

Scrutiny Board

Minutes - 13 September 2016

Attendance

Members of the Scrutiny Board

Cllr Ian Angus
Cllr Philip Bateman
Cllr Paula Brookfield
Cllr Peter O'Neill
Cllr Rita Potter
Cllr Stephen Simkins (Chair)
Cllr Greg Brackenridge
Cllr Jasbir Jaspal
Cllr Rupinderjit Kaur
Cllr Louise Miles
Cllr Julie Hodgkiss

Employees

Mark Taylor	Director of Finance
Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer
Helena Kucharczyk	Business Intelligence Manager
Steve Rice	Customer Engagement Manager
Shaun Walker	Section Leader
Anna Zollino-Biscotti	Senior Information Governance Officer
Sarah Campbell	Complaints Manager

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Apologies for absence**
The Chair referred to the recent death of Wolverhampton North East MP, Ken Purchase and former Wolverhampton Councillor. The Chair also referred to the death of the former Mayor of Wolverhampton, Gwen Stafford Good.

The Board stood for a minute silence in their memory.

The Board agreed to formally thank Deborah Breedon for her work in Scrutiny Team and in supporting the work of different panels. The Board wanted to wish her good luck in her new post.

Apologies for absence were received from the following:

Cllr Pat Patten

Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman
Keith Ireland

2 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

3 **Minutes of the previous meeting (12 July 2016)**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

5 **Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2016-17**

Earl Piggott-Smith, Scrutiny Officer, briefed the Board on current scrutiny work programme. The Board discussed the timing of the next update report on progress of the West Midlands Combined Authority. The Board had agreed to receive quarterly reports and suggested that the Leader and Managing Director be invited to present to a meeting on 1 November 2016. The Board agreed to be advised by Mark Taylor about the timeliness of the report.

Resolved:

1. The Board to receive an update report on 1 November 2016 about the progress of the West Midlands Combined Authority, subject to the discussions about timeliness.
2. The Board noted the progress of the Scrutiny Board work programme 2016-17.

6 **Traveller Protocol - Councillor fact sheet and communications protocol**

Shaun Walker, Section Leader, gave a short introduction to the briefing paper and explained that the Board had requested an update on proposals to respond to the issue of unauthorised encampments. The Section Leader commented on the findings and recommendations of the task and finish group that had been set up to look at the response from different agencies to an incident at Ashmore Park.

The Section Leader commented on improved working relationships with the police since the protocol was agreed. The communications protocol makes clear the circumstances where the Council would expect the police to take the lead in responding to an unauthorised encampment. The protocol has been signed by the former Chief Supt Simon Hyde and Ross Cook Service Director – City Environment, Place.

The Section Leader advised the Board on the work being done to protect known hot spot sites which are targeted by travellers and gypsy community. A report on preventative action to deter encampments has been presented to Cabinet. Cabinet approved the funding of specific works to make these hot spot sites more secure.

The Section Leader commented on the work done to improve the sharing of intelligence between the police and local authorities and the public of possible incidents.

The Section Leader advised that discussions are on-going with other local authorities about alternative sites across the Black Country region that could be used by the gypsy and travelling community.

The Board welcomed the report and the excellent progress made in producing the member guide and protocol. The Board discussed the role of elected members and suggested that the protocol should include them as specific group to be contacted when a large scale incursion is suspected or an event that is likely to attract a large number of travellers.

The Section Leader welcomed the comment and agreed to make the suggested change to the wording in the communication protocol. The Board suggested that the guide and protocol should be included as part of induction or training for all Councillors.

The Board discussed the merits of using social media to keep residents updated about a large scale traveller incursion and the role of members in responding to any queries. The Board discussed the circumstances where social media would be used and how this would be managed. The Board suggested that Wolverhampton Today Facebook site should be used to update the public, rather than social media pages of ward members. The Board suggested that the issue should be discussed further with Ian Fegan, Head of Communications, to suggest how to keep the public informed and responding to media enquiries in response to an incident.

The Section Leader agreed to make the suggested changes to the protocol. An updated draft of the protocol will be sent to the Board.

Resolved:

1. The Board noted the briefing paper and the guide for elected members and welcomed the progress made.
2. The Section Leader agreed to make the suggested changes to the guide and share a final draft with the Board.
3. Ian Fegan, Head of Communication, to advise the Board on using Wolverhampton Today Facebook site to inform the public about how the Council and partners are responding to an issue involving travellers.

7 **Information Governance Performance Report Quarter One 2016-17**

Anna Zollino-Biscotti, Information Governance Manager, gave an overview of the achievements and progress for quarter one (April – June 2016). The Information Governance Manager commented on the work done since an audit was completed by the Information Commissioner's Office in October 2011 and July 2012. The Information Governance Manager commented on the action taken in response to a data breach which involved a filing cabinet containing details of service users that was given to a local trader. The incident was reported to the Information Commissioner's Office and they concluded that no further action was required from the Council.

