

### Attendance

#### Members of the Scrutiny Board

Cllr Paul Sweet (Chair)  
Cllr Jonathan Crofts (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr Philip Bateman MBE  
Cllr Alan Bolshaw  
Cllr Greg Brackenridge  
Cllr Paula Brookfield  
Cllr Val Evans  
Cllr Phil Page  
Cllr Rita Potter  
Cllr Stephen Simkins  
Cllr Mak Singh  
Cllr Wendy Thompson  
Cllr Martin Waite

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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 Jacqueline Sweetman. Cllr Martin Waite was in attendance as a substitute.
  
- 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**  
Cllr Bolshaw referred to page 6 of the agenda and the item regarding the Annual Social Care, Public Health and Corporate Complaints Report. Cllr Bolshaw confirmed that he had received feedback from the Customer Engagement Manager regarding the future inclusion of additional contextual information relating to departments and service areas where no complaints had been received.
  
- 5        **Call-in: Future Operating Model for Civic Halls**  
The Chair of Scrutiny Board stated that he had requested the item considered by Cabinet on 16 October 2019 in relation to the future operating model for the Civic

Halls be called-in. This was an important decision for the Council and the City and he considered it important that Scrutiny Board scrutinise the proposed solution and the market intelligence used to inform the decision.

The Board received a presentation from the Director of Finance which provided the background to the decision. The presentation had been prepared by the Council's advisors, IPW, who were unable to attend the meeting due to previous commitments.

IPW had been appointed to advise on the different management options and to carry out market testing with prospective operators. IPW were leading industry advisors and had undertaken similar work for cities across the country (including 70% of UK arenas). IPW had also taken the lead on the development and operation of mid-scale venues in Hull, Swansea and Bradford.

IPW fed back that the Civic Halls was in a strong location with a strong catchment and a higher capacity than its competitors. The Hall was also known to have a good reputation amongst artists and promoters. The Board agreed that maximising income was critical and that it was vital to get what happened in the building right. Income generation would need to consider areas such as promoter relationships and secondary spends whilst also taking into consideration social value.

Four primary operating models had been considered:

1. Self-operation: In house through the Visitor Economy Team
2. Self-operation: Trust
3. External operation: Lease arrangement
4. External operation: Management agreement

Each of the above options had different features in terms of control over the day to day operation, the level of financial exposure, the certainty of financial income (risk), the level of building risk retained by the Council and the level of annual financial return to the Council to contribute to the capital investment.

It was stated that an external operator would normally be expected to generate higher revenue surplus due to expertise, promoter networks and commerciality. Any external operator would also have programming freedom. The Board considered the different operating models and the associated levels of control, risk transfer and cost certainty. It was confirmed that the Council would be able to specify certain contractual requirements such as payment of the living wage.

Market testing had been carried out and discussions held with ten industry operators, with significant interest being shown from eight (very high). Feedback had been positive with operators considering that the venue would generate a profit, that they would be interested in a lease agreement and that there would be a strong guaranteed annual payment to the Council to support repaying the borrowing. Competition, catchment and product were key. It was confirmed that in any scenario, the Council would retain ownership of the building.

The preferred option (option 3), was to have a lease arrangement with a private sector operator, paying annual rent to the Council. This type of arrangement was viable in a strong market where operators could be sure of a commercial return, with

all operating risk transferred to the operator. This option would provide an opportunity for the Council to receive profit share above threshold.

The Director of Finance provided examples of similar projects including Bradford Odeon, Bonus Arena, Hull and Swansea Arena; all of which had been led by IPW.

The Board considered the use of the term world class when describing the Civic Halls. The Chief Executive stated that there had been a lot of testimony from acts who had appeared at the venue and feedback directly from the industry. It was however not clear what would constitute a world class venue and areas such as profitably, sold out performances and performers choosing to perform there were some possible criteria. The venue had a very good track record as was evidenced by eight out of the ten potential operators showing an interest in the building and it was hoped that it would become one of the leading venues of its type in the UK.

