

Wolverhampton City Council



Scrutiny Annual Report 2014/15

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Scrutiny at Wolverhampton

Councillor Peter O'Neill, Chair of Scrutiny Board

Scrutiny at Wolverhampton has made a positive contribution to the formulation and implementation of policy across the Council and the City. The Board and panels have made key recommendations and observations, which the Cabinet and partner organisations have taken into account when making decisions. This demonstrates the importance of the scrutiny function at Wolverhampton and how it manages an appropriate and open working relationship with the Executive and partner organisations.



Wolverhampton operates a scrutiny model similar to that of most unitary councils across England. The Scrutiny Board provides the overall co-ordination of the work programme, with six service related panels focusing on key Council priorities related to the 2012-15 Corporate Plan. In addition to this, there are also a number of scrutiny reviews each year, which allow for particularly important topics to be closely examined, with evidence based recommendations being put forward to the Cabinet.

The scrutiny function at Wolverhampton is increasingly important considering the nature of the financial challenge that the Council faces. It is imperative for the Council to deliver services in more efficient ways, and scrutiny is the keystone in ensuring that decisions are well informed, alternate options are considered, and that the Cabinet is held to account. Through the various scrutiny functions, the Council can ensure that decision making is robust, evidence based and transparent. It also enables policy development and review, which equally helps to ensure that the Council is delivering its services in the best possible way.

The Board also has the responsibility of overseeing and coordinating scrutiny of the budget. This process involves each panel considering budgetary implications for the service areas that the panel scrutinises. The panels offer their comments and recommendations, which are conveyed to the Board. It is then the Board's responsibility to discuss budget concerns and endorsements with a view to forwarding them to the Cabinet.

It has been a successful year of scrutiny and the Council looks forward to building on this during 2015/16.

As Chair of Scrutiny Board, I would finally like to thank all scrutiny panel Councillors, Cabinet colleagues, employees and partners for their input into the scrutiny process during the last year. Effective scrutiny can only be achieved through partnership and this is evident at Wolverhampton City Council.

Membership of Scrutiny Board 2014/15



Cllr P O'Neill [Lab]
(Chair)



Cllr B Findlay [Con]
(Vice-Chair)



Cllr I Angus [Lab]



Cllr P Brookfield [Lab]



Cllr A Bolshaw [Lab]



Cllr C Darke [Lab]



Cllr J Hodgkiss [Lab]



Cllr L McGregor [Lab]



Cllr A Photay [Con]



Cllr R Potter [Lab]



Cllr J Rowley [Lab]



Cllr S Simkins [Lab]



Cllr W Thompson [Con]

Adults and Community Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Paula Brookfield (Chair)	Lab
Cllr Patricia Patten (Vice-Chair)	Con
Cllr Payal Bedi	Lab
Cllr Ian Claymore	Lab
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar	Lab
Cllr Linda Leach	Lab
Cllr Rita Potter	Lab
Cllr Susan Constable	Lab
Cllr Bishan Dass	Lab
Cllr Barry Findlay	Con
Cllr Malcolm Gwinnett	UKIP
Cllr Stephen Simkins	Lab

Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Julie Hodgkiss (Chair)	Lab
Cllr Wendy Thompson (Vice-Chair)	Con
Cllr Susan Constable	Lab
Cllr Michael Hardacre	Lab
Cllr Michael Heap	Lib Dem
Cllr Paula Brookfield	Lab
Cllr Lorna McGregor	Lab
Cllr Peter O'Neill	Lab
Cllr Christopher Haynes	Con
Cllr Martin Waite	Lab
Cllr Daniel Warren	Lab
Cllr Jasbinder Dehar	Lab

Confident, Capable Council Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Rita Potter (Chair)	Lab
Cllr Christopher Haynes (Vice-Chair)	Con
Cllr Ian Angus	Lab
Cllr Mary Bateman	Lab
Cllr Alan Bolshaw	Lab
Cllr Craig Collingswood	Lab
Cllr Jasbir Jaspal	Lab
Cllr Milkinderpal Jaspal	Lab
Cllr Arun Photay	Con
Cllr Caroline Siarkiewicz	Lab
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman	Lab
Cllr Andrew Wynne	Con

Enterprise and Business Scrutiny Panel

Cllr John Rowley (Chair)	Lab
Cllr Jonathan Yardley (Vice-Chair)	Con
Cllr Harbans Singh Bagri	Lab
Cllr Philip Bateman MBE	Lab
Cllr Payal Bedi	Lab
Cllr Craig Collingswood	Lab
Cllr Valerie Evans	Lab
Cllr Michael Heap	Lib Dem
Cllr Zahid Shah	Con
Cllr Tersaim Singh	Lab
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman	Lab
Cllr Martin Waite	Lab

Health Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Claire Darke (Chair)	Lab
Cllr Zahid Shah (Vice-Chair)	Con
Cllr Greg Brackenridge	Lab
Cllr Mark Evans	Con
Cllr Jasbir Jaspal	Lab
Cllr Milkinder Jaspal	Lab
Cllr Peter O'Neill	Lab
Cllr Thomas Turner	Lab
Cllr Daniel Warren	Lab

