

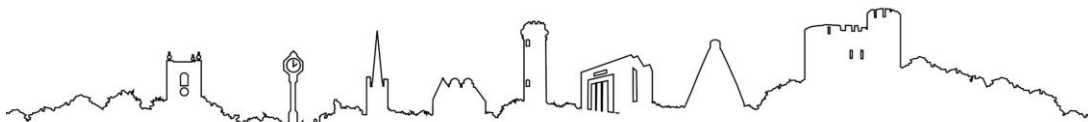
Meeting of the Future Council Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 6th October, 2021 at 6.00pm
in the Town Hall (access from St. James's Road), Dudley

This meeting will be webcast and can be viewed by clicking on the following link <https://www.youtube.com/user/dudleymbc>

Agenda - Public Session **(Meeting open to the public and press)**

1. Apologies for absence.
2. To report the appointment of any substitute members serving for this meeting of the Committee.
3. To receive any declarations of interest under the Members' Code of Conduct.
4. To confirm and sign the minutes of the meetings held on 1st and 8th September, 2021 as a correct record.
5. Update on the Black Country Plan Consultation and Engagement Process
To receive an update from Officers concerning the ongoing consultation and engagement process
6. Public Forum
To invite any questions and comments from members of the public
7. Black Country Plan
Questions and discussion by Members of the Committee on the themes of environment/climate change; socio economic impact and infrastructure



8. Future Meetings

To consider arrangements for future meeting(s) of the Scrutiny Committee concerning the Black Country Plan and potential invitees to those meeting(s).

9. To consider any questions from Members to the Chair where two clear days notice has been given to the Monitoring Officer (Council Procedure Rule 11.8).



Chief Executive

Dated: 28th September, 2021

Distribution:

Councillor A Lees (Chair)

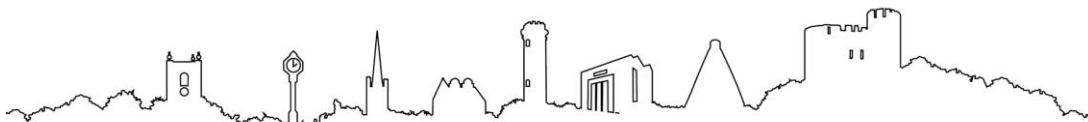
Councillor E Lawrence (Vice-Chair)

Councillors S Ali, P Atkins (Substitute Member for A Davies), C Barnett, D Corfield, J Cowell, P Dobb, J Foster, Z Islam, J Roberts, M Rogers and S Saleem.

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- Please bring and use your own face masks (a supply is available in the building). Face masks may be removed when you are seated in the meeting.
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- Do not attend if you feel unwell; if you have tested positive for Covid-19; if you are self-isolating or if you suspect that you are symptomatic.
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Public Gallery

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- There is no smoking on the premises in line with national legislation. It is an offence to smoke in or on the premises. You cannot use e-cigarettes and/or similar vaping devices.

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Submitting Apologies for Absence

- Elected Members can submit apologies by contacting Democratic Services. Members wishing to appoint a substitute should notify Democratic Services as soon as possible in advance of the meeting. Any substitute Members must be eligible to serve on the meeting in question (for example, he/she must have received any training required by the Council).

Private and Confidential Information

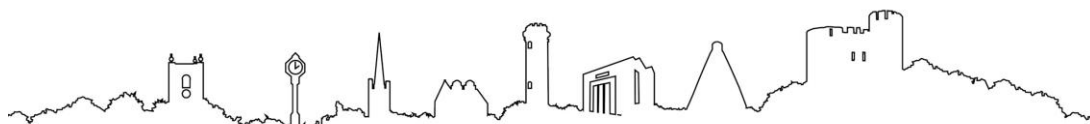
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**Minutes of the Future Council Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday, 1st September, 2021 at 6.00 pm
In The Town Hall, St James's Road, Dudley**

Present:

Councillor A Lees (Chair)
Councillor E Lawrence (Vice-Chair)
Councillors S Ali, P Atkins, C Barnett, D Corfield, J Cowell, T Crumpton, P Dobb, J Foster,
M Rogers and S Saleem

Officers:

H Martin (Director of Regeneration and Enterprise), P Mountford (Head of Planning and
Regeneration), E Vesty (Project Manager Black Country Plan) and S Griffiths (Democratic
Services Manager)

Also in Attendance:

Councillor S Phipps (Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise)
Councillor C Bayton (Opposition Spokesperson for West Midlands Combined Authority)
12 Members of the Public

15 **Chair's Comments**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that the meeting would be
webcast and recorded for viewing online.

16 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors A Davies, Z Islam and
J Roberts.

