

**BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

**COORDINATING O&S COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING**

**1000 hours on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2024, Committee Rooms 6,**

**Council House, Victoria Square, B1 1BB**

**Minutes**

**Present:**

Councillor Sir Albert Bore (Chair)

Councillors: Mick Brown, Shabrana Hussain, Mohammed Idrees, Katherine Iroh, Kerry Jenkins, Ewan Mackey, Lee Marsham and Alex Yip

**Also Present:**

Fiona Greenway, Interim Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer

Richards Brooks, Director of Strategy, Equalities and Partnerships [Online]

Muhamad Sajid, Assistant Director: Financial Strategy

Timothy Bell (Consultant-Corporate Finance) [Online]

Steve Muldoon, Interim Business Partnering Improvement Lead [Online]

Fiona Bottrill, Senior Overview and Scrutiny Manager

Johane Gandiwa, Scrutiny Officer

**1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST**

The Chair advised that the meeting would be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast via the Council's Public-I microsite ([please click this link](#)) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

**2. APOLOGIES**

No apologies were given.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Cllr Jenkins declared that she was employed by Unite. However, she had no direct representations for employees of Birmingham City Council.

#### **4. MINUTES – 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

##### **RESOLVED:-**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

#### **5. COMMISSIONER'S REVIEW AND COMMENTS ON THE AGENDA**

The comments by the Commissioners were noted.

#### **6. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (OSC) SAVINGS DELIVERY TASK AND FINISH GROUP MEETINGS**

The Chair informed the meeting that the agenda was not complete as had been planned. Notes from the April Task and Finish Group meetings were not published together with the agenda. This followed legal advice from the Interim City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer that the notes contained exempt information that would be prejudicial to the Council and the effective scrutiny of budget proposals if published. In addition, some of the information was legally privileged. Furthermore, the Task and Finish group meetings had been set up as private sessions to encourage free and frank discussions and advice by cabinet members and officers. The Chair advised that a meeting was held with the Interim Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer to explore how best scrutiny could be involved in budget matters.

Members expressed concern that scrutiny was being undermined as it was not being given the support it required. While confidentiality and privileged information were paramount, members expressed views that some matters must be reported in the public domain so that scrutiny can play its proper role. Public meetings were critical in ensuring transparency and accountability. Members emphasised that given the work programme for June and July, there was need to have these matters resolved so that scrutiny of the budget savings was not undermined.

Going forward, the Chair informed members that a meeting would be held with the Interim Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer, the Interim City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer, as well as the Head of Scrutiny and Committee Services to discuss and raise the concerns by members. Members commended the Interim Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer for being very supportive to scrutiny. In relation to meeting of Task and Finish Groups, members recommended that there was need to develop a framework on CMIS that shows the agenda of such meetings and attendance.

In relation to the Sustainability and Transport, the meeting noted that the biggest saving was the PFI and Highways maintenance contract. However, judicial review had an impact on where that saving would go. There was therefore need for scrutiny to

monitor and keep an eye on that process. It was also agreed that there was need to closely monitor the savings coming out homes to school transport for the 19 years old, particularly in terms of equalities impact. Commissioners had made it clear that there should be no delays in the implementation of savings, and consultations could delay the savings.

The Chair advised the meeting that the months of June and July would be used to provide an overview on the delivery of savings and carry out further work on the recommendations from the April Task and Finish Groups. The Chair set out that Scrutiny committees would consider the impact of the budget recommendations on individuals and communities through the Task and Finish Group process where relevant officers would attend. This would lead to intensive questions on the savings. Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee would decide at the June committee meeting which savings and implications will be considered at July Task and Finish Group meeting.

The Chair further advised the meeting that in July, the Corporate and Finance OSC would focus on the delivery of 2024-25 saving reported to the Improvement and Recovery Board. Also in July, a Task and Finish Group meeting of Corporate and Finance OSC would look at the budget pressures for the 2024-25, 2025-26 and 2026-27 municipal years. The meeting would also cover the Mid Term Financial Plan.

**RESOLVED:-**

That the following recommendations from the April Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) Savings Delivery Task and Finish Group meetings be adopted and relevant Cabinet Members and Directorates respond to the recommendations as set out below:

- i. That the Committee considers the recommendations from the April Task and Finish Group meetings and requests the relevant Cabinet Members and Directorates to respond to the recommendations directly through future work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- ii. That the Cabinet member for Digital, Culture, Heritage, and Tourism should engage Cabinet Member for Transport to ensure that the necessary discussions take place to achieve delivery of savings under 175 (5G small cell and LoRaWan)
- iii. That a robust corporate process be put in place to monitor the use of Public Health funds and ensure compliance with the 7 Memoranda of Understanding, including how risks are escalated to the Corporate Risk Register (Savings 211,89,96,35,155,156,163) so that the delivery of these savings is adequately tracked, including costs that may be incurred as a result of the processes in delivering the savings.

