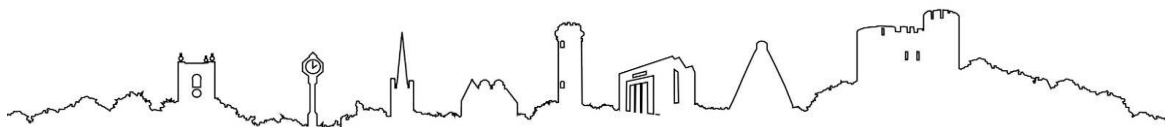




Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report 2023/2024



Working as One Council in
the historic capital of the Black Country





**Chair -
Councillor
Ian Kettle**

Annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

2023/24 Municipal Year



**Vice-Chair -
Councillor
Mohammed Hanif**

Introduction

This report gives a summary of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Select Committees during 2023/24.

Effective scrutiny is a key element of the Council's democratic governance arrangements. We need to make sure there is proper accountability and transparency in the way the Council conducts its business.

Scrutiny has several key roles. These include holding decision takers to account, contributing to policy development, reviewing performance, undertaking scrutiny inquiries and making recommendations for improvement.

Scrutiny work must be placed in context with the severe financial and service pressures faced by the local authority and other partners. We have to make the best use of limited resources by focussing on key priorities.

At the start of this municipal year, a Scrutiny Development Session was held with representatives of the Local Government Association. Work is ongoing to ensure that our overview and scrutiny functions remain fit for the future. This work will be driven by recognised good practice, statutory guidance and input from elected Members.

We would like to place on record our appreciation of all the hard work and support given by Councillors, Officers, Partners and members of the public who have contributed to our Scrutiny work during 2023/24.

Full details of Committee meetings, including agendas, minutes and reports, can be viewed online by accessing the [Committee Management Information System](#). Alternatively, contact Democratic Services on 01384 815238 or e-mail democratic.services@dudley.gov.uk.

Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements 2023/24

During the Municipal Year, the Committee has received reports on the development of the Council's overview and scrutiny arrangements. This followed the introduction of a revised structure of Scrutiny/Select Committees for the 2023/24 municipal year.

Outcome:

- *Revisions to the Council's Constitution and the Scrutiny Procedure Rules were endorsed by Full Council in February, 2024 as part of the annual review of the Constitution.*

Corporate Quarterly Performance Reports

Quarterly corporate performance reports have been submitted to Members during the municipal year. This identifies issues that have been particularly problematic over time and/or which are of strategic significance. Issues identified by Members are considered in more detail by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, raised with Cabinet Members or referred to the relevant Select Committee for more detailed analysis.

Dudley Economy

The Committee received a detailed report and presentation on an overview of Dudley's economy at mid-year 2023. The Committee recognised that the information was complex, however, demonstrated a level of resilience in the Dudley economy. Members noted that the information presented would form a context for future decisions and assist Members in undertaking their overview and scrutiny role.

Outcomes:

- *The information promoted a wider understanding of all the complex issues affecting the local economy, together with recognition of the ongoing activity to enhance the quality of life for people in the Borough.*
- *The Committee requested that further reports be presented to Members in due course.*

Traffic Congestion and the Impact on the Dudley Economy

Members received a detailed presentation and commented on the performance of the Dudley Highway Network Performance.

The Committee considered this as a 'cross-cutting' issue in view of the impact of traffic congestion on issues such as the quality of life of residents, the environment and the local economy. This report complemented the work undertaken by the Highways and Environmental Services Select Committee.

Outcome:

- *That the issue of traffic congestion be included in the future scrutiny work programme with a view to a detailed scrutiny exercise being undertaken on this topic in the future.*

West Midlands Combined Authority - Formal Ratification of the Single Settlement Memorandum of Understanding between the West Midlands Combined Authority and His Majesty's Government

The Committee considered the Single Settlement Memorandum of Understanding between West Midlands Combined Authority and His Majesty's Government. Members had the opportunity to comment prior to the report being approved by the Cabinet on 15th February, 2024.

Outcomes:

- *The proposed Single Settlement Memorandum of Understanding between West Midlands Combined Authority and His Majesty's Government was noted and subsequently approved by the Cabinet.*
- *The Committee noted the high-level next steps for Single Settlement negotiations and implementation ahead of the first Single Settlement allocation, which is likely to be 1st April, 2025.*

Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Committee considered the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2026/27, approved by the Cabinet as the basis for consultation and scrutiny. In the interests of full transparency, the proceedings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25th January, 2024 were broadcast on the Internet and the recording of the meeting is available on the [YouTube Channel](#). Details of the discussion are also recorded in the minutes on the [Council's Internet site](#).

Outcome:

- *Comments on the proposals for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2026/27, taking account of the report and the issues raised by Members, were referred to the Cabinet and Full Council for consideration as part of the budget setting process.*

West Midlands Combined Authority Activity – Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

The Committee considered a detailed report on the work that West Midlands Combined Authority is carrying out within the Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council area. Members welcomed this report as an opportunity for improving engagement and promoting a wider understanding of the activities of West Midlands Combined Authority.

Outcomes:

- *Details of the work that West Midlands Combined Authority is carrying out in the Dudley MBC Local Authority Area were noted.*
- *Specific issues raised by Members were noted by Officers for action, further consideration or a response as appropriate.*
- *Updates from the West Midlands Combined Authority will be given to future Scrutiny Committee meetings.*

West Midlands Combined Authority - Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

The Committee received the annual report on the West Midlands Combined Authority Scrutiny function in the 2022/23 Municipal Year. The report was presented by Councillor C Bayton (Chair of the WMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee) and Councillor J McNicholas (Chair of the Transport Delivery Overview and Scrutiny Committee).

Outcome:

- *The Committee welcomed the report and noted the key ongoing issues being considered by the West Midlands Combined Authority scrutiny function.*

Employee Health and Wellbeing

The Committee received a report and a detailed presentation on the findings of a review of the Council's employee wellbeing offer and an action plan to address issues identified in the review.

Outcomes:

- *The Committee noted:*

That employee wellbeing within the Council currently reflects the national trends of an overall increase in sickness and absence due to mental health related sickness.

The findings of work undertaken to review the Councils' employee wellbeing offer.

The need to strengthen the Council's wellbeing offer to employees to address the issues highlighted.

- *Members endorsed an action plan and agreed that a progress report be submitted in six-months' time.*

Improvement and Sustainability Programme ('Fit for the Future') Scope and Governance

Following an initial progress update in January, 2024, the Committee considered a report on the Council's Improvement and Sustainability Programme, known as 'Fit for the Future'. The proposals were agreed by the Cabinet on 20th March, 2024.

The report set out the scope, timelines and key financial and other success measures and milestones along with the governance arrangements to ensure that the Programme delivers the necessary benefits for Dudley MBC and its residents.

Outcome:

- *The Committee noted:*
 - *The achievements of the completed Phase 1 of the programme.*
 - *The detailed scopes of Phase 2, 'Fit for Purpose' at the first Programme Gateway.*
 - *The governance arrangements for the 'Fit for the Future' Programme.*

Ongoing/Future Items

Items that require further consideration and potential inclusion in the Scrutiny Programme for 2024/25 are listed below: -

- Traffic Congestion and the Impact on the Dudley Economy.
- Dudley Economy - Updates
- Procurement
- Employee Health and Wellbeing Progress Report



**Chair -
Councillor
Luke Johnson**

Annual report of the Adult Social Care Select Committee

2023/24 Muncipal Year



**Vice-Chair -
Councillor
Jonathan Elliott**

Our role involves the scrutiny of matters falling within the portfolio responsibilities of the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, and to contribute to policy development for functions of the Directorate of Adult Social Care.

