

Scrutiny

Annual Report to Council 2019/2020



To be considered at the City Council meeting
20 October 2020



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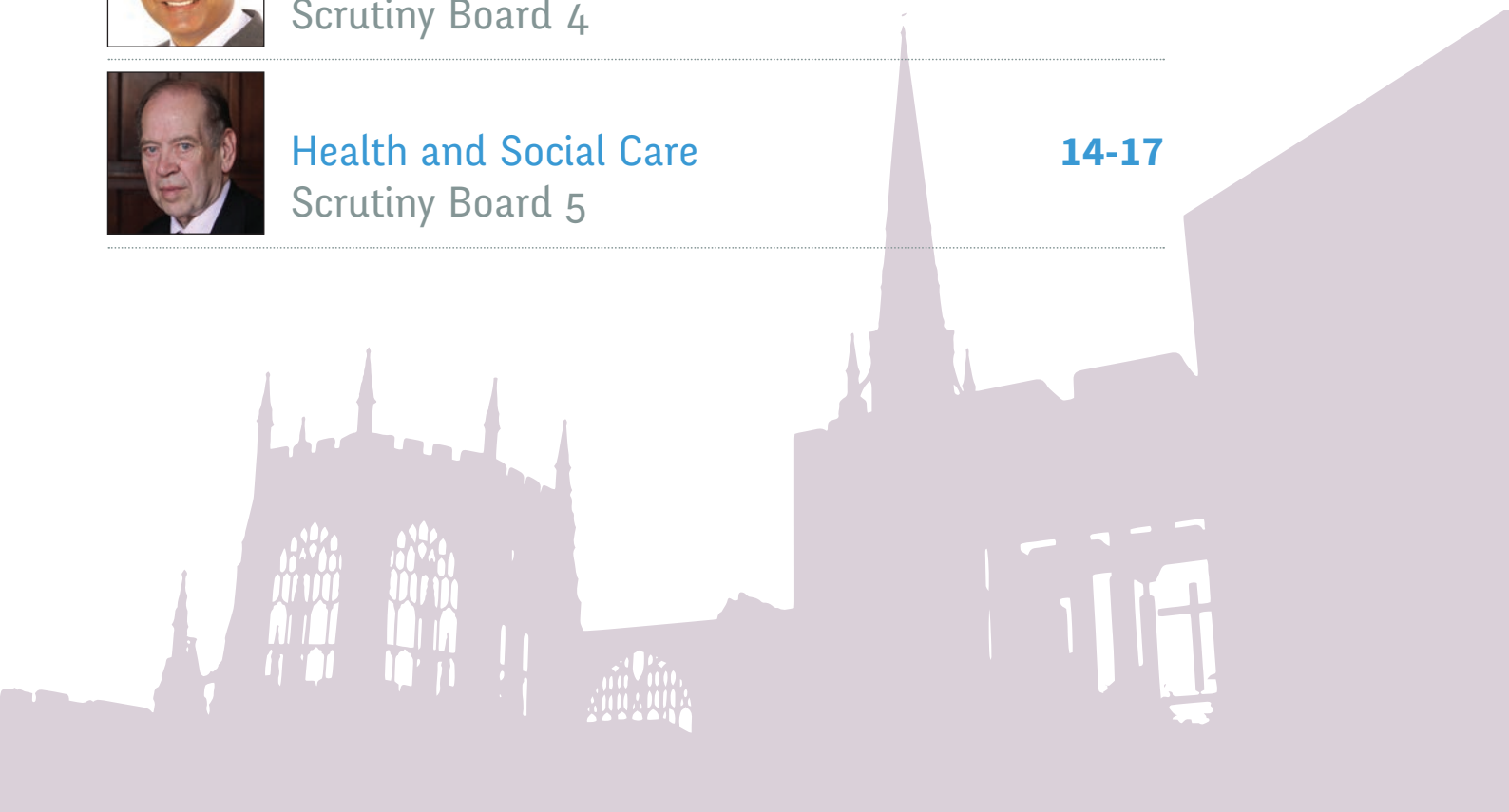
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Introduction by Cllr Richard Brown

The municipal year 2019-20 has certainly been an interesting one. My thanks to Cllr Tariq Khan for the work that went into Scrutiny throughout 2018-19. When I took over the Chair from Tariq in May 2019, who could have predicted that the year would end with a global pandemic?

