

# Birmingham City Council

## Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee

19 October 2023



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**Subject:** Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme

**Report of:** Christian Scade, Head of Scrutiny and Committee Services

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### 1 Purpose

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposed work programme for the Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2023-24, based on the Committee's meeting to date. Appendix 1 outlines the topics identified, aims and objectives and the preferred method of scrutiny to achieve these objectives.
- 1.2 The report also refers to other topics, which the Committee has identified, for future consideration, and this will be continuously updated during the year.

### 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee:
  - Notes the information set out in Appendix 1 and identifies if any further topics need to be added to the menu of topics for the Committee to explore over the coming year.
  - Agrees, subject to further input from the Chair and Deputy Chair, the issues that the Committee will consider during November- December 2023, the proposed aims and objectives and the preferred method of scrutiny.
  - Notes, subject to further input from the Chair and Deputy Chair outside of the meeting, its proposed work programme will be submitted to Co-ordinating O&S to enable work to be planned and co-ordinated throughout the year.

### 3 Background

- 3.1 The [statutory guidance for local government overview and scrutiny](#) sets out the role it can play in holding an authority's decision makers to account. This makes it fundamentally important to the successful functioning of local democracy.
- 3.2 Effective Overview and Scrutiny should:
- Provide constructive 'critical friend' challenge.
  - Amplify the voices and concerns of the public.
  - Be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role.
  - Drive improvements in public services.
- 3.3 The role and functions of Overview and Scrutiny Committees are outlined in [The City Council's Constitution | Birmingham City Council](#) They will:
- Make reports and/or recommendations to the full Council, the Executive and/or other organisations in connection with the discharge of the functions specified in their terms of reference.
  - Consider any matter covered in their terms of reference that may affect or be likely to have an effect on the citizens of Birmingham; relevant to the Council's strategic objectives; relevant to major issues faced by officers in managing a function of the Council; and likely to make contribution to moving the Council forward and achieving key performance targets.
- 3.4 Effective scrutiny needs to add value. A well planned and timely work programme enables Overview and Scrutiny Committees to be involved at the right time and in the right way, and ensure their involvement is meaningful and can influence the outcome.
- 3.5 Members often have a number of topics suggested to them and are therefore required to **prioritise** matters for consideration. The Scrutiny Framework sets out the following factors to be considered:
- Public interest: concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen.
  - Ability to change: priority should be given to issues that the Committee can realistically influence.
  - Performance: priority should be given to areas in which the Council and Partners are not performing well.
  - Extent: priority should be given to issues that are relevant to all or a large part of the city.
  - Replication: work programme must take account of what else is happening to avoid duplication.

### ***Looking Ahead***

- 3.6 Overview and Scrutiny Committees will identify a 'menu' of issues (including policy development, policy review, issues of accountability and statutory functions) at the start of the year. Each Committee should then regularly review their 'menu' and decide which issues need to be examined further, and how that work would be undertaken. Scrutiny activities should be thorough and undertaken in a timely manner.

### ***Scrutiny Methods***

- 3.7 There are a range of ways to undertake scrutiny. The approach for 2023-24 enables flexible scrutiny and outlines a shift from monthly formal meetings to a combination of approaches. The Committee will choose the most effective scrutiny method to achieve the desired aims and objectives for each topic.
- 3.8 Based on Statutory Guidance published in 2019, different scrutiny methods include (but are not limited to):
- A single item, or items, on a committee agenda – this method fits more closely with the “overview” aspect of the Scrutiny function and provides limited opportunity for effective scrutiny. It is most appropriate for specific issues where the committee wants to maintain a watching brief.
  - A single item meeting, either as the committee or a more limited number of Members. It has the capacity to enhance the previous option by taking evidence from a number of witnesses.
  - A task and finish day - provided that these are properly focused, they ensure Councillors can swiftly reach conclusions and make recommendations and are effective even for complex topics.
  - A task and finish review – this is an enhancement of the previous option being held over four or six meetings spread over a limited number of months.

### ***Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee***

The Committee's Terms of Reference is to fulfil its functions as they relate to any policies, services and activities concerning:

- Council Housing management services, repairs and maintenance programmes.
- Best use of housing stock across all housing providers.
- Neighbourhood management initiatives and the housing growth agenda (Birmingham Social Housing Partnership).
- Private rented sector, licensing and regulation.
- Tenancy engagement in the management and development of social housing and Housing Liaison Boards.

