

**Budget and Corporate
Scrutiny Management Board**

**Wednesday 6 November, 2019 at 5.45 pm
in Committee Room 1
at the Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Agenda

(Open to Public and Press)

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Members to declare:-
 - (a) any interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting;
 - (b) the existence and nature of any political Party Whip on any matter to be considered at the meeting.
3. To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 2 October, 2019 as a correct record.
4. Revenues and Benefits Service Update.

D Stevens
Interim Chief Executive

Sandwell Council House
Freeth Street
Oldbury
West Midlands

Distribution:

Councillors L Giles (Chair);

Councillors E M Giles, Moore, Rollins and Singh.

**Agenda prepared by Alex Goddard
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Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

Apologies for Absence

The Board will receive any apologies for absence from the members of the Board.

Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

Declaration of Interests

Members to declare:-

- (a) any interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting;
- (b) the existence and nature of any political Party Whip on any matter to be considered at the meeting.

Minutes of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

**2nd October, 2019 at 5.45pm
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor L Giles (Chair);
Councillors E M Giles, Moore and Singh.

Apology: Councillor Rollins.

In attendance: D Stevens (Interim Chief Executive);
S Tour (Director – Law and Governance and
Monitoring Officer);
S Suthi-Nagra (Democratic Services Manager);
I Parry (Centre for Public Scrutiny).

18/19 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 11th September 2019 be approved as a correct record.

19/19 **Scrutiny Review**

Further to Minute No. 11/19, the Scrutiny Management Board received the report of the Scrutiny Review Working Group, which had been endorsed at its meeting on 24 September 2019.

The Working Group was established to examine how the Council's overview and scrutiny arrangements, including scrutiny outcomes, could be improved so as to reflect recognised good practice.

The Working Group considered the insight and evidence gathered through a series of engagement sessions, desktop studies, one-to-one interviews, member surveys, analysis against statutory guidance and explored good practice to make evidence-based recommendations.

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The Working Group had been supported in its work by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and the Local Government Association (LGA).

It was reported that six key themes emerged from the engagement sessions:-

- Culture;
- Relationships;
- Work Programme;
- Structure;
- Support;
- Agile Working.

These were also borne out by the findings of the work undertaken by CfPS during the review.

The Board acknowledged the excellent work that had been undertaken in respect of the review. Particular thanks were given to officers who had supported the Working Group and the Review, along with the Centre for Public Scrutiny and the Local Government Association. The Board praised the approach taken to engage Members which had proven to be an excellent piece of work.

The Board further acknowledged the hard work undertaken to prepare the Review Report and the pace within which the Review had been undertaken, which ensured a strong focus was maintained throughout.

The Review demonstrated that the single most important determinant of whether the Council delivered an excellent overview and scrutiny function that was nationally recognised, was the need for embedding a positive, passionate culture and approach amongst councillors to undertaking scrutiny, that was underpinned by a strong commitment to maximising the opportunities effective scrutiny provided.

A number of recommendations were proposed by the Working Group to strengthen the Council's overview and scrutiny function which included a focussed Scrutiny Work Programme to align with the ambitions within Vision 2030. These included a revised structure for the overview and scrutiny function, terms of reference for the panels and sub-panels and refreshed role descriptions for scrutiny chairs, vice-chairs, panel members and co-opted members.

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Ian Parry, CfPS, attended the meeting and commended the thorough and inclusive work that had been done in Sandwell on the Review. The engagement programme with councillors that had taken place was highlighted as a strength, demonstrating the enthusiasm and commitment elected members had to improve scrutiny. The CfPS had been particularly impressed by the pace of the Review and agreed that the proposed model for overview and scrutiny in Sandwell would be an innovative and bold step to modernise the function.