I have been delighted to return to Scrutiny to continue the good work undertaken in previous years. Some of the highlights of my year as Chair of SCRUCO are explored in more detail later in this report.

One of the key pieces of work that happened last year was a review of our scrutiny function by the Centre for Public Scrutiny. The outcome of the review was a report which highlighted some of the strengths of scrutiny in Coventry.

These included:

- **Scrutiny is respected and valued and has a high level of esteem**
- **Scrutiny has a strong on-going commitment**

in terms of time and resource dedicated across the organisation

- **There is capacity and support for improvement from all areas of the Council, including Senior Members, Political Leaders, the Chief Executive and Corporate Directors**
- **There is strong support from the scrutiny team and governance services**

There were also 10 recommendations made, intended to initiate discussion about how improvements can be made. These discussions will continue during 2020-21, with actions to be identified and agreed.

We have also seen the loss of committed long-standing scrutiny friends and colleagues – Cllr Gary Crookes, Cllr Sucha Bains and Cllr Hazel Sweet. Their contribution to scrutiny was welcomed and they will be missed by all.

The future may look uncertain due to the continued impact of Covid-19, but scrutiny remains and will continue to play a key role in the function of the Council and the re-set and recovery from this global pandemic.

Thank you to everyone who has made Scrutiny possible, including Scrutiny Members, Cabinet Members, officers and external partners and members of the public.

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

Chair: Cllr Richard Brown

Deputy Chair: Cllr Lynnette Kelly

Remit

In 2019-20 the Committee was responsible for overseeing the Scrutiny function (including call-ins), considering cross-cutting issues and for the portfolios of the Cabinet Member - Policy and Leadership and the Cabinet Member - Policing and Equalities. It was also designated the Board for oversight of crime and community safety.

Membership

Councillors N Akhtar, Andrews, Brown (Chair), Clifford, Dr Kelly (Deputy Chair), McNicholas, Ridley, Dr Sandhu and R Singh

Activities and outcomes

At the start of the municipal year, Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee (SCRUCO) held a meeting for all Scrutiny Members to hear about the priority issues for the organisation, including presentations from the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Chief Executives (People) and (Place). This then enabled Members to identify the priorities for work programmes across all six scrutiny Boards. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee reviewed the suggestions received to ensure a balanced scrutiny work programme.

The Committee scrutinised and sought assurance on a range of issues under its remit including the following. Papers from their meetings are available via the weblink below.

City of Culture

■ The City of Culture is an exciting opportunity for Coventry, and SCRUCO have received updates throughout the year on the preparations for 2021, with a particular focus on community engagement, governance and risk management arrangements.

The City of Culture is an exciting opportunity for Coventry, and SCRUCO have received updates throughout the year on the preparations for the UK City of Culture 2021, with a particular reference to community engagement and governance and risk management arrangements.

Members scrutinised the preparations and raised a number of issues including: the financial implications for

the City Council including the legacy spend; capacity to deliver within the Trust as well as for Partners providing support; the mechanisms for engaging local communities; how the economic impact would be measured; ensuring the city's industrial and social heritage was highlighted as part of the City of Culture programme; the importance of public health and public safety and use of social media for

promotion whilst being mindful of digital exclusion.

Outcomes of the meeting included SCRUCO supporting the establishment of a City of Culture 2021 Members Advisory Board; requesting information on security arrangements and emergency planning for 2021 and improvements be made in communications between the Trust and City Councillors.

Bus Provision and Innovation

Over two meetings, Scrucro considered items on Bus Provision in Coventry and Bus Innovation. Members received information from Council officers, as well as representatives from Travel for the West Midlands and National Express Coventry, the biggest bus operator in the city.