- Exempt accommodation.
- Housing Options for vulnerable adults, children, young people and offenders.
- Temporary accommodation provision.
- Homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Supply of homes to meet housing need.

3.9 The Committee is chaired by Cllr Mohammed Idrees, and its membership comprises Cllrs Ziaul Islam, Saqib Khan, Lauren Rainbow, Rinkal Shergill, Ron Storer, Penny Wagg and Ken Wood.

#### **4 Work Programme 2023-24**

- 4.1 Appendix 1 sets out the topics the Committee will consider over the next few months, and also outlines future items for consideration.
- 4.2 The Committee may decide to add further items to the work programme during the course of the year. When considering this, the Committee is advised to consider where it can best add value through scrutiny, and how it can prioritise topics for consideration based on the Scrutiny Framework referred to in 3.5.
- 4.3 The Council's latest [Forward Plan](#) may assist Members in identifying future topics. The following reports are of particular relevance to this Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

ID Number	Title	Proposed Date of Decision
010625/2023	Bromford Housing Development, Open Space Improvement, Procurement Strategy and revised FBC	17 Oct 23
010770/2023	Housing Revenue Account Business Plan	17 Oct 23
010840/2023	Asset Management Strategy	17 Oct 23
011746/2023	Local Authority Housing Fund – Round 2	17 Oct 23
011990/2023	Ratification of Selective Licensing Fee	17 Oct 23
011496/2023	Building Birmingham: Procurement Strategy for Housing Developments for Various Sites	14 Nov 23
011970/2023	Private Rented Sector Pathfinder Programme Grant 2023-25	14 Nov 23
011849/2023	Housing Repairs and Maintenance Contract Extension	16 Jan 24

- 4.4 Overview and Scrutiny Chairs are advised to maintain regular engagement with Cabinet Members to enable flexibility to be built into the Overview and Scrutiny work programme, so as to respond to the Council's policy priorities in a timely way.

- 4.5 The work programme, as set out in Appendix 1, also cross references the work of the Committee with the Council's Corporate Priorities 2022-26. During the period June – April 2023, the work of this Committee will contribute to 4 Corporate Priorities.

## **5 Any Finance Implications**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report.

## **6 Any Legal Implications**

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report.

## **7 Any Equalities Implications**

- 7.1 The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
  - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2 The protected characteristics and groups outlined in the Equality Act are Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Marriage and Civil Partnership; Pregnancy and Maternity; Race; Religion and Belief; Sex, and Sexual Orientation.
- 7.3 The Committee should ensure that it addresses these duties by considering them during work programme development, the scoping of work, evidence gathering and making recommendations. This should include considering how policy issues impact on different groups within the community, particularly those that share a relevant protected characteristic; whether the impact on particular groups is fair and proportionate; whether there is equality of access to services and fair representation of all groups within Birmingham; and whether any positive opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and/or good relations between people are being realised.
- 7.4 The Committee should ensure that equalities comments, and any recommendations, are based on evidence. This should include demographic and service level data and evidence of residents/service-users views gathered through consultation.

## **8 Appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix 1: Work Programme 2023-24 – October

## **9 Background Papers**

9.1 [Birmingham City Council Constitution](#)

