

# Scrutiny Board

Minutes - 30 June 2015

## Attendance

### Members of the Board

Cllr Ian Angus  
Cllr Philip Bateman  
Cllr Alan Bolshaw  
Cllr Paula Brookfield  
Cllr Craig Collingswood  
Cllr Barry Findlay (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr Arun Photay  
Cllr Rita Potter  
Cllr Stephen Simkins (Chair)  
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman

### Employees

|                 |                           |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Adam Hadley     | Group Manager - Democracy |
| Charlotte Johns | Head of Transformation    |
| Mark Taylor     | Director of Finance       |

## Part 1 – items open to the press and public

*Item No.*     *Title*

### 1     **Apologies for absence**

Cllr Simkins welcomed those present to the new Board and outlined a proposal for Scrutiny Chair and Vice-Chair meetings. He also welcomed Cabinet Member participation for future meetings.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Hardacre, Cllr O'Neill, Cllr McGregor, Cllr Johnson, Keith Ireland and Kevin O'Keefe.

### 2     **Declarations of interest**

Cllr P Bateman declared a pecuniary interest for his works in transport. Cllr Sweetman also declared a pecuniary interest due to her consultancy work.

### 3     **Minutes of the previous meeting (28 April 2015)**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### 4     **Matters arising**

Adam Hadley, Group Manager – Democracy, explained to the Board that the Annual Scrutiny Report will be presented to Council in July.

5 **Election of Scrutiny Board Vice-Chair**

Cllr Simkins proposed and Cllr Bolshaw seconded, and it was resolved that Cllr Findlay be elected as Vice-Chair for Scrutiny Board for the 2015/16 municipal year.

6 **The Corporate Plan and Wolverhampton Way**

Charlotte Johns, Head of Transformation, presented an overview of the Corporate Plan and Wolverhampton Way documents. The Corporate Plan is a 'plan on a page' document that gives high level summaries of service area priorities. It identifies key deliverables that are evidence based as well as performance measures that can be monitored at committee meetings. The plan has been considered by the Cabinet and will be presented at Full Council on 15 July 2015. The Wolverhampton Way outlines officer values and key behaviours of employees.

Cllr Bateman stated the importance of the document, particularly its reference to the Combined Authority.

Cllr Bateman raised some additional areas he felt the document should cover. Firstly, he observed that it does not mention promoting the City's history and culture. The Head of Transformation explained that this is referenced implicitly throughout the document and that there is a work stream dedicated to monitoring visitor usages of cultural sites. Secondly, he outlined that there was no mention of promoting fire safety. This was not explicitly mentioned in the document as this workstream is addressed by the City Board; however, it was agreed this would be discussed with the Leader. Finally, Cllr Batemen commented that the use of public transport and coaches should be highlighted as it was financially beneficial to the City. He was assured that coaches are a key part of the transportation plan, but that this could also be put forward as an amendment in the final draft.

Cllr Brookfield voiced concern about the drop in fire station numbers and praised the preventative work the service organises with schools. She also noted that smaller issues such as grass cutting and street cleaning should not be overlooked by the plan. Mark Taylor, Director of Finance, reassured the Board that for the 2015/16 financial year the Council is confident it can balance its books. He noted that future governmental cuts could affect the Council and there would be greater challenges in future years.

Cllr Collingswood echoed comments about fears for the future of fire stations. He also praised the document by commenting that it looked stylish, but noted that some of the targets were vague. The Head of Transformation explained that 'underneath' the plan on page there is robust methodology to agree how data will be documented to benchmark and monitor progress. She added that the plan provides an overview and that there are other indicators that will sit in service level layer of the plan. Dashboards will be prevalent to allow people to easily monitor data. She also clarified that the Wolverhampton Way will promote core values with tangible workstreams, but that this will be a gradual change.

Cllr Sweetman voiced concern that there was no direct mention in the plan of how the Council will examine voids in retail offer. She noted this would be easy to monitor and that was important as the plan will be a PR document for prospective businesses wanting to invest in the region. She was complimentary about the rest of the document. Cllr Photay also approved of the corporate feel of the document, but

called for work to be done in the communities, such as improving the signage, to ensure that the document's fresh feel is supported by practice.