Members wanted to understand the current position with regard to bus services in the city, what steps were being taken to increase bus transport and what innovation was in place to improve bus provision, with a particular emphasis on green

travel. The Committee questioned the Council's representatives on the Transport Delivery Committee of TfWM, as well as Council officers and partners present. Members raised a number of issues, including franchising options, comparisons with Transport for London, as well as improving the passenger experience on buses, information availability, and green travel. Members also asked questions about the preparations for bus provision during the City of Culture.

The Committee supported the development of apps to encourage bus usage, as well as other innovations, including funding bids to create an all-electric bus fleet in the city. The Committee also requested that scrutiny feed into the discussions on a Strategic Outline Business Case for bus franchising, as well as supporting the creation of a Coventry Bus Performance Board, recommending strong lines of accountability to the Lead Member for Transport and the opportunity for scrutiny to have an overview of the work of the Board.

Climate Change

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee committed to scrutinise Climate Change throughout the municipal year and to consider it as a cross-cutting item. An example of this can be seen above in the outline of the item on bus provision and innovation.

There had been significant progress on the Climate Change agreement between July 2019 and March 2020 when the item was reconsidered. Work

had taken place by Officers to positively tackle climate change, including recruitment, investment, stakeholder engagement and the development of a strategy and programme of actions.

The Committee welcomed all of the work which was being undertaken and resolved that Climate Change would continue to be a key priority for the Committee in the new Municipal Year.



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Finance and Corporate Services

Chair: Cllr Rupinder Singh

Remit

In 2019-20, the Scrutiny Board was responsible for the scrutiny of the portfolio of the Cabinet Member - Strategic Finance and Resources.

Membership

Councillors **Abbott, Dr Auluck, Bains** (part year), **Blundell, Brown, Gittins, Lakha, Sawdon, R Singh** (Chair).

Activities and outcomes

The Board scrutinised and sought assurance on a range of issues under its remit including the following examples. Papers from their meetings are available via the weblink below.

Finance

■ The Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board considered a number of items on finance throughout the year. The items have addressed strategic financial issues, including the 2020-2023 Medium Term Financial Strategy, Council Reserves and the 2018/19 Capital Programme.

The Board recognised that Councils were still working in a time of unprecedented financial pressure, and uncertainty, leading to further significant reductions in spending levels. Throughout the year SB1 robustly questioned

officers to seek assurance that the Council was using its revenue and capital funding effectively, managing contracts effectively and generating income in a way which provided the financial foundations required to ensure

that Council services are fit for purpose to protect the most vulnerable as well as providing the appropriate level and quality of core services for every citizen in the city.



ICT and Digital Strategy

■ **The Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board has taken a detailed look into ICT and Digital again this year, including an in-depth look at the Digital First programme. They have discussed a number of topics to seek assurance that ICT is as resilient and fit for purpose as possible.**

Questions have also been asked about working in partnership across the region to share ideas and economies of scale, as well as linking up with existing apps, to avoid reinventing the wheel and about support to the workforce to help them maximise the opportunities ICT provides for improving digital skills and therefore efficiencies and customer service.

The Board discussed the Digital Strategy and the Local Digital Declaration which committed

the City Council to designing a service to best meet the needs of the citizens, challenging the technology market, protecting citizens' privacy and security and delivering value for money. Digital successes to date were also scrutinised including data on the take-up of online digital service by residents and details of the internal infrastructure for supporting the workforce. The Board sought assurance that every effort was being made with Housing Partners to ensure there

was maximum opportunities for all homes to benefit from the roll out of fibre broadband across the City and that digital programmes continue to highlight and consider the importance of digital inclusion.

The Board are continuing to endeavour to ensure that ICT is at the heart of the Council's services to improve experiences for citizen's and efficiencies for the Authority.

Social Value Policy

■ **The Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board considered Social Value Policy twice during the course of the year.**

At the first meeting in July, Members noted there had been progress in several areas against the Social Value Policy since previous update in April 2018. This included; the inclusion of clauses in local authority standard contracts which were intended to ensure that contractors were operating in a way that impacted favorably on society; Consideration of additional Social Value requirements within the specifications and/or weighting the contract award criteria, which was now standard in City Council tender activity and support of the Social Value Portal in the use of online solutions that allowed organisation to measure and

manage the contribution that the organisation and supply chain makes to society.

