC Asset Disposal Programme • CWC Employee Equalities Update Briefing 	<p>Claire Nye/ Alison Shannon</p> <p>Julia Nock</p> <p>David Pattison/Jin Takar/Laura Phillips</p>		
9 February 2021		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific Reserves Working Group meeting 	Alison Shannon		
17 March 2021	9 March 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio Holder Statement and Question Time 	Portfolio Holders		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our People Plan - update on work to support employee development 	Charlotte Johns		
Cross Cutting Themes	<p>Apprenticeships - requested by the Chair for consideration – also applicable to Stronger City Economy Scrutiny Panel and Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel.</p> <p>Update on what has taken place to be provided in the first instance for information.</p> <p>Discussion about contract process for Heath Town Baths – Cllr Udey to wait for reply from David to questions submitted by him before deciding next steps</p> <p>Charlotte to discuss with Chris East the provision of meals in schools and the extent to which they meet the needs of different groups – the issue will probably be referred to CYPF panel – depending on the issue of concern</p>				

DRAFT

Our Council Scrutiny Panel

The scrutiny of organisation and performance of the human, financial, technical and material resources to support the delivery of Council services.

Specific responsibilities

The Panel will have responsibility for scrutiny functions as they relate to:

- Strategic Finance
- Revenues and Benefits
- Procurement
- The Hub
- Audit
- Human Resources
- Organisational Development
- Democratic & Support Services
- Corporate Landlord
- ICT

General Role of the Scrutiny Board and Scrutiny Panels

Within the terms of reference set out in the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, the Scrutiny Board will:

1. Co-ordinate the work of the Scrutiny Panels and Scrutiny Review Groups.
2. Receive annual reports from the Councillor Champion and give consideration to the work undertaken and issues that the Councillor Champion wishes scrutiny to consider investigating further.
3. Maintain regular dialogue with the Cabinet on service improvement, performance management of cross-cutting issues, policy development and budgetary provision.
4. Oversee and ensure access to appropriate learning and development for scrutiny Councillors.
5. Discharge the call-in procedures relevant to its overarching role.

The Scrutiny Panels will:

1. Maintain regular dialogue with the Cabinet, Scrutiny Board and Councillor Champions.
2. Ensure that members of the public and stakeholders are informed of and involved in issues within the remit of each Panel.
3. Discharge the call-in procedure relevant to their terms of reference.

Appendix A:

1. Chair of Scrutiny Panel:

- To attend fortnightly meetings with the SEB lead and Scrutiny Officer
- To attend agenda setting meetings and other relevant briefings on a regular basis
- To contribute to the work planning for the panel and to bring forward relevant topics and issues for inclusion
- To chair meetings in a fair and open way and to encourage participation from panel members
- To attend Scrutiny Board (where appropriate) to provide feedback and updates on progress
- To prepare, when possible, questions in advance of a meeting to allow for healthy debate and to ensure that clear resolutions are made that add value and show impact
- To act as champion for scrutiny and to represent the best interests of the citizens of Wolverhampton

2. SEB Lead:

- Meet with the Chair, the Vice Chair and the Scrutiny Officer fortnightly to discuss upcoming issues, updates from previous meetings, workplans and any other relevant business as agreed by all parties.
- Recommend topics for inclusion on the workplan, working proactively with the Chair, Vice Chair and Scrutiny Officer to address any issues/opportunities/challenges that fit with the remit of the panel.
- To advise on the viability of any issues put forward by the panel for inclusion on the work plan.
- To attend relevant Scrutiny Panel meetings and provide an update at each meeting on any relevant issues within the remit of the panel. Also, attending Scrutiny Board (as appropriate) to provide feedback.
- To act as a champion for scrutiny in the Council and to encourage engagement with the scrutiny function and promote a healthy culture within which scrutiny can thrive

3. Scrutiny Officer:

- Provide support and guidance to the panel, its members, officers, partners and other stakeholders regarding the scrutiny function
- To ensure openness and transparency in the scrutiny function and to make sure that information is continuously shared and communicated between all relevant parties in a timely and suitable fashion
- To ensure that the appropriate persons are invited to meetings and that they are given adequate time to prepare and to provide guidance and support where appropriate
- To manage the administration of all relevant panels and meetings within statutory timescales
- To carry out research and information gathering exercises when required
- To provide advice on policy and legislation where appropriate
- To ensure that all resolutions are followed up and responses or actions fed back, monitored and recorded
- To act as liaison between the Chair and the SEB lead to ensure a shared understanding of priorities and work planning.
- To manage the agreed work plan and its outcomes to show impact and added value

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