

Minutes of Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

**Wednesday, 13 July 2022 at 6.00 pm
at Committee Room 2 - Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor Moore (Chair);
Councillors Shackleton, Fenton, Akhtar, E M Giles, Hinchliff,
Simms and Taylor.

In attendance: Neil Cox (Director of Business Strategy and Change), Surjit
Tour (Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring
Officer), Elaine Newsome (Service Manager of Democracy),
Suky Suthi-Nagra (Democratic Services Manager), Matt
Powis (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Anthony
Lloyd (Democratic Services Officer)

23/22 Apologies for Absence

An apology was received from Councillor Anandou.

24/22 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.



25/22

Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2022 are approved as a correct record.

26/22

Additional Items of Business

There were no additional items of business to consider.

27/22

Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board Work Programme 2022-23

The Chair presented an overview of the Board's work programme for the 2022-23 municipal year. It was noted that each Council directorate was invited to a work programming session on 30 June 2022 which allowed Members of the Board to discuss services, key issues and priorities.

The Board would be conducting a scrutiny review on the Council's 'Customer Journey' and as part of this, a visit to the Council's Contact Centre would be arranged by the Director of Business Strategy and Change.

Members also discussed the impact on staff as a result of the consequences of COVID-19 with particular focus on working from home. Members raised following questions in respect of the review item:

- had productivity increased or decreased since staff had begun working from home?
- how could the Council increase productivity, if required?
- with the majority of staff still working from home, did this present a saving to the local authority or cost more?
- how the council could support the health and well-being of staff?
- how could the Council improve communication with staff and future outlook of working from home employees.

It was agreed by the Board that the above concerns were to be collated into a new item for work programme.

Resolved that the work programme for the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board for 2022-23 municipal year be approved.

Scrutiny Boards Work Programme 2022-23

The Chair invited each Scrutiny Chair to present their work programme for the 2022-23 municipal year which was outlined as follows:

Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

The Chair of the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board presented the 2022-2023 work programme. The Children's Services COVID Recovery Funds item was highlighted as an upcoming item.

As a result of the pandemic, members suggested that scrutiny should consider reviewing how the Council monitored home-schooled children. Concerns were raised around the well-being of the children as it appeared several may not be getting the support they need. The Senior Democratic Services Officer confirmed that this was an item to be scheduled and that conversations were taking place with the relevant officers to begin the process.

Members sought clarification on the safeguarding aspect of this issue. The Chair of the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board reassured the Board that safeguarding concerns would be presented at the next meeting of the Board.

Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment

The Chair of the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board presented the 2022-23 work programme. It was noted that the Board had a mixture of strategic items of importance such as the Black Country Enterprise Partnership, Local Transport Plan and the Outcome of the E-Scooters Trial.

Health and Adult Social Care

The Chair of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board highlighted the work programme for the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board which remained under review pending further discussions with NHS and Black Country Partners.

It was proposed to include an item on men's mental health as a future Board item. Concerns were raised around the considerable high rate of suicide in males and was therefore deemed a priority. Additionally, members discussed the possibility of expanding further on this topic by including a review into domestic abuse aimed towards men.

Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities

The Chair of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board presented the work programme for 2022-23. In particular, a scrutiny review in relation to Brandhall Golf Course was highlighted as a priority of the Board. Due to the vast number of items to be covered by the Scrutiny Board, it was agreed that further meetings could be scheduled if required.

Members offered a suggestion of reviewing current policies around loft conversions as part of the Housing Strategy review. Many Sandwell Council tenants had stated that the Council had refused to allow them to convert loft spaces. It was proposed that this may alleviate some of the issues currently faced when considering social housing shortages. This also prompted discussion around the need for more bungalows to help older citizens downsize during their later years. The Chair of the SNAC Scrutiny Board noted the recommendation.

SMB Chair Summary

The Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board reminded members that, this municipal year, each of the Scrutiny Boards will hold pre-meetings as well as agenda setting meetings. This would help officers in feeding information in a timely and effective manner to their respective Boards.

It was noted that the Scrutiny Recommendation Action Tracker had been implemented across all Scrutiny Boards and regularly presented to the Council's Leadership Team for monitoring.

The Chair encouraged Members to have regular meetings with Directors and Cabinet Members. The Director of Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer expressed how keeping good scrutiny practices would help play a key role in demonstrating to central government that the Council was making improvements with decision-making processes overall.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the work programme for the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board, the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Boards and the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board for 2022-2023 be approved;
- (2) that the Chair and Vice Chair of Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board, in consultation with the Chair of the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board, agree the work programme for Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board 2022-23 following the work programming session with the Board;
- (3) that the Chairs of Scrutiny Boards be authorised to make any further amendments to their respective Scrutiny Board work programmes, as deemed necessary.

Meeting ended at 6.42 pm

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