However, Members were concerned that it had been five years since the adoption of the Social Value Policy and recommended the Cabinet Member reviewed the Policy. The Cabinet Member accepted the recommendation and the revised policy was brought back to scrutiny in March 2020 en route to Cabinet. It had been reviewed by the Social Value Working Group who were proposing a new and extended policy, including an increased focus on Sustainability. It was proposed that the policy

was also renamed as the Social Value & Sustainability Policy. Members raised the possible opportunity of developing Community Wealth Building in the City and it was agreed an established task and finish group would continue to look at this.



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Education and Children's Services

Chair: Cllr Kindy Sandhu

Remit

In 2019-20, the Scrutiny Board was responsible for the scrutiny of the portfolios of the Cabinet Member (Children and Young People) and the Cabinet Member, (Education and Skills).

Membership

Councillors **P Akhtar, Blundell** (part year) **Kaur, Dr Kelly, Lepoidevin, Lloyd, Male** (part year), **Thay, Thomas**

Co-opted members sat on the Board for education matters. Mrs. S. Hanson (Church of England), Ms. Kelly Jones (School Governor) and 3 vacancies (Primary Parent Governors, Roman Catholic Church and Other Faiths).

Activities and outcomes

The Board scrutinised and sought assurance on a range of issues under its remit including the following examples. Papers from their meetings are available via the weblink below. The Board continued to receive regular progress reports from the Children's Improvement Board.

Improving Children's Services

At their first meeting of the year, the Board had introductory presentations on the work of both Education and Children's Services. The Board were then able to identify areas to scrutinise over the year. The Board scrutinised and sought assurance on a range of issues under its remit including the examples below. The Board continued to receive regular progress reports from the Children's Services Continuous Improvement Board.

Papers from their meetings are available via the weblink.

Improving Children's Services

■ This year the Board received four update reports from the Children's Services Improvement Board. The reports focussed on the comprehensive Strategic Plan 2019-22, workforce, training for staff, Family Drug and Alcohol Courts and performance data. The Director and Cabinet Member were able to respond to Members questions on areas of concern.

The Board raised concerns that the Chair of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board was no longer a member of the Continuous Improvement Board. SB2 recommend that this was amended and the Chair is now a members of that Board.

Members agreed to continue receiving reports and monitoring implementation of the strategic

plan and the progress towards a "Good" Children's Services.



Post 16 transition and NEETS – Coventry College

On the 28 November the Board met at Coventry College. The Members were able to hear from some of the students at the college about their route into post 16 education and what the college offered them that their schools' 6th forms couldn't. They were also able to offer advice for other young people leaving school. The Chief Executive gave a presentation with the strategic plans, priorities and purpose of the college.

Members were given an opportunity to hear about the work of Prospects which provides support to NEETS (not in Education, Employment or Training) in the city. The Board were able to ask questions about tracking young people who were NEET, strategies to encourage engagement, concerns about exploitation, activity unknown and homeless young people and work experiences.

The young people who attended the meeting were also invited to ask questions on the other items on the agenda which provided a useful opportunity for the Board to hear young people's issues and concerns on safeguarding, SEN and children's services generally.

Partnership Working T&F and visit to the Children's Services

■ As part of their task and finish group on the effectiveness of Partnership working across Children's Services, focusing on referrals into the MASH, Members visited the Children's Services offices at Broadgate House. This gave Members the opportunity to talk to staff in the Social Work Academy and congratulate them in person for their Guardian Public Service Award for Workforce Learning and Development.

Members were also able to visit the MASH and speak to the Edge of Care team. Members reported it was really beneficial to be able to ask questions to front line staff

The task and finish group (T&F) looked at external agencies use of the Right Help Right Time guidance for identifying the support that a child, young

person or family might need and how best to provide that support. It had been suggested that some partners were referring families to the MASH inappropriately. The T&F group interviewed partners from the Safeguarding Partnership, health, police, education, voluntary sector and the MASH. The T&F group used their findings to identify recommendations which will be presented to the Cabinet Member during the next municipal year.