Vibrant, Safe and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Stephen Simkins (Chair)	Lab
Cllr Andrew Wynne (Vice-Chair)	Con
Cllr Mary Bateman	Lab
Cllr Greg Brackenridge	Lab
Cllr Ian Brookfield	Lab
Cllr Barry Findlay	Con
Cllr Bhupinder Gakhal	Lab
Cllr Malcolm Gwinnett	UKIP
Cllr Keith Inston	Lab
Cllr Caroline Siarkiewicz	Lab
Cllr Tersaim Singh	Lab
Cllr Richard Whitehouse	Lib Dem



Scrutiny Board

Chair: Peter O'Neill

The role of the Board is to be the overarching body of the scrutiny process at Wolverhampton. It co-ordinates the work of the six panels, as well as scrutinising broad topics which would fall into the remits of two or more panels. Chairs of all the panels are members of the Scrutiny Board, and this allows a structured and coherent work programme to be set.

The Board also has the responsibility of undertaking pre-decision scrutiny on overarching issues, such as the Confident, Capable Council agenda. It helps co-ordinate the work of the panels into one collective voice that can inform the Cabinet of its findings. The Board also deals with cross cutting 'called-in' items. This is where a decision has been made by the Cabinet, into which a member of the Scrutiny Board wishes to conduct further investigation. In such cases, Scrutiny Board can influence policy and improve outcomes.

Much of the Board's focus this year has related to scrutinising service areas' new ways to meet ever increasing demands in challenging economic circumstances. The Board has aimed to scrutinise proposals to ensure that changes to delivery ensure services are as robust as before. This was exemplified early in the year when changes were made to the Council Tax Reduction scheme, which was a call-in – a key decision that certain Councillors felt was wrong and so wished for it to be re-examined before being made.

Other important work of note has been the Board's use of pre-decision scrutiny to affect policy. In November, an extra Scrutiny Board meeting was held to discuss the Confident, Capable Council agenda. I noted at the meeting that pre-decision was of great benefit as it allowed the Board's discussion to inform the Cabinet meeting where the same report was considered. The Board forwarded its endorsement for the changes to the Council's revised corporate plan. These changes are being made to streamline the Council's business process.

Below are some of the key workstreams and reports that the Board discussed and scrutinised during the last year.

Employee performance appraisal

The Board made recommendations for accountabilities and responsibilities of managers to be clearly reflected in the Constitution. Following this year's work, appraisals will be monitored closely next year, with managerial responsibility for ensuring they are being conducted in a proper and timely fashion.

100:100 Programme

The majority of the Board expressed its support for the promotion of staff voice shaping internal processes and policy.

Confident, Capable Council

The Board considered significant proposed changes through pre-decision scrutiny. These included:

- A revised Corporate Plan framework.
- A new marketing strategy for the Council.
- A new corporate identity for the Council.
- An internal communications strategy including a new approach to Directions Conferences.
- The Council's customer service standards.

The Board's comments were received as part of the consultation on the proposals.

Better Care Fund

During the year, the Board received an update on the Better Care Fund. Given the cross-cutting nature of this topic the Board will continue to take the lead scrutiny role in respect to the Better Care Fund. It will receive regular updates to track its delivery including breakdown of financial data to ensure that services are operating at best value for money.

Council Tax reduction scheme

This year a major piece of scrutiny, which the Board undertook, was the implementation of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme and a working to investigate ways to aid residents with Council Tax following the removal of the national scheme. At July's Board meeting, the local Council Tax reduction scheme was called-in. The reason for this was to examine alternatives for generating the envisaged £870,000 in savings arising from changes to this scheme, which did not directly impinge upon the most vulnerable members of the community.

Cllr Andrew Johnson, Cabinet Member for Resources, confirmed the potential savings contained in the consultation were part of the Council's wider efforts to secure savings of £123 million, and that this had been contained in the budget approved by Council earlier in the year. He affirmed the value of the consultation in helping identify how the most vulnerable groups could be protected and pointed out that a final decision would not be made until the consultation process was complete and the final proposals considered and determined by Cabinet and Council. He explained the Council had taken the decision to phase the reductions in over three years. He acknowledged it had not been possible to involve scrutiny in reviewing the proposals but explained it was because the consultation had been brought forward.



Adults and Community Scrutiny Panel

Chair: Councillor Paula Brookfield

The Adult and Community Scrutiny panel is responsible for the scrutiny of the provision of adult social care and support services, supported housing services, health and welfare services, community and cultural services and leisure provision.

The scrutiny panel holds the Cabinet Members for Adult Services and Leisure and Communities to account as well as other agencies responsible for Adult Safeguarding, commissioning, monitoring and delivery of adult services. The panel also considers legislative change and conducts pre-decision scrutiny of Cabinet key decisions in order to challenge and influence the decision making process and policy relating to leisure, community and adult services matters.

Below are some of the key workstreams and reports that the Adults and Community Scrutiny panel have discussed and scrutinised during the last year.

Refreshed Joint Dementia Strategy

The scrutiny panel carried out pre-decision scrutiny of the refreshed Joint Dementia Strategy 2014-16 and implementation plan. The Cabinet Member for Adult Services shared the aspiration, commitment and importance placed on Wolverhampton becoming a 'Dementia Friendly City' by April 2015. Dementia is a disease of the brain, a long-term impairment that affects mainly older people and Wolverhampton has an aging population. The scrutiny panel supported the co-ordinated approach being undertaken across the city and work with the Wolverhampton Dementia Action Alliance, which is made up of organisations that operate across the city to create dementia friendly communities to improve the lives of people living with dementia and their carers.