Programme of Meetings and Business Items for 2023/24

Members of the Committee considered the programme of meetings and potential items of business for the Adult Social Care Select Committee during 2023/24. In considering the proposed changes to the Overview and Scrutiny arrangements, Members were of the view that individual Select Committees, who had a specialised knowledge and experience, should be responsible for the scrutiny of any call-ins and budgetary implications relevant to their specific service area/directorate.

Outcomes:

- *That the programme of meetings for 2023/24, be noted.*
- *That subject to the comments referred to above, the business items as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report submitted, be noted and agreed.*
- *That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be recommended to continue with the existing arrangements for call-in and that the Medium-Term Financial Strategy report continue to be submitted to individual Select Committees for scrutiny.*
- *That the Lead for Law and Governance, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, be authorised to make all necessary arrangements to enable the Select Committee to undertake its work during the 2023/24 municipal year.*

- *That subject to any necessary amendments, as a consequence of resolution 3, the draft terms of reference for the Select Committee, as set out in the appendix to the report, be noted.*

(Members again expressed concern at its meeting on 17th January, 2024, that budget proposals specifically relating to Adult Social Care would not be scrutinised by the relevant Select Committee)

Progress Update with the Woodside Day Service

Members received an update on the Woodside Mental Health Day Service Provision and the current position regarding the condition, viability, cost and long-term appropriateness of the building were provided. Details with regards to the 12-week strengths-based approach programme were outlined which Members were informed was designed to be portable and promote recovery, without being reliant upon a building and that the criteria for the service were consistent and in line with the Care Act. Members expressed concerns and made comments with regards to how the service would now be portrayed, how the new criteria were being used to assess service users and questioned why previous users were no longer eligible to attend. The relocation of the service was also discussed.

Outcomes:

- *That the progress in re-opening Woodside Mental Health Day Service as a recovery focused preventative service be noted.*
- *That the Head of Adult Mental Health to develop partnership working to further develop and enhance the preventative offer.*
- *That a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Select Committee, with consideration being given to ways of seeking service users' views on the service.*
- *That the Director of Adult Social Care pursue a land valuation for the current Woodside Day Centre site.*
- *That the Director of Adult Social Care provide a summary of the support currently provided to service users that are no longer eligible to attend Woodside Day Centre.*

Improvement priorities for adult social care mental health in Dudley Borough

Members considered a report which provided an overview of improvement priorities for adult social care mental health in Dudley. The key improvement priorities, in particular the work that had been undertaken to

refocus on early intervention and prevention, with clear criteria, and entry and exit pathways into services, were outlined, which included the reconfiguration of the Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHP) Services to maximise resources. Key risks in compliance with statutory frameworks, which included Section 117 reviews, were identified. Members were advised that there were 953 cases identified that would be subject to review under Section 117 of the Mental Health Act and that work was ongoing to improve partnerships with health colleagues to develop a joint review system to increase review activity.

Outcomes:

- *That the progress in delivering improvement in adult mental health in Dudley, be noted.*
- *That the views of the Select Committee be taken into account by the Head of Adult Mental in the ongoing programme of improvement activity.*
- *That further work be undertaken to enhance the approved mental health professional provision.*

Adult Social Care Complaints, Comments and Compliments

Members considered a report which provided an overview of the Adults Social Care Complaints Annual report for the period 1st April, 2022 to 31st March, 2023. A decrease in the number of complaints received for this period was reported and performance for responding to complaints was consistent with the previous year. Members commented positively on the information contained in the report and commended the Directorate on the high level of service that was evidently provided.

Outcomes:

- *That publication of the Adults Social Care Complaints Annual Report, in line with statutory requirements, be endorsed.*
- *That the Democratic Services Officer, on behalf of the Select Committee, send a letter of thanks and appreciation to the Directorate of Adult Social Care.*

Care Quality Commission (CQC) Inspection and Readiness Review/ Recommendations and developments from ADASS Principal Social Worker Practice Review Programme of Dudley Adult Social Care

During the municipal year, Members received reports and information on the Care Quality Commission Inspection regime for Adult Social Care in Local Authorities and the preparation work that was being done in readiness for an inspection in Dudley. Feedback from West Midlands Association of Directors of Adult Social Care (WM ADASS) readiness review was provided, together with a copy of the external practice review report highlighting the key strengths and areas for improvement with actions to meet requirements.

Outcomes:

Meeting held 7th September, 2023:-

- *That the contents of the report and the requirements for the CQC inspection, in particular the Quality Statements, be noted.*
- *That the key risks and improvement priorities identified, be noted.*
- *That the implications of a CQC inspection and the potential impact for people who use care and support, Adult Social Care in Dudley and the Council's reputation, be noted.*
- *That the continuation to ensure that people of Dudley who use care and support continue to have the right level of support and are safeguarded, be endorsed.*
- *That the Director of Adult Social Care provide Select Committee Members with government guidance to support them in the scrutiny role with regards to Adult Social Care Scrutiny and Safeguarding.*

Meeting held 7th March, 2024:-

- *That the report on the external Practice Review, together with the key strengths and areas for improvement, be noted.*

Dudley Adult Social Care Activity – Average Number of People Delayed

An overview of supported hospital discharge activity assisting residents to return home was provided. The critical incident that had been declared by Russell Halls Hospital, due to limited capacity in the hospital because of high admissions was referred to, together with details in regard to the winter plan that had been established across the whole health and care system. Members were advised that to meet with hospital pressures, the

Local Authority were processing 8 to 10 discharges a day instead of 5 as per the winter plan and that a request for financial support to balance the cost of the additional demand had been submitted to the Integrated Care Board.

Outcomes:

- *That the information contained in the report and presented at the meeting in relation to Dudley Social Care Activity – Average Number of People Delayed per day, be received and noted.*
- *That the Director of Adult Social Care provide data with regards to the number of complaints received in relation to the discharge process from Russells Hall Hospital.*

Other items considered by the Select Committee in the 2023/24 Municipal Year

- Quarterly Performance Report
- Blue Badge Fraud, Process and Enforcement
- Adult Social Care Select Committee Progress Tracker and Future Business
- Annual Adult Safeguarding Report and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)
- Market Position and Sustainability
- Preparing for Adulthood (PFA)
- Service Update from Dudley Telecare

Future items for consideration by the Select Committee

Item to be considered for potential inclusion in the work programme for 2024/25:-

- Woodside Day Service – update report to include feedback and views from users of the service that had completed a twelve-week programme.



**Chair -
Councillor
Kerry Lewis**

Annual report of the Children and Young People Select Committee

2023/24 Municipal Year



**Vice-Chair -
Councillor
Daniel Bevan**

Our role involves the scrutiny of matters relating to Children's and Young People Services in the Directorate of Children's Services and the Cabinet portfolios of appropriate Cabinet Member(s).

Children's Services Committee Progress Tracker and Future Business

Throughout the Municipal Year Members considered reports on the progress tracker and discussed issues in relation to Disclosing and Barring Service (DBS) checks.

