

Attendance

Members of the Scrutiny Board

Cllr Paul Sweet (Chair)
Cllr Philip Bateman MBE
Cllr Val Evans
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Wendy Thompson
Cllr Simon Bennett (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar
Cllr Asha Mattu
Cllr John Reynolds
Cllr Susan Roberts MBE
Cllr Zee Russell
Cllr Ellis Turrell
Cllr Barbara McGarrity QN

In Attendance

Ross Cook	Director of City Housing and Environment
Sarah Campbell	Customer Engagement Manager
Lamour Gayle	Head of Customer Services and Registrars
Julia Nock	Deputy Director Assets
Kieran Simpson	EDI Advisor LGBT+
Marguerite Nugent	Manager: Arts and Culture
Isobel Woods	Head of City Assets

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies for absence**
There were no apologies for absence.
- 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 **Quarter One 2021/22 Social Care, Public Health and Corporate Complaints Report**

Scrutiny Board welcomed Sarah Campbell, Customer Engagement Manager to the meeting. Board received a presentation in relation to the Quarter One Social Care, Public Health and Corporate Complaints report for the following areas:

- Corporate
- Children's
- Adults and Public Health
- Ombudsman enquiries

The Council had received 29 stage one corporate complaints; this was in comparison to 74 cases received for quarter one in 2020/21, details were outlined in Appendix 2. Out of the 29 cases received, 11 were upheld (at fault) and 18 not upheld (not at fault).

The highest figure of 17 complaints referred to Waste Management, followed by Planning receiving three and Arboriculture receiving three. In some cases, this had followed extensive but unsuccessful attempts to resolve some of those matters at a service level. Out of the 17 complaints referring to Waste Management, two were received for Household, Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC) sites, seven were received for general waste and eight received for garden waste. More detail was outlined in 4.2 of Appendix 3. The Complaints Team had worked closely with services to improve complaint handling and ensure appropriate remedies were put in place to achieve the best outcomes for customers.

If a customer remained dissatisfied, they could escalate their complaint to stage two of the procedure. During this period the council received five stage two cases which was consistent in comparison to quarter one 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020. Out of the five cases received, two cases were partially upheld (partially at fault), and three cases were not upheld (not at fault).

The Council had received 13 stage one children's services complaints; this was in comparison to eight received during 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020, an increase of five cases; The highest figure of three cases referred to the SEND team. Out of the 13 complaints investigated during this period, two cases were upheld (at fault), seven cases were partially upheld (partially at fault), and four cases were not upheld (not at fault). In some cases, this had followed extensive but unsuccessful attempts to resolve some of those complaints informally.

No statutory stage two complaints had been received during this period; this was in comparison to no complaint cases being received during 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020. A non-statutory children's stage two complaint had been received which was dealt with in accordance with the corporate complaints policy and procedure. This was in comparison to no cases received from 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020.

The Council had received six stage one adult services complaints: a decrease of six cases in comparison to quarter one in 2020/21. The highest figure of two cases referred to Adult Community Team West. During this period, three complaints received were in relation to commissioned services. Out of the six cases logged and

investigated during this period, one case was upheld, three cases partially upheld and two cases were not upheld.

The council had received six assessment enquiries from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and six assessment enquiries from the Housing Ombudsman. The council had received three LGSCO full enquiries; two for Adult Services and one for Children's Services, and one full enquiry from the HO for Wolverhampton Homes. Adoption@ Heart, Children's Services received one published report from the LGSCO. The complaint was in relation to a request to register a potential adopter; the council accepted the findings of the LGSCO and in line with recommendations had reviewed its adoption recruitment procedure to ensure it adhered to the Department of Education's 2013 statutory guidance on adoption.

Board understood that when a complaint was upheld (council at fault) and the findings of a subsequent investigation were 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 Customer Feedback Team also attended regular quality assurance meetings for Adults/Children's Services and Waste Liaison Meetings to ensure they used the learning from complaints to drive service improvements.

The Customer Feedback Team had received a total of 165 compliments (Corporate, Public Health, Adults and Children's) for this period.

