

### Attendance

#### Members of the Scrutiny Board

Cllr Ian Angus  
Cllr Peter O'Neill  
Cllr Stephen Simkins (Chair)  
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman  
Cllr Philip Bateman  
Cllr Greg Brackenridge  
Cllr Jasbir Jaspal  
Cllr Arun Photay  
Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur  
Cllr Louise Miles  
Cllr Patricia Patten (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Andrew Johnson - Cabinet Member Resources and Cllr Val Gibson – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

#### Employees

Mark Taylor	Director of Finance
Colin Parr	Head of Governance
Dawn Williams	Head of Safeguarding
Steve Rice	Customer Engagement Manager
Sarah Campbell	Customer Engagement Officer
Julia Cleary	Scrutiny and Systems Manager

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

*Item No.*    *Title*

- 1 Apologies for absence**  
Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Potter and Cllr Brookfield.
- 2 Declarations of interest**  
There were no declarations of interest.
- 3 Minutes of the previous meeting**  
Resolved:  
That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
- 4 Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

5 **Draft Budget 2017/18**

Cllr Andrew Johnson, Cabinet Member for Resources presented a report seeking feedback from Scrutiny Board in relation to the Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/18 that had been approved as the basis of consultation by Cabinet on 19 October 2016. Cllr Johnson confirmed that the public consultation was on going until 14 January 2017 and that there had been a good response so far with over 2000 online responses being received.

Cllr Johnson confirmed that the Council needed to achieve Budget Reduction and Income Generation amounting to £13.5 million and £10.0 million of Base Budget Revisions for 2017/18. Cllr Johnson stated that £10 million of savings had already been identified which left a remaining deficit of £13,539,000.

Members expressed concern that additional money needed to be found to fund social care and queried whether there was any additional information regarding whether this would need to be achieved by raising the Council Tax precept or whether money from the Better Care Fund might be made available sooner than previously expected. Cllr Johnson stated that this was still an unknown but that the preference would be to bring forward money from the Better Care Fund. The Chair suggested that once the final details had been received that there might be scope for a piece of joint working with the Health Scrutiny Panel and representatives from the CCG and Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust.

A question was raised in relation to items on page 11 of the first supplementary agenda regarding revisions to assumptions on pension auto-enrolment and further pension contributions. The Finance Director confirmed that the City Council was currently in a position where additional payments could be made to avoid significant interest costs. The Panel queried why other Councils were not doing this and the Cabinet Member stated that management of the pension fund was a matter for each individual authority and that the City of Wolverhampton Council was able to make the additional payments due to careful management of its savings.

The Board agreed that it was vital that the Council maintained a clear understanding of the situation regarding the Pension Fund. The Cabinet Member agreed and stated that the Council was currently doing an excellent job and that many issues had arisen due to staff taking redundancy and then their pensions and this not being balanced out by the contributions from the remaining reduced workforce. However the Council had budgeted for this and was now in a position where the aforementioned advance payments could be made.

Members requested that a presentation be provided to the Board at a future meeting in relation to the Pension Fund.

Members queried how the projected savings of £1,000,000 listed on page 16 of the first supplementary agenda in relation to the use of public health funding would be made. The Cabinet Member stated that this came from a strictly ring fenced budget but that the rules did allow for some adjustments to be made as long as the funding was used for activities that promoted public health.

The Board considered the proposed savings in relation to adults social and health care and acknowledged that there were serious issues relating to adult care right across the country that would need to be addressed over the next 12 months. Many of these issues related to demographic growth and the Board noted the additional budget that had been allocated for this. The Cabinet Member confirmed that many of the savings came from the promotion of independence, better ways of working and the use of new technology such as the telecare system which allowed patients to remain at home for longer rather than having to enter residential care. The Board did however note that many of these savings benefited the Health Service and that that some negotiation needed to take place to ensure that the benefits were shared by the Council. The Cabinet Member agreed and stated that the Adult Care service as a whole was in need of additional resources on a scale that could only be provided by Central Government.

The Board considered the importance of including the Communications team in disseminating information relating to this area to explain to the public what the Council was doing. The Cabinet Member agreed and stated that this would be done once a decision had been made by the Government as to the settlement.

The Chair stated that it was vital that there were robust governance procedures in place and that it was important that the Council be in a position to act as broker for the various health and social care partners who would be involved.