The scrutiny panel welcomed the person-centred approach which considers every aspect of the person's life, dealing with everyday situations. The comments and recommendations of the panel were shared with the Cabinet Member for Health and Well Being, the Health and Well Being Board and Cabinet. Some of the outcomes from the scrutiny so far are that dementia friendly training sessions have taken place for Councillors, employees from the Council and partner organisations and that a Dementia Awareness week is planned for 18-24 May 2015. There will be further scrutiny of progress made against the implementation plan in July 2015.

Care Act Implementation

The scrutiny panel received a presentation outlining the breadth and depth of change that would be required in the City to respond to the Care Act 2014 and agreed that work force development was important to prepare for the changes in service delivery, especially taking into account the reduction of employee numbers in the Council and the capacity of the remaining employees to manage the changes. Outcomes from the scrutiny include the comments of the panel being shared with the West Midlands Regional Group for Care Act Implementation and that Councillors recognised the importance of them being trained. A Care Act 2014 awareness session for

Councillors took place in February 2015 and a special session relating to the Care Act 2014 was included in the Scrutiny Board work programme.

Wolverhampton Adult Safeguarding peer review outcome and action plan

The scrutiny panel considered progress made and heard that guidance notes and training modules have been developed to outline their newly defined roles, responsibilities and powers within the Council's Constitution. Outcomes of the scrutiny include employees being asked to investigate a mechanism to notify Councillors when a safeguarding alert has been received to confirm that action is being taken, a recommendation that online safeguarding training should be compulsory for all Councillors and included in the Councillor Induction Programme and that the Safeguarding Board be requested to encourage partner organisations to take up safeguarding training modules.

Wolverhampton Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2013/14

The scrutiny panel received a summary report of safeguarding activity during 2013/14 and a summary of progress made against the six priorities for 2013-16. The contents of the report were found to be wide ranging and extremely useful information, particularly the Wolverhampton map which shows the proportion of safeguarding alerts by ward. Councillors paid tribute to the work that had been carried out to produce the new look annual report.

Wolverhampton Information Network (WIN)

The scrutiny panel received a presentation and demonstration of the new in-house information portal for older people called Wolverhampton Information Network (WIN). Councillors liked the ease of use of the site as it was simple, bright, accessible and linked to the Council website. Comments from the scrutiny helped to shape the WIN portal and outcomes include all Councillors actively promoting WIN and encouraging local organisations and event organisers to share events, opportunities, details of voluntary organisations and local connections across their ward and to build a network online available to public and advisory services to refer to.

Budget Review – 2015/16 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2015/16 – 2017/18

The scrutiny panel debated savings proposals recognising the need to consult and take account of public opinion to get the very best value for money and quality services for our most vulnerable in their homes and in care homes. The scrutiny panel received a progress report in March 2015 detailing the outcomes from the public consultation relating to the budget savings items and pre-decision scrutiny of the proposed way forward for in-house services adult social care was carried out and informed Cabinet on 11 March 2015.

Wolverhampton Citizen Advice Bureau

The scrutiny panel invited the new Wolverhampton Operational Manager for the Citizens Advice Bureau to a meeting to consider the challenges and pressures relating to funding and capacity of voluntary sector organisations this year and into the future. The panel highlighted the need for close partnership working with the third sector as the Council will be depending more on voluntary organisations to deliver services and work with individuals and communities.

Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Compact

The scrutiny panel has also considered how the Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council and the Council were working together to start to refresh the voluntary sector compact. The compact outlines the rules of engagement between and within the sectors in a series of principles. Underpinning the principles are six codes of practice that provide more detailed guidance. The panel endorsed the proposed way forward and requested further scrutiny involvement once the consultation process was complete. Scrutiny had early input into a really important move to refresh and shape the compact and to secure relationships and partnership with the third sector moving forward.



Children and Young people Scrutiny Panel

Chair: Councillor Julie Hodgkiss

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel is responsible for the scrutiny of provision of all Council services to children and young people in Wolverhampton. These include education and learning, children and young people's social care, special needs, early years' provision, looked after children and youth services.

The scrutiny panel holds the Cabinet Member for Children and Families to account as well as other agencies responsible for the commissioning, monitoring and delivery of services to children and young people against national performance standards. The scrutiny panel also conducts pre-decision scrutiny on important issues for children and young people in the city, feeding comments in to the Cabinet and scrutinising reports during the policy making process.

The scrutiny panel conducted scrutiny on a range of topics during the last year, including some significant pre-decision scrutiny items. Highlights have included a working group for short breaks provision, pre-decision scrutiny regarding youth services, and a joint meeting with Corporate Parenting Board.

The scrutiny panel's main aim at the start of the year was to look at how Councillors can be kept abreast of national policy development that fall within its remit.

Below are some of the key workstreams and reports that the Children and Young People Scrutiny panel have discussed and scrutinised during the last year.

CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service)

Councillors reviewed progress of a number of initiatives aimed at improving the range and quality of current provision - in particular the service delivered to underrepresented groups. There was agreement by the scrutiny panel to continue to monitor the impact of the planned service changes.