Members of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board visiting the Children's Services offices



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Business, Economy and Enterprise

Chair: Cllr John McNicholas

Remit

In 2019-20, the Scrutiny Board was responsible for the scrutiny of the portfolio of the Cabinet Member - Jobs and Regeneration and the Cabinet Member - Public Health and Sport.

Membership

Councillors Birdi (part year), Crookes (part year), Heaven (part year), Male (part year), Jandu, Lancaster, Lucas, Miks, Ruane, B Singh

Activities and outcomes

The Board scrutinised and sought assurance on a range of issues under its remit including the examples below. Papers from their meetings are available via the weblink below.

Trees and the Urban Forest

■ The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board considered several items on trees this year. They invited the Chair of the Coventry Tree Wardens to talk about the work they do across this city. Members received a presentation which covered the objectives and activities of the wardens. Members questioned them on the relationship they have with Council officers which was reported to be positive.

Members also took part in the consultation on the draft Urban Forestry Strategy. Members wanted more opportunities for Elected Members to be involved in local tree planting projects as well as recommending that other tree planting projects such as through Severn Trent and the Woodlands Trust were included in the strategy. The Board also wanted the recommendation they had made on the Green Space Strategy

about planting a tree for every citizen to be delivered through the Urban Forestry Strategy. Members recommendations will be considered as part of the consultation and progress on the implementation of the action plan will be reported to the Board.

Members were also able to feed into the consultation on the draft Developer and Trees Supplementary Planning

Guidance. Members made several recommendations as part of the consultation process which focussed on firmed enforcement and protection for existing trees from developers as well as prescribed tree planting requirements for developers. The Board also recommended to the Leader that responsibility for trees comes under a single Cabinet portfolio, rather than split across several as it is now.

Air Quality

The Board received two reports on the Local Air Quality Action Plan throughout the year, however due to the Covid-19 closure were only able to consider the item at one meeting. Members made several comments on the draft action plan and contributed to the consultation process throughout. The Board asked questions of the Cabinet Member about encouraging use of public transport, cycling and electric vehicles, as well as tree planting to improve air quality. The Board were generally supportive of the proposals in the action plans and supported the Cabinet Members direction of travel including opposition to a Clean Air Zone in the city. Members have requested that the item remain on the work programme for 2020/21.



Members of SB3 watching the 3D visualisation of a very light rail vehicle at WMG.

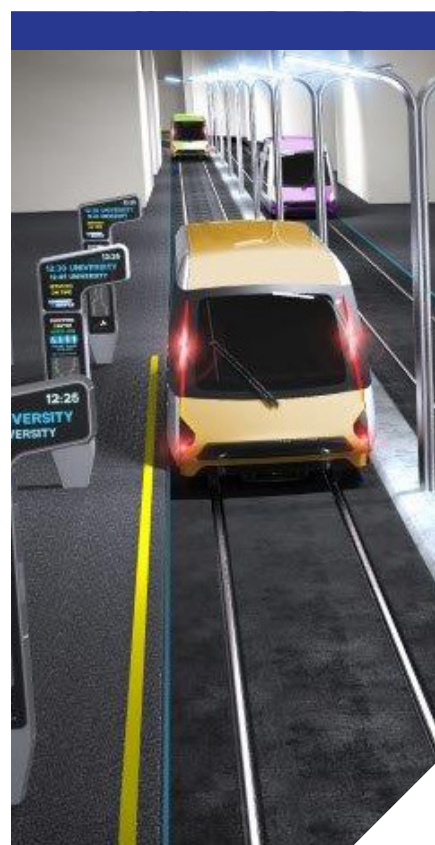
Very Light Rail and visit to WMG

Members of the Board requested an update on progress on the Very Light Rail (VLR) programme being delivered in partnership with WMG at Warwick University following a very informative item in January 2018. The meeting was held at WMG which enabled Members to experience the 3D visualisation of the VLR in development. Members then received a presentation from partners and Council officers involved in the project. The Board were able to ask questions of the Cabinet Member as well as representatives from WMG. Members asked questions about progress including the environmental benefits,

legislative context, business case and timescales, as well as potential routes and impact of 5G on delivery of the project. The Board noted the progress made and supported further work to deliver the project in Coventry.



