

## Attendance

### Members of the Scrutiny Board

Cllr Stephen Simkins (Chair)  
Cllr Paula Brookfield  
Cllr Jasbir Jaspal  
Cllr Peter O'Neill  
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman  
Cllr Linda Leach  
Cllr Philip Bateman MBE  
Cllr Greg Brackenridge  
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar  
Cllr Dr Michael Hardacre  
Cllr Sohail Khan  
Cllr Martin Waite

### Employees

Earl Piggott-Smith  
John Denley  
Martin Stevens  
Meredith Teasdale

Scrutiny Officer  
Director of Public Health  
Scrutiny Officer  
Director of Education

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

*Item No.*    *Title*

1            **Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies recorded

2            **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

3            **Minutes of the previous meeting**

Resolved:

The panel agreed to amend the minutes to state that the Cabinet be consulted in relation to the creating of a new member post with responsibility for representing the Council at all meetings and working groups associated with the West Midlands Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The minutes were approved, subject to the agreed changes being made.

4 **Matters arising**  
There were no matters arising.

5 **Scrutiny Review of Flood Risk Preparation and Response**

Cllr Phil Bateman, Chair of the Review, introduced the report. Cllr Bateman explained that the review was undertaken in response to a period of heavy rainfall in May 2018 which caused flash flooding in parts of Wolverhampton.

Cllr Bateman advised that Scrutiny Board agreed to set up the review to investigate the Council's response to the flooding and effectiveness of the emergency planning arrangements. The overall aim of the review was to make recommendations to improve the response of the Council to future extreme weather-related events.

There were specific concerns about the communications problems experienced over the weekend when key people could not be contacted by local councillors for advice and information needed to respond to calls from residents affected by the flooding.

The work of the review was supported by Dr Chris Bradley, University of Birmingham, who gave detailed evidence about issues of managing flood water in an urban setting.

Cllr Bateman commented on concerns expressed about the proposed changes gulley cleaning programme and the importance of drain clearance to reduce the level of flooding. Cllr Bateman commented on the responsibilities of Severn Trent Water (STW) and expressed concern about the delay in providing a response to present evidence to the review about the work done before and during the flooding incident. Cllr Bateman wanted assurance that STW would be monitored to check that it is meeting their legal responsibilities in respect of flood management work.

The Board welcomed the report and thanked Cllr Bateman and other members of the review group for their work. The panel commented on the importance of having a reliable communication system to deal with emergency situations. The Chair invited John Denley, Director of Public Health, to respond to the findings and recommendations in the review report.

The Director of Public Health outlined a range of changes to local emergency resilience arrangements in response to the issues highlighted during the review. The work was being done as part of a wider review of emergency planning and resilience responses. The Director Public Health outlined the key stages in response to an emergency incident and changes made to the out of hours cover arrangements. The new arrangements were tested, and the findings used to feed into a much wider review of the service.

The Board discussed the problems caused to homes as result of flooding and concern about the risks arising due to contaminated water entering homes. The Board discussed the issue of planning regulations and consideration was given to how flood risk will be managed when assessing applications for new developments.

The Board highlighted the importance of learning from the experience of neighbouring local authorities who are likely to have similar problems in managing flood water. The Board commented on the important community leader role of Councillors and the role that they can have in responding to calls from the public.

The Board commented on the responsibility of Public Health to monitor possible risk of groundwater contamination as a result of flooding and the importance of the Council working with the Environment Agency.

The Director of Public Health advised the panel of changes made to check and respond to emergency emails received out of hours to avoid the issue highlighted in the review report. The Board were advised that a Resilience Forum had been set up with representatives from across the City and of the progress made to develop an action plan. The Director of Public Health advised that that a WhatsApp distribution group had been set up to deal with communication problems experienced at the time. The use of social media would be in addition to existing communication methods to alert key people.

The Board commented that it was estimated that 50% of the population did not have access to social media and the majority of calls to Councillors over the weekend had used their telephone. The Board suggested that other means of alerting the public need to be considered.

The Director of Public Health acknowledged the importance of effective communication during an emergency and advised the Board that the Director of Communication was leading on this work to look at alternatives. Furthermore, the Managing Director was arranging a round of Ward visits to meet local residents to build relationships and communication links. The Director of Public Health acknowledged the important community assurance role of local councillors and invited members of the Board to contribute to future resident meetings.