Primary school expansion programme

The scrutiny panel considered in detail the outcomes of consultation with schools about increasing their future provision. The panel welcomed the plans but recommended that consideration be given to future demand at the secondary school level.

Looked after children provision

The scrutiny panel was invited to give pre-decision consideration of proposals aimed at remodelling existing looked after children services. The contributions of the panel with regard to informing the development of the policy was welcomed by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families. The scrutiny panel's recommendations were included in the revised proposal submitted to Cabinet.

Reduction of play service provision

The scrutiny panel reviewed plans to undertake a consultation with young people on proposals to reduce the current level of adventure playground provision. The contributions of the panel with regard to informing the development of the policy was welcomed by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families. The scrutiny panel recommendations were included in the revised proposal.

Fostering process and recruitment strategy

The scrutiny panel reviewed the range of work being done to recruit new foster carers and promote the service and welcomed the progress made to meet the target for approving an agreed number of foster care applications. The scrutiny panel expressed support for the work being done to recruit and support foster carers.

Responding to the growing numbers of looked after children

The scrutiny panel undertook pre-decision scrutiny of proposed changes to the looked after children service provision in Wolverhampton. The panel has carefully considered the issue at separate meetings during the year and undertook detailed scrutiny of how the planned changes would affect the ability of the Council to meet its statutory responsibilities.

The outcome from the discussion was a much clearer understanding among the panel of the factors contributing to the increase in looked after children numbers and in particular the actions planned to help support children to stay in families, where possible. The panel were reassured that the new arrangements would not leave potentially vulnerable children at risk and will continue to monitor the impact of the new arrangements.

Emotional and Psychological Well Being Services Strategy for Children and Young People (2013-2016)

The members of the Children and Young People and Health Scrutiny Panels held a joint meeting to consider a report on the Emotional and Psychological Well Being Services Strategy for Children and Young People (2013-2016). Councillors reviewed progress and plans for reconfiguring services that would help in the earlier identification of children and young people with mental health needs and ensure the right package of care is provided. Representatives of Wolverhampton Council, Wolverhampton CCG and Black Country Partnership Trust outlined the plans for the future of the service at the meeting.



Confident, Capable Council Scrutiny Panel

Chair: Councillor Rita Potter

The Confident, Capable Council Scrutiny Panel is responsible for the scrutiny of the performance of all human, financial, technical and material resources to support the delivery of Council services.

The scrutiny panel holds the Cabinet Members for Resources, and Governance and Performance to account and carries out pre-decision scrutiny of Cabinet key decisions that fall within its remit.

The scrutiny panel aims to support the creation of 'a better, stronger Council, ready and able to deliver the change this City needs'. Achieving this objective depends on the creation of a strong and corporate core for the organisation and on delivering high quality, cost effective services.

Also, as part of its remit, the Confident Capable Council Scrutiny Panel provides the members for the Specific Reserves Working Group, which meets to discuss the use of reserves and specific reserves. The Specific Reserves Working Group met on 27 November 2014. The scrutiny panel also has the responsibility of holding the Executive to account on matters relating to these issues.

Below are some of the key workstreams and reports that the Confident Capable Council Scrutiny Panel have discussed and scrutinised during the last year.

Future Works Progress Update

A significant issue that was considered by the scrutiny panel was the implementation of the Agresso system as part of the FutureWorks programme. The new system means that pay and management arrangements are now all managed through Agresso. Councillors praised the phased implementation approach taken by Strategic Directors and the Director of Finance, and resolved to receive a further report providing further statistical detail with regards to the transactions and payments.

Budget Update and Review

The scrutiny panel received quarterly updates on the budget for the municipal year, which allowed the Councillors to scrutinise the work of the Cabinet with regard to the budget. The scrutiny panel resolved to consider the arrangements for ensuring adequate identification and management of budget risks, and the arrangements for budget planning and forecasting for future years. It was also decided that the specific reserves working group will reconvene in 2015/16.

Independent Review of the process for Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget

The Local Government Association recommended that a suitably qualified independent reviewer - Eugene Sullivan, former Chief Executive of the Audit Commission – be engaged for the review and produced his final report in July 2014. The review and action plan were scrutinised by the panel and put forward to the Executive and employees to be implemented.

Individual Electoral Registration

The scrutiny panel were informed of the status of Individual Electoral Registration by the Electoral Services Manager and the Head of Democratic Services. Concerns were raised about the reduction in registration in particular wards, especially the large drop in St Peter's and Heath Town. This is partly as a result of students no longer being automatically re-registered. The scrutiny panel's feedback meant that the register was published on the national deadline of 1 December 2014.

Annual Complaints Report

The scrutiny panel considered the Council's first annual complaints report as part of the new customer services strategy. Following this meeting, a quarterly complaints report became part of Scrutiny Board's work programme. Following feedback from the panel, the quarterly reports encompass compliments data.

Health, safety and wellbeing strategy 2014-17

The scrutiny panel received a report on the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Strategy 2014-17 following concern about workplace wellbeing. The scrutiny panel resolved that the proposed development and the implementation of the strategy should establish a clear vision for the further development of health and wellbeing policies, procedures and measures in the Council to ensure the full discharge of senior management responsibilities. The policies will support activities at both corporate and business levels of the organisation.