The question was raised as to what other, aspirational regeneration proposals might be feeding into this project such as proposed pedestrianisation of areas of the City centre.

The Director of Finance stated that IPW was aware of the broader aspirations but had looked at the facility for the facilities sake in this instance.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the Council consciously didn't want to bring in other material factors that were not specific to the venue, but that it would be important to capitalise on the visitors who came to the City to visit the Civic Halls.

It was stated by a councillor that it was important to see some success and that option 3 appeared to be the best option but that care had to be taken to ensure that all due diligence was carried out.

A suggestion was made that the Council should be able to run and manage venues such as the Civic Halls itself. The Board considered this option and although there was some sympathy with the suggestion, it was generally agreed that the Council was not always the best organisation to run a commercial facility dealing with bands and publicity and that the safest proposal was to bring the experts in with a contract in place to guarantee income for the Council.

The Chief Executive stated that the Council could not underestimate the complexities of managing such a business and that the Council was dealing with the market leaders who understood the market and what drove consumer behaviour. It was important to get to the market now and do the right deal with due diligence and everything built into the contract that the Council wanted. Once this was done the preferred operator could put their stamp on it and get it operating on a new, higher level by giving it the full range of facilities that modern day consumers demanded. The Chief Executive stated that he was very very confident that the Council could run a successful process and identify a leading operator who would generate income and the benefits that the Council wanted.

The Board agreed and stated that people in Wolverhampton deserved something better and that an external organisation could provide this.

The question was raised as to how much control the Council would retain to balance out requirements of need and not stifle smaller entertainment centres where the Council did have a role to play and how the Civic Halls would support these smaller venues. The Chief Executive stated that this would be taken into consideration as part of the City's visitor offer and that it might be different but would complement what the Council already had to avoid competing markets in the City. It was confirmed that some soft market testing had already been carried out in the City and that had so far proven positive.

Regarding control, the Chief Executive stated that the Council would want the operator to fill the venue with acts that people wanted to see and that this would come down to the market. It was confirmed that safeguards and controls could be built into the contract to specify that the venue not be used for certain things as it was vital to build social value and maximize local benefits through supply chains. Trust would need to be placed in the operator to maximise financial return whilst maintaining public trust and reputation.

It was confirmed that Cabinet would be getting a further report with a full business case at a later date.

Resolved: That Scrutiny Board, following consideration of the called-in decision and supporting information note the decision, which can now be implemented immediately;

- 6 **Scrutiny Review: Rewriting the Narrative - Youth Violent Crime**  
The Board welcomed Cllr Obaida Ahmed, Chair of the Scrutiny Review, to the meeting. Cllr Ahmed introduced the draft scrutiny review in to youth violent crime and provided an overview of the main points in the report. The review had been cross-party and provided a platform for placing violence prevention at the heart of the Council's commitment to ensure that everyone in Wolverhampton could live their lives in a safe and supportive environment. Cllr Ahmed thanked everyone who had contributed to the scrutiny review.

The report considered areas of good practice already taking place within the City such as Catch 22, Eyes to Success, the Summer Squad and Believe to Achieve and the good work being carried out by the Council's own Youth Offending Service and Community Safety Team. Alongside this, the report provided evidence and examples of successful initiatives carried out by the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit and made a number of recommendations regarding how these initiatives could be fed into the future West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit.

The report highlighted the importance of early intervention and the necessity of training for all those who had direct contact with young people in order that they might spot the signs of adverse childhood experiences and be able to take appropriate action.

Cllr Ahmed explained that the review had adopted a public health approach and had initially sought to understand and establish the facts regarding youth violent crime. One very important statistic was that only 8% of violence in the City was committed by young people.

Cllr Ahmed stated that no one is born violent but risk factors from birth can lead a young person to violence and it was the responsibility of everyone to try and bring in as many preventative measures as possible to mitigate the risk factors. Cllr Ahmed stated that young people suffering from adverse childhood experiences (ACES) could be up to ten times more likely to be involved in violence by the time they were 18. The review highlighted the vital role of the community in supporting young people to overcome ACES and associated risk factors.