9.2 Birmingham City Council Overview and Scrutiny Framework April 2021

## Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023/24

Month	Item/Topic	Aims and Objectives	Scrutiny Method	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer	Other Witnesses	Additional Information and Outcome*
July	<p>Voids – Improving Standards</p> <p><b>Corporate Priority: 11</b></p>	To be confirmed by Task and Finish Group	Task and Finish Group meetings	Director, Housing Management – Stephen Gabriel		<p>The Housing and Neighbourhoods O&amp;S Committee in 2022-23 agreed to review Voids – Improving Standards. A <a href="#">Terms of Reference</a> was approved in February 2023, and the <a href="#">Council's City Housing service presented</a> in March 2023. Committee members also took part in visits to City Housing void properties. The intention had been to continue into 2023-24.</p> <p>As there is now a dedicated Homes O&amp;S Committee for 2023-24, the scope of these Terms of Reference will be reviewed at the first Task and Finish Group meeting.</p>
September	<p>Social Housing Regulation Bill</p> <p><b>Corporate Priority: 11</b></p>	<p>Provide information on what the Social Housing Regulation Bill means for the Council's City Housing service.</p> <p>Understand how City Housing will achieve compliance with the Social Housing Regulation Bill, and preparation for inspection from the Regulator for Social Housing in April 2024</p>	<p>Committee meeting - single item: 21 September 2023, 2pm.</p> <p>Venue: Room 6, Council House</p>	Head of Service, Strategic Enabling – Naomi Morris		<p>This Bill intends to deliver the reforms outlined in <a href="#">the Social Housing White Paper</a> and address the concerns following the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017. It will introduce a stronger and more proactive regulatory regime to improve standards and accountability for landlords for the services they provide.</p>

Month	Item/Topic	Aims and Objectives	Scrutiny Method	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer	Other Witnesses	Additional Information and Outcome*
		Consider how Member insight can inform and drive improved services	<b>Deadline for Papers: 12 September 2023</b>			The agenda item will also outline progress toward inspections following the Regulatory Notice in May 2023.  <b>Outcome:</b> Approved quarterly compliance meetings
September	Housing Ombudsman – Paragraph 49  <b>Corporate Priority: 11</b>	Outline the background to, and the key recommendations from, the Housing Ombudsman special report on Birmingham City Council  Provide information on the progress made towards delivering on the recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman, Paragraph 49 report.  Consider how Member insight can inform and drive improved services	Committee meeting - single item: 21 September 2023, 2pm.  Venue: Room 6, Council House  <b>Deadline for Papers: 12 September 2023</b>	Head of Service, Strategic Enabling – Naomi Morris		In January, the Housing Ombudsman published a <a href="#">special report</a> on Birmingham City Council. The report made recommendations relating to repair handling; complaint handling; record keeping and compensation policy.  <b>Outcome:</b> Approved quarterly compliance meetings
September	Scrutiny Contribution to Budget Savings and Recovery Plan	For the Committee to consider a report on current and future Budget Savings and Recovery Plans and implications for Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Committee meeting - single item: 21 September 2023, 2pm.  Venue: Room 6, Council House	Cllr Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness	Paul Langford, Strategic Director, City Housing	It was agreed at Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July that all Scrutiny Committees will consider the implications of the Medium-Term Financial Plan at the September Committee meetings.



Month	Item/Topic	Aims and Objectives	Scrutiny Method	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer	Other Witnesses	Additional Information and Outcome*
			<b>Deadline for Papers: 12 September 2023</b>			
October	Exempt Accommodation  <b>Corporate Priority:</b> 9, 10 and 11	Provide update on progress of outstanding recommendations from Exempt Accommodation inquiry.  Consider the impact of the recommendations from the Inquiry	Committee meeting - single item: 19 October 2023, 2pm.  Venue: Room 6, Council House  <b>Deadline for Papers: 10 October 2023</b>	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, Cllr Jayne Francis  Assistant Director, Housing Strategy and Enabling – Guy Chaundy		<a href="#">Exempt Accommodation Inquiry</a> , 2021  <a href="#">Latest update to Co-ordinating O&amp;S Committee</a> (March 2023)
October	Scrutiny of Delivery of 2023/24 Budget Savings and Update on Council's Response to Section 114 Notice and Financial Recovery Plan	Continue to scrutinise the existing 2023/24 savings.  Consider the implications of recent events on the Committee's work programme.	Committee meeting – standing item: 19 October 2023, 2pm  Venue: Room 6, Council House  <b>Deadline for Papers: 10 October 2023</b>	Strategic Director, City Housing - Paul Langford	TBC	Co-ordinating O&S Committee on 15.09.23 agreed that all committees should have a standing item on the delivery of existing savings for 2023/24 particular to the remit of the Committee.
November		To be confirmed				
December		To be confirmed				
January	Regulatory Compliance	Provide oversight, scrutiny and productive challenge to City	Committee meeting – single	Cabinet Member for Housing and		Following agreement in September 2023 to hold quarterly landlord