Board noted that waste management had received the most complaints and that issues in relation to this were very important to residents and did need to be addressed. It was also noted that there were probably more issues than actual complaints as some residents might not consider lodging a complaint. Members hoped that lessons were being learnt from the complaints in order to bring them down in the future. Clarity was also sought as to the difference between a complaint and a service request. It was stated that in relation to service requests, if somebody phoned up to say that their bin had not been emptied, then this would be dealt with as a service request, and it would be unreasonable to expect someone to wait 21 calendar days for the matter to be investigated. A service request would provide an audit trail and an acknowledgement to the resident. The relevant service area would be notified straight away, and they would be asked to ensure that the bin was collected.

Board considered the matter of blue badges, and it was noted that this could also be a constant source of concern for many residents. Concerns were raised in relation to parking enforcement officers acting against residents whose blue badges were out of date but who were struggling to get through the system to sort out the renewal. Board queried whether there was a particular number or emails address that residents were able to use for blue badge information. The Customer Engagement Manager stated that she was not aware of an increase of complaints regarding these.

Resolved: That the update be received.

5 **Customer Contact Update**

Scrutiny Board welcomed Lamour Gayle, Head of Customer Engagement and Registrars to the meeting.

Customer Services used a number of channels to enable customers, citizens, visitors to the city, businesses and partnering organisations. These channels included:

- Telephony
- E-mail and web forms
- Online and paper application processing
- Face to face and
- Virtual appointments

During Quarter 2 the Team handled 147, 403 customer contacts with the highest number of contacts being through telephony which accounted for 115,799 contacts. The majority of face-to-face appointments were for Taxi Licensing where walk-in appointments were provided at the Hickman Avenue site. Board noted that 6.6% (9687 call) of customers terminated their call before employees were able to answer.

During Quarter 2 in 2021 the Team received 125,486 calls. Of these calls, they were able to answer 115,799 and the call contact response rate for this quarter was 92.3%. There were 5,349 more calls in that quarter in comparison to the same period during 2020. An analysis of Mitel (telephony system) was undertaken for the period of 1 July 2021 to 27 September 2021, data showed that 2491 calls were terminated by the customer within 80 Seconds, 844 of those being within 30 seconds.

During Quarter 2 the Team handled 27,904 emails and web form enquiries. Enquiries relating to Revenue and Benefits accounted for the highest number of email and webform customer contact. The service level agreement with internal services was to process customer emails and webform enquiries within two working days and this was achieved this during Quarter 2. Board understood that the Team analysed email data to identify any trends in customer enquiries and to identify opportunities to work with services to improve published customer information. The Team also worked with the services to improve their web forms and the information that was on the website, all channels were analysed to help identify where the Team could make the customer journey slicker and easier.

During Quarter 2, Customer Services had processed 2,536 Blue Badge and school applications, provided support for home to school travel appeals and continued to support local businesses with business grant applications. In relation to these areas, the Team would process the applications as soon as they were received and there would only be further work required if areas such as occupational health assessments were needed, otherwise the Team would process the applications up to the point where the badge was issued to the customer. It was noted that for blue badges, the Team recognised how important they were to residents and pre-pandemic had held surgeries within the Civic Centre to help customers complete the forms online. To follow up on this as part of the reopening, surgeries were also being held in areas such as Bilston and Wednesfield. Work had been carried out with the Insight and Performance team to identify areas where the highest numbers of applicants for blue badges came from and this information was used to inform where the surgeries were held. It was however noted that the majority of customers applied online but paper forms could be sent out if requested or customers could attend the Civic Centre or Bilston Library to have face to face support. The same service was

being offered at the Civic Centre for school applications to support parents and carers with their applications and the team were looking to identify any hot spots in relation to this before the next round of secondary and primary school applications.

In relation to future plans to further improve the Customer Journey the following areas had been identified:

- Review of current telephony system
- Chat Bot solution
- Web Chat solution
- Document scanning solution for customers
- Community based Customer Service Delivery
- CWC and Wolverhampton Homes community-based Co-location
- Work with Insight and Performance to identify any trends in demand for
- Blue Badge appeals

Board welcomed the idea of the chat bot as this technology was already being used by a lot of businesses and it could really help to streamline interaction with customers.