17 **Appointment of Substitute Members**

Councillors P Atkins and T Crumpton had been appointed as substitute Members for
Councillors A Davies and Z Islam respectively, for this meeting of the Committee only.

18 **Declarations of Interest**

No member made a declaration of interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct.

19 **Minutes**

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th July, 2021, be approved as a correct record and signed.

20 **Public Forum**

The Committee heard representations from several members of the public concerning the Black Country Plan, as summarised below:

- A resident of Worcester Lane, Stourbridge raised issues concerning the sustainability appraisals of all of the sites that had been put forward in the call for sites process; how these had been carried out and what local input or local detail had been taken into account. Specific reference was made to concerns regarding the sites in Worcester Lane. It was acknowledged that sustainability appraisals had been carried out by consultants at the top level. The resident queried what local knowledge or input had been used in assessing the suitability of the sites. A question was also raised as to how officers had satisfied themselves that all brownfield and greenfield sites had been put forward and assessed properly at a local level before greenbelt sites were included.

The Director of Regeneration and Enterprise acknowledged the imperative to consider all brownfield sites before greenbelt land in line with the plan process and stringent national policy requirements. Sites had been identified by taking account of an evidence base and officers undertook to exhaust all attempts to identify suitable brownfield and greenfield sites. It remained the principle to look at brownfield sites first and the inclusion of green belt was a last resort subject to a rigorous evidence-based analysis. The Project Manager referred to site assessments of every individual site. Information such as ecological and biodiversity data was fed into the sustainability appraisal conducted by an independent consultant and assessed against a range of criteria for each site.

- A representative of the 'Wall Health As One' campaign group raised a question concerning the Kingswinford Neighbourhood Growth policy and its association with green belt sites in the area, specifically Holbeache and The Triangle. Residents had expressed opposition to the conversion of these sites to housing. 1750 houses were proposed within two miles of Wall Heath and it appeared that no account had been taken of what South Staffordshire were proposing. There was potential for a large industrial estate and a minimum of 1500 houses or another 3000 houses if the industrial estate was rejected. In addition to the 1750 houses as part of the Dudley part of the Plan, this was considered to represent an excessive number of houses or industrial uses being imposed on the area. Assurances were sought as to whether the Council had consulted South Staffordshire in this regard.

The Director of Regeneration and Enterprise assured the resident that communication had taken place with South Staffordshire in line with the 'duty to co-operate'. Regular meetings took place with neighbouring authorities. Other authorities were contributing to the identified housing need in the Black Country. These conversations would continue during the development of the Plan and beyond. In line with consultation timetables, residents would have the opportunity to comment on the Plans being developed by both the Black Country and South Staffordshire. Additionally, the Council would be notified, and have an opportunity to make representations, if any planning applications were submitted on or around the Borough boundary.

- Residents of Wall Heath expressed a view that the Council was failing in its duty to consult residents. Reference was made to a perceived general lack of awareness, knowledge and understanding of the Black Country Plan and the potential for a future judicial review regarding the adequacy of the consultation process. The resident questioned why she had not been responded to and why Dudley residents were not being written to individually about plans affecting the local area. Due to the size and complexity of the Black Country Plan, reference was made to the difficulties being experienced in making online objections. Reference was made to the cost of advertising the consultation on the back of buses and the need to notify residents of the specific sites affected.

The Director of Regeneration and Enterprise indicated that some of the detailed points would require further investigation. In general, however, the consultation process was defined by law and the Council had made efforts to go above and beyond the statutory requirements. This included extending the consultation period for an additional two weeks and arranging events to reach out to residents. Improvements had been made to the website based on feedback received. The Chair referred to the Government grant of £560,000 towards the cost of the Black Country Plan review.



The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise acknowledged the points raised and referred to improvements made to the website, the use of social media alongside other more traditional methods of engagement. The Chair asked that residents contact Councillors with a view to arranging meetings to discuss local concerns. All residents were encouraged to fill in the comments form to register their views on the Black Country Plan. Reference was made to the availability of paper copies of the form. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise assured residents of the Council's commitment to achieving maximum public engagement. Ward Councillors could play an active role in local meetings and in distributing information and documents in their areas.

- A resident of Pensnett expressed thanks to Councillor J Foster for her involvement in making residents aware of the Black Country Plan consultation.

The Chair asked that residents present at the meeting leave their contact information with officers to enable responses to be given as necessary. The Chair referred to the ongoing communications plan and requested the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise, along with Officers, to consider the points raised during the Public Forum with a view to appropriate action being taken to address these concerns during the consultation period.

Reference was made to the recent edition of the Dudley Home magazine and a potential missed opportunity for a special edition of the magazine, dedicated to the Black Country Plan.