Arising from the consideration of this item during the meeting held on 18th January 2024 discussions ensued in relation to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and in particular the impact that would have upon Children's Services for the forthcoming municipal year.

At the meeting held on 11th March 2023 Members considered a briefing note on the position in relation to the DBS checks and it was noted that there was legal requirement for enhanced checks to be carried out for those Members of the Select Committee.

Outcomes:

- *Democratic Services were requested to invite the Assistant Director People and Inclusion to a future meeting of the Committee to determine the position in relation to DBS checks for Members and details of the criteria required.*
- *The Service Director Education, SEND and Family Solutions was requested to discuss with the Chair a possible date of a future meeting to submit a report on Child Friendly Dudley*
- *The Assistant Director of People and Inclusion was recommended that the Members of the Committee should receive enhanced DBS Checks given the possibility of them encountering those children and young people who were vulnerable.*

- *The Director of Children's Services was requested to consider reporting to a future meeting on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, particularly the impact that would have upon Children's Services for the forthcoming municipal year.*

Children's Social Care Complaints, Comments and Compliments Annual Report 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023

Members considered the annual report noting that every Local Authority with a responsibility for Social Care Services is required to provide an annual report in relation to the operation of the complaints and representations procedure.

Outcomes:

- *The Director of Children's Services was requested to submit annual reports on learning in relation to complaints through the Centre for Professional Practice.*

Child Poverty

A report was considered providing a summary of child poverty in Dudley and information on initiatives in Dudley to support families living in poverty.

Outcomes:

- *The development of a system wide strategy and encouragement of system participation in the strategic mitigating poverty group was supported.*

Family Hubs and Start of Life Information and Update Report.

A report was submitted on the overview of the development and recent progress of the Dudley Family Hubs and Start of Life Programme.

Outcomes:

- *There was a request that Members be provided with leaflets in relation to the Family Hubs to distribute to their constituents in order that they were aware of the services provided.*
- *Democratic Services were requested to email to Members details of the dates available for them to attend the Family Hubs.*

Care Experienced Young Adults Accommodation

Members considered a report on the delivery of accommodation to Care Experienced Young Adults as well as providing a response to the Committee's recommendations to improve suitability of accommodation for this cohort of young people.

Outcome:

- *That any future reports on Care Experienced Young Adults Accommodation include details of the specific accommodation that was unsuitable for them.*

Education Report

Members considered a report providing an update on Education outcomes including the work of the Education Outcomes Team in relation to Dudley Performing Arts, Suspensions, the Alternative Provision Strategy, Elective Home Education and Children Missing Education.

Outcome:

- *The Head of Education Outcomes and Inclusion was requested to provide Members with a breakdown of where those children and young people who were being EHE were within the Borough.*

Other Items Considered by the Scrutiny Committee in the 2023/24 Municipal Year

- Family Safeguarding Model
- Children's Services Phase Two Redesign
- Dudley Children's Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report
- Education Reports
- Dudley Virtual Summary of Annual Report 2022-2023
- Corporate Quarterly Performance Reports.
- Learning from Complaints

Ongoing/Future Items

Items that require further consideration and potential inclusion in the Scrutiny Programme for 2024/25 are listed below: -

- Corporate Quarterly Performance Reports
- Children's Services Complaints, Comments and Compliments Annual Report
- Dudley Children's Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report
- Integrated Early Years, Family Hubs, and Start of Life in Dudley
- Education Reports
- Dudley Virtual School Annual Report
- The Needs Assessment Findings
- Learning from Complaints



**Chair -
Councillor
Peter Dobb**

Annual report of the Climate Change Select Committee

2023/24 Muncipal Year



**Vice-Chair -
Councillor
Thomas Russon**

Our role involves the scrutiny of matters concerning Climate Change and the Council's decision to declare a Climate Emergency. This includes the development and implementation of the Carbon Reduction Plan and action to support the United Nations sustainable development goals. The role includes contributing to the environmental sustainability agenda and action to address the corporate priority to create a cleaner and greener place, working collaboratively with partners, businesses, and communities to achieve long term goals.

Transport Fleet Services

The Committee considered a report on the Council's Transport Fleet Services, which provided a progress update of the work carried out on the Council's Fleet services together with consideration of future options for its fleet management responsibilities and commensurate with the Council's financial and environmental policy objectives. An outline of the current vehicle replacement programme was provided and that a new Climate Change team had been established together with a newly appointed Head of Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change who would be collaborating and working on future plans.

During the meeting, the Committee commented on the information presented and raised a number of queries in relation to the early trials being carried out to upcycle and recycle the current fleet to electric vehicles, electric vehicles that had been trialled for future waste collection and utilising existing infrastructures. The Committee commented positively on the use of Euro 6 diesel fuelled vehicles and the potential to reduce energy from waste for the fleet to be self-sufficient by producing green waste such as green hydrogen.

Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure

The Committee considered a report on the current progress of all matters associated with public Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure across the Borough. An outline of work undertaken including assessments for identifying locations throughout the Borough to install

charging points were reported to the Committee and further updates would be provided.

The Committee raised a number of queries in relation to the potential disruption that could be made during installation of Electric Vehicle (EV) charge points, obstruction to properties and the potential for anti-social behaviour and were assured that this would be monitored.

Environmental Impact on Council House Refurbishment

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Corporate Landlord Services regarding the Environmental Impact on the Council House Refurbishment.

During the meeting, the Committee commented on the information presented and raised a number of queries in relation to the installation of heat pumps and boiler optimisers and raised concerns regarding secondary glazing being installed at the Council House, although it was acknowledged that consideration would need to be given to keep in style with the Grade 2 listed building and installation would need to be done sensitively.

Update on Carbon Reduction Plan

The Committee received a presentation on the Council's Carbon Reduction Plan outlining key work that had been completed. Actions for the draft Climate Action Plan had been agreed and a Climate and Sustainability Board had been established to develop and monitor the delivery of the Action Plan. The Climate Action Plan was a three-year plan from 2024 to 2027, which an annual review and reporting process would be provided.

During the meeting, Members raised a number of queries regarding the impact spending controls would have on implementation of the Climate Action Plan.

Dudley Council Climate Action Plan

The Committee received a report on the Dudley Council's Climate Action Plan, Phase 1 (2024-2027) as part of the response to the climate emergency. The Climate Action Plan was a Corporate Plan which would be formally reviewed, and an annual update provided.

Outcomes:

- *That the Dudley Council's Climate Action Plan, Phase 1 (2024-2027) outlining how the Council would work to reduce carbon emissions from the Council's operations and activities and influence carbon reduction boroughwide, be received and noted.*
- *That an annual update of the Climate Action Plan to review the data and evidence, monitor progress and insert new actions to further reduce the Council's carbon footprint towards achieving its ambition to reach carbon net zero by 2030, be considered as part of the Annual Scrutiny Programme for the 2024/25 Municipal Year.*

Update on Food Waste Collection and Anaerobic Digestion

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Waste and Fleet Operation regarding an update on Food Waste Collections and Anaerobic Digestion. The benefits to collecting food waste were outlined together with information provided regarding how food waste would be collected; operating revenue costs; potential funding and reference was made to the preferred method of food waste recycling via anaerobic digestion to generate biogas such as biofuel, power or heat or digestate to fertiliser.

The Committee expressed concerns with regards the potential cost to residents and to the Council having waste being transported and processed through Kinver Anaerobic Digestion plant, it was acknowledged that further information would need to be sought from other Local Authorities for best practices.