The group had visited the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit (SVRU) and the experience from this had helped to form the core of the review. The SVRU had been on a long journey but what shone through was the passion the team had and this was vital to its success and needed to be replicated in the new West Midlands VRU. The SVRU had also highlighted the importance of involving people with real, lived experiences of trauma who could offer empathy rather than just sympathy to those in need of help and support.

Cllr Ahmed praised the wonderful work that had been carried out over the summer holidays by the Summer Squad which had resulted in a 48% reduction in violence. This was a perfect example of what could be achieved, and it was important that schemes such as this continued.

The Board praised the work done and the report; and thanked Cllr Ahmed and everyone who had been involved in the scrutiny review.

The question was raised as to whether the groups had considered the issue of parental support. Cllr Ahmed stated that yes this had been considered and that it was important to rebuild relationships with all generations and that one area for consideration might be the use of intergenerational centres.

The Board considered that the loss of the youth service had impacted quite strongly on areas of the city and that something positive really needed to come out of the review and that the Council needed to identify the resources needed to support the recommendations in the report.

The Board agreed with Cllr Ahmed that the narrative from the press needed to change and that initiatives such as the Summer Squad needed to be continued in partnership with the Police to help drive down the fear of crime.

The Board also considered the issues associated with school exclusions and considered that more support was needed regarding this as young people were on a road to nowhere once excluded. Schools needed to ensure that exclusion was a last resort. The Board agreed that the referral units in the City were excellent and could really turn children around but when 7 and 8 year children were being excluded there was a need to be concerned.

The Chief Executive stated that many of the initiatives recommended by the review were already being embedded in the work of the Council and that it was vital to ensure that our influence was felt regarding the West Midlands VRU. Most of the work carried out to date had been to understand what would actually make a difference and what was actually meant by youth services today. The Council was committed to supporting young people and setting them on the right path. There was a report planned for Cabinet in January which followed on from the work of the

Summer Squad and the Youth Engagement Strategy. The Council was keen to try new initiatives and was prepared to not always succeed in the quest for what worked. This was the start of a more long-term implementation plan for young people in the City. There were some big challenges ahead.

Resolved: That the report be received and noted.

7 **Annual Scrutiny Review**

The Board considered the Annual Scrutiny Review. The Review highlighted some of the key achievements of the Scrutiny function over the 2018-2019 municipal year including details of the progress and outcomes from a selection of Panel meetings and Reviews.

The report also highlighted upcoming items and developments in the scrutiny function and calendar.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

8 **Quarter 1 Social Care, Public Health and Corporate Complaints Report**

The Board considered the Quarter 1 Social Care, Public Health and Corporate Complaints Report for 2019. The Council's Customer Feedback Team handled complaints, compliments and service enquiries from members of the public. Those relating to social care and public health matters fell under a statutory framework, while the remainder were handled under the council's policy. The report provided an overview of the contacts received during the first quarter of 2019/20.

Resolved: (1) That Scrutiny Board note:

- I. The Statutory Complaints Activity for Children's Services, Adult Services and Public Health, as listed in section 1 of the report.
- II. All the other complaints activity governed by the Corporate Complaints Procedures as listed in section 2 of the report.
- III. The new layout and structure of quarter one complaints report.

9 **Updates from the chairs of the scrutiny panels**

The Board considered the updates from the Scrutiny Panel chairs.

1. Stronger City Economy Scrutiny Panel

The Scrutiny Officer read out the update from Cllr Sweetman in her absence.

At the meeting on the 16 July the Panel had considered an item titled *Public Realm, Transport and Linking the City*. Members of the Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel had been invited to attend for this item and many of them did so. The Panel made a number of recommendations including that Cllr Martin Waite be invited to sit as a Member on the newly formed informal Member Reference Group on the Public Realm / Westside Link and that he report back into the Scrutiny process and that the Stronger City Economy Panel receive more information at their next meeting in

September 2019 on the marketing plans for the Public Realm / Westside Link project.