Enterprise and Business Scrutiny Panel

Chair: Councillor John Rowley

The Enterprise and Business Scrutiny Panel is responsible for the scrutiny of regeneration in Wolverhampton, encouraging investment and economic development, local traders, and developing the skills and opportunities of the workforce and employers.

The Enterprise and Business Scrutiny Panel replaced the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel of 2012/13 to enable a greater focus on improving Wolverhampton's economy, generating local enterprise and attracting business and investment.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Prosperity has attended meetings of the scrutiny panel to respond to specific questions or concerns, especially when related to regeneration and improving the image of Wolverhampton to prospective business.

The scrutiny panel's main aim when it began work was to get an update on progress on a number of major regeneration projects in Wolverhampton and across the region, and the linked strategies used to support their delivery. The scrutiny panel were briefed about plans for using the Government's Regional Growth Fund to regenerate the City and create and support jobs growth.

The scrutiny panel have considered reports on the following areas, which offered the best opportunity to regenerate the City:

- J2/i54 high tech business park
- City centre regeneration
- Bilston Centre Regeneration

Future regeneration plans:

- Tower Works and Fort Works
- Former Sunbeam Factory
- Chapel Ash
- Canalside Quarter
- University Quarter
- Royal Hospital site
- Visitor economy - £6m refurbishment of the Civic Halls
- Wolverhampton Interchange,
- Westside and Southside
- Youth Zone

Below are some of the key workstreams and reports that the Enterprise and Business Scrutiny Panel have discussed and scrutinised during the last year.

Approach to business support

The scrutiny panel reviewed and commented on the range of work being done to support new and existing business. The panel also considered the findings of the Wolverhampton Economic Review which predicted that Wolverhampton was set to outperform the rest of the UK in the next few years.

Approach to business investment – North Wolverhampton Enterprise Zone and corridor

The scrutiny panel considered a report on the background to the development of the Black Country Enterprise Zone (EZ) and the expected benefits offered to businesses that set up within the site. The scrutiny panel was briefed about the work being done with business to bring forward the developments on the vacant sites in the EZ.

Old Steam Mill and closure of Cornhill Road

The scrutiny panel received a detailed presentation about the on-going difficulties with the owners of the Steam Mill site which has led to a closure of the Cornhill Road for a number of years following a fire. The scrutiny panel had concerns about the lengthy delay in resolving the issue in bringing forward a re-development of a building located in major access route into the City. The scrutiny panel was briefed about the options being considered that would enable the Council to meet its responsibilities to both protect a historical buildings and support the regeneration of the City.

The scrutiny panel accepted the difficulties in making progress in resolving the problem and made a number of suggestions to options that make clear the action the Council would consider if the necessary progress has not been made. The scrutiny panel's comments were sent to Cabinet for consideration.

Black Country Working – Strategic Economic Plan, City and Growth Deals, European Strategic Investment and Funding Strategy

The scrutiny panel were asked to undertake pre-decision scrutiny of a report on the development and delivery of the Black Country Strategic Economic Plan and supporting Growth Fund opportunities to be presented to Cabinet. The scrutiny panel were given details of the range of projects funded by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Growth Deal and European Union Structural and Investment Funds. Wolverhampton City Council is leading on the delivery of a number major projects which provide the opportunity for the Council to to attract additional resources to meet the nees of the City and the wider Black Country. The scrutiny panel commented on the potential benefits of developing the canal side area of the City and making improvements to the towpath area to make it more attractive and generate positive headlines. The scrutiny panel expressed concern about whether local people had the necessary skills to take advantage of the job opportunities as result of the investment and support that would be provided to help meet gaps in skills and knowledge. The scrutiny panel also commented that more work was needed to unlock the potential of the open space and the opportunity to improve cycling and walking routes. The scrutiny panel's comments were sent to Cabinet for consideration.



Health Scrutiny Panel

Chair: Councillor Claire Darke

The Health Scrutiny Panel has statutory responsibility for the overview and scrutiny of all health related issues, including liaison with NHS Trusts, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), the Health and Well Being Board, Public Health and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to improve the health of local people ensuring their needs are considered in the commissioning and delivery of health services. The new governmental guidance, 'Local Authority Health Scrutiny' was issued in December 2014. It called for greater patient voice and public involvement. As a result, the panel now includes three co-opted Wolverhampton HealthWatch members. Together, the scrutiny panel members continue to work to improve working relationships and good communication with the CQC, CCG and other key health partners. It also considers the impact of regional and national policy changes and governmental Acts when making recommendations as to how to improve health outcomes in Wolverhampton.

The panel holds the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, Cllr Sandra Samuels, to account as well as public bodies and carries out pre-decision scrutiny of Cabinet key decisions that fall within its remit.

At the beginning of each municipal year a health scrutiny planning event is held with key local stakeholders to discuss the priorities for the coming year. This forms a base for the work programme for the panel for the year; other issues are also considered by the panel as they occur through the year. This year, for example, one of the key Public Health priorities identified was how to tackle obesity in the City. Panel members attended the obesity summit event in July, which highlighted key public health priorities for the city and launched the 1 million miles and shed 1 million pounds initiatives to tackle obesity in Wolverhampton.