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Communities and Neighbourhoods

Chair: Cllr Naeem Akhtar

Remit

In 2019-20, the Scrutiny Board was responsible for the scrutiny of the portfolios of the Cabinet Member - Community Development and the Cabinet Member – City Services including issues relating to energy, the environment, street services, waste management, highways and lighting.

Membership

Councillors N Akhtar (Chair), Abbott, M Ali, R Ali, Bailey, Mayer, Miks, Thay, Walsh.

Activities and outcomes

The Board scrutinised and sought assurance on a range of issues under its remit including the following examples. Papers from their meetings are available via the weblink below.

Housing and Homelessness

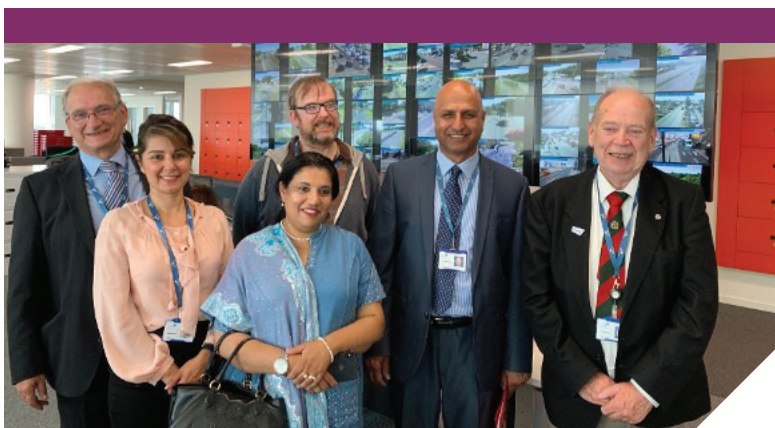
Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board have considered a number of items over the past year on the topic of housing and homelessness. These included an item on a 12 Month Review of the Implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA); Adoption of Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024; Coventry Homefinder Review; Temporary Accommodation Charging Policy; Housing Development in the City and a housing and homelessness update in March 2020.

Following these meetings, a number of recommendations were made and a couple of examples are listed below.

With regards to the Temporary Accommodation Charging Policy, the Board supported the proposals and asked for consideration

be given to options other than pre-payment meters for utilities payments and a further report back following implementation on the impacts of the policy. With regards to Housing Development in the City, a recommendation was made that the Cabinet

Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods undertake the necessary research (using local resources if possible/ appropriate) to ascertain the impact of the new student accommodation on the housing market in the City.



SB4 visit to the Urban Traffic Management Centre at Friargate July 2019

Fly-tipping

■ At their meeting on the 19th September 2019, the Board considered an item on tackling fly-tipping in the city. Officers reported that there had been a 47% increase in the number of fly-tips reported which was in context with an increase nationally.

The Board heard that an online reporting form was making it easier for the public to check if the fly-tipping had already been reported. Despite the marked increase in fly-tipping, the Council had slightly increased the proportion of fly-tips attended to and had developed metrics to identify, determine and address the levels of cleanliness across the City.

Fly tipping had reduced in the first quarter of 2019/20 when compared with the same period last year. The Scrutiny Board noted that it was too early to determine if this is part of a long-term trend but indicated that the progress was encouraging.

The Board were informed of measures the Council are using to address the increase in fly tipping including focus on “hot spots”

and surveillance. These include a pilot surveillance project which the Board requested a report back on next municipal year.

The Board questioned officers particularly in relation to work with partners including social and private landlords, the fire service, educating residents about how to get rid of bulky waste and the “Your Rubbish” app.

Christmas Waste Collection

■ The Board wanted to focus on plans for Christmas Waste collections so they considered an item on preparations at their meeting in September which was followed by a meeting in January to consider how plans had been implemented. At the second meeting the Board considered a presentation on the Outcomes of the Christmas Waste Collection, which covered Performance, Challenges, Communication and Considerations for 2020.

Members discovered that contact they had with residents was not included in the data on numbers of complaints. Only complaints made via customer services were included in the data.