The panel queried what type of response the Council is required to provide when a Freedom of Information (FOI) request is received. The Information Governance Manager explained that the Council is required by legislation to provide a full response within 20 working days for FOI requests and 40 calendar days for Data Protection (subject access) requests.

Resolved

The Board welcomed the report and the achievement in meeting key performance targets.

8 **Annual Corporate complaints report 2015/16**

Steve Rice, Customer Engagement Manager, explained that this was the first combined annual complaint report to Scrutiny Board covering all complaints received by the Council. The Customer Engagement Manager gave a breakdown of complaints and compliments received by Social Care, Public Health and Corporate services. The Customer Engagement Manager commented on the reduction in the number of complaints received.

The Customer Engagement Manager commented on the results of an analysis of annual letters sent to all Councils about complaints received. The results of the analysis showed that City of Wolverhampton Council had the lowest number of complaints upheld against it by the Ombudsman in 2015/16; when compared to neighbouring authorities.

The Board expressed concern regarding the proposal to put in place a twelve month time limit for a person to raise their complaint with the Council from the date of the incident or event concerned. The Board raised concerns regarding cases involving historical abuse. The Customer Engagement Manager explained that there is a separate process for dealing with such cases which will not be affected by the planned change. Members requested information regarding how many complaints would have been affected by this change in previous years. The Customer Engagement Manager agreed to provide this information to the Board.

The Board commented on the need for a robust complaint process and discussed how the number of complaints received should be interpreted as either evidence that people feel confident to use it or an indication of poor service.

The Customer Engagement Manager commented on the work done internally to investigate the types of complaints received and to identify trends where changes in policies and or procedures are need to improve performance.

The Customer Engagement Manager commented on the value to the service of learning from complaints to improve the quality of service provided. The Board discussed the criteria used to decide if an issue raised by a customer is treated as either a complaint or service request, and how this is captured in the information presented in the performance report. The Board commented on the need for greater clarity on how this information should be presented in the future.

The Board discussed the arrangements for monitoring complaints about commissioned services and the work done to ensure providers understand the process for recording complaints and when such complaints should be escalated.

The Customer Engagement Manager commented on the processes for checking contract compliance by external service providers. The Board suggested that this issue should be considered by members of Adult and Safer City Scrutiny Panel. The Customer Engagement Manager agreed to present a report on complaints process to a future meeting and a separate report to Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel on work done to monitor contract compliance.

The Board discussed the reasons for the difference at ward level in the number of complaints received by the Council.

Resolved:

1. The Board welcomed the report.
2. The Customer Engagement Manager agreed to undertake research to investigate the impact of 12 month limit on the number of complaints received in previous years and circulate this to the Board.
3. The issue of service providers complaints procedures in relation to contract compliance to be added to the agenda of Adults and Safer City Scrutiny Panel for more detailed work.

9 **Corporate Performance Report (report to follow)**

Helena Kucharczyk, Business Intelligence Manager, gave an overview of the report on the Council performance. The Business Intelligence Manager gave an update on the corporate plans and explained how it links to business plans being developed by different service areas. The Business Intelligence Manager explained how the business plans will contribute to achieving the corporate objectives. In addition, benchmarking work has been done with other local authorities to compare Wolverhampton's approach to developing its corporate plan.

The Business Intelligence Manager commented that an updated city scorecard will be published in May 2017 and would include an improved analysis of performance data. The Business Intelligence Manager explained that work is being done to develop an interactive performance model. The work will be completed by October 2017.

The Board commented on the importance of ensuring that all the individual targets are linked together and support joined up thinking across the Council. The Business Intelligence Manager explained how targets link to expected outcomes and work being done to support this process. The Board discussed the issue of performance data for looked after children and need to consider the impact of other factors on efforts to improve outcomes.

The Board queried the rationale for using employee budget underspend to fund the development of the new performance management IT system. The Business Intelligence Manager explained that funding was provided by vacancies held following previous services restructures.

Resolved:

1. The Board welcomed the report and the noted the progress made.

10

Schedule of Petitions

Colin Parr, Head of Governance, updated the Board on the progress in the arrangements for dealing with public petitions. The Head of Governance commented that a further review of the number of signatures needed before a petition is presented to a panel is being undertaken. A report on the proposals will be presented to a future meeting for the Board to consider.

The Board commented on the impact of adding petition items to the panel work programme. The Head of Governance commented that the changes being considered are intended to reduce the impact on the workload on panels, while offering a more effective way of dealing with public petitions.

Resolved:

- The Board noted the report and progress

The meeting closed at 20:00