A Member referred to the previous request for an extension to the consultation period. In view of the issues that had been raised at this meeting, concerns were expressed regarding the timing and resource implications of the proposed consultation and engagement activities prior to the deadline of 11th October, 2021. Concerns were repeated about the complexity of commenting via the website and the need to improve the process for communication and engagement with local people.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise acknowledged the workload and tight timescales involved. Officers explained the process for considering, analysing and responding to representations, obtaining further evidence where appropriate and the extensive work required to comply with the timescales to produce the next version of the Plan. In response to a further query, an assurance was given that sufficient resources were available across the Black Country to undertake the work in line with the existing project plan timescales. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise reported that further engagement events were planned and Officers would attend locally convened meetings as necessary. Councillors were encouraged to promote involvement in these events. In the interests of safety, residents were encouraged to telephone Officers to discuss concerns in the first instance. Face to face appointments could be then made if necessary.



21 **Black Country Plan**

The Committee received a report of the Lead for Law and Governance on the scrutiny review relating to the Black Country Plan. A report of the Director of Regeneration and Enterprise was also submitted following the Committee's consideration of the draft Black Country Plan on 15th July, 2021. The report included specific environmental and infrastructure requirements as a result of the proposed allocations in the draft Black Country Plan. The Director of Regeneration and Enterprise presented the report to the Committee in detail.

Questions were asked about the planned process for the scrutiny review and an assurance was sought that this would not be the only Scrutiny Committee meeting at which the Black Country Plan would be discussed. Reference was made to the request to extend the consultation process, the issues raised in the public forum, several errors identified in the Plan and problems with the online consultation. A view was expressed that the consultation process should halted until the errors had been corrected and assurances sought that action was being taken to address the issues that had been raised, which were continuing to cause confusion. Clarification was requested of the Cabinet Member portfolio responsibility for the Black Country Plan.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Enterprise confirmed that he was taking the lead role for the Black Country Plan, in conjunction with the Leader. The scheme of delegation in the Constitution would be updated to reflect this. The Chair confirmed the intention to hold further scrutiny meetings in relation to the Black Country Plan and the details would be discussed with relevant officers. The request to extend the consultation period had been reported to the Cabinet on 21st July, 2021. The Cabinet had decided to continue with the eight-week consultation period. Assurances were given that all identified errors were being corrected. An erratum had been issued that would be made available with the printed hard copies.

A Member referred to the request for residents to complete separate forms for each part of the Plan. Although this was easier online, it was considered unfair to expect residents to submit multiple written responses. The reason as to why one form could not be used was queried. The Project Manager confirmed that one form would be accepted. A view was expressed that this should be advertised so that residents were clear on the expectations. A query was also raised as to why people who had been asked to pre-register for updates had not received those updates. The Project Manager explained that, in view of data protection requirements, people who had registered previously needed to be contacted to confirm that they still wanted to receive updates. Anyone wishing to receive updates at this point could contact Officers accordingly. The Councillor was asked to contact Officers direct with any outstanding concerns. Decisions made concerning the promotion of the consultation process were queried, including the possibility of writing to all residents and the use of the Dudley Home magazine. The Director of Regeneration and Enterprise undertook to liaise with the Head of Communications and Public Affairs regarding the options that were considered and the costings.



Members requested clarification of the arrangements for the scrutiny review. Various questions and corrections to the Plan had been submitted in advance of the meeting on behalf of the Opposition Group. Reference was made to the complicated nature of the Black Country Plan review and the various concerns that had been raised at this meeting. A view was expressed that the identified themes should be considered in detail at subsequent dedicated scrutiny meetings. The Chair had previously raised the possibility of establishing a Task and Finish Group to discuss issues in detail. It was noted that the questions had been requested in advance so that the relevant officers could be available to respond. Members of the Opposition Group stated that their intention was to put forward the questions during a series of future scrutiny meetings in relation to the various identified themes.

A discussion took place about the planning of the scrutiny process as there were differing views on the purpose of this meeting. The Chair referred to the recommendations in Agenda Item No. 6 and invited any further comments from the Committee. Reference was again made to the complexity of the Black Country Plan and the additional issues raised at this meeting. Further information was requested on evidence regarding the projected housing need, the communications plan and resourcing of the communications and engagement process. A Member referred to the importance of the scrutiny process being held in public. Reference was made to the potential adoption of a similar approach to the scrutiny review, undertaken in the previous municipal year, concerning the Council and Partner response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was suggested that the process moving forward should involve a series of scrutiny meetings to include contributions from the public, specialist witnesses and others to provide any required information.

The Chair expressed concerns about the work programme of this Committee and the capacity to undertake the proposed level of detailed scrutiny of the various identified themes within the formal Committee meetings. The Vice-Chair referred to the tight consultation timescale and the stressed the importance of taking this opportunity to ask and seek responses to questions on the Black Country Plan.