- iv. That a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the Adult Social Care savings on carers be done as this was an issue where the Health and Adult Care OSC could add value during the 2024/25 work programme.
- v. That assurance be provided to the Health and Adult Social Care OSC as part of the 2024/25 work programme that that the delivery of the savings 126 and 130 (Review of Care Centre Model, Review of Day Centre Model) was based on best practice, assessed needs as well as delivery of the financial targets.
- vi. That Adult Social Care identifies best practice from other areas relating to Shared Lives and this informs the implementation of this saving.
- vii. That assurance be provided that the delivery of saving 139 takes account of the drop-out rate for some people recruited as Shared Lives Cares.
- viii. That Leisure Services continue to monitor and update the equalities impact assessment and the members requested copies of The Active Wellbeing Society service specification (saving 56) and to be updated on the development of the systems approach to leisure services funding.
- ix. That in delivering saving 10, Revenues and Benefits continues to develop the holistic and preventative approach to collect outstanding council tax and business rates ensuring staff are able to sign post residents and businesses to other sources of support.
- x. That in also delivering saving 10, Revenues and Benefits would monitor the productivity of the new staff to ensure that working from home arrangements do not restrict the sharing of good practice within the team and information sharing.
- xi. Saving 4: That within the new enforcement staff team recruited to undertake the enforcement work, resource was dedicated to building relationships and communication with the Business Improvement Districts and that this work was linked with other services across the Council that also work with the BIDs.
- xii. Saving 3: That the Council continues to seek alternative funding to provide non-statutory benefits advice.
- xiii. Saving 3 (Review of Benefits Advice Team): That while the non-statutory Benefits Advice Team does not function, services across the Council work collaboratively to provide early help and intervention advice including benefits advice. These included the Neighbourhood Advice and Information Service and work delivered through the Cost of Living Crisis programme.

- xiv. Saving 3 (Review of Benefits Advice Team): That Council communications would include information to signpost residents to places where advice of benefits is available.
- xv. Saving 105 (Business Improvement and Support Re-design): That work would continue at pace on delivery of saving 105 and where possible delivery would be brought forward to 2024/25.
- xvi. Saving 9 (Additional income generated through the Government's New Homes Bonus (NHB) scheme): That there was a joined-up approach across Council services to maximising the opportunities from bringing empty homes back into use e.g. working with the temporary accommodation to use properties to address the shortage of long term accommodation in the City.
- xvii. Saving 216 (Debt recovery consolidation): That members were kept informed to monitor progress of the work during 2024/25 to ensure delivery of the saving in 2025/26 including an assessment of the level of risk for the debt types to be recovered.
- xviii. Saving 216 (Debt recovery consolidation): Once the saving starts the delivery would be monitored to ensure financial delivery of the saving and also customer satisfaction.
- xix. Saving 216 (Debt recovery consolidation): That the Council builds on the learning from these savings to identify areas across the Council where services can be consolidated resulting in a more joined up service, better outcomes for residents and efficiencies that deliver financial savings.
- xx. Saving 188 (Contract Management Efficiencies): That the results of the analysis of contracts across the organisation was shared with the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- xxi. Saving 228 (Fees and Charges): That City Operations explored the opportunity to charge for damage to pavements as a result of construction work on adjacent properties.
- xxii. Saving 193 (Early Intervention and Prevention – Library and NAIS re-design): That the consultation process should be well managed and executed properly to enable residents and other key stakeholders to contribute meaningfully.
- xxiii. Cross cutting recommendation: That as a principle, where possible, savings identified for 2025/26 should be brought forward to the current financial year to compensate for savings where slippage may occur.

- xxiv. That there should be a robust corporate process to ensure that documentation on the delivery of savings is up to date and shared with Overview and Scrutiny Committees in a timely way. Where actions / risks were not completed, as they were dependent on the outcome of consultation or other processes, this should be clearly explained.
- xxv. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committees be strengthened to keep a close eye on the impact and tracking of all savings and concentrate on those savings that have high political and financial risk.

## **7. TASK AND FINISH GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE: CURRENT PRACTICES AND FUTURE USE OF INFORMATION TO INFORM WORK OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

The Chair informed members that a request for names of members to be appointed to the Task and Finish Group had been made at the last meeting of the Coordinating O&S Committee held on 19 May 2024. The Chair updated members that a meeting was held with officers on how to take the work of the Task and Finish Group forward. Revised terms of reference were agreed and circulated to members as an addendum to the agenda. The work would be completed between May – August 2024, with the two task and finish meetings taking place in June and July. The July meeting would bring in the external comments from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.

### **RESOLVED:-**

- i. That the following members be appointed to the Task and Finish Group: Current Practices and Future Use of Information to Inform Work of Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
  - a. Labour Group – Cllr Albert Bore
  - b. Labour Group – Cllr Katherine Iroh
  - c. Conservatives Group – Cllr Ewan Mackey
  - d. Lib Dem Group – Cllr Morriam Jan
- ii. That the following Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Group be adopted.
  - a. 2.1 Propose the Model for Scrutiny using information in relation to performance, delivery, and risk.
  - b. 2.2 Recommend the sources of information.
  - c. 2.3 Recommend how members would use the information to inform the issues that will be considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

- d. 2.4 Recommend to the Committee the Council's strengths and weaknesses around the use of this information.
  - e. 2.5 Propose the support that Members needed to access and effectively use information.
- iii. That the Task and Finish Group would report to the Corporate and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2024.

#### **8. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)**

There were no requests for Call In for Co-ordinating OSC.

#### **9. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

A training session on Risk Management for the Corporate and Finance OSC was being arranged. Members would be advised of the dates in due course. The Committee expressed its appreciation to all outgoing members of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 10:53am.