Board considered that the call log suggested that there had been more calls this year but appreciated that this could be due to customers seeking additional support due to the pandemic and some services being reduced and new services such as the food bank being introduced.

Board considered that it Might be useful to have a breakdown of calls received during the week and queried whether there was any reporting available for specific days or busy periods during the day and what mitigating action was taken in relation to any identified busy periods. A query was also raised in relation to when calls were sent onto other departments and how or whether this was monitored to ensure that they were not just going to voicemail creating a backlog.

Board queried whether the Customer Services team had any call handling targets, were these being met and whether there was any analysis in relation to idol time or targets for wrap up times. Board also queried whether the service was able to let customers know where they were in the call queue and how long the wait was expected to be. It was stated that the Team were aware and able to monitor busy periods and peak times on a day-to-day basis and that to manage this, resources and staff were allocated appropriately.

The Team were satisfied that they could now predict peak times and days for a full 12 months and had been carrying out a lot of analysis on the system. There were five different family group in Customer Services and the team were able to identify when there would be peak times in relation to these areas such as when council tax bills were sent out, or on a Monday morning when there were normally a higher number of calls coming into specific service areas. There were different peaks across the services and the team were able to predict this. A lot of work had also been carried out with service areas in relation to passing calls onto them. It was confirmed that calls were not forwarded to voice mails and that if the team were aware of a letter drop coming up for a specific department, then plans would be put in place to mitigate any predicted increase in calls. Agreements were also in place with service

areas in relation how many calls would be put through for each day so that the call wait times would be reduced and for those customers calls were always to internal offices and were never outside of the council or to a voicemail. There were call handling targets for the team and it was noted that the national abandonment rate for contact centres was 15 percent and that the Council was adhering to this standard, but it was also understood that each call abandoned was a customer and there was ongoing analysis of why calls had been abandoned and what impact that might have.

Targets were set for each family group as the handling times for different types of queries varied and a call relating to housing benefits or business rates could take 20 to 30 minutes, whilst a garden waste call could take between five to ten minutes.

In relation to idle time, this was a large piece of work and different services could have different idle times. Monitoring was carried out in real time and section leaders were able to identify if a customer service officer had been idle for some time, section leaders were also able to contact the customer service officer directly if required. Wrap time was also considered in real time so and was different for the different service areas. Wrap time for an adult social care call would be much longer than wrap time for a purple bin inquiry. Wrap times were therefore set for each family group. Board thanked the Head of Customer Engagement and Registrars for the detailed responses to the questions.

Board queried whether support for parents and carers in relation to school admissions might be rolled out to other parts of the city such as Blakenhall where there was a high percentage of South Asian and BAME residents, and whether the information would be available in different languages. It was stated that at the moment, the availability of surgeries was being carried out on a risk assessment basis and that research was being undertaken as to where specific types of calls were coming from so that surgeries could be targeted; discussions were ongoing in relation to moving surgeries around and it was considered that the work in relation to this was just at the start of the journey with an aim to make sure that the service was accessible to all of our communities moving forwards. In relation to the use of different languages; this was an area that the team dealt with on a day-to-day basis and a translation service was used to ensure that there were no barriers to any communities.

In relation to the blue badges, it was normally a 12 weeks turn around for an application however this could take longer if an occupational health assessment was required or if customers hadn't submitted the right documents. It was stated that there hadn't been many complaints around blue badges. When enquiries were made in relation to blue badges, care was taken to ensure that the customer was fully aware of the information that needed to be submitted. Some members of the Board considered that the 12 week turnaround was still too long a wait for a straightforward blue badge application. In relation to advertising and communicating this, the information was captured in the surgeries and most of the people that booked appointments for face-to-face meetings were those who were unable to complete the forms online. It had been noted that information was spreading through word of mouth in relation to the surgeries, but it was agreed that further work could be done to promote and use these surgeries more. The suggestion was made that in relation to surgeries, the team could consider Tennent Management Organisation (TMO) areas as some areas did not have libraries and communication was not reaching these areas. The suggestion was also made that venues managed by

Wolverhampton Homes could be considered. Board also considered that surgeries in relation to blue badges could be held in Tettenhall as it had the most elderly population in the city.