A Member made further reference to the tight timescales, the importance of the public engagement process and the need to undertake this appropriately. The arrangements for advertising the proposed future engagement events were queried. In view of the implications for specific areas, including Kingswinford North and Wall Heath, Officers were implored to engage with the local community in those areas rather than having meetings in a central location. Further information was requested on how this engagement would be undertaken and the timescales.

The Chair requested Officers, in consultation with the Cabinet Member and the Leader, to consider and take appropriate action on the points raised at this meeting concerning the ongoing public engagement and consultation process. He referred to the urgent need to consider the communications plan in relation to individual wards to ensure that appropriate engagement was being undertaken at local level.

A Member referred to the pre-registration process discussed earlier at the meeting and indicated that, although she had recently registered, no updates had yet been received. The Project Manager undertook to investigate and asked that any specific concerns be sent by email to the Black Country Plan inbox. A concern was expressed that members of the public may not be aware of this.

The Vice-Chair referred to issues with the website and requested Officers to liaise with the Communications and Public Affairs Team to make improvements as a matter of urgency. The Council was also asked to provide further assistance in cases where people were struggling to use the website by providing additional printed copies of the comment forms as required.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Chair stated that the communications plan would be reviewed with officers. Consideration would be given to holding a further scrutiny meeting, or a separate single subject scrutiny meeting, taking account of the constraints of the annual scrutiny programme and the workload of this Committee.

The meeting ended at 7.53pm

CHAIR



FC/30

**Minutes of the Future Council Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday, 8th September, 2021 at 6.00 pm
In the Council Chamber, Council House, Dudley**

Present:

Councillor E Lawrence (Vice-Chair in the Chair)
Councillors S Ali, C Barnett, D Corfield, J Cowell, A Davies, P Dobb, J Foster, Z Islam,
J Roberts, M Rogers and S Saleem.

Officers:

B Heran (Deputy Chief Executive), L Fulci (Director of Digital, Customer and Commercial Services), H Marsh-Geyton (Acting Director of Public Realm), A Paul (Head of Chief Executive's Office), C Blunn (Corporate Performance Manager), S Griffiths (Democratic Services Manager) and K Taylor (Democratic Services Officer)

Also in Attendance:

Councillor I Kettle - Cabinet Member for West Midlands Combined Authority
Councillor C Bayton – Opposition Shadow Cabinet Member for West Midlands Combined Authority
Councillor S Keasey – Cabinet Member for Digital, Customer and Commercial Services
M Waters (Director of Policy, Strategy and Innovation) and A Greatholder (Principal Policy and Strategy Officer) (Transport for West Midlands) for Agenda Item No. 5.

22 **Chair's Comments**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was noted that a revised agenda and an additional report had been circulated. The Chair was of the opinion that Agenda Item No. 10 (Scrutiny of the Black Country Plan) needed to be considered at this meeting, as an urgent item of business, pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in view of the timescales and deadlines involved.

23 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor A Lees and K O'Keefe (Chief Executive).

24 **Declarations of Interest**

No member made a declaration of interest in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct.

25 **Public Forum**

There were no issues raised under this agenda item.

26 **Change in Order of Business**

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 13(c) it was: -

Resolved

That the order of business be varied and the agenda items be considered in the order set out in the minutes below.

27 **Corporate Quarterly Performance Report – Quarter 1**

A report of the Chief Executive was submitted on the Quarter 1 Corporate Quarterly Performance report covering the period 1st April, 2021 to 30th June, 2021. Two Directorate Service Summary Documents had been appended to the report submitted, providing an overview of service delivery and achievements during the given quarter focusing on Housing and Community Services and Public Realm.

In presenting key information, the Corporate Performance Manager made particular reference to the thirteen performance indicators that were below target, as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report submitted. It was noted that the overall short-term trend for the collective key performance indicators had identified that ten measures had improved performance, three remained consistent and seventeen highlighted a downward trend in comparison with Quarter 4 outturns. A detailed account of the performance indicators was outlined in the appendix to the report submitted.

With regard to performance indicators on sickness absence, it was reported that sickness levels had significantly increased during Quarter 1 with 2.98 Days lost per full time employee, which was reported to be the highest sickness rate since April, 2011. Sickness levels in Quarter 1 last year were particularly low due to the changes in working arrangements and the initial Covid-19 lockdown. It was evident that long-term sickness absence predominately related to Mental Health/Anxiety/Depression, Muscular Pain and Non-Work-Related Stress.



The increase in Covid-19 related absences predominately related to the number of employees developing Long-Covid conditions or reactions to vaccinations, and the long-term impact of the Pandemic was unclear going forward. Reference was made to the introduction of a Wellbeing Calendar to support employees and the Corporate Performance Manager undertook to circulate this to the Committee for information.