Further updates and information to be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee within the next municipal year.

Planning Policies in Relation to Renewable Energy and Climate Change

The Committee received a report and presentation on the Planning Policies in relation to Renewable Energy and Climate Change, which provided an overview of how developers have responded to emerging planning policies following the recent Draft Local Plan consultation. Officers outlined the existing planning policy documents, which contained several policies in relation to renewable energy and how

policies within the draft Dudley Local Action Plan supported actions within the Dudley Council Climate Action Plan.

Other items Considered by the Select Committee in the 2023/24 Municipal Year

- *Net-Zero Neighbourhood and Additional Sustainability Measures*
- *Information regarding the High Plateau Site at Merry Hill*
- *Corporate Quarterly Performance Reports*

Ongoing/Future Items

Items that require further consideration and potential inclusion in the Scrutiny Programme for 2024/25 are listed below: -

- Update Dudley Climate Action Plan
- Cycle and Travel Card Scheme
- The Grant Register
- Biodiversity
- Update on the Use of Pesticides and Maintaining the Boroughs Green Spaces
- Update on Food Waste Collection and Anaerobic Digestion
- Carbon Literacy Training



Annual report of the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee



**Chair -
Councillor
David Stanley**

2023/24 Municipal Year

**Vice-Chair -
Councillor
Stuart Henley**

Our role involves the scrutiny of matters falling within the functions of the Directorates of Chief Executive's, Digital, Commercial and Customer Services, Finance and Legal and Regeneration and Enterprise and the Cabinet portfolios of appropriate Cabinet Member(s).

Programme of Meetings and Business Items for 2023/24

Members of the Committee considered the programme of meetings and potential items of business for the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee during 2023/24.

Outcomes:

- *The Senior Democratic Services Officer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, review the timings of the proposed items in relation to the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension Update and the Economic Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan.*
- *The following items be included in the programme of business for 2023/24:*
 - *Key Performance Indicators – Corporate and Regeneration*
 - *Commercialisation Strategy Update*
 - *UK Shared Prosperity Fund*
 - *Estates Strategy*
 - *Stalled Sites Progress Update (March, 2024)*
- *That, subject to resolution (2) and (3) above, the Committee confirm the programme of business as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report submitted, subject to the need for flexibility to reflect any changes that might arise during the municipal year.*
- *That the Lead for Law and Governance, following consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, be authorised to make all the necessary arrangements to enable this Committee to undertake its programme of scrutiny work during the 2023/24 municipal year.*

- *That the terms of reference for the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee, as set out in the Appendix to the report submitted, be noted.*

Call-In of Decision Sheet – Loan to Dudley and Kent Commercial Services Ltd Joint Venture Company

An additional meeting was scheduled to respond to the call-in of the decision of the Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources concerning a loan to Dudley and Kent Commercial Services Ltd Joint Venture Company. The decision had been called-in at the request of four Members of the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee in accordance with the Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules, as set out in the Council's Constitution. The Cabinet Member of Finance, Legal and Human Resources, Cabinet Member for Corporate Strategy, Director of Finance and Legal, Director of Digital, Customer and Commercial Services, Director of Children's Services and the Monitoring Officer attended the Committee to address the meeting and to respond to questions.

Outcomes:

- *That the Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee recommend that no objection be raised to the decision, in which case no further action is necessary and that the decision of the Cabinet Member for Finance, Legal and Human Resources be implemented with immediate effect.*

Commercial Strategy

The Committee received a report and detailed presentation on an update on the Commercial Strategy, core commercial activity and key projects and to assure the Committee on the value of the work undertaken by the Commercial team.

Outcomes:

- *That the Head of Commercial liaise with the Head of Corporate Landlord Services to provide details of the operation of the system in relation to the school meal service, how the system had failed and what had resulted in that failure to members; Advise members how many customers had left the Telecare service and advise the relevant service areas who were managing the analogue switch off of the request that elected members be provided with material detailing the analogue switch*

off to assure those who had concerns in relation to the loss of their landlines.

Consultation Process Review across the Authority

The Committee received a report on the consultation activity across the authority and future improvements to processes.

Outcomes:

- *Noted, that Dudley Council does not have a single, corporate departments with an oversight of responsibility for consultations taking place across all directorates and services in the local authority.*
- *That the scale and complexity of consultation activity undertaken across the local authority service areas and how best practice has been used to inform a consistent corporate approach, be noted.*
- *That the new Consultation Framework and the database produced for guidance by the Chief Executive's performance management team and key stakeholders across the organisation, as outlined in Appendix B of the report submitted, be supported.*
- *That the officer working group to identify the best software solution be supported.*

Corporate and Economic Strategy Select Committee Progress Tracker and Future Business

During a meeting on 6th September, 2023, an urgent item was raised in relation to the national developments at that time regarding Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in schools in England. Although it was acknowledged that communication bulletins had been circulated confirming that local authority led schools and academies were unaffected, the Committee suggested that an audit of all council buildings, including libraries, leisure centres and community centres, be undertaken to establish whether RAAC had been used in any of the buildings. Following the meeting, a communication bulletin was circulated to all Elected Members.

Concerns were also raised in relation to the disruption that may be caused to two town centres and traders due to the full funding now being obtained in relation to the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension, and a request was made for a report to be submitted to a future

committee. This information was presented to the Committee in January, 2024.

Corporate Quarterly Performance Report

The Committee received the corporate Quarterly Performance reports during the year. The Corporate Quarterly Performance Report in relation to Quarter 3 was e-mailed to the Committee for comments. Directorate Service Summary documents providing detailed accounts of service delivery for each Quarter was also provided.

Outcomes:

- *Detailed scrutiny has been undertaken of specific performance indicators that are reported as 'below target' with responses provided by relevant Directorates.*
- *That the Chair and Vice-Chair in conjunction with the Corporate Performance Manager consider how future reports should be presented to the Committee above, referring to the suggestions by members above.*
- *That the Corporate Performance Manager be requested to:*
 - *report on the details in relation to the complaints procedure to include processes, how they were handled and feedback from complainants to include timeliness;*
 - *report on what work was being conducted in relation to work related sickness in future Corporate Quarterly reports;*
 - *discuss with relevant officers the future reporting of the Corporate Performance Report to all Select Committees;*
 - *provide a written response on the Council's Policy for COVID testing and the measures taken across the Council to mitigate stress levels for employees in view of the current financial situation and challenging times ahead;*
 - *liaise with the Chair and Vice-Chair on dedicated sessions focusing on specific elements raised by the Committee, including complaints and sickness absence, in future reports;*
 - *investigate whether an overview of the reasons why employees had left the authority could be provided to Members for information.*

Dudley Borough Economic Regeneration Strategy

The Committee received a report on the work undertaken to date on the proposed Dudley Borough 'Economic Regeneration Strategy'.

- *That all future reports clearly outline the purpose of the report and the response or observations required by Members.*
- *That the relevant Cabinet Member be recommended to consider the feasibility of the development of a Business Improvement District for Brierley Hill Town Centre to support the economic sustainability and vitality of the Town Centre following recent and ongoing investment.*
- *That an agenda item looking at the regeneration programme, the breakdown of funding awarded, how much was retained within Dudley and where it can be quantified the economic benefit and social value obtained, be included on the future work programme of the Committee.*

MyDudley Digital Platform Update

The Committee considered a report on the MyDudley programme, the functionality of which included customer portal, customer service hub, councillor portal and staff portals. Arising from a request made by the Committee, the Head of Digital and Customer Services agreed to consider introducing facilities in council owned buildings including libraries and leisure centres to enable users to provide feedback direct to the Council.

