

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

NEIGHBOURHOODS O&S COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING

1400 hours on Wednesday, 1 November 2023,

Committee Room 6, Council House

Minutes

Present:

Councillor Shabrana Hussain

Councillors: Deirdre Alden, Marcus Bernasconi, Kerry Brewer, Marje Bridle, Ray Goodwin, and Izzy Knowles

Also Present:

Wendy Griffiths, AD, Customer Services & Business Support (online)

Revinder Johal, Commissioning Manager, Adults Social Care

Shirin Marashi, Senior Commissioning Officer, Adults Social Care

Amelia Murray, Overview and Scrutiny Manager

Sajeela Naseer, Director, Regulation and Enforcement

Nic Reid, Principal Operations Manager (online)

Carl Thomlinson, Interim Finance Business Partner, City Operations (online)

Amanda Simcox, Scrutiny Officer

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chair advised that this meeting will be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Public-I microsite and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there are confidential or exempt items.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for lateness was received on behalf of Cllr Ray Goodwin.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded they must declare all relevant pecuniary and other registerable interests arising from any business to be discussed at this meeting, and none were declared.

4. MINUTES

(See document No. 1)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. COMMISSIONERS REVIEW AND COMMENTS ON THE AGENDA

The Chair advised that all reports needed to be sent to the Commissioners for review and to provide comments on the agenda, and it was agreed that the comments for item 7 would be picked up under that item.

In response to the question as to whether the Commissioners would be attending or watching the committee meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny Manager responded Scrutiny had not been advised of this.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the comments received from the Commissioner on this agenda and agreed to discuss the comments under item 7.

6. ACTION TRACKER

(See document No. 2)

The Chair advised the Committee the outstanding actions for waste including the workshop, and localisation were being progressed with officers. Also, other outstanding actions would be forwarded and progressed with the appropriate officers for resolution.

RESOLVED:

That the action tracker was noted.

7. SCRUTINY OF DELIVERY OF 2023/24 BUDGET SAVINGS

(See document No. 3)

Carl Thomlinson, Interim Finance Business Partner, City Operations (online), Wendy Griffiths, AD, Customer Services & Business Support (online), Nic Reid, Principal Operations Manager (online), and Sajeela Naseer, Director, Regulation and Enforcement, were in attendance for this item.

In response to the Commissioners comments the Committee was provided with additional commentary and details of the rationale for the original four non-deliverable cross cutting savings and reasons why they were deemed undeliverable. It was acknowledged part of the problem had been due to lack of co-ordination and duplication. Assurance was provided that this mistake would not be repeated as there had been a move away from cross cutting initiatives and savings, Directorates were responsible for their own budget and savings and were working collectively to bridge the budget savings gap.

The Committee was provided with details of the original governance and decision making process relating to the four non-deliverable savings and the Committee requested they were provided with an audit trail of the process for how these savings were signed off, to include timelines, responsible officers, and supporting paperwork for the next committee meeting.

The Commissioners concerns were echoed by the Committee, and further concerns were raised about the slow pace of the budget savings in light of the significant saving decisions that would be needed. Comments were made about how the Committee might open a dialogue with the Commissioners, and the Chair agreed to ask the Commissioners if they would like to attend a future meeting.

The Committee was updated on progress made towards achieving the medium and high risk savings, and it was highlighted the savings rated amber was because they had not undertaken full financial monitoring. This was underway and would be reported to both Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet.

The Committee was assured there has been no significant impact at present on the Pest Control Service.

The meeting discussed missed green waste collections and the work to drive down missed collections. It was confirmed the 55 households could request a rebate for the full amount of £50 which totalled £2,750. It was suggested the number of complaints about missed collections that did not reach the rebate threshold would provide a bigger picture. The meeting was informed deliberations were ongoing in relation to the viability of the redevelopment of the Lifford Lane depot.

The Chair advised the Committee there will be a Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group led by Finance and Resources O&S Committee to look at the budget and savings across the council in further detail. The Finance and Resources Budget Task and Finish Group will include the Chairs of all the O&S Committees and the Chair undertook to provide feedback to the Committee.

The Committee requested that the £710,000 non-delivery savings for Council Services – Bereavement was picked up when the Bereavement item was discussed at the January committee meeting.

RESOLVED:

That:

- The information was noted.
- The establishment of the Finance and Resources Budget Task and Finish Group was noted.
- The Chair agreed to ask the Commissioners if they would like to attend a future committee meeting to open a dialogue with the Commissioner overseeing the portfolio.
- An audit trail of the process for how the four non-deliverable savings were signed off, to include timelines, responsible officers, and supporting paperwork is provided for the next committee meeting.
- The £710,000 non-delivery savings for Customer Services – Bereavement to be picked up when the Bereavement item was discussed at the January committee meeting.