It was noted that a review would be undertaken as to how Dudley delivered anti-social behaviour services to ensure that the Local Authority was meeting future need and changing trends, including the introduction of an Anti-Social Behaviour Focus Group that would consult with users focusing on services provided in Housing and Communities. The Deputy Chief Executive undertook to share proposals with the Committee.

Members asked questions, made comments and responses were given where appropriate as follows: -

- Following comments made in relation to sickness absences of employees with Long-Covid related conditions, Members queried whether adequate support would be made available to those families that were affected together with the wider communities, and the measures implemented by Public Health. The importance for the Local Authority in sending a positive message in recognising Long-Covid as a serious condition was mentioned, and it was important that employees were informed of support available and polices implemented accordingly. The Corporate Performance Manager undertook to forward the query to the appropriate officer.
- In responding to concerns raised by a Member in relation to insufficient communication with service users within customer focus groups in respect of anti-social behaviour, the Corporate Performance Manager undertook to request further details from the appropriate officer.
- The considerable amount of work undertaken in reviewing the Key Performance Indicators was referred to and the need to look for more reasonable measures whilst reviewing trend data.

Reference was made to the key performance indicators relating to customer complaints, which had been identified as below target, and officers were in attendance to provide further details and respond to questions asked by the Committee. The Committee was assured that Directorates were regularly monitoring and progressing well in this area.



The Acting Director of Public Realm stated that, although the statistics appeared concerning, the complaints were categorised under five areas including service quality and staff attitude. It was reported that 201 complaints had been received compared to 137 in previous quarters which related predominately to the measures implemented at the beginning of the Pandemic, policies and procedures, closure of the Anchor Lane Household Waste and Recycling Centre and issues arising from fines issued by external enforcement companies.

The Director of Digital, Customer and Commercial Services emphasised the need to provide data on lessons learnt and confirmed that a review would be undertaken on the process of disseminating data to Members prior to Scrutiny meetings.

Members asked questions, made comments and responses were given where appropriate as follows: -

- A Member referred to the need to improve and resolve issues in relation to Green Care, in particular areas that had been delayed as a result of the Pandemic. The Acting Director of Public Realm referred to the challenges faced arising from a reduction in resources in particular in relation to green care and recruitment, however, the Committee was informed that priority would be given to improving the service next year.

The Deputy Chief Executive acknowledged the backlog of work as a result of COVID-19 and referred to the development of a tracking programme identifying outstanding work, whilst being transparent and honest in disclosing work that could not be undertaken due to budget constraints.

- The Deputy Chief Executive also referred to determining and communicating the definition between a complaint and service requests for users and suggested that a responsive digital system was needed to support users including generating automated messages to those reporting an issue that had already been registered. The complex nature of the process was acknowledged and progress would be communicated to the Committee accordingly.
- The Corporate Performance Manager was requested to include further details and comparative data in relation to recruitment in Dudley within the next Quarterly Performance Report.
- In responding to a request by a Member, the Corporate Performance Manager undertook to request updated information in relation to PI. 120 - 16 to 18 year old's who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) with the appropriate officer.



- Reference was made to PI.2074 Proportion of premises in the borough that are broadly compliant with food hygiene law (star rating of 3 or more), in particular that Quarter 1 outturn of 81.06% was lower than the target rating of 90%, and that Dudley should aspire for all premises to be of a good hygiene standard. The Corporate Performance Manager undertook to request a breakdown of the hygiene ratings and premises within the Dudley Borough with the appropriate officer.
- A Member welcomed the introduction of a new Key Performance Indicator in relation to the reduction in smoking during pregnancy.
- A Member commented on the significant amount of areas identified within the report that were within the remit of the Committee and suggested that performance should be considered in determining the agenda and business for future meetings.

The Corporate Performance Manager confirmed that appropriate scorecards had been presented to individual Scrutiny Committees either electronically or considered at a Scrutiny meeting. It was noted that additional information would be included in future reports including impact and assurances of work being undertaken.

Following suggestions made by the Head of Chief Executive's Office, the Committee agreed that the appropriate Director be invited to attend the Committee to provide further details on service areas that were below target in two consecutive quarters.

Resolved

- (1) That the Quarter 1 Corporate Quarterly Performance report covering the period 1st April, 2021 to 30th June, 2021, be noted.
- (2) That the Corporate Performance Manager be requested to forward queries and comments raised by the Committee to the appropriate officer for a response, on the following Key Performance Indicators and areas:
 - The support proposed to families of employees together with the wider communities that were affected by Long-Covid, and the measures implemented by Public Health.
 - Improved communication with service users within customer focus groups with regard to anti-social behaviour.
 - PI. 120 - 16 to 18 year old's who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET).
 - PI.2074 Proportion of premises in the borough that are broadly compliant with food hygiene law (star rating of 3 or more)



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



- (3) That the Corporate Performance Manager be requested to circulate the Wellbeing Calendar outlining support available to employees to the Committee for information.
- (4) That the Deputy Chief Executive be requested to provide details on the proposed work in relation to housing and communities, with regard to Anti-Social Behaviour, to the Committee for information.
- (5) That the Head of Chief Executive's Office be requested to invite the appropriate Director to future meetings to provide further details on service areas that were below target in two consecutive quarters.