Progress on Major Regeneration Projects

The Committee considered a report on an update on the major regeneration projects in Dudley town centre, Brierley Hill and other town centre proposals and projects in development. During this item, a Member of the Committee shared concerns that the Medium-Term Financial Strategy report would not be presented to individual Select Committees. It was acknowledged that some difficult decisions would need to be made that were in the scope of the Select Committee and a request was made for the scheduling of an urgent cycle of additional Select Committee meetings where Elected Members could examine the most controversial and impactful proposals within the remit of their respective Select Committees.

Outcomes:

- *That the update on the major regeneration projects in Dudley town centre, Brierley Hill and other town centre proposals and projects in development, be noted.*
- *The Director of Regeneration and Enterprise be requested to provide a written response to options considered in relation to car parking following the closure of Pool Road Car Park, Halesowen.*
- *That the Chair consider the comments made with regard to scheduling an urgent Committee meeting where Members could examine the most controversial and impactful of proposals within the remit of the Select Committee.*

Following the meeting, confirmation was received that it was not possible for the proposed Medium-Term Financial Strategy to be presented to individual Select Committees due to time constraints. A dedicated Question and Answer session was arranged for all Members and the report was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25th January, 2024. The meeting was broadcasted live on the internet and recorded for future viewing on the Council's Youtube channel.

Stalled Sites – Strategies for bringing back into use privately owned vacant land and property

The Committee considered a report on the strategies being deployed by the Local Authority to bring back into use privately owned land and property which remained derelict or untidy of where development was stalled.

A further update was provided to the Committee at the last meeting of the Municipal Year in March, 2024.

Outcomes of 6th September, 2023 meeting:

- *That the progress made and positive actions being undertaken by services in seeking to bring back into use privately owned land and property which remained vacant and derelict, be acknowledged.*
- *That the limitations of statutory powers in requiring private landowners to bring forward vacant and derelict sites for development be recognised.*
- *That the Head of Economic Growth and Skills circulate information on progress made to the remaining 48 sites to the Committee including a map identifying all 68 sites; liaise with the Technology, Systems and Services Department with regard to an*

accessible list of all sites including regular updates and an online directory of available rentable amenities within Dudley and liaise with Democratic Services with regard to future Member training.

Outcomes of 6th March, 2024 meeting:

- That the progress made since the report was submitted to the Committee on 6th September, 2023, be noted.*
- That the positive actions being undertaken by services in seeking to bring back into use privately owned land and property which remained vacant and derelict, be acknowledged.*
- That the methodology for drawing up the revised short and long list of sites to be included in the programme for the next period, be endorsed.*
- That the limitations of statutory powers in requiring private landowners to bring forward vacant and derelict sites for development be recognised.*
- That the constraints on resources following the introduction of spending controls measures and the implications on service priorities be recognised.*
- That the Head of Economic Growth and Skills provide a written update on progress made in relation to Site 8 and 58 of the stalled and derelict sites long list and contact the Brockmoor and Pensnett Ward Members in relation to a site included as part of the stalled and derelict sites long list.*

UK Shared Prosperity Fund / Multiply Programme Update

The Committee received a report updating Members on the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Multiply Programme.

Outcomes:

- That the information contained in the report submitted and as reported at the meeting, on the update on the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Multiply Programme, be noted.*
- That the progress being made with regards to the Council's financial year 1 (2022-23) and year 2 (2023-24) programme of activity be acknowledged.*

- *That the continued risk linked to the original delays in the receipt of both year 1 and year 2 funding be acknowledged.*
- *That the year 3 funding allocations and the proposed range of activity across Communities and Place, Local and Regional Business Support, People & Skills and Multiply be acknowledged.*
- *That the Head of Economic Growth and Skills provide a written response as to the reasons why Mary Stevens Park, Halesowen had been identified as a site for refurbishment works.*

Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension Delivery Update

Representatives from Transport for West Midlands attended the Committee and provided a detailed presentation on progress made with the delivery of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension.

Outcomes:

- *That the information contained in the presentation on progress with the delivery of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension, be noted.*
- *That the Executive Director, Transport for West Midlands refer comments and explore options available in relation to repainting the mural previously displayed on Hanson's Ale Bridge to the new structure and interpretative signage for the Parkhead Viaduct and Hanson's Ale Bridge.*
- *That the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise confirm whether the Parkhead Viaduct was locally listed.*

Ongoing/Future Items

Items that require further consideration and potential inclusion in the Scrutiny Programme for 2024/25 are listed below: -

- Estates Strategy
- Corporate Quarterly Performance Reports
- Dudley Borough Economic Regeneration Programme (including breakdown of funding awarded, how much was retained within Dudley and where it can be quantified, the economic benefit and social value obtained).



**Chair -
Councillor
James
Clinton**

Annual report of the Health Select Committee

2023/24 Muncipal Year



**Vice-Chair -
Councillor
Rebbekah
Collins**

Our role is to fulfil the scrutiny functions as they relate to the improvement of local health and associated services, as a contribution to the Council's community leadership role, in accordance with the relevant legislation, regulations and associated guidance. This includes the scrutiny of local National Health Service (NHS) bodies and policy development matters falling within the portfolio responsibility of the Cabinet Member for Public Health.

Programme of Meetings and Business Items for 2023/24

Members of the Committee considered the programme of meetings and potential items of business for the Public Health Select Committee during 2023/24. Members opposed the proposed changes to the Overview and Scrutiny arrangements and emphasised the importance in ensuring that the current arrangements remained, in that individual Select Committees be responsible for the scrutiny of any call-ins and budgetary implications relevant to their specific service area/Directorate.

Outcomes:-

- *That the programme of meetings for 2023/24, be noted.*
- *That subject to the comments referred to above, the business items as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report submitted, be noted and agreed.*
- *That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be recommended to continue with the existing arrangements for call-in and that the Medium-Term Financial Strategy report continue to be submitted to individual Select Committees for scrutiny.*
- *That the Lead for Law and Governance, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, be authorised to make all necessary*

arrangements to enable the Select Committee to undertake its work during the 2023/24 municipal year.

- *That, subject to any necessary amendments as a result of resolution 3, the draft terms of reference for the Select Committee, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report submitted, be noted.*

High Oak Surgery

Following the full scrutiny review on the relocation of High Oak Surgery which was undertaken by the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee during the 2022/23 municipal year, the Select Committee have continued to receive regular updates from Dudley Integrated Health and Care Trust (DIHC) on the current situation. DIHC have continued to engage with the local pharmacy to develop a business case to get a more permanent solution, whilst GP services have continued to be provided from the original portacabin site. Members have continued to express their disappointment that the situation was still unresolved and have presented their offer of support to DIHC in any way that would help to advance the process.

Development of Dudley's Integrated Model of Health and Care

Members have received updates on the Development of Dudley's Integrated Model of Health and Care as a standing item on all agendas. Following the cessation of the Integrated Care Provider procurement process in November 2022 and the subsequent review of the Dudley Integrated Health and Care Trust, progress updates on the future delivery of services previously provided by DIHC and the development of integrated care pathways have been received.