The Panel at their meeting in July considered the Digital Infrastructure Strategy as a pre-decision item. The Panel resolved, that officers co-ordinate with the Council's Communication team on an effective communication and engagement plan promoting the benefits that the successful implementation of the Digital Infrastructure Strategy will bring to the City. Concerns raised at this meeting regarding the Westside Link / Public Realm were re-visited at the September meeting. Members continued to raise a number of serious concerns about the project and agreed that answers be pursued. This will in part be through the new Member Reference Group, which the Portfolio Holder had established.

The Panel also considered the City Identity and Marketing for the City of Wolverhampton. It was clear that good work was ongoing in this area.

## 2. Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Singh stated that the Panel had considered burial places and capacity at Bushbury Crematorium and that this was the 16<sup>th</sup> busiest crematorium out of 219 in the UK. Cllr Singh stated that Cllr Leach and her team had been working hard over the past year to provide new burial spaces and that it was an example of good cross panel working that had been praised by the equalities team. The Panel had specifically requested that the bereavements team make sure that the service met with people's expectations and ensured that all religious matters and faith matters were taken into consideration.

The Housing Strategy had been considered as an item of pre decision scrutiny and Cllr Singh stated that a number of good suggestions made by the Panel were noted.

The Panel had also considered *Keep the Street Neat* which included the issue of fly tipping and had a night visit to the casino and a number of night time economy retail establishments.

The Board praised the work of the Trading Standards and Enforcement Team and stated that it had been wonderful to see how they worked with the Police and the sniffer dog.

## 3. Health Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Page stated that the Health Scrutiny had held a very good public meeting at Linden House in relation to the possible closure of a GP surgery and that the Panel had enjoyed a productive site visit to West Park Hospital.

Cllr Page praised the good partnership working that took place on the Panel with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), Public Health, the Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, and Healthwatch amongst others all playing a vital role.

Work of the Panel included looking at GP appointment waiting times, dementia, the CCG annual report, the Public Health annual report and the Healthwatch annual

report. Cllr Page thanked the Scrutiny Officer for his support and stated that he was pleased with how the Panel was working and where it was heading.

#### 4. Our Council Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Brookfield stated that the Panel had started looking at the digital print service which had undergone a major modernisation with new equipment being installed and new ways of working being rolled out. Cllr Brookfield stated that the Panel were going to look at the services' competitiveness in the market at a future meeting to ensure that the Council was at the very least doing all of its own printing.

The Panel would also be looking at asset disposal and had already received a presentation from the Head of Assets. To date everything was on track but the Panel were keen to just keep an eye on things.

The Board queried whether the Panel would be considering the issue of Universal Credit and how much money being taken out of the local economy due to this. Cllr Brookfield stated that the issue was on the workplan for a future meeting.

The Board also considered that work could be done regarding the weak skills base in the City as until this improved local people would not be able to fill the vacancies on offer.

SMART working was on the workplan for a future meeting along with Community Asset Transfers and Council Tax, Business Rates and general indebtedness.

#### 5. Children and Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Potter stated that there had been a very good discussion for the Portfolio Holder Question Time with Cllr Reynolds.

Other items included consideration of findings from external inspections, SEND and exclusions and the Summer Squad.

A detailed item on exclusions was scheduled to come before the Panel in January 2020.

Resolved: That the updates be noted.

#### 10 **Work programme**

Resolved: That the work programme be agreed.

#### 11 **Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

The Board considered the Forward Plan and a request was made to add housing allocations to the Work Plan. It was however noted that this had already been considered by the Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel when a number of related issues and also been discussed. The Housing Allocation Policy was also due to come back to the Panel January 2020.

It was agreed to invite the Director of Assets and City Housing to a future meeting of Scrutiny Board to provide the presentation that had previously been considered by the Panel.

Resolved: That the Director of Assets and City Housing attend a future meeting of Scrutiny Board to provide a presentation on housing allocation.