Cllr Bolshaw requested that the changes in how children are assessed at school are also taken into account when monitoring school performance. He also called for the Council to support schools where possible, but noted the current circumstances

Cllr Findlay also praised the feel of the document, but commented that more should be done to ensure local businesses receive support from the Council. The Director of Finance agreed and explained how the new Procurement Strategy will aim to ensure more contracts go to local businesses. He noted the challenges of this, but stated it was important for the Council to be more accessible to businesses.

Cllr Potter raised the issue of employability for an older generation who are skilled, but unemployed. The Corporate Plan identified key areas for how to get people back into work such as the skills commission, adult education and retraining packages. Cllr Brookfield related this issue to the Goodyear site and wanted to know how the Council had addressed job losses in the area. In response the Board was assured that the Strategic Director for Place is in regular contact with businesses in the area and had held meetings with the Leader and MPs to discuss the outcomes of the situation. A briefing note can be shared with the Board to keep them informed of developments. Cllr Sweetman added that better communications would be beneficial for sharing Council success stories. It was agreed that the Council should use as many channels as possible to communicate with external parties and the public.

Resolved:

- 1) To feedback the comments made by the Board to the Leader of the Council for consideration.
- 2) To circulate a briefing note to the Board explaining the situation at Good Year and the strategy for getting people back into employment.

## 7 **ICT Strategy and Digital Strategy**

Andy Hoare, Head of ICT, presented the ICT and Digital Strategy reports together. He explained these strategies are linked, with the Digital Strategy being outward facing document and the ICT Strategy being inward facing.

The Head of ICT explained the previous ICT strategy was based on replacing the mainframe and needed renewing as technology has changed significantly over the last five years. The strategy needs to be flexible and cost effective, and will cover a shorter, three year period. It will prioritise Council communication with customers allowing services to be accessible whenever and wherever people want. Better use of technology will also save money as processes become more efficient.

Cllr Bolshaw raised the issue of employees working from home. The Head of ICT explained the strategy will enable employees to work smarter and give them more choice. Some of these plans include: office 365, a new customer relationship management system, and live chat on the Council homepage. These will be digitally inclusive and support will be provided to community centres and libraries to ensure people are able to access the technology. The Head of ICT also noted that whilst the technology was important, there was a fundamental need for policy to support the changes being made.

Cllr Angus praised the papers' intentions and made a suggestion for the documents to be written in a manner that would make them accessible to people with limited ICT knowledge. There was a consensus that the strategies were welcome and technology should be embraced. There was also agreement that the Council should aim to use more of the features on the packages to ensure best value for money.

Cllr Bateman noted that there is an issue that superfast broadband is not provided in the key commercial area of the City and that this needs addressing. In response, Councillors were assured the Council is unable to access a voucher scheme for this coverage support, but is finding alternative ways to achieve coverage.

Resolved:

- 1) That the ICT and Digital Strategy documents incorporate more user friendly language.
- 2) That Councillors receive an updated copy of the draft and make comments.

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### **Work programme**

Adam Hadley, Group Manager – Democracy, presented the work programme. Officers will work with Scrutiny Chairs to formulate a plan for the year, which will be shared at the September meeting. The three proposed reviews for the year were:

- Child sexual exploitation
- City volunteering
- Electoral engagement and registration

Cllr Brookfield clarified a point she had made at one of the planning events that she wanted to consider safeguarding with relation to GP performance. This was added to the Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel work programme.

Cllr Simkins thanked the Scrutiny Team for their work preparing the planning events. He then explained that next year these sessions will run before purdah, so inquiries and work plans can be active as soon as possible. He also encouraged panel chairs to run task and finish groups on the proviso that they had tangible outcomes. The Group Manager – Democracy explained that panels have recourse to call external bodies, such as the police, in to meetings and make recommendations for them to respond to.

Cllr Simkins drew the meeting to a close by thanking Cllr O'Neill for the previous year's work and foundations he had set for the Board.

Resolved:

- 1) That safeguarding issues at GP surgeries be added to the Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel work programme, and GP performance to be added to the Health Scrutiny Panel.
- 2) That the work programme be agreed
- 3) That the child sexual exploitation, city volunteering and electoral engagement and registration reviews be agreed.