National Health Service (NHS) Quality Accounts – Black Country Healthcare Trust

The Committee considered the published Quality Accounts of the Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust for 2022/23, including priorities set out for their services for the forthcoming year.

Outcomes:-

- *That the Quality Accounts of the Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust for 2022/23 and the priorities set out for the service for the forthcoming year be received and noted.*
- *That the Chief Nursing Officer provide a written response with regards to the utilisation of local charities, namely The What Centre, to assist with providing mental health support to young people.*

- *That a further report be submitted to a future meeting, a date of which to be confirmed, in relation to Children and Young People's Mental Health.*

(Reports on Collaborative Working to address the Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Needs for Infants, Children and Young People in Dudley and All Age Mental Health Needs Assessment were considered by the Select Committee on 28th March, 2024)

Life in Lye Project

Members considered a report which provided an overview of the 'Life in Lye' programme and its approach to improving community cohesion and reducing health inequalities in Lye through a system-wide, place-based approach. The different approach that was being taken for Lye and the challenges faced around community cohesion and safety were outlined.

Outcomes:-

- *That the report and activity that had already taken place with regards to Life in Lye and the alignment with the Council Plan, Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy and the Forging the Future Dudley Borough Vision, be received and noted.*
- *That the requirement for Public Health to submit quarterly reports to the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) on activity in line with the agreed funding proposals, be noted.*
- *That the Acting Director of Public Health and Wellbeing pursue a twinned approach of quick fix options, together with long-term projects.*
- *That issues raised with regards to fly-tipping, street cleansing and houses in multiple occupation, which fall outside of the remit for Public Health Select Committee, be referred to the appropriate Directorate.*

(Regular updates on the project have formed part of the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing's verbal update)

Substance Misuse Commissioning and Delivery in Dudley

Members received a comprehensive and detailed report in relation to the issue of substance misuse in Dudley and the interventions and services commissioned by Dudley's Public Health and Wellbeing Directorate to address and mitigate the issue. An outline of the overall impact of substance misuse and the national and local picture, the services and interventions commissioned were presented.

Outcomes:-

- *That the report in relation to Substance Misuse Commissioning and Delivery in Dudley, be noted*
- *That the ways in which Select Committee Members can support substance misuse work in the Borough, as outlined in the report and discussed at the meeting, be noted.*
- *That the Programme Manager (Dr M Andrews) provide information in relation to the number of heroin related deaths or injuries normally be experienced over a similar period.*
- *That the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing give consideration to providing an online session to the Select Committee on how Members can proactively support substance misuse work in the Borough and how their scrutiny skills could be deployed to help drive improvement as a critical friend of the service.*
- *That any Member wishing to undertake a visit to Atlantic House be requested to contact A Burford – Change Grow Live.*
- *That a report on the associated work undertaken by Trading Standards be presented to a future meeting of the Select Committee.*

Evaluation of Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2022 and Health, Wellbeing and Inequalities Strategy 2023-2028

Members considered two reports on the findings and recommendations from the Health and Wellbeing Board's evaluation of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2022 and the new joint Health, Wellbeing and Inequalities Strategy 2023-28 which had been developed by the Health and Wellbeing Board. The reason for the evaluation and how the authority was progressing on achieving the 2017-2022 strategy goals were outlined, and it was acknowledged that whilst the priorities for the new strategy had changed, work continued on the goals for the 2017-2022 strategy, which had become embedded as 'business as usual'. During deliberations of the reports, Members expressed concern in that the Health and Wellbeing Board evaluated their own work and that the report presented to the Select Committee was just to be noted.

Outcomes:-

- *That the new Health, Wellbeing and Inequalities Strategy 2023-2028 and its new goals, be noted.*
- *That the reinstatement of the monthly webinars for all Members to provide support and to discuss Health and Wellbeing initiatives,*

including the Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy and a deep dive into alcohol abuse, be reconsidered by the Cabinet Member for Public Health and the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing.

- *That consideration of the role of the Select Committee in scrutinising the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board be considered and that the Chair and Vice-Chair review how this may be incorporated into the work programme for the Select Committee.*

Update from the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing

Throughout the municipal year Members have received verbal updates from the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing on national and local issues. The updates have provided detailed information on national infection outbreaks, as well as updates in respect of the Brockmoor and Pensnett Innovation Project and the Life in Lye Project.

Outcomes:-

- *That details of the location of the five local Family Hubs be circulated.*
- *That further information in relation to Poverty Proofing that was presented in schools, together with poverty proofing in maternities which was also due to commence be provided. (Report to be considered at the Select Committee in March 2024)*
- *That details of future community funding initiatives, that could be shared with Community Groups, be provided.*

Other items considered by the Scrutiny Committee in the 2023/24 Municipal Year

- NHS Quality Accounts
- Dudley Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) – Operational Changes
- Director of Public Health and Wellbeing Annual Report
- All Age Mental Health Needs Assessment

Ongoing/Future Items

Items considered at Select Committee on 28th March, 2024:-

- All Age Mental Health Needs Assessment
- Collaborative Working to address the Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Needs for Infants, Children and Young People in Dudley
- Development of Dudley's Integrated Model of Health and Care

- Growing up in Dudley

Items to be considered at Select Committee on 25th April, 2024:-

- NHS Quality Accounts
- Update on the development of the Integrated Care Partnership
- Update on the Household Support Fund

Item that requires further consideration and potential inclusion in the Scrutiny Programme for 2024/25:-

- Trading Standards – report on the role and involvement of Trading Standards in the fight against drugs and illicit substances.



**Chair -
Councillor
Ed
Lawrence**

Annual report of the Highways and Environmental Services Select Committee

2023/24 Municipal Year



**Vice-Chair -
Councillor
Peter Miller**

Our role involves the scrutiny of matters falling within the functions of the Directorate of Environment and the Cabinet portfolios of appropriate Cabinet Member(s). The Cabinet Member for Highways and Environmental Services attended all Committee meetings and responded to questions raised by the Select Committee.

Programme of Meetings and Business Items for 2023/24

Members of the Committee considered the programme of meetings and potential items of business for the Highways and Environmental Services Select Committee during 2023/24.

Outcomes:

- *The programme of meetings and items of business for the Committee for 2023/24, be noted.*
- *That, subject to an update on the Neighbourhood Approach being scheduled for later in the year, the Committee confirm the programme of business as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report submitted, subject to the need for flexibility to reflect any changes that might arise during the municipal year.*
- *That the Lead for Law and Governance, following consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, be authorised to make all the necessary arrangements to enable this Committee to undertake its programme of scrutiny work during the 2023/24 municipal year.*
- *That the terms of reference for the Highways and Environmental Services Select Committee, as set out in the Appendix to the report submitted, be noted.*

Developing the Neighbourhood Approach

The Committee received a report on developing the neighbourhood approach in the Environment Directorate, which aimed to provide customer focused services that were tailored to specific neighbourhoods and deliver value for money. A consultation exercise had commenced as part of Phase 2 of the restructure of the Environment Directorate and it was proposed that a further update would be provided to the Select Committee on progress made and outcomes of the Consultation.

During the meeting, the Committee commented positively and welcomed the new model approach and Elected Member involvement and emphasised the importance of collaborative working.