Members questioned officers about staffing arrangements covering Christmas collections, as well as how neighbouring authorities provide a service. Members also discussed the risk of reputational damage by not providing an effective service. Members also discussed plans for Christmas 2020 and how the service could address the staffing issues which had led to a delay in collections over the Christmas period.

Members requested that the Cabinet Member for City Services, as part of the planned review into the Christmas waste collection and for planning for 2020, consider a range of options including:

- no refuse collection for that week and providing extra bags,
- using agency staff entirely to deliver the service over that week,
- a review of contractual requirements for staff over the closure week

They also requested that the Cabinet Member identify a new process to understand the full extent of the complaints/

compliments about waste collections all year round which would include contacts from residents to councillors and officers directly, not just the formal complaint process through customer services.



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Communities and Neighbourhoods

Chair: Cllr Joe Clifford

Remit

In 2019-20, the Scrutiny Board was responsible for the scrutiny of health, adult social care and health inequalities, including the portfolio of the Cabinet Member - Adult Services and a significant part of Cabinet Member – Public Health and Sport's portfolio. The Board was also the designated committee under the Health and Social Care Act 2001 for scrutiny of local NHS services.

Membership

Councillors M Ali, Blundell (part year), Birdi (part year), Clifford, Harvard, Innes, Lancaster, Ruane, Skinner, Sweet.

Co-opted Member: Mr. D Spurgeon (Healthwatch)

Activities and outcomes

The Board scrutinised and sought assurance on a range of issues under its remit including the following examples. Papers from their meetings are available via the weblink below.



Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) Pathway and Support to Children and Young People in Coventry

■ The Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board met with Members of the Education and Children's Scrutiny Board to consider the Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) pathway. Representatives from Coventry City Council and Warwickshire County Council, the three Clinical Commissioning Groups for Coventry and Warwickshire and Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust (CWPT) were present at the meeting.

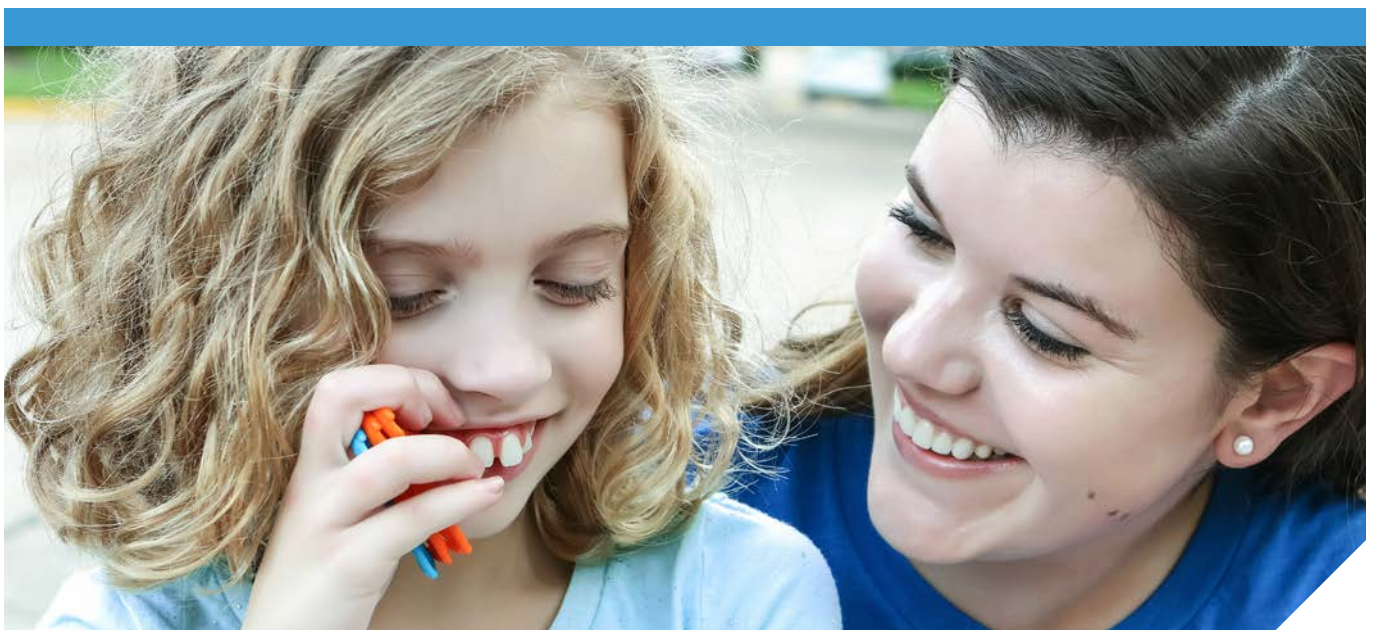
The meeting heard an explanation of autism and the requirements of legislation on Local Authorities and CCGs for supporting children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities including autism. Members heard about the wide range of services available in Coventry for parents and carers, children and young people, and schools to support children and young people who are on the waiting list or have received a diagnosis of autism. This was important as there were significant waits for assessments – in some cases up to 2 years.