28 **West Midlands Local Transport Plan – Green Paper Engagement and Local Transport Plan (LTP) Programme**

A report of the Acting Director of Public Realm was submitted on the development of a new West Midlands Local Transport Plan including the publication of the transport Green Paper, proposed West Midlands Leaders summit and COP26 prospectus and the wider programme for developing and adopting a new Local Transport Plan. Representatives from Transport for West Midlands attended the meeting.

M Waters referred to the Local Transport Plan that had been adopted in 2016, however significant developments and changes had taken place in the last five years including concerns regarding the Climate Emergency and the current COVID-19 pandemic. There had been a significant increase in e-commerce and introduction of new technology within the transport system including e-scooters and e-bikes.

A Greatholder commented on the five Motives for Change adopted by Transport for West Midlands to frame the relationship between transport and Inclusive Growth including sustaining economic success, tackling the climate emergency, supporting local communities, becoming more active and creating a fairer society. The Green Paper established how the economic, social and environmental challenges and opportunities were addressed.

The importance of improving access equitably was critical for social and economic prosperity. The plan would also be honest about difficult decisions and how to restrain behaviours.

It was acknowledged that the issues highlighted were not easy to resolve and therefore engagement was critical in achieving success. A comprehensive consultation process had commenced in July, 2021, engaging widely across a broad range of stakeholders and the public, with approximately 600 responses received to date which had mainly been positive.



A summit with West Midlands Leaders had been proposed for late September to deliberate on key messages and to confirm the scope of ambition and approach for the new West Midlands Local Transport Plan. The high-level programme for developing the Transport Plan was outlined in paragraph 22 of the report submitted.

M Waters confirmed that Council Officers were engaged in the process and Cabinet Members were invited to Regional Working Groups. He specifically referred to developments and areas for consideration within Dudley including Stourbridge connectivity and the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro Extension.

Following the presentation, Members asked questions, made comments and responses were given as appropriate:-

- It was confirmed that the consultation process had been extended and would remain open to allow for further engagement and comments submitted by stakeholders and the public.
- A Member suggested that the Green Paper could be the opportunity for the West Midlands Local Authorities to influence and help residents understand the urgency of climate emergency. The possibility of implementing local hubs to allow people to work near to their homes to reduce extended transport journeys was also mentioned.
- In responding to a question raised by a Member in relation to electric vehicle charging facilities, the Acting Director of Public Realm confirmed that the charging infrastructure was currently being considered.

M Waters referred to the significant amount of work already undertaken in relation to electric vehicle charging and undertook to provide a briefing note for the Committee.

- A Member stated disappointment that the report and presentation provided did not specifically relate to implications for Dudley, and it was suggested that it would assist Members to consider Dudley's Transport Plan and data sets in order to compare and make positive contributions towards the content and priorities of the West Midlands Plan.

The Acting Director of Public Realm acknowledged the comments made and confirmed that the process was in the very early stages of development. Officers would ensure that any information relating to Dudley would be shared with Members and updates will be provided where appropriate.

- In responding to a question raised by a Member, M Waters confirmed that Dudley could consider implementing a Local Transport Plan Area Strategy or be included with the Black Country. The Local Transport Plan Area Strategy would complement the core West Midlands Local Transport Plan and focus largely on local and neighbourhood level issues, priorities and interventions required within the initial five year delivery plan.



- Concerns were raised on accessibility issues to services for people that do not have access to their own transport or public transport.
- In view of the forthcoming Commonwealth Games in 2022, a Member suggested that a direct bus route to Sandwell and Dudley Train Station would be beneficial to the Borough.

In responding to comments, M Waters confirmed that the proposals were at the early stages and that consideration would be given to understanding the appetite for change for businesses and residents, and working collaboratively with all local authorities to ensure there were no disparities. It was noted that capacity funding had been awarded from Central Government to distribute amongst local authorities to help develop schemes and local plans.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked officers and representatives from Transport for West Midlands for the information presented and requested that the Committee be updated on progress made when appropriate.