A further update was provided to the Committee at the last meeting of the Municipal Year in March, 2024. The Street Scene Group Manager attended the meeting together with five Street Scene Neighbourhood Managers (each covering one of the new 5 community forum areas). During the meeting, Members commented positively on the progress made since the neighbourhood approach had been presented to the Committee in August, 2023.

Outcomes of the meeting held on 2nd August, 2023:

- *That a further progress report be submitted to the Highways and Environmental Services Select Committee before the end of the 2023/24 municipal year*

Outcomes of the meeting held on 21st March, 2024:

- *That the Director of Environment be requested to circulate a copy of the structures across the Directorate to Members for information.*

Corporate Quarterly Performance Report

The Committee received the corporate Quarterly Performance reports during the year. Directorate Service Summary documents providing detailed accounts of service delivery for each Quarter was also provided.

Outcomes:

- *Detailed scrutiny has been undertaken of specific performance indicators that are reported as 'below target' with responses provided by the Director of Environment and Officers.*
- *That figures in relation to fly-tipping be categorised into areas in future reports.*
- *That the Head of Waste and Fleet Operations be requested to emphasise the need for sufficient and safe places for waste disposal once applications had been submitted for larger developments with the Head of Planning.*
- *That the Head of Waste and Fleet Operations be requested to provide a breakdown of specific locations of fly-tipping incidents to Members for information.*

Dudley Highway Network Performance and Road Safety

The Committee received a detailed presentation on an overview of the Dudley Highway Network Performance, Major Scheme Development and Road Safety, including National Data and Trends, Economic Impact and Local Data.

The Committee raised a number of queries in relation to traffic restrictions across the Borough, the School Streets Initiative and introduction of 20mph speed limit around schools and traffic congestion. The Committee welcomed a proposal to undertake further in-depth scrutiny in relation to Road Safety at a future meeting of the Select Committee.

Outcomes:

- *That the information contained in the presentation on an overview of the Dudley Highway Network Performance, Major Scheme Development and Road Safety, be noted.*
- *That a presentation on road safety together with a review of the draft Road Safety Strategy be submitted to a future meeting of the Select Committee.*

Public Forum

Two petitions were presented by local residents of Quarry Bank during a meeting held in November, 2023 in relation to safer roads and speed control measures on Thorns Road, Quarry Bank and restoring access to the public footpath located between Lynval Road and Thorns Road, Quarry Bank.

The Committee acknowledged and supported comments made during the meeting and the Acting Service Director – Neighbourhood Delivery accepted the petitions presented and undertook to provide a response and ensure that any outstanding responses were actioned.

The Environment Highways Group – Ways of Working / Work Programmes

The Committee received a detailed presentation to Members on the ways of working and work programmes by the Environment Highways Group over the past 12 months. An overview was also provided of the changes adopted compared to previous years including the introduction of the Road Hierarchy review categorising a highways importance to the Borough, to help identify where focus is needed to maximise spend where the greater benefit could be made.

During the meeting, the Committee commented positively and expressed their appreciation on the vast improvements made across ward areas, however it was acknowledged that there noted that further work was needed to improve maintenance in estate roads and gulley's. A request was also made to ensure that future presentations be produced in an accessible format.

Outcomes:

- *That the information contained in the presentation submitted, and as reported at the meeting, on the ways of working and work programmes by the Environment Highways Group over the past 12 months, be noted.*

Transport Fleet Services

The Committee considered a report on an update on the Council's Fleet Service and the future options for its fleet management responsibilities, commensurate with the Council's financial and environmental policy objectives. An update was also presented on the trials undertaken of electric vehicles for waste collection covering multiple rounds throughout a week to establish capacity and allow operatives to trial the new technologies.

During the meeting, the Committee commented positively on the information presented and raised a number of queries in relation to the electric vehicles that had been tested for future waste collection, utilising existing infrastructures and the potential impact to weekly residential waste collections.

Outcomes:

- *That the information contained in the report submitted, and as reported at the meeting, on an update on the Council's Fleet Service and the future options for its fleet management responsibilities, commensurate with the Council's financial and environmental policy objectives, be noted.*

Update on Green Waste Charging

The Committee received a report on all matters associated with the introduction of a chargeable Green Waste collection service. The proposal for Dudley to charge residents for the collection of the garden waste was ratified at the meeting of the Full Council on Monday 4th March, 2024. The Chair requested that a report be submitted to allow the Select Committee to comment or raise any questions relating to the operation of the service.

During the meeting, Members raised a number of concerns and comments in relation to the communications and engagement with residents, the challenges faced by residents in paying the £36 charge as a one-off payment and the possibility of recycling old green waste bins that had been collected in order to reduce costs for new residents that had moved into properties that did not have a bin.

Outcomes:

- *That the Head of Waste and Fleet be requested to provide a breakdown of the departmental costs for the green waste service to Members for information.*
- *That the Cabinet Member for Highways and Environmental Services, in consultation with the Director of Environment, be requested to consider future charging options for residents and maximising the recycling of bins that had been collected in order to be available to residents that wished to subscribe to the green waste collection service at a reduced rate, on request.*

Ongoing/Future Items

Items that require further consideration and potential inclusion in the Scrutiny Programme for 2024/25 are listed below: -

- Road Safety (including the draft Road Safety Strategy)
- Quarterly Performance Reports
- Dudley Transport Plan
- Dudley Borough Parking



**Chair -
Councillor A
Davies**

Annual Report of the Housing and Safer Communities Select Committee

2023/2024 Municipal Year



**Vice-Chair –
Councillor
S Bothul**

Our role involves the scrutiny of matters falling within the functions of the Directorate of Housing and Community Services and the Cabinet portfolios of appropriate Cabinet Member(s).

Programme of Meetings and Business Items for 2023/24

The Committee considered the annual scrutiny programme 2023/24.

Outcome:

- *That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to:*
 - *provide regular updates on progress on the stock condition survey;*
 - *liaise with the Housing Strategy Team to ascertain whether there were any groups/organisations that recorded data in relation to social housing, housing associations, private rented and owner occupier properties in the Dudley Borough and provide a written response to Members of the Committee;*
 - *circulate the structure of the Safe and Sound Board to Members;*
 - *consider the possibility of providing Members the opportunity to allow more detailed scrutiny of the housing stock within the Borough, supported by the Democratic Services Officer;*
 - *incorporate a community safety element to each report programmed for the Committee for the municipal year.*

Public Forum

The Committee heard representations concerning numerous issues within the remit of the Housing and Communities Directorate throughout the 2023/24 municipal year and raised questions as outlined below.

Outcome of the meeting held on 13th September, 2023:

- *That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to provide written responses to a member of the public and all Members of the Committee on the following questions raised.*
 - *What were the timescales involved in allocating Housing Officers to areas within the Borough?*
 - *Consideration of a review to take place on how Aerial Funding was allocated moving forward. It was considered that quorum numbers for meetings were currently too high which was affecting the voting requirements on how to use funding.*
 - *In referring to the Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC), a member of public, together with Councillor J Cowell queried the number of high and low rise blocks within the Dudley Borough that were affected and where those buildings were located.*

Outcome of the meeting held on 22nd November, 2023:

- *That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to provide written responses to a member of the public and all Members of the Committee on the following questions raised.*
 - *In referring to the minutes of the meeting held on 13th September, 2023, which referred to the Tenant Housing Board and clarification was requested on what the Board was now called?*
 - *What was happening to high-rise forums? There did not appear to be a group that focused on the needs of high-rise properties.*
 - *In referring to information contained in the Quarterly Corporate Performance reports, the number of properties awaiting investment decisions had increased from 50 to 95 properties. Questions were raised, as follows:*
 - *What was happening to those properties?*
 - *What was required to bring the properties back into use?*
 - *Out of the 95 properties awaiting investment decisions, what type of properties were they? The significant financial*

implications relating to the properties for the Local Authority was questioned as they were in high demand so why were they being held back?