Members considered the savings in relation to car park usage on page 23 of the second supplementary and requested that there be careful consideration regarding the impact of charges on businesses in the area to ensure that trade was not lost. The Cabinet Member confirmed that this would be taken into consideration and that the current proposals dealt with charges being incurred after a 2 or 3 hour stay rather than for short stays. The Cabinet Member also confirmed that issues such as displacement would be taken into account and proper qualitative surveying and consultation carried out before any decisions were made. The Chair of the Vibrant and Sustainable Scrutiny Panel confirmed that his Panel had requested a detailed report on this to come to a future meeting.

Resolved:

1. That the comments of the Scrutiny Board on the Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017/18 be considered by Cabinet.
2. That a report be brought to a future meeting of the Board in relation to the Pension Fund.

## 6 **Complaints Procedures**

The Panel received a presentation from the Council's Customer Engagement Manager and Customer Engagement Officer in relation to the Corporate Complaint Procedures and the Social Care complaint procedures [adults and children] and Public Health. Officers highlighted that there were some differences in relation to the procedures as those relating to Social Care were statutory rather than local.

Following the presentations a query was raised regarding where the Communications Team fitted into the process and at what stage they would be brought in should the Council find itself in a situation requiring careful management

of a potentially damaging complaint. The Customer Engagement Manager stated that every situation was risk assessed to determine which process to take it down and to ascertain whether it could potentially leave the Council in a vulnerable situation. The Customer Engagement Manager stated that he would meet with the Communications Manager, Senior Managers and Ward Members if this was deemed appropriate following assessment of each individual case. There was still however concern from Members of the Board that this needed to be more specific and that Communications needed to be strategically placed within the complaints procedure. The Board agreed that details in relation to this be brought back to a future meeting.

The Board considered the timescales for responding to a complaint and expressed concern that the Council was not obliged to consider any complaint concerning any incident or decision that happened in excess of 12 months ago. The Customer Engagement Manager confirmed that the decision of whether or not to investigate a complaint outside of the 12 month window was at the discretion of Officers. The Board again voiced some concern regarding this especially as the discretion was with Officers who worked for the Council against which the complaint was being made. The Customer Engagement Manager stated that any decision taken in regard to this would have to be justifiable to the Local Government Ombudsman therefore all complaints were given due consideration. The Board considered that further information and scrutiny was required in relation to the process used to determine whether a complaint should be investigated outside of the 12 month window and at what stage cabinet and ward members were involved.

Resolved:

That a report be provided to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Board detailing the following areas in relation to the Complaints Procedures:

- a) Where and how Communications are involved in the process;
- b) Where and how cabinet and ward members are involved in the process;
- c) The protocol on the circumstances when a complaint would be investigated outside the twelve month cut off.

## **7 Information Governance Performance Report Quarter Two**

The Board consider a report on the performance of Information Governance for Quarter Two (July – September 2016).

The Board agreed that the achievements were generally outstanding, that training was now going in the right directions and that the teams involved be commended for their hard work.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted and agreed.

## **8 Scrutiny Review Update - Child Sexual Exploitation**

A report was submitted to update Scrutiny Board on progress in implementing the recommendations of the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Scrutiny Review completed during 2015/16 and to bring to the attention of the Board the executive responses listed at Appendix 1.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People introduced the report and stated that she was pleased that the majority of the recommendations had been implemented or were in the process of being implemented.

The Head of Safeguarding stated that the majority of the outstanding recommendations related to obtaining information from partner organisations who she had re written to at the start of the month. It was also confirmed that CSE was now a standing agenda item on the Safeguarding Board and that care was taken to ensure that progress continued to be monitored.

Members drew attention to recommendation 14 and it was stated that school governors were very important in relation to identifying CSE and that it was vital that they received the relevant training. The Head of Safeguarding confirmed that more effort was being put into schools regarding this including a train the trainer exercise which would be rolled out by the CSE/Child protection lead in each school thus giving more responsibility to the school rather than the Council.

A query was also raised regarding recommendation 19 and whether the Council was taking any additional steps to reach community groups. The Head of Safeguarding confirmed that yes, the Council's CSE Coordinator was looking at areas such as community engagement and learning and development. It was also noted that the Council needed to ensure that all community groups were engaged including any recently established orthodox Eastern European groups.

Cllr Jaspal had chaired the Review Panel and she stated that one of the main concerns had been the relationship with outside bodies such as the Police and bringing the perpetrators to justice. The Chair of the Scrutiny Board thanked Cllr Jaspal for her hard work in relation to the review.

Resolved:

1. That progress made to implement recommendations from the scrutiny review of child exploitation which concluded in 2016 be noted.
2. That the review be signed off..

## 9 **Work programme**

The Scrutiny Board considered a report updating it on the scrutiny work programme for 2016-17.

Resolved:

That the Scrutiny Board work programme 2016-17 be noted and agreed.