

**Minutes of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee**

**Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2018 at 5.00 p.m.**  
**In Committee Room 2, The Council House, Dudley**

**Present:**

Councillor J Hill (Chair)  
Councillor E Lawrence (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors S Ali, C Barnett (From Minute No. 5), B Challenor, S Craigie, A Finch, R Harris (From Minute No. 6), C Neale, J Roberts and D Tyler.

**Officers:**

S Norman – Chief Executive, A McCormick – Chief Officer Transformation and Performance, R Jones – Strategic Business Partner, C Blunn – Portfolio Partner, S Griffiths – Democratic Services Manager, P Parker – Head of Communications and Public Affairs and K Taylor – Democratic Services Officer (All Chief Executives Directorate)

**Also in attendance**

Sarah Middleton – Chief Executive – Black Country Consortium Ltd

1 **Apology for Absence**

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor K Ahmed.

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2 **Appointment of Substitute Member**

It was reported that Councillor A Finch had been appointed to serve as substitute Member for Councillor K Ahmed, for this meeting of the Committee only.

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3 **Declaration of Interest**

No declarations of interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, were made in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.

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4      **Minutes**

Members referred to the alteration of the start time of the meeting after notification of the meeting had been published. Concerns were raised that consideration should be given to Members that may not be able to alter work commitments at short notice, and suggested that some level of flexibility should be incorporated into the Constitution for any future instances under exceptional circumstances.

**Resolved**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2018, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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5      **Public Forum**

There were no issues raised under this agenda item.

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6      **Annual Scrutiny Programme 2018/19**

The Committee considered a report of the Lead for Law and Governance on the items proposed for inclusion in the Annual Scrutiny Programme for detailed consideration during 2018/19, at the programmed meetings, these being:

- Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2018  
Digital Transformation  
Dudley Council Plus and Customer Services  
Corporate Quarterly Performance Report
  
- Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2018  
Medium Term Financial Strategy  
Annual Review of the Constitution  
Council and Corporate Consultation
  
- Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2019  
Customer Feedback and Corporate Complaints  
West Midlands Combined Authority  
Corporate Quarterly Performance Report
  
- Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2019  
Digital Transformation  
Corporate Quarterly Performance Report

It was noted that subject to approval of a motion by Council on 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2018, an additional item would be included in the Annual Programme 2018/19 to receive regular reports covering the delivery of social value in Dudley's procurement policies.

Members made comments in relation to the number of items in the Work Programme hindering the ability to effectively scrutinise matters. It was considered that scrutiny of two items per committee was preferred. It was also suggested that the Committee should maximise modern methods of technology in order to scrutinise urgent items that arise at any given time.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the items to be scrutinised by this Committee in the Annual Scrutiny Programme for 2018/19, be noted.
- (2) That the Committee confirm the programme of business as outlined in paragraph 8 of the report submitted, subject to the need for flexibility to reflect any changes that might arise during the municipal year.
- (3) That the Lead Officer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair and the Democratic Services Officer, be authorised to make all the necessary arrangements to enable this Committee to undertake its programme of scrutiny work during the 2018/19 municipal year.
- (4) That a Scrutiny Development Working Group be established to provide for the informal consideration and formulation of recommendations concerning any future policy development or budget issues that are referred to it, and which are relevant to the terms of reference of this Scrutiny Committee, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member(s) as appropriate, and to comprise all Members of the Scrutiny Committee.

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### **Corporate Quarterly Performance Report**

The Committee considered the fourth Corporate Quarterly Performance report for 2017/18, which covered the period 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2018. A Power Point presentation was given at the meeting summarising key points from within the report.

The Strategic Business Partner referred to the information relating to staff sickness absence (excluding schools), in particular, that the Council had the lowest sickness levels for a number of years and that there had been a reduction in short term sickness. The Committee was informed that although the figures in the report identified a worsening position than Quarter 3, this was due to seasonal factors and was a significant improvement compared to 2013. Directorates had since been requested to incorporate seasonal figures in future performance reports. It was also noted that although performance levels in respect of Performance Review and Development (PRD) undertaken had decreased since 2017, this was affected by the implementation of the revised 'My Annual Review' procedure.

With regard to Performance Indicator 154 (number of care leavers in education, employment or training), it was noted that the figures incorporated care leavers that had mental health issues and/or were pregnant and therefore unable to be in education, employment or training. Care Leavers who were pregnant or were parents were referred to Early Help to address the issues identified.

The Committee also noted Performance Indicator 46 was worsening, as there had been an increase in complaints in Quarter 4 due to the operational pressures and issues caused by the inclement weather conditions.