- *What had been spent on properties awaiting investment decisions over the last 20 years.*

Outcome of the meeting held on 13th March, 2024:

- *That the comments made by the member of public whilst delivering a presentation around the general experiences of Dudley residents who identify as LGBTQ+, Disabled, Muslim etc, be circulated to appropriate officers for consideration.*

Progress Tracker and Future Business

The Committee received information on outstanding actions following recommendations made throughout the 2023/24 municipal year, which included items to be considered at future meetings.

Outcome of the meeting held on 21st September, 2023:

- *That the Chair and Vice-Chair be requested to review the timings of the Community Safety Partnership report to an earlier programmed meeting.*
- *That the following updates be provided to Members of the Committee at a future meeting on:*
 - *private rented housing;*
 - *work associated with the Stock Condition Survey programme that Savills was currently undertaking on all Council housing stock;*
 - *the Right to Buy scheme.*
- *That information be provided to all Members of the Committee on accurate statistics of Right To Buy sales for the last five-year period to include the property types purchased.*

Corporate Quarterly Performance Report

The Committee received the Corporate Quarterly Performance reports during 2023/24. Specific officers attended meetings to provide a summary and responded to questions asked by the Committee.

Outcome of the meeting held on 22nd September, 2023:

- *That the Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety be requested to provide a written response to all Member of the Committee on the details associated with the timescales around void bungalow turnaround times.*
- *That “Know Your Community Housing Officer” information, including pictures and contact details for each of the six areas be submitted to all Members of the Council.*

Outcome of the meeting held on 22nd January, 2024:

- *That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to:*
 - *provide Members with an accurate figure of cases associated with housing fraud for the 2023/24 financial year;*
 - *forward Members’ appreciation to the Housing Team for the work, support and expertise in tackling homelessness and begging in the Stourbridge area.*

Outcome of the meeting held on 13th March, 2024:

- *That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to:*
 - *circulate a briefing note regarding the complexities involved in relation to the 53-week rent cycle to all Members of the Committee.*
 - *clarify the position in relation to mid-year alterations to Housing Benefit and Universal Credit claims as a result of the introduction of service charges with the Department for Work and Pensions and provide a written response to all Members of the Committee.*
- *That the Ward Members for Gornal be informed of any updates in relation to the sheltered accommodation at Church View.*

Impact of the 2023/24 Rent Increase

The Committee received a report on the 2023/24 rent increase and the impact on tenants and Dudley MBC budgets.

Outcome:

- *That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to provide Members of the Committee with information on the average cost of various property types across the Borough.*
- *That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to circulate to all Members of the Committee accurate figures of customers that were currently charged the underoccupancy rate.*
- *That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to circulate to all Members of the Committee the accurate figure that was “written off” as unrecoverable debt during the 2022/2023 financial year.*

Update on Property Condition and Compliance

The Committee received a report on Property Condition and Regulatory Compliance in Council owned homes.

Outcome of the meeting held on 21st September, 2023:-

- *That Councillor D Stanley provide information on a complaint received relating to the cancellation of a gas safety inspection at short notice to the Interim Lead for Compliance and Building Safety for consideration and action.*

Tenant Satisfaction Measures – Tenant Perception Survey

The Committee received a report which provided an overview on the introduction and implementation of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM), examining specifically the Baseline Tenant Perception Survey 2023 element of the research.

Outcome:

- *That “Know Your Community Housing Officer” posters for each of the six areas of the Borough be re-circulated to all Members of the Committee.*

Annual update on the Safe and Sound Partnership priorities

The Committee considered an overview of the Safe and Sound (Dudley’s Community Safety Partnership) and the ongoing work to

improve the management of neighbour disputes and anti-social behaviour.

Outcomes:

- *That the Director of Housing and Communities be requested to:*
 - identify appropriate Housing Officers for the Wolverhampton Street area and circulate the information to Councillor C Reid;*
 - investigate timescales involved in erecting notices notifying the public of the consequences of graffiti and associated matters and provide a response to all Members of the Committee;*
 - raise Member issues in relation to online harm at the next meeting of the Safe and Sound Board and arrange for a response to be provided to all Members of the Committee on the types of online harm being fed through the Community Safety Partnership and what was being done to tackle the issues;*
 - forward Members' appreciation to the Head of Anti-Social Behaviour and her Team for the exceptional work provided in communities;*
 - investigate location and impact of Public Space Protection Orders and circulate to Members of the Committee;*
 - invite a Police representative to attend the next meeting of the Select Committee where an update on the Safe and Sound Partnership was provided to respond to specific questions raised by Members.*
 - provide information to all Members of the Committee following the confirmation of the annual community safety fund received from The Office of Police and Crime Commissioner.*

Review of Housing Finance

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Housing and Communities and the Director of Finance and Legal on the Review of Housing Finance.

Outcome:

- *That the latest Housing Revenue Account outturn forecast for 2023/24, outlined in paragraphs 5 – 9 and Appendix 1 of the report submitted, be noted.*
- *That the proposals considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 13th December, 2023, relating to the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2024/25 onwards, as detailed above, be endorsed.*

Review of Private Rented Sector

The Committee considered a report on the roles and responsibilities of the Private Sector Housing Team working in the Private Rented Sector, including the statutory duties of the team which determined key roles and responsibilities, enforcement options available and challenges faced in operations.

Outcome:-

- *That Councillor C Reid be requested to provide information associated with a specific rogue landlord to the Private Sector Housing Manager for investigation and appropriate action.*
- *That the Private Sector Housing Manager be requested to provide actual figures of empty homes located within the Borough associated with the private sector to all Members of the Committee.*
- *That the Private Sector Housing Team work with colleagues in Planning, Regeneration, Environment and other departments, to look into how selective licensing could be used to tackle ongoing issues in hotspot locations concerning the lack of waste storage and inappropriate parking, particularly in town centres.*
- *That Councillor C Reid provide information associated with the derelict properties located in Charlton Street and surrounding areas to the Private Sector Housing Manager for appropriate investigation and action.*

Contractor Management

The Committee considered reports on the work being undertaken to review contracts and contractor management.

Outcome:-

- *Noted that the review of contractor management was underway with an expected outcome due in April 2025, with the implementation of a new approach and strategy to the procurement and management of contractors.*
- *That a further report be submitted to the Committee towards to end of the 2024 municipal year setting out the final outcomes of the project.*

Other Items Considered by the Committee in the 2023/24 Municipal Year

- Customer Engagement and Involvement
- Community Housing Services – The Neighbourhood Approach

Ongoing/Future Items

Items that require further consideration and potential inclusion in the Scrutiny Programme for 2024/25 are listed below: -

- *Review of Housing Finance*
- *Stock Condition Survey*
- *Private Rented Housing*
- *Safe and Sound (Community Safety Partnership Board)*
- *Contractor Management*