The Board discussed the importance of gulley maintenance and related preventative work, to reduce the risk of damage from tree roots. The Board discussed the need for real time data on the level of flood risk. The Board were advised that residents can register for flood alerts on Severn Trent Water. The Director of Public Health accepted the issue of poor mobile phone reception areas and reassured the Board of the work being done to ensure a reliable service.

Resolved:

The Board agreed to approve the recommendations of the review report.

## 6 **Youth Council Annual Report**

The outgoing Chair of Wolverhampton Youth Council introduced the annual report and commented on the key areas of work undertaken by members of Youth Council during the year. The Chair commented on the list of issues identified as priorities, the issues range from knife crime, homelessness, climate change, votes at 16 and work experience. The Board were advised of the work done with different organisations during the year.

The Board were introduced to the new Chair of Youth Council who outlined priorities for 2019/20. The work will be supported by a number of initiatives aimed at getting more young people involved in the annual Make Your Mark Campaign.

The Chair wanted to engage more with local councillors and talk about issues of concern to local people that could be considered by members of Youth Council.

Meredith Teasdale, Director of Education, commented on the good work done by Youth Council and discussed the issue of school exclusions. The Director of Education agreed that it would be useful to look at the issue of school exclusions. The Board discussed the issues that contribute to the number of school exclusions and how different factors may influence young people decision to carry knives.

The Board discussed the current review of violent crime and suggested that Youth Council could be invited to give evidence. Youth Council commented on their interest in attending a range of panel meetings to contribute to a wider range of topics that will impact on the future of young people.

The Board discussed the concerns of Youth Council about the difficulties experienced by pupils in getting support needed to arrange work experience sessions. A particular concern was expressed about the limited opportunity for pupils in Year 10 to get work experience and the impact this has later on when trying to apply for apprenticeships. The Director of Education advised that schools have the responsibility to provide pupils with independent careers advice and added that the Council is working with schools to improve the offer to young people. The Director advised the Board that the online learning platform on the Council website had been improved and was being promoted.

The panel discussed the work done by West Midlands Combined Authority to improve skills and the offer to young people.

The Board supported the active involvement of Youth Council in the work of the Council and welcomed ideas for making meetings more accessible to young people. The Board suggested that Youth Council could be invited to attend full Council and also Cabinet. The Board suggested that Councillors could also visit local schools to talk to young people about the work of the Council and positively engage with the process.

The Board also suggested arranging a Scrutiny Take over day for Youth Council.

The Board thanked Youth Council members for their contributions and the report.

Resolved:

The Board supported increased involvement by Wolverhampton Youth Council in the work of the Council. The Scrutiny Team to work with members of Youth Council to take forward ideas discussed for increasing the opportunities to influence and share the work of the Council.

- 7 **Quarter 2 Social Care, Public Health and Corporate Complaints Report**  
Meredith Teasdale, Director of Education, introduced the report and invited the Board to comment on the management and performance of corporate complaints. The Board queried if information is collected on levels of public satisfaction with the complaints process and suggested that this should be included in a future report. The Director of Education explained that the Council has adopted a restorative practice

approach to dealing with complaints. The Director of Education agreed to collect information as part of the process and the findings will be included in a future report.

The Board discussed the situation where enquiries to customer services may not be logged as an official complaint, if a caller was unhappy. The Director of Education agreed to discuss the matter with a Customer Services Manager.

Resolved:

1. The Board agreed to note the report.
2. The Director of Education to include details about levels of public satisfaction about the complaints process to be included in a future report to Scrutiny Board

## 8 **Work programme and updates from scrutiny officers**

Martin Stevens, Scrutiny Officer, presented the report. The Board were invited to comment on the draft work programme.

Cllr Martin Waite, Chair of Vibrant and Sustainable City Panel advised the Board that the issue of delays in communities benefiting from s106 payments agreements. The issue has been added as a future agenda item and witnesses will be invited to give evidence. The Board discussed the need to better understand the process and the reasons for delay.

Resolved:

The Board agreed to note the report.

The meeting closed at 19:50

## 9 **Forward Plan(s)**

The Board agreed to note the report.