8. DOMESTIC ABUSE PREVENTION STRATEGY

(See document No. 4)

Shirin Marashi, Senior Commissioning Officer, Adults Social Care and Revinder Johal, Commissioning Manager, Adults Social Care were in attendance for this item.

The presentation was given which included the context, scope of the strategy, background of the current strategy, Scrutiny involvement to date, the drafting of the Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2024+, including the overall approach, the Strategy Working Group (SWG), draft content of the new strategy, the six priorities for change, what success looked like, and the consultation and engagement plan.

During the discussion and in response to queries raised by Members, the main points included:

The Budget to Deliver the Strategy

The Committee was informed the previous strategy had no budget apart from the £3.1m the Council received from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). This was for supporting victims and children who reside in safe accommodation and will continue as it was a statutory duty. The rest was reliant on partners. It was recognised by partners that domestic abuse drives demand for their services and so, it will be a Birmingham Strategy led by strategic partners.

Action Plan

In responding to the question on how the vision will be delivered the Committee was informed officers were currently collaborating with partners on developing the action plan.

Data

There was a wealth of data and insight to help target resources. However, domestic abuse is a hidden crime, and officers were collaborating with specialist providers to ascertain where they can intervene earlier.

Domestic abuse was increasing and there could be a variety of reasons if the data was showing it was decreasing in a particular area.

Family Hubs

There will be 10 Family Hubs in Birmingham funded by the Department for Education.

Cuckooing

Cuckooing was a form of abuse and has parallels with domestic abuse. However, the government definition of domestic abuse refers to family members, partners, or ex-partners, and this may not be the case with incidences of cuckooing.

The Committee was informed the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership Annual Report will be discussed at the December committee meeting and attendees could be asked for a response on how cuckooing cases were addressed.

Priority 6 - Hold Perpetrators to Account

They were preparing a good practice guidance to support this priority and holding perpetrators to account is not reliant on the Council but working in partnership.

Training to Councillors

The special training to Councillors was discussed and officers undertook to explore whether more sessions could be provided.

The Chair requested the Committee promote the consultation within their communities and networks, and it was agreed the Scrutiny Officer will forward the weblink.

The Committee agreed they wanted a report back on the draft strategy prior to Cabinet and they would review implementation of the strategy annually.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee:

- Commented on the draft Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2024+.
- Requested a written report is provided prior to the final Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2024 presentation to Cabinet.
- Agreed to review implementation of the Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy on an annual basis.
- Requested the weblink for the consultation be e-mailed to Committee Members to disseminate.
- Requested Officers explore whether additional special training sessions could be provided to Councillors.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

(See document No. 5)

The Committee discussed the work programme and:

December 2023 Committee Meeting

- Scrutiny of Delivery of 2023/24 Budget Savings Item:
 - An audit trail of the process for how the four non-deliverable savings were signed off, to include timelines, responsible officers, and supporting paperwork to be provided for the next committee meeting (agreed under item 7).
 - The Committee was concerned about the impact of S114 spend controls on the level of missed waste collections, which is an essential service. A request was made for the Strategic Director to attend and provide statistics on missed collections for the individual depots before and after spending controls measures, and also statistics on missed green waste collections.
- The Birmingham Community Safety Partnership Annual Report: The Committee requested information is provided on measures to tackle cuckooing, and an update on the operation and impact of the introduction of localised community safety officers.

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- Draft Litter Prevention Strategy: The Committee's recommendation one (page 245 in the papers) included a fly tipping prevention plan and this should be discussed alongside the draft litter prevention strategy.
- Customer Services – Bereavement Services, the £710,000 non-delivery savings should be discussed (agreed under item 7).

To be added to the Menu of Topics

The Committee discussed adding a topic to examine the perceived rise in incursions onto parks and green spaces, to include enforcement powers and the security of green spaces. Members were advised that it was not possible to put a cost on specific events due to a number of factors. The Assistant Director undertook to share a copy of the report going to Licensing and Public Protection Committee in November 2023.

RESOLVED:

That:

- The information set out in Appendix 1 was noted and the Committee identified the perceived rise in incursions onto parks and green spaces to be added to the menu of topics for the Committee to explore over the coming year.
- A progress report on the implementation of recommendations made by the Co-ordinating Task and Finish Group on Bereavement Services - Customer Service, be presented in January 2024.
- The progress towards the implementation of recommendations made by the Co-ordinating Task and Finish Group on Waste Management Services - Customer Services is examined at the Committee Member workshop (date to be arranged).
- Agreed, subject to further input from the Chair and Deputy Chair the issues that the Committee will consider during December 2023 – January 2024, the proposed aims and objectives and the preferred method of scrutiny.
- 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 was noted.

10. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted that the next formal meeting will be held on 6 December 2023 at 1400 hours in Committee Room 6.

11. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)

None.

12. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

13. AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS

RESOLVED:

In an urgent situation between meetings, the Chair jointly with the relevant Chief Officer has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 15.30 hours.