Resolved

- (1) That the progress on development of the West Midlands Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the publication of the West Midlands Transport Green Paper, be noted.
- (2) That the planned approach for engaging with Leaders on key transport challenges through a transport 'summit' proposed to be held in September, be noted.
- (3) That the high-level programme timescales for developing the core Local Transport Plan strategy through to Summer 2022, be noted.
- (4) That the plan to publish a West Midlands Transport Plan Prospectus to tie into wider West Midlands representation at COP 26 in Glasgow in November, be noted.
- (5) That the information presented on the West Midlands Local Transport Plan Green Paper be circulated to the Committee for comments and questions as necessary.
- (6) That a briefing note on the work undertaken in relation to electric vehicle charging be provided by the Transport of West Midlands to the Committee for information.
- (7) That an update on progress be presented to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee when appropriate.



29 **Future Council Programme Update**

A Power Point presentation was given at the meeting by the Deputy Chief Executive updating Members on the Future Council Improvement Programme.

A hierarchy of plans had been developed focusing on the Borough Vision, Council Plan and Future Council Programme identifying aspirations on what the Council wanted to achieve, and Directorate Service Plans and Divisional Delivery Plans enforcing the 'one council approach' and ensuring that priorities and work were not being overlooked.

A review of future work in Dudley had identified a number of themes including productivity and performance, teamwork and collaboration and service provision, and a breakdown of the themes were outlined at the meeting. Engagement with service areas would be undertaken to review how services could be improved, ensuring best value and considering how processes could be amended reflecting customer demand and need.

A review of technology and hybrid meetings was being undertaken as it was considered an effective use of resources and would assist in reducing carbon emissions. The implementation of an accessible digital communication for residents as an efficiency tool was also mentioned.

The challenges faced in recruitment were referred to and the need to build a compelling package to attract, retain and build a skilled workforce, alongside the sense of urgency and collective ownership in reducing carbon emissions. The opportunity to maximise the transformation achieved during COVID-19, including digital payments, was mentioned.

Reference was made to the Workspace Strategy ensuring that physical assets were developed and the office estate shaped to fit the new workstyles and delivering an exceptional customer experience by creating a single digital 'front door' to enable residents, businesses and visitors to access all public services in one place.

The Deputy Chief Executive referred to issues identified within the programme including new workstyles and the importance of ensuring that employees felt included within the change programme. It was stated that resident engagement, appropriate support and developing programmes was critical to assist those that were not comfortable or confident in utilising digital technologies.

Definitions of the revised four workstyles were outlined namely, fixed location worker; field worker; community-based worker and hybrid worker. All workstyles would be encouraged to utilise Microsoft Teams and minimise travel between sites.

Reference was made to the timetable of actions completed and the next steps in relation to workforce, digital and facilities.



The Deputy Chief Executive referred to the development of ward based plans that enabled residents, businesses, Councillors and partners to identify issues within each ward, opportunities for improvements and provide a strong evidence based baseline for each ward including information from the National Health Service and Police.

Members asked questions, made comments and responses were given where appropriate as follows:-

- The Chair commented positively on the presentation and considered that the Pandemic had escalated the digital programme and looked forward to the implementation of the proposals.
- The Deputy Chief Executive agreed with comments made by a Member on the importance of communication between directorates being critical in ensuring services were being delivered and referred to the Local Authority's ambition of operating a 'one council approach'. The Pandemic had provided the opportunity to drive forward change and overall there had been a positive response from employees, however it was acknowledged that the process would be long and complex. There would be further opportunities for Members to scrutinise the programme as it developed.
- A Member suggested that the presentation should be provided to all Members of the Council for information and commented on the importance of implementing timelines as plans required continuity in order to complete and work effectively.

The Deputy Chief Executive acknowledged comments made and assured that timelines would be introduced and that the Committee would be updated on progress accordingly.

- The importance of employees across all Directorates and service areas understanding the role of Councillors and the necessity of providing political-awareness training sessions to employees was highlighted.
- Arising from concerns from a Member in relation to residents who did not have access to digital services, the Director of Digital, Customer and Commercial Services referred to the proposed programme to ensure that all options were made available including the use of social media, whilst recognising that some users would prefer face to face meetings. The importance of creating a singular system to ensure that there was no repetition was expressed.
- A Member commented positively on the proposed development of Ward Plans, and in responding, the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the first draft of the template was anticipated to be completed within six to nine months.
- A Member welcomed the opportunity of utilising post offices and similar operators in delivering Council services.



- A Member commented positively on the proposed hybrid workstyles in particular the need to be flexible to maintain a full workforce. In responding to a suggestion made, the Director of Digital, Customer and Commercial Services confirmed that a business case was being prepared in relation to enhancing equipment for staff working at home.

Resolved

That the report and information be noted and that the Committee be updated on progress in due course.

30 **Digital and Information Technology Services Update**

A report of the Director of Digital, Customer and Commercial Services was submitted on the ongoing and planned developments relating to Digital and Technology Services.

