

**Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board
Wednesday, 27th November, 2019 at 6.00 pm
In Committee Room 2 at the Council House, Dudley**

Present:

Councillor C Barnett (Vice-Chair in the Chair)
Councillors C Bayton, R Burston, A Finch, J Foster, P Miller, J Roberts, M Rogers, P Sahota,
D Tyler and S Waltho.

Dudley MBC Officers

D Harkins (Director of Public Health and Wellbeing), M Rodgers (Director of Housing),
R Cooper (Head of Financial Services), S Griffiths – Democratic Services Manager/Statutory
Scrutiny Officer and M Johal – Senior Democratic Services Officer (Directorate of Finance and
Legal)

Also in Attendance

S Bourner – Chief Superintendent (West Midlands Police)

17 **Honorary Alderwoman Rachel Harris**

The Chair referred to the recent death of Honorary Alderwoman Rachel Harris and the Board observed a period of silence as a token of respect to her memory.

18 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors
T Crumpton, L Jones, A Millward and N Richards.

19 **Appointment of Substitute Members**

It was noted that Councillors C Bayton and P Miller had been appointed to serve as substitute Members for Councillors T Crumpton and L Jones for this meeting of the Board only.



20 **Minutes**

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4th September, 2019, be approved as a correct record and signed.

21 **Public Forum**

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

22 **Medium Term Financial Strategy**

The Board considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Legal on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2022/23. The proposals had been approved by the Cabinet on 31st October, 2019, as a basis for consultation and scrutiny. The four Scrutiny Committees had considered the matter between 13th and 21st November, 2019 with an emphasis on proposals falling within the terms of reference of each Committee.

In presenting the report the Head of Financial Services provided feedback on discussions from the Scrutiny Committees. The Place and Corporate Scrutiny Committees had received and noted the report. At the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee a Member had commented positively on the mainstream funding for the activity to support hospital admissions previously funded by the Improved Better Care Fund continued to be ring-fenced, however, concern was expressed about comments made at the Adult Social Care Peer Review relating to unsustainable reserves. Members were disappointed that the Social Care Green Paper had again been delayed and were of the view that further cross party correspondence should be sent to Central Government to this effect.

With regard to the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee the Cabinet Member for Finance and Legal Services had been requested to consider a proposal that the Council Tax Reduction Scheme include provision for care leavers up to the age of 25 years to receive 100% Council Tax reduction, regardless of their financial circumstances.

Arising from the presentation of the report Members made the following comments:-

- Given the budget was of significant importance, concerns were expressed about the lack of comments from certain Scrutiny Committees. However, it was considered that a contributing factor for this could be due to the quality of information and insufficient detail contained within reports which potentially resulted in Members not being able to have an informed debate and ask appropriate questions or undertake proper scrutiny. Also there may be insufficient time for Scrutiny Committees to scrutinise the budget given full and demanding work programmes.
- Reference was made to public consultation. Responses from residents taking part in the Big Question budget consultation was low and figures were not representative of the population resulting in there being no substantive information for Members to raise questions; the Board supported efforts to encourage more people to engage.
- The Board referred to the inclusion of local businesses within the Borough in consultation on the Council's budget given their financial and business expertise.

With regard to the lack of comments from Scrutiny Committees it was suggested that a review be undertaken of the current budget scrutiny arrangements. The Statutory Scrutiny Officer acknowledged comments made and undertook to refer the matter to the Director of Finance and Legal for consideration. A report would be submitted on potential options for budget scrutiny in 2020/21.

Resolved

- (1) That the work undertaken by Scrutiny Committees, together with the updates provided at the meeting concerning ongoing scrutiny and consultation in relation to the proposals for the Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2022/23, be received and noted.
- (2) That the Director of Finance and Legal be requested to consider the comments made by Members concerning the budget scrutiny process and submit a report to a future meeting of the Board.

23 **Refresh of Safe and Sound (Dudley's Community Safety Partnership) Community Cohesion and Hate Crime Strategy**

A report of the Director of Housing was submitted providing feedback received to date in respect of the consultation through Community Forum meetings to inform the refresh of the Community Cohesion and Hate Crime Strategy.

A Member referred to the information contained within the report and indicated that there was no action plan or pertaining timescales attached. Also there were various other connecting strategies and there was a need to combine this information. In responding, the Director of Housing indicated that an overarching summary could be considered.



Questions were raised about the report particularly relating to the number of respondents from the consultation and the lack of detail on the figures to enable a true reflection to be made in relation to the percentages. Comments were also made on the demographics information contained within the Strategy highlighting that 20% of Dudley residents stated that their day to day activities were limited to some extent by a long term health condition or disability which was considered to be a high figure. Also, information relating to religion only included the main faiths and if other minority religions were not referenced they could feel marginalised. Age was also considered to be a vital determining factor in community cohesion and it was pointed out that this information had not been included and it was suggested that consideration be given to including this type of information in future strategies. The Director of Housing undertook to provide a response to Members detailing the statistics relating to the number of respondents to the consultation exercise.

The Director of Public Health and Wellbeing informed Members that the Council used a variety of methods to engage with the community and groups and efforts were also made to visit 'hard to reach' communities. There were also dedicated champions for groups such as the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender. The Chief Superintendent indicated that there were also a vast number of networking opportunities to engage with the community. As young people were less inclined to attend Community Forum meetings, especially as they were held on an evening, a Member suggested holding a meeting at a College during the day with a view to engaging and discussing issues pertinent to young people.

The Director of Public Health and Wellbeing indicated that there was a considerable amount of work undertaken with young people particularly on violence prevention. It was acknowledged that this work may not be as visible as it should be and consideration should be given to informing and involving Members. Suggestions were welcomed on improvements being made.

Resolved

- (1) That the feedback to date in respect of the consultation to refresh the Community Cohesion and Hate Crime Strategy be noted.
- (2) That a draft version of the refreshed Community Cohesion and Hate Crime Strategy be submitted to the meeting of the Board in January, 2020.

24 **Feedback from Scrutiny Committees**

The Board received an update on the work being undertaken by Scrutiny Committees, including feedback from meetings as follows:-

Place Scrutiny Committee – 13th November 2019

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – 14th November 2019

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee – 20th November 2019

Corporate Scrutiny Committee – 21st November 2019

The meeting ended at 6.56 pm

CHAIR



OSMB/15