A question was raised in relation to residents who had emailed the council and had not had a response and what was being done to address this issue to ensure that all email enquiries were responded to. In relation to the emails, it was stated that the team had an SLA with the service area that the emails were received on behalf of and that the SLA required the team to action the emails within two working days. However, if the e-mail needed a service specific response, then the customer services team would not manage that and some of those outstanding e-mails could be where the service hadn't responded. Where there were repeat calls to customer services and customers stated that they had not received a response then the team could follow this up, but customer services did not case manage the calls. The data within the e-mails would flag up to show that these were repeat e-mails which would enable customer services to target the areas where the delays were occurring.

In terms of the future to improve the customer journey, Board noted that there appeared to be a long waiting list for Tele Care services. Board expressed concern that this might result in vulnerable residents waiting desperately for the required services. It was stated that the customer services team did not manage the tele care system and this was managed by Adult Social Care.

Resolved: That the presentation be received.

6

Rainbow City

The Board welcomed Julia Nock, Head of Assets and Chair of the Rainbow Project Board and Kieran Simpson EDI Adviser (LGBT), to the meeting.

The Board understood that there was a clear drive and passion for ensuring Wolverhampton was firmly on the map as a rainbow city and there was a high level of commitment, not only within the council but also with partners to make this happen. The overall aim was to ensure that the City of Wolverhampton was a fair, diverse, and inclusive city where everybody felt free to be themselves. Multiple initiatives would be delivered across the city to highlight this commitment, with a particular focus on improving health and wellbeing outcomes for our growing LGBT+ community. The work was being delivered through the Rainbow City Project Group, which included officers from across the business and representatives from city partners including Wolverhampton Homes, Wolverhampton LGBT+ and Enjoy Wolverhampton.

Board considered the 168 responses to the consultation including:

- 82% agreed with the initial principles, vision, and objectives of the Rainbow City
- 67% thought Wellbeing Services were the top priority for Health and Support Services (with 52% being Sexual Health)
- 60% got information on health and support services from Google (8% get information from WIN)
- 82% wanted to see Cafés as their top priority for what they wanted to see in the daytime economy (71.3% wanted to see City Events)
- 71% wanted to see Bars as their top priority for what they wanted to see in the daytime economy (70% wanted to see Social Events)

The majority of people agreed with the principles, vision and objectives and a lot of the feedback was around visibility and recognition of our LGBT community. Respondents sought equality, acceptance, and diversity in the Rainbow City and to be a welcoming city where LGBT people could thrive. The consultation specifically referred to health opportunities and health inequalities, which were seen as major concerns in society and the highest option that came out was around Wellbeing Services with sexual health being at 52%.

In relation to the drivers for change the Board understood that LGBT+ people showed lower satisfaction with their lives than the general population. In the national LGBT survey, LGBT people gave an average rating of 6.5 out of 10, while trans respondents gave an average rating of 5.4. For the general population, the average rating was 7.7.

Board understood that a high proportion of LGBT+ people suffered from mental health issues. It was noted that 24% of respondents to the national LGBT survey had accessed mental health services in the 12 months prior to responding. These were likely to have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, as indicated in survey results published by the LGBT Foundation.

Many LGBT+ individuals had experienced hate crime, and this was often unreported. The national LGBT survey showed that over 40% of respondents had been victims of abuse as they were LGBT and indicated that over 90% of these incidents went unreported. While some LGBT+ support was available in the city, there was no unified offer. Feedback from LGBT+ individuals in the city indicated that this could lead to a perception of Wolverhampton not being LGBT+ friendly.