In presenting key information, the Director of Digital, Customer and Commercial Services confirmed that a significant change would occur within the next three years in relation to resource allocation with fewer employees working on infrastructure and additional resources on supplier management and requirements capture. It was noted that focus would be given on requirements capture, architecture design and organisation-level integration rather than developing in-house products.

The three-year digital and technology roadmap outlined the future objectives of Dudley with new technology, the initiatives needed to achieve the objectives, and the order of priority of delivery. It was noted that 150 digital and technology initiatives were prioritised alongside 115 'must do' initiatives, which would be considered and agreed by a representative group under an agreed scoring system. The ambitions outlined in the Borough Vision and the Future Council programme supported the roadmap.

The proposed Governance Model to commence in October, 2021, included the introduction of a Councillor Digital Forum, Digital and Technology Working Group and Digital Board. The draft membership of the Digital Forum included Councillors to represent residents needs and to hold the Local Authority to account. The Digital and Technology Working Group would feedback to the Digital Board to ensure that the priorities of the Council were being delivered and funding allocated appropriately. The Director of Digital, Customer and Commercial Services requested any Members that were interested in joining the Councillor Digital Forum to contact her directly.

Reference was made to the proposed ICT team restructure which had created two new Heads of Service, namely, the Head of Digital and Data Integration and the Head of Technology, Delivery and Services. The Head of Digital and Data Integration enabled the development of digital capabilities more efficiently and with greater accountability and responsibility for implementing digital initiatives that enabled innovation and transformation. It was also proposed that customer service functions would be incorporated into the role. The Head of Technology, Delivery and Services would be responsible for improving and overseeing the IT infrastructure. The Director of Digital, Customer and Commercial Services confirmed that the recruitment process had commenced for these posts.

Reference was made to the three key business cases that were currently being processed namely: Digital Platform, Future Workplace and Migration to 365.

The Director of Digital, Customer and Commercial Services acknowledged that, due to the rapid progress made, this had created some anxiety amongst teams. Assurances were given to the Committee that the proposals would not result in a risk to employment, but were focussed on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of work undertaken.

Following the presentation, Members asked questions, made comments and responses were given as appropriate:-

- The Chair welcomed and noted the importance of the Digital Forum, and in responding to a question, it was confirmed that support was available to staff following the proposed re-structure.
- A Member commented positively on the presentation, in particular that digital and IT had been separated and that it was important for the success of organisation to allow employees to express their preferences in order to undertake their work effectively.
- A Member referred to the use of jargon within the report and presentation and suggested that an index or plain language be utilised in future.
- In responding to comments on the proposed governance model, the Director of Digital, Customer and Commercial Services confirmed that any Member could attend the Forum if interested. It was confirmed that the Councillor Digital Forum would act as the single platform to represent users going forward. It was also noted that feedback from the Councillor Digital Forum to the Digital Board would be communicated through the Director of Digital, Customer and Commercial Services.
- In responding to a question by a Member, the Director of Digital, Customer and Commercial Services confirmed that the Local Authority had procured an external provider, namely, Whitespace, a digital platform that enabled efficiency in developing and utilising systems across all Directorates.



Resolved

- (1) That the information reported on the ongoing and planned developments relating to Digital and Technology Services be noted.
- (2) That the development of a 3-year digital and technology roadmap for the agreement by the Strategic Executive Board in October, 2021, be noted.
- (3) That the establishment of a Digital and Technology governance model, to be agreed effective from October, 2021, be noted.
- (4) That the restructuring of the ICT team by March, 2022, subject to the outcome of the recruitment of the Heads of Service, be noted.
- (5) That the development, for Cabinet approval, of three significant business cases: Digital Platform (October 2021), Future Workplace (September, 2021) and Migration to 365 (2022), be noted.
- (6) That the deployment of a development plan to close the skills gap in digital and technology, be noted.

31 Scrutiny of the Black Country Plan

A report of the Lead for Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer) was submitted on the arrangements for the scrutiny of the Black Country Plan. The Chair was of the opinion that this item of business should be considered as a matter of urgency, pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, in view of the timescales and deadlines involved with this work.

The Chair reported verbally on revised recommendations for consideration by the Committee. Following a discussion, it was

Resolved

- (1) That two further Special Meetings of the Scrutiny Committee be arranged to consider the Black Country Plan, with the option of more if necessary.
- (2) That the Lead for Law and Governance, following consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair and appropriate Directors, be authorised to take any necessary actions to progress this scrutiny work.
- (3) That an e-mail be circulated to all Members of the Committee outlining the proposed dates and clarification of the process to be undertaken at the Special Meeting.

The meeting ended at 8.50pm

CHAIR



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the historic capital of the Black Country



FC/43