During the presentation of the report, Members made comments, asked questions and responses were given where appropriate. Queries were raised on the following specific points:-

- Members raised concerns of the absence of a covering report to accompany and summarise the Corporate Quarterly Performance report included in the main agenda. Members queried whether this Committee was the correct forum to consider this topic, in its existing format, as there were areas of concern that could not be scrutinised in detail as they were not within the terms of reference of the Committee. It was noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board at its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2018 requested that the Corporate Quarterly Performance report be considered by this Committee. Further consideration would be given to the format and presentation of the report in order to provide detailed answers to questions raised by Members, and how areas of concern in relation to specific subjects, that did not fall within the remit of this Committee, should be deliberated.
- A Member suggested that acronyms should be explained (or avoided) in Committee reports and that a list of acronyms used should be provided to Members.

- In responding to a question by a Member in regard of initiatives provided for employees for their health and wellbeing, the Chief Executive commented on the positive work undertaken with staff to provide support including counselling, sleep management and mental health courses. It was also suggested that areas such as sickness absence and the health and wellbeing of employees could be scrutinised further by this Committee.
- Reference was made to the improving performance of new tenant's satisfaction with the letting process, in particular, that a Member commented that the main issues for tenants was the after-effects of moving into their property such as delays in maintenance and repairs.
- A Member also suggested that numbers, rather than percentages, should be incorporated in future reports as it would be more beneficial to Members.
- The Chief Officer Transformation and Performance, in responding to a question by a Member, confirmed that the Key Performance Indicators were presented to Corporate Board and Wider Corporate Board providing updates on the management of services and performance levels being achieved within the Council on a quarterly basis and continued to be monitored and amended if necessary.

Following further discussion it was

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the fourth Corporate Quarterly Performance report for 2017/18, covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2018, and as reported at the meeting, be noted.
- (2) That further consideration and detailed discussions be undertaken to ascertain the most appropriate process and format for future consideration of the Corporate Quarterly Performance report.

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### **West Midlands Combined Authority – The Second Devolution Deal and Action Plan**

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on the Second Devolution Deal between the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and the Government. The report outlined the proposed approach to the implementation of the Deal and further devolution discussions with Government together with details on the proposed Devolution Action plan and “phase three” of devolution and information on the ways in which the WMCA intended to build on the commitments made in the Devolution Deal.

At this juncture, the Chief Executive of the Black Country Consortium Ltd gave a detailed presentation on the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), following a request made by the Committee previously.

It was reported that Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) were established in 2011 to focus on local economic priorities and played a vital role in supporting businesses and innovation. It was noted that the Black Country LEP was ranked 5<sup>th</sup> out of 38<sup>th</sup> in England following the Annual Conversation meeting, whereby the Government and each LEP discussed progress made in delivering local economic growth priorities and associated projects. The Black Country LEP had also received an exceptional governance rating.

The Black Country LEP championed local regeneration priorities and collaborated on a number of areas such as the garden city, which accelerated house building and improve housing mix by treating the supply of brownfield land as an opportunity for place shaping and the creation to sustainable communities.

It was reported that Dudley's total gross value contribution towards the Black Country Economy had increased to £5 billion in 2016, however it was acknowledged that further work was required to increase the gross value added per head in Dudley as there was a £10,000 gap from the national figure of £27,108.

Dudley currently obtained the largest business stock within the neighbouring authorities, which was likely to increase following the development of the Enterprise Zone. It was further noted that Dudley's workforce was growing and it was anticipated that a further 40,000 potential jobs would become available from the development of local sites.

Ongoing collaborative work with schools was outlined with schools being encouraged to partner-up with local businesses, as it was recognised that further work was needed to increase the skills and education in local communities.

Statistical information was presented in respect of the West Bromwich to Brierley Hill Corridor that evidenced cross authority collaborative work. A number of investment projects were also reported, in particular the number of projects awarded to Dudley College including a Dudley Advance and Innovation Centre and specialist equipment for High Value Manufacturing (HMV) Sector Skills.