The Scrutiny Management Board recognised that the Review outlined many positive and worthwhile proposals; however also felt that more time was needed to reflect upon the following:-

- The proposed structure included a 2030 Scrutiny Panel with a membership of 24. This would have three sub-panels reporting to it and concerns were raised as to the practicality of such an arrangement.
- More clarity was needed around the roles of Vice-Chairs in leading the sub-panels of the 2030 Scrutiny Panel and how this differed to the role of Scrutiny Panel Chairs.
- Greater analysis required on how the proposals met the Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities, published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. In particular, public engagement principles and mechanisms needed to be more explicit.
- It was recognised that protocols were a tool to creating a change in culture and the Scrutiny Management Board requested that further work be done by the Working Group to develop the protocols before any new proposals were presented to Full Council.
- Greater emphasis was needed in relation to the how scrutiny of the West Midlands Combined Authority would be undertaken.
- The Scrutiny Management Board highlighted the need to conduct further engagement with elected members on the proposals, to maintain the momentum that had been gained from the previous engagement sessions which had been well attended by councillors.

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- It was felt that further information on the proposed methods of resourcing the support for scrutiny needed to be made clearer.

Resolved that:-

- (1) the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board:-
 - (a) note the excellent work undertaken in relation to the Scrutiny Review so far;
 - (b) place on record its thanks to the Centre for Public Scrutiny, Local Government Association for their support to the Scrutiny Review and Officers for all their hard work;
- (2) the comments of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board set out in these Minutes be referred back to Scrutiny Review Working Group for consideration and action;
- (3) the Scrutiny Review Working Group co-ordinates and undertakes further engagement work with Elected Members and the Executive (as necessary) on the proposals detailed in the Scrutiny Review before preparing final proposals;
- (4) a revised Scrutiny Review Report of the Working Group detailing the final proposals be submitted to a future meeting of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board;
- (5) in order to keep the pace of the Scrutiny Review, an extraordinary meeting of the Council be arranged (if necessary), with the Mayor's consent, prior to 14 January 2020 to consider the recommendations of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board in relation to the Scrutiny Review.


(Meeting ended at 7.56 pm)

Contact Officer: Alex Goddard Democratic Services Unit 0121 569 3178
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REPORT TO BUDGET AND CORPORATE SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT

06 November 2019

Subject:	Revenues and Benefits Service Update
Director:	Executive Director – Resources – Darren Carter
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Contact Officer(s):	<p>Sue Knowles Head of ICT and Revenues and Benefits sue_knowles@sandwell.gov.uk</p> <p>Ian Dunn Revenues and Benefits Service Manager ian_dunn@sandwell.gov.uk</p>

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board :

1. Review and comment upon the Revenues and Benefits Service update.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To raise awareness across Board members of the work carried out by the Revenues and Benefits Service.
- 1.2 To update members of the Board on the annual timetable of reports to Cabinet that require a key decision.

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2 IMPLICATIONS FOR SANDWELL'S VISION

- 2.1 The Revenues and Benefits Service is responsible for the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates which is the main source of funding for the Council.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The Revenues and Benefits Service produces a number of cabinet reports throughout the financial year. Several of these reports require decisions which will be used when setting the Council's budget.
- 3.2 Raising awareness of the work carried out by the Revenues and Benefits Service and the key decisions required from Cabinet will therefore help to strengthen the Council's budget scrutiny process.

4 THE CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 The report does not require a decision and therefore, no position analysis is necessary.

5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

- 5.1 Not required.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1 The report does not require a decision and therefore, alternative options do not need to be considered.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct financial and resource implications arising from this report.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 The Local Government Act 2003 places a requirement on local authorities to provide Members with regular financial monitoring.
- 8.2 Raising awareness of the Revenues and Benefits Service's role and responsibilities and key decisions required by Cabinet used to inform the Council's budget setting will enhance financial monitoring.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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9.1 It was not necessary to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10.1 It was not necessary to undertake a Data Protection Impact Assessment. Data gathered during audit reviews is used and retained in accordance with current legislative requirements.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

11.1 There are no direct risk implications arising from this report.

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

12.1 There are no direct sustainability issues arising from this report.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

13.1 There are no direct health and wellbeing implications from this report.

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

14.1 There is no direct impact on any council managed property or land from this report.

15 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 The purpose of the report is to raise awareness of the work carried out by the Revenues and Benefits Service and to inform the Board of the annual timetable of Cabinet reports.

16 BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 None.

17 APPENDICES:

17.1 None.

Darren Carter, Executive Director – Resources