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	<b>Corporate Priority:</b> 11 and 12	Housing while moving towards compliance with the requirements under the Social Housing Regulation Bill and the recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman special report.	theme: 25 January 2023, 2pm  Venue: Room 6, Council House  Deadline for Papers: 16 January 2023	Homelessness, Cllr Jayne Francis  Strategic Director, City Housing – Paul Langford		compliance meetings, the cycle of meetings will commence in January 2023. This will enable Members of the Committee to receive bespoke training in advance of this first session.
February		To be confirmed				
March		To be confirmed				
April	Regulatory Compliance  <b>Corporate Priority:</b> 11 and 12	Provide oversight, scrutiny and productive challenge to City Housing while moving towards compliance with the requirements under the Social Housing Regulation Bill and the recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman special report.	Committee meeting – single theme: 18 April 2023, 2pm  Venue: Room 6, Council House  Deadline for Papers: 9 April 2023	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, Cllr Jayne Francis  Strategic Director, City Housing – Paul Langford		Following agreement in September 2023 to hold quarterly landlord compliance meetings, the cycle of meetings will commence in January 2023. This will be the second time that this item will take place.

\*Outcome: This will be populated once the item/topic has been completed. It will highlight the added value and impact.

### Menu of Options for Future Consideration

The following items had been identified as potential topics for future consideration. This approach enables the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to remain flexible and respond in a timely manner to emerging issues.

This is a live work programme work programme. New items may be added, or items removed during the course of the year. Proposed aims and objectives as well as scrutiny methodology may also be subject to change.

Item/ Topic	Proposed Aims and Objectives	Proposed Scrutiny Method	Additional Information
Affordable Housing	This will be confirmed following further discussions by the O&S Committee	This will be confirmed following further discussions by the O&S Committee	This will be confirmed following further discussions by the O&S Committee. However, there is a proposal for a single agenda item discussion at Committee. This will provide the Committee with a more detailed understanding of the strategy for Affordable Housing, with a view to identify areas for scrutiny to explore, if appropriate.
Customer Services – Housing Repairs	To be confirmed following July’s Co-ordinating O&S Committee. Currently: Monitor the progress and impact of the recommendations from the Customers Services O&S programme	To be confirmed	Co-ordinating O&S Committee convened Task and Finish groups to identify, and monitor progress of, recommendations to improve customer services in 4 areas including Housing Repairs.  A final Task and Finish group took place on 14 June 2023, and a report presented to Co-ordinating O&S in July. It was agreed that Homes O&S Committee takes forward this work for Housing Repairs in the future.
Tenant Engagement	This will be confirmed following further discussions by the O&S Committee.	This will be confirmed following further discussions by the O&S Committee	This will be confirmed following further discussions by the O&S Committee.

In addition to the above, the Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake an Inquiry focused on improving the standards of Council homes. [A Terms of Reference was approved at the Committee in September 2023.](#)

**Scrutiny Method Options:**

Committee meeting - single item

Committee meeting - single theme

Task and Finish Group (outline number of meetings)

On location

Other - (describe)

**Corporate Priorities, Performance and Outcomes****Corporate Priorities 2022 – 26:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 Support inclusive economic growth                          | 11 Increase affordable, safe, green housing                       |
| 2 Tackle unemployment  | 12 Tackle homelessness  |
| 3 Attract inward investment and infrastructure               | 13 Tackle health inequalities                                     |
| 4 Maximise the benefits of the Commonwealth Games            | 14 Encourage and enable physical activity and healthy living      |
| 5 Tackle poverty and inequalities                            | 15 Champion mental health   |
| 6 Empower citizens and enable citizen voice                  | 16 Improve outcomes for adults with disabilities and older people |
| 7 Promote and champion diversity, civic pride and culture    | 17 Improve street cleanliness                                     |
| 8 Support and enable all children and young people to thrive | 18 Improve air quality  |
| 9 Make the city safer  | 19 Continue on the Route to Zero                                  |
| 10 Protect and safeguard vulnerable citizens                 | 20 Be a City of Nature  |
|  | 21 Delivering a Bold Best in Class Council                        |

Information on the [Corporate Priorities, Performance and City Outcomes](#) was reported to the Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee OSC in June 2023.