In relation to the national picture, the Government had released an LGBT Action Plan in 2018, this was as a response to the findings of the national LGBT survey conducted in the previous year. The Action Plan contained 75 committed for delivery by 2022, across themes including health, education, safety, and workplaces. The latest progress report from July 2019 highlighted the following actions:

- The appointment of the UK's first LGBT Health Advisor (Apr 2019)
- The appointment of an "LGBT Advisory Panel". The Panel's term ended in March 21 and had yet to be reconvened.
- Funding for training and development of LGBT+ community groups and a small grants scheme, delivered by Consortium (the LGBT+ Futures Fund, January 2019 to March 2020).
- A new curriculum for Relationships Education (primary schools) and Relationships and Sexual Education (secondary schools) that included non-heteronormative portrayals of relationships. Schools were required to have implemented the changes by September 2021.
- Consultation on Banning Conversion therapy (launched on the 29 October 2021)
- The scheduling of an international LGBT+ conference for June 2022, entitled 'Safe to be Me'.

Based on research and consultation, the LGBT conference held in 2019 and the work of the Project Board; five key themes had been identified and officers allocated to these themes as part of a wider group. The five key themes were:

1. Digital
2. Culture and Creative
3. Health and Wellbeing
4. Community Safety
5. Education

Detailed information was provided to show some of the interventions, aims, objectives and the actions that were proposed, alongside the theme leads and deputy leads.

Board considered the Governance arrangements of the Rainbow City which included at the strategic level, the Rainbow City Project Board, at the operational level the Rainbow City Operational Steering Group and at the consultative level. The Rainbow City Charter Network.

Board considered the Engagement Plan which showed the approval path for the project, including being sent out to all Councillors for feedback on 13 December 2021, approval by Cabinet on 23 February 2022 and a launch date of 28 February 2022. Board thanked officers for what was considered a great initiative and welcomed the presentation.

Board referred to page 61 of the agenda and queried whether it would be possible to have hate crime data from across the whole of the West Midlands. Board also requested some additional clarification as to who had been consulted and whether there was a breakdown of the ages of those who had responded and whether any consultation had been carried out with schools. Board considered that it might be good to see enhanced consultation with schools as this work needed to be shaped by young people as well as people who worked in the Council. Some Board members considered that it would have been better had the project been resident driven rather than staff driven in the first instance.

It was stated that consultation had been widely advertised through social media and letters had been sent out in relation to a number of briefings that had been held. In relation to providing a more detailed breakdown of those who had been consulted and responded, the survey had been anonymous, but a high-level breakdown could be provided. In relation to working with schools, this was one of the largest areas where work was hoping to be carried out as this was where the future would be shaped. Work in this area was under development and the team were working closely with the Youth Council but recognised that there was much more that could be done moving forward.

The question was also raised in relation to whether the Council had reached out to partners such as the local football team; there had been consultation previously in relation to setting up a LGBT supporters Club in the year before the pandemic and as football was such a huge part of the culture of the city it was considered important to try and include this in the Rainbow City project. It was noted that the Wolves Captain was the British LGBT ally which was wonderful, and it was stated that Ian Fegan (Director of Communications and External Relations) was the sponsor for the project and that the aspiration was to work with as many partners as possible including the football club.

Board queried the costs associated with the Rainbow City Project and noted that there had to be priorities for the Council and that the outreach centres referred to would come at a cost which would take resources away from other priority areas. It was stated that in relation to budget, the team and project board were acutely aware of its and nothing in relation to the outreach centres had been set in stone yet. At the moment investigations in to the centre and available budgets were ongoing. Work was being carried out with partners such as the University and Wolverhampton Homes as it was not incumbent upon the Council to necessarily share all the financial burden and work was being carried out to see what could be achieved together.

Board queried what research had been done in relation to other towns and cities and their approaches. It was stated that prior to the main consultation, work had been carried out by the Senior Policy and Strategy Officer in relation to what best practice was already out there locally, nationally, and worldwide; information about this could be provided to Board after the meeting.

Board suggested that there could be some further work with West Midlands Police given the very concerning statistics in relation to hate crime. This work could include a focus on understanding what a hate-crime was and how it could affect different people in different ways.

