

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 Jacqueline Sweetman
Cllr Wendy Thompson

In Attendance

Mark Taylor	Deputy Managing Director
David Pattison	Director of Governance
Charlotte Johns	Director of Strategy
Julia Cleary	Scrutiny and Systems Manager
Earl Piggott Smith	Scrutiny Officer
Martin Stevens	Scrutiny Officer

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies for absence**
Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mak Singh.
- 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**
The Board received an update on the Towns Fund from Charlotte Johns, Director of Strategy.
 - Last year, the City of Wolverhampton was identified by government as one of 100 'towns deal' locations.

- As a result, the Council had been awarded £173k of capacity funding, to develop an investment plan in order to bid for up to £25m of government funding.
- One of the issues was that the geography that was given to the Council by government used the ONS built up area data set, which excluded Bilston and Wednesfield and included small parts of South Staffordshire.
- This issue had been raised several times with government, who had now confirmed that the Towns Fund boundary for Wolverhampton could be co-terminus with the local authority boundary.
- However, despite lobbying, the government would not change the funding arrangements, so whilst the new geography included a city centre and two towns, the Council would only get one lot of capacity funding and one opportunity to bid for up to £25m.
- This differed to other areas, such as Sandwell who had three separate towns identified, and so had three lots of capacity funding and could bid for up to £75m.
- Discussions had been held with the regional Cities and Local Growth Office, and it had been made clear that the Board now had two remaining options which they were considering:
 - I. Accept the revised boundary but under the same funding offer. Bilston and Wednesfield will not be able to apply for further rounds of funding.
 - II. Reject the revised boundary and lobby for Bilston and Wednesfield to be included in their own right in further rounds of the fund.
- The Towns Deal Board agreed in the last meeting that other funding stream work should be integrated into Board's work programme and oversight.

The Board considered that that as the Towns Board was still in the process of deciding on the matter, that it would be untimely to cut across and say something until that decision had been made.

The Board noted that in the Prospectus it stated that the Chairman should come from the business sector.

The Director for Strategy stated that the government had said they could change the boundaries to include Bilston and Wednesfield but that the money had to then be spread across the three areas. The other option was to go back to the original geography and request that Bilston and Wednesfield be included in later funding rounds.

5 **Quarter 3 Social Care, Public Health and Corporate Complaints Report**
David Pattison, Director of Governance presented the Quarter 3 Social Care, Public Health and Corporate Complaints Report.

It was stated that the most critical issue was to make sure that we were learning from the complaints.

The Board queried whether it should have an annual report to look at policies and to look at what mistakes had been made. The Director of Governance stated they the team could look at doing an annual report and providing that transparency in the future.

The Board considered that the report was so much better now and thanked officers for their hard work.

The Chair stated that he had been very impressed speaking to the Customer Engagement Manager at the pre-meeting how was pleased with how robust the data collection was, he stated that the report was very reassuring.

The Director of Governance stated that yes it was an exemplar and that there was a need to maintain a strategic approach. It was noted that the Board had received an annual report from the Ombudsman in the past to ensure that as a council we had good oversight of the issues. It was important to keep aiming to improve.

The Board queried how much money was saved by reports not going to the Ombudsman. It was noted that savings would be minimal at the early assessment stage as it was relatively easy to collate the required information but that yes, savings could certainly be made regarding any investigations as these could take a huge amount of time. There may not be any external cost but there was a large amount of officer time.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

6 **Update on the Fire Safety Scrutiny Review Group**

The Board received an update on the Fire Safety Scrutiny Review Group from the Deputy Chief Executive. It was confirmed that there was one final meeting scheduled for the Group. Oversight of Fire Safety would now be referred to the Our Council Scrutiny Panel.

The Chair of the Review Group, Cllr Brackenridge agreed that the work had gone on for longer than first anticipated but that it had been important after an incident like Grenfell where there had been a number of failings.

At the moment there was little work that could be carried out until the next phase of the Moore Bick enquiry and there was concern that the enquiry should have looked at the building issues first rather than the fire response. Cllr Brackenridge was confident that whatever legislation came forward, the Council would be above and beyond whatever was required.

The Board was proud of what the Review Group had achieved to date and agreed that it was not right to give any final recommendations until the legislation came out, at which point the Review Group would meet one final time to firm up recommendations and hand over to the Our Council Scrutiny Panel.

The Board sought to also recognise the tireless work of Peter Bilson in relation to the work carried out.

Resolved: That the update be noted.

7 **Work programme**

The Board considered updates from the Chairs of the Scrutiny Panels:

Our Council Scrutiny Panel

At the November meeting, the Panel had considered the draft budget and medium-term financial strategy along with Wolves at Work which had been extended into a 4th year.

The Panel had looked at partnership working in schools and a series of apprentices had attended the meeting to talk about their experiences of apprenticeships in the City.

Stronger City Economy Panel

The Panel had received a report into marketing and inward investment. There had been a number of strong points made and the minutes were available on the Council website. It was stated that this issue needed to be taken forward and that inward investment as a strategic tool was currently under resourced. It was also agreed that given the figures that had been provided that the research needed to be carried out again in a years' time and the outcomes brought back to scrutiny.

The Panel had also considered digital services and noted that fact that the Council had a lot of equipment now and could do remarkable things and that it was important to ensure that we were able to make our own in-house materials where appropriate. The Panel had been very pleased with the work being carried out.

The Panel praised the work being carried out by the Head of Assets, Julia Nock following an update on the Asset Disposal Programme.

The Board raised the issue of the Corona Virus. The Chair of Health Scrutiny, Cllr Page stated that his Panel had received an update that had included input from officers and every agency (Clinical Commissioning Group, NHS Trust, Healthwatch and at the National Level) and everything had been put on the table and communications were good.

The Deputy Managing Director gave assurance that the Director of Public Health was leading on this area for the City and as mentioned was working with all partners as well as doing a lot of work internally. All areas were updating their business continuity plans and testing agile working amongst other things.

The Board noted its sincere thanks to the Director of Public Health, John Denley who had been in constant communication with the Leader to keep him informed as well.

The Board also offered thanks to the cleaning staff in the council buildings who were using extra powerful cleaning products and cleaning the building twice a day, focusing on specific areas including lift buttons.

Resolved: That the updates be noted.

8 Forward Plan

Resolved: That the forward plan be noted.