Another major health theme that is at the forefront of the panel's priorities is the on-going effects of the recommendations made by the Francis Report. In January 2015 the panel received an update from the Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust (RWHT), the Black Country Partnership Trust and Wolverhampton Clinical Commissioning Group, to scrutinise how recommendations have been implemented, the action taken to improve health outcomes for the people of Wolverhampton and to continue to monitor delivery for best practice.

However, the panel's remit is not confined to the boardroom; another aspect of the panel's role is to fact find first-hand. In November 2014 the panel visited Newcross and Cannock Hospital as part of a piece of work to support the patient voice group, HealthWatch. A significant number of members of the public had raised concerns through HealthWatch about RWHT's proposed move of elective surgery to Cannock hospital. The panel visited both sites by public transport in order to gain a better understanding of the issues facing patients and their families travelling between the two locations. The panel worked with HealthWatch supporting them in their call for RWHT to reconsider how they engaged with the public. As a result a number of changes were made; RWHT has improved communication with patient groups, with a more direct approach to service users.

RWHT also updated how it publicised its information, to provide it's the public with a better understanding of the proposed change to services.

The following topics are a highlight of some of the other work streams that were scrutinised by Health Scrutiny Panel this year.

Royal Wolverhampton Hospitals NHS Trust – Patient Experience Friends and Family Test

The panel scrutinised the Trust's process of collecting feedback and data through the Patient Experience Friends and Family Test, and queried the robustness of data collection procedures. In response, RWHT will provide an in-depth analysis of data to the panel when they next report on the subject, and will highlight trends and areas for improvement.

Budget Review – 2015/16 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2015/16-2018/19

The panel accepted changes to the Mental Health and Public Health budgets, and forwarded these comments to the Scrutiny Board. It was accepted that medium term savings can be made without significant risk to the quality of services.

Public Health - Sexual Health Consultation

As part of a substantial variation (a significant change in the delivery of a service) the panel was asked to provide its endorsement for the new model for sexual health commissioning. The panel provided feedback to Public Health asking them to ensure equalities had been addressed fully and the new model will be monitored.

Wolverhampton Clinical Commissioning Group - Musculoskeletal Services Consultation

As part of another substantial variation, the panel endorsed the proposed Musculoskeletal Services consultation process. Feedback will be provided in summer 2015.

Wolverhampton Clinical Commissioning Group - Mental Health Commissioning Strategy

The panel received an overview of the new proposed mental health commissioning strategy and requested statistical evidence from Wolverhampton CCG to exemplify how the new crisis concordat had helped people with mental health issues to receive appropriate care, rather than being taken into police custody. Following this, the panel then visited Penn Hospital to assess issues surrounding mental health ward capacity and admissions.

NHS Capital Programme – GP Surgeries

Following subcommittee work from 2013/14 on this matter, the panel called for a report about the locations of new GP surgeries in Wolverhampton. As a result of scrutiny, regular meetings are now held between NHS Capital Programme officers, the CCG and the Council to share information.

Sandwell and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group - Hyper Acute Stroke Services

The scrutiny panel received a presentation regarding the consultation on stroke services. It was explained that this was part of the pre-consultation exercise and that the scrutiny panel would be formally consulted at a future date and the findings would be shared with the panel.



Vibrant, Safe and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel

Chair: Councillor Stephen Simkins

The Vibrant, Safe and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel is responsible for the scrutiny of policies to secure safe and vibrant local communities where people feel proud to live, specifically including community engagement, neighbourhood community safety and services delivered at the local level.

Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 requires every local authority to have a crime and disorder committee with the power to review or scrutinise decisions taken in connection with the discharge by the Responsible Authorities of their Crime and Disorder Functions. The Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 complement the provisions under Section 19. This scrutiny panel fulfils this requirement.

The scrutiny panel holds to account the Cabinet Members for Leisure and Communities, and Economic Regeneration and Prosperity, who have attended several meetings during the year.

Below are some of the key workstreams and reports that the Vibrant, Safe and Sustainable Scrutiny Panel have discussed and scrutinised during the last year.

Sustainability Improvement Plan

The scrutiny panel considered a detailed report relating to the Council's 'Sustainability Implementation Plan' monitoring and 'Climate Local Wolverhampton' progress report for 2013-14. Councillors endorsed the need to promote the sustainability message and highlighted the need to encourage recycling, use of solar panels/energy and to develop sustainable travel and welcomed the initiatives to re-use road planning and develop renewable and low carbon energy in new builds.

Outcomes of the scrutiny were that comments and recommendations informed the review of the Sustainability Implementation Plan, further update reports will be presented to maintain checks and balances on the progress of the implementation plan and a presentation from Wolverhampton Homes of the work it is doing to improve sustainable heating in the winter in social housing.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Service Review and options appraisal for future service delivery

The scrutiny panel carried out pre-decision scrutiny, debated the outcomes arising from the ASB comprehensive service review and the options for future service delivery. The scrutiny panel discussed the need to get local businesses on board and to continue the strong working relationship and information sharing between the Police and ASB team which was reported to Cabinet. Scrutiny of ASB over the last three years has resulted in good outcomes, including an efficient service with a joined up ASB team and an integrated legal team.

Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014

The scrutiny panel considered an informative paper about the changes to legislation relating to ASB, in particular the proposed threshold and process for the community trigger. They debated how the ASB powers are to be streamlined, increased partnership working and giving victims a voice.

Outcomes from the scrutiny were that comments relating to the unknown factors such as take-up of the community trigger and potential costs to implement were fed back to the Head of Service and a briefing note was prepared and circulated to all Councillors to notify of the changes to ASB legislation with a focus on the main points identified by the panel in relation to the community trigger, the level of threshold and the role of ward Councillors.

Budget Review – 2015/16 Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2015/16 –2018/19

A special meeting was held to consider the draft proposals of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The concerns of the scrutiny panel relating to the savings proposals were debated with Cabinet Members in attendance and the comments were included in a report to Scrutiny Board and reported to Cabinet as part of the Budget Consultation Process.

Crime Reduction, Community Safety and Drugs Strategy Update

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Communities reported on progress relating to delivery of the City's Crime Reduction, Community Safety and Drugs Strategy. The scrutiny panel highlighted the level of organisational change and resource reductions across all sectors and how flexible the 'Local Police and Crime Plan' has to be to enable sufficient flexibility to be maintained within partner operating models to respond to changing need. The need for effective monitoring was highlighted and the comments of the panel will inform future delivery of the Crime Reduction, Community Safety and Drugs Strategy and the panel will continue scrutiny as required by legislation.

Wolverhampton Local Policing and Crime Plan 2014/15

The scrutiny panel considered the progress being made against the Local Police and Crime Plan relating to actions taken and progress made in relation to neighbourhood specific issues. The West Midlands Police Liaison Officer regularly attended scrutiny meetings to present information and respond to questions arising. Councillors are effectively monitoring and challenging the delivery of the Local Policing and Crime Plan.

Draft Licensing Policy Changes

The scrutiny panel considered the draft statement of Licensing Policy as part of the statutory consultation process and comments were fed back into the Licensing Committee to help shape and develop the draft licensing policy.

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

A highlight of the work programme this year has been to invite the Assistant Police and Crime Commissioner to address the scrutiny panel and respond to key lines of enquiry relating to current delivery under reducing resources, future plans and initiatives, and the Police and Crime Plan for 2015/16 -'Pride in our Police'. Outcomes arising from the scrutiny were that the comments made

at the meeting will inform and help shape the Police and Crime Plan for 2015/16 and the work programme for the Police and Crime Commissioner. Councillors also invited the Assistant Police and Crime Commissioner to a future meeting to share the outcomes of the public consultation about 'Pride in our Police' Police and Crime Plan.

Blakenhall Community and Healthy Living Centre

The scrutiny panel monitored the budget savings proposal relating to the Blakenhall Community and Healthy Living Centre following consultation to appraise the way forward for the operating arrangements. The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Communities confirmed that the Centre will reduce current operating hours and there will be a reduction in the staffing structure as a result of the savings. The scrutiny panel requested the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Communities to explore other ways of increasing income. Councillors welcomed the work that had been carried out and endorsed the way forward which meets savings targets with minimum impact on service users.

WV Active Business Transformation

The scrutiny panel considered the transformation of business and future opportunities to increase the participation rates across the City through utilisation of mainstream leisure facilities and endorsed the current strategy and invited a longer term strategy for the City, highlighting the importance of linking the leisure offer in the City to public health.

Wolverhampton Housing Offer

The scrutiny panel considered a report and received a presentation relating to current housing and future needs. Councillors' debate will inform the approach to delivering a total approach to the City's housing matters and help to shape the work programme for scrutiny in 2015/16.

Scrutiny Reviews and Inquiries



Employability and Skills

Chair: Councillor Ian Angus

The employability and skills gap is one of the most significant and complex challenges faced by Wolverhampton. The challenge isn't a new one but the need to find and deliver sustainable solutions has become critical. The review group met on five occasions to gather evidence relating to the challenge of high levels of unemployment alongside low skill levels amongst the local population.

The findings and conclusions of the review group were formed into 11 recommendations based on statistical analysis, information reports, and written and verbal witness evidence gathered at the review sessions. They were also informed by site visits to the Job Centre and voluntary sector job clubs in the City, which enabled Councillors to speak directly with service users and providers.

The report was presented to Cabinet on 11 March 2015. It captured the progress of current mechanisms, initiatives and projects and the barriers that need to be addressed in the City and nationally. It takes into account future employment trends, the current financial and resource pressures, the socio-economic challenges faced by the City and the overall health of the economy to ensure that local people are able to access jobs and benefit from economic growth in the City.

The report highlights the need to work effectively in partnership in the City and to maximise the impact of current and future resources. It emphasises the ambition of various organisations, public and voluntary, to work with residents and businesses to develop the right range and level of skills to meet the demand arising now and in the future. It highlights the need to influence better informed service design and more detailed information that will help to shape and develop proposals for European and other funding.

The Chair reported the main findings of the review into the Wolverhampton Skills and Employment Commission in January 2015 focusing on the gaps and barriers which need to be addressed in order to plan for the long term. The Commission will report in June 2015 to the City Board which will oversee the employability and skills agenda. The Council and its partners will give further consideration to the role of the proposed Combined Authority in addressing the barriers identified by the scrutiny review to developing higher levels of employability and skills in the City.