The meeting highlighted the increased demand for autism assessments which were anticipated to rise to by 33% by the end of 2019/20.

Members questioned the representatives and officers on a number of issues including; Concerns about the length of the waiting lists and waiting times and the work being undertaken to reduce them; Concerns about the gap in provision when moving from childhood to adulthood while waiting for a diagnosis for autism, with a request to strengthen support in this area; staff shortages and resources; Clarification about autism and the need to support people's differences; The importance of raising awareness of autism; why numbers significantly higher in Coventry compared to other areas and the implications for families of the long wait for a diagnosis.

Members gave their support to

Coventry becoming an Autism Friendly City and for having an Autism Awareness Day/ Week later in the year and suggested that autism awareness training be provided for both Members and officers. Members requested that the City's 3 MPs be contacted to request more resources for Coventry and Warwickshire to support the ongoing work with autism. This letter has been sent and agreement received that this will be picked up by the MPs once the Covid-19 Crisis is over. It was also agreed that the draft All Age Autism Strategy be submitted to a future meeting of the Board along with further information on the Autistic Spectrum Condition pathway and the waiting lists for initial assessment.



Developing Stroke Services in Coventry and Warwickshire

■ The Coventry and Warwickshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee met formally for the first time in March 2019 to request an update on the Stroke Services review, following delays in implementation due to difficulties in gaining NHS England assurance for the redesigned service. At that time, the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee were told they expected formal consultation would begin in Summer 2019.

The formal consultation was further delayed and finally began in Autumn 2019. The Coventry and Warwickshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee met to hear the final proposals in October. At that meeting they agreed to consider the redesign at their respective health overview and scrutiny meetings and to reconvene in January 2020 to formalise their joint response.

Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group presented the proposals to SB5, with support from Clinicians from UHCW and South Warwickshire Foundation Trust, Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust and West Midlands Ambulance Service, who contributed their views to the final submission. The final submission was agreed by the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their January meeting and reflected views from across the Coventry and Warwickshire footprint.

The outcome was that Members appreciated the extensive public consultation which had taken place and were assured that concerns raised had been heard and responded to. Members had also had some concerns over the proposed model, but they were reassured by the answers received at the meeting that there was a clear understanding and rationale for the service changes which were being complimented by investment into the service to improve patient outcomes. It was recognised that this review had taken a long time to reach this stage and Members hoped for a swift and successful implementation and regular updates were requested to monitor actual performance against the anticipated outcomes in the business case.

External partners providing evidence and information: Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group, University

Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire, Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust, Coventry Safeguarding Adults Board, South Warwickshire Foundation Trust, West Midlands Ambulance Service.



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Thanks to representatives from the following organisations who contributed to, or attended scrutiny board meetings; Citizen; City of Culture 2021 Trust; Coventry College; Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group; Coventry Safeguarding Adults Board; Coventry Tree Wardens; Coventry and Warwickshire LEP; Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust; Future Lets (Coventry University); Midland Heart; National Express; South Warwickshire Foundation Trust; Transport for West Midlands; University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire; Warwick University; West Midlands Ambulance Service; West Midlands Police; WMG



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