Board thanked officers for what was considered to be a fantastic initiative and a powerful and proud statement to make to our citizens.

Resolved: That the presentation be received.

7 **British Art Show 9 - Full Programme Update**

Scrutiny Board welcomed Marguerite Nugent, Manager for Arts and Culture to the meeting.

The British Art Show 9 was due to open in Wolverhampton on 22 January 2022 and run until 10 April 2022. Wolverhampton was the first English host city, there would be 35 artists showing across Wolverhampton Art Gallery and the University School of Art. Themes included:

- healing,
- care and reparative history
- tactics for togetherness and
- imagining new futures

There would be a Wolverhampton focus on 'living and giving voice to difference' alongside the most diverse range of artists represented to date, with 40% being Black or Asian, 45% being women artists and 11% European.

The Art Show would help to support the city recovery and wider city offer in the following ways:

- Relighting our City- Vibrant High Streets and Communities strand
- Cultural Strategy- in draft but focusing on 5Ps (Productivity, Promotion, Participation, Pride, Partnerships)
- Link to Open Events Cultural Action Zone

- Events Strategy and longer-term plan for activity in the city
- Driving footfall to the city (40,000 people to Aberdeen)
- Evening economy – supports the development of evening activity in the city.

Board understood that there would also be a learning programme supported by Arts Connect. This included:

- Programme of BAS9 partner schools with focus on performance, visual arts and SEND working with specialist local practitioners
- School visits and teacher resource packs available for schools
- Programme of events to include workshops and talks both in person and virtual
- Family exhibition trails including Augmented Reality trail
- Saturday Art Club for disadvantaged young people to run during the show

There was a bespoke community ambassador programme which included:

- LGBTQ+ ambassador artist Kathy O'Conner
- The Good Shepherd working with homeless people- tour and exhibition 'it starts with a meal'
- Amarjit Kaur workshops for Asian women using textiles and responding to artist Catherine Walker
- Student ambassador – producing a 'Zine' drawing on experiences of autism and mental health.
- BID ambassador would see an additional BAS9 street ambassador in the city
- Youth ambassador working with groups from The Way Youth Zone

Volunteering would be co-ordinated across all sites to include:

- University students volunteering programme
- Arts & Culture council volunteering programme for non-students through the Art Gallery
- Training to be given on both operational matters and exhibition content
- Incentives including certificates and training so that participants had evidence of career development.
- Volunteer target of 40

Board considered the Offsite 9 project which would be delivered in partnership with Creative Black Country. This was funded by Arts Council England and would involve 25 local artists who had been commissioned to make work around the city. This would include an open call and four ring-fenced commissions with Asylum Arts, Eagleworks studios, Flexus Dance and DASH (disability arts). There would be a publication telling the stories of people of Wolverhampton and profiling the artistic and creative talent in the city. There would also be podcasts capturing Wolverhampton voices in a changing social and political environment.

A marketing and audience development strategy had been developed to identify target audiences. This strategy had been aligned to the national campaign with a launch event planned for 21 January 2022 at the Art Gallery. The hope was to bring

an additional 50,000 visitors to the city for the duration of the show, provide new opportunities for local businesses, create meal and hotel deals, and provide events space for pop up events and activities. Through measuring the impact of the activities, the Council would be able to better profile visitors to the city for large scale events and it was hoped that the show would support the longer term cultural and events strategy, provide a template for any future large-scale exhibitions or festivals and raise the profile of the city.

Board welcomed the presentation and all the work being carried out and considered that this was a huge feather in the city's cap. Board considered it vital to ensure that we were getting every single bit of benefit from this huge show as possible. However, some members raised concern that when looking at the event on the internet it appeared to link with the visit Birmingham web pages and that it was important to try and encourage people to stay over in Wolverhampton so perhaps how we were marketing and communicating this event and our city required some additional work and thought. It was considered vital to get the publicity and communication right to really make the most of this.

Resolved: That the presentation be received.

8 **Work programmes Update**

The Scrutiny and Systems Manager updated the Board in relation to the Work programme.

Resolved: That the Work programme be agreed.