Infant Mortality

Chair: Councillor Claire Darke

The scrutiny review of infant mortality was triggered by national statistics which showed that Wolverhampton had the highest rate of infant mortality in England. The review group focused on the known risks and also modifiable or environmental including socio-economic factors that increase the likelihood of a child dying in the first 12 months of birth.

The overall aim of the review is to assess the effectiveness of current and future work aimed at addressing the main modifiable factors that are the main causes of infant mortality in Wolverhampton.

The review group took verbal and written evidence from expert witnesses involved in commissioning or providing services to pregnant women. The review group visited the Neo Natal Unit at the Royal Wolverhampton Hospital to talk to staff and see the range of services provided.

The review group have suggested a number of recommendations aimed at building on existing work being done or planned to reduce the number of deaths. The review group highlighted the impact of smoking during pregnancy, low breast feeding rates and deprivation on the number of babies dying. The reviews report will be presented to Cabinet in July 2015. The report will also be considered by NHS England, Health and Wellbeing Board, Wolverhampton Clinical Commissioning Group and Royal Wolverhampton Hospitals NHS Trust for comments after Cabinet.



Channel Shift

Chair: Councillor Jonathan Yardley

Developing the Council's approach and execution of channel shift is a core business aim of the Confident, Capable Council corporate priority. To be sustainable in the long term, digital self-service options need to be the contact channels or first resort for a citizen or business accessing public services. This review explored different areas and issues arising as the Council began to execute its shift to digital self-service options. The review group examined the potential savings of channel shift, how it was embedded throughout the Council, and how changes were communicated with stakeholders.

The group met to hear about the Digital by Design ethos which has been adopted by the transformation and have met with a representative from PA Consultants who are involved in facilitating the shift. They have also heard from employees about the Customer Relationship Management Solution which is being sought and how social media and citizen consultation will be involved in the channel shift. They received a demonstration of the ContactPortal net calls system which has been introduced to internal users. Some Councillors have visited the Council's contact centre to learn about the current systems used and to understand the work which they undertake.

The review group will make recommendations to:

- include a risk register throughout the channel shift
- ensure the systems procured are future-proof
- improve and retain communication with internal and external customers
- endorse the "My Account" feature integrated into the customer view of the CRM system to allow residents to easily see the transactions they have previously made and customise the services that they view
- use SMS messaging as an integrated form of contact with customers
- endorse the use of tablets and PCs in guiding customers onto digital channels
- publicise the compliments received to Customer Services

The final report will be presented to the Cabinet on 15 July 2015.



Welfare Reform – Unclaimed Benefits

Chair: Councillor Rita Potter

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 brought big changes to the benefit system, many residents struggled to manage budgets and there were reports of benefits not being claimed which could help people get back on their feet and out of debt.

The review group met on six occasions to consider how to ensure people know about benefit entitlement and to find out what support is available to help them claim benefits that they are entitled to. The report gives an indication of the pressures for the City with particular focus on customer advice and support mechanisms to help with maximising benefit income and defending benefit entitlement, resource reductions and the current and future development programmes and opportunities in Wolverhampton.

The review provided an insight into the correlation between indebtedness, unemployment and unclaimed benefits, it highlighted the need for awareness about eligibility for benefits and the need to reach out to people through a range of channels to offer help and support to all residents including those who have never asked for or needed help before and to help people off benefits and back into work to reduce the high number of long term unemployed and Jobseeker's Allowance claimants in Wolverhampton.

The report was presented to Cabinet on 11 March 2015 and made seven recommendations to work in partnership to develop access to information and tools through a number of channels and deliver a joined up and co-ordinated advice and support strategy for the City. It highlights that the Council's transformation programme and customer services strategy are planning towards enabling customers and partners to access services, advice and support themselves and to signpost others to it. Some immediate changes were made to the Council website as a direct outcome of the review and partners were brought together around to discuss current and future arrangements.

The review promotes the need for people to be able to help themselves to information, for the Council and partners to signpost people to advice, for third sector organisations to be linked in and to be able to offer the support to those that need expert knowledge. It also considers exploring funding and co-ordinated bids to support the framework in preparation for the implementation of Universal Credit by 2017. This will mean transition from weekly to monthly benefit payments and potential reduction to household income putting more pressure on family finances and vulnerable individuals. The Council and partners considered current and future help and support for people to maximise income and defend entitlement to benefits in the City during the transition.

The Scrutiny Team at Wolverhampton

Please contact the following people if you have any queries about the Scrutiny Annual Report 2014/15. Further information, copies of agendas and minutes can be found at <https://wolverhamptonintranet.moderngov.co.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1>)

Adam Hadley
Group Manager – Democracy
Adam.Hadley@wolverhampton.gov.uk
01902 555043

Deborah Breedon
Scrutiny Officer
Deborah.Breedom@wolverhampton.gov.uk
01902 551250

Laura Gilyead
Graduate Management Trainee
Laura.Gilyead@wolverhampton.gov.uk
01902 553219

Earl Piggott-Smith
Scrutiny Officer
Earl.Piggott-Smith@wolverhampton.gov.uk
01902 551251

Jonathan Pearce
Graduate Management Trainee
Jonathan.Pearce@wolverhampton.gov.uk
01902 556162