Arising from the presentation given in respect of the Black Country LEP, Members asked questions, made comments and responses were given where appropriate as follows:-

- There was still some uncertainty as to the effect of the European funds provided to the Black Country as a result of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union. Further discussions would be needed to identify match funding for key delivery of priority investment areas and the possibility of providing greater flexibility on revenue and capital elements. It was anticipated that the role of the West Midlands Combined Authority and the LEPs would prove a pivotal role in shaping funding for the future.
- With reference to the work undertaken in respect of careers and enterprise, it was noted that the Black Country LEP had developed a programme where advisors liaised directly with school and college leadership teams to provide support in developing and building on existing careers, enterprise and employer engagement plans by utilising local business networks. The Chief Executive – Black Country Consortium Ltd undertook to provide detailed information on schools within the Dudley Borough that were not engaging in the programme.
- Concerns were raised by Members in targeting the most deprived areas in Dudley for investment. The Chief Executive confirmed that discussions were taking place and ongoing work with Henry Kippin, Director of Public Service Reform for the West Midlands Combined Authority regarding opportunities for inclusive growth and access to education and employment in deprived areas. It was also recognised that further work was required in regard of apprenticeships and whether there was sufficient connectivity with local businesses.
- Following a request by a Member, the Chief Executive – Black Country Consortium Ltd undertook to provide supplementary information on local businesses, in particular of the category of the business stock within the Black Country, and sectoral analysis of the potential contracted hours of employment of the jobs that were expected to become available through regeneration projects.

At this juncture, Members made comments on the information contained in the report submitted, on the second Devolution Deal and Action Plan.

Reference was made to the Bikeshare Scheme, and the Chief Executive confirmed that a detailed report had been submitted to the WMCA, explaining that the infrastructure comprised of docking stations located around key sites with an estimated number of 300 bikes for Dudley, which would also include electric cycles. Specific locations in Dudley had not yet been identified, as Dudley would form part of phase 3 of the project, which was likely to commence in Autumn 2018.

It was noted that there was not an Action Plan specifically relating to Dudley, however, there would be a number of plans developed by Dudley Council outlining the process and actions in developing projects throughout the Borough and identifying what our needs were.

A Member commented on the Brierley Hill Metro extension and queried what benefits would be brought in to the Brierley Hill area, and suggested that a local plan should be established setting out proposals on ensuring the benefits of the Metro reaches the deprived communities enhancing jobs and opportunities in the area.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the recommendations to the Council to approve the second Devolution Deal agreement and the proposed approach to implementation, as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report submitted, be noted.
- (2) That the recommendations to the Council to approve the high level Action Plan and further work with the Government on devolution with the coverage and portfolio leadership, as outlined in Appendix 2 of the report submitted, be noted.

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## **8 Council and Corporate Consultation**

A report of the Lead for Law and Governance and Statutory Scrutiny Officer was submitted on the corporate approach to consultation and the implications of the decision taken by the Cabinet relating to 'significant' consultation exercises undertaken by the Council.

In presenting the report submitted, the Democratic Services Manager gave an overview of the report and referred to the Government's Consultation Principles and the Local Government Association good guidance documents, as outlined in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report submitted.

The Head of Communications and Public Affairs reported on the consultation activity undertaken by the Council including the setting of the Council's Revenue Budget and Council Tax and issues such as the Travellers Transit consultation. It was also noted that consultation activity was undertaken in conjunction with Public Health.

Arising from the presentation of the report submitted, Members asked questions, made comments and responses were given where appropriate as follows:-

- It was imperative that to effectively consult on issues, the public perspective was taken into account together with Elected Member involvement and notification provided to Members of upcoming consultations, in order to provide a more holistic approach to reflect communities. It was suggested that further consideration should be given in identifying mechanisms to target wider demographic areas.

- In responding to a question by a Member, the Head of Communications and Public Affairs stated that there had been a designated team within the Council that administered a central database highlighting all consultations undertaken, however, following the organisational restructure this was no longer available.
- Members requested that further consideration should be given by this Committee on the adoption of local consultation principles, prior to the recommendation to Cabinet. It was noted that a further report was scheduled to be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee in November, 2018, including a draft set of localised consultation principles.
- A Member suggested that a corporate consultation approach was needed to monitor how questions were being asked and how responses were given.
- Members suggested that the local consultation principles be discussed at a meeting of the Scrutiny Development Working Group prior to the submission to Cabinet.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the corporate approach to consultation taking account of the existing provisions of the Constitution, legal requirements, guidance and recognised good practices summarised in the report, be noted.
- (2) That the Chief Executive, Strategic Directors and Chief Officers ensure the implementation of the Cabinet decision, in respect of all future significant public consultation exercises undertaken by the Council.
- (3) That the details of consultations undertaken be included in Cabinet, Committee reports and Decision Sheets submitted to the relevant decision taker(s).
- (4) That further detailed consideration be given to the adoption of local consultation principles based on the Government's consultation principles, as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report submitted, and the Local Government Association consultation checklist, as outlined in Appendix 2 of the report submitted, prior to a recommendation to Cabinet.

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The meeting ended at 7.35 pm.

CHAIR