

# **BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

## **CO-ORDINATING O&S COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING**

**1000 hours on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2021, On-line meeting**

### **Action Notes**

**Present:**

Councillor Carl Rice (Chair)

Councillors: Deirdre Alden, Albert Bore, Debbie Clancy, Liz Clements, Roger Harmer, Penny Holbrook, Ewan Mackey, Rob Pocock and Kath Scott

**Also Present:**

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services

**1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST**

The Chair advised that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site ([www.civico.net/birmingham](http://www.civico.net/birmingham)) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

**2. APOLOGIES**

None received.

**3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

None declared.

**4. ACTION NOTES**

(See document No 1)

**RESOLVED:**

The action notes from the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2021 were agreed.

**5. DRAFT SCRUTINY FRAMEWORK**

(See document No 2)

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services, presented the proposed framework for agreement prior to presentation to full Council for endorsement in April, provided an update on progress to date and clarified next steps.

Discussion followed and Members made the following points and queries:

- Cllr Pocock approved the re-ordering of priorities and recommended reflecting concerns of citizens as the first item under 'conditions of success'.
- Clarity was requested regarding whether there were any substantial issues or concerns in relation to any particular item.

Emma Williamson confirmed that there had been no negative responses, only clarification sought regarding parity of esteem to be followed through with officers. The draft has been agreed at an informal meeting of Cabinet Members and Corporate Leadership team, and presentation to Directorate Management Teams has commenced.

Members discussed the importance of obtaining officer support for the proposals to ensure they are taken forward effectively and agreed that post-implementation meetings should be scheduled in order to take the matter forward.

## **RESOLVED**

That the attached Scrutiny Framework is submitted to Full Council for endorsement, subject to the amendment proposed by Cllr Pocock.

## **6. CALL-IN PROCESS PROPOSALS**

(See documents No 3)

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services, presented proposals for revision of the call-in process, as follows:

- To amend the criteria for call-in by removing criteria 7 and amending criteria 9 to incorporate the word 'governance'

Following approval of these amendments this will be taken forward as part of the annual review of the constitution through Council Business Management Committee and then on to Full Council for agreement.

- The call-in request form is amended to allow for additional detail to ensure better preparation and dissemination of information. This would not require any constitutional change but would be reported to the Council Business Management Committee for confirmation.
- An informal resolution mechanism was discussed but not deemed necessary as it may reduce transparency. Any further information provided that causes a meeting to be deemed unnecessary will be reported to the next scheduled O&S meeting for recording.

The Chair invited comments from Members, and these were:

- Additional information should be limited to a small number of bullet points. The Chair clarified this and explained the process and its purpose. Emma Williamson confirmed that point 5.3 in the reports states that the additional information is in the form of a concise statement of one or two sentences.
- It was noted that that requests for call-in are now better organised, focussed and relevant, and this recommendation will further assist the streamlining of the process.
- The number of call-ins in relation to other local authorities was discussed. It was clarified that there was no recent data for comparison but anecdotally Birmingham did have a higher number of call-ins than other councils. Members discussed the lack of opposition within some councils which may reduce call-in requests and agreed that Birmingham demonstrates good cross party scrutiny and support.

## **RESOLVED**

- That Members recommend to Council Business Management Committee that criteria 7 “the decision appears to be particularly “novel” and therefore likely to set an important precedent” is deleted as a criteria for call-in;
- That Members recommend to Council Business Management Committee that criteria 9 is amended to read “the decision appears to give rise to significant *governance*, legal, financial or propriety issues”
- That Members recommend to Council Business Management Committee that a column is added to the request for call-in form, requiring a short, concise, explanation as to the reason for the request for call (as shown in Appendix 3).
- That the Procedure Note on Call-In be amended to say that if a situation arises whereby Members wish to withdraw a request for call-in, then the meeting to consider the call-in would not go ahead but the matter would be reported to the next scheduled meeting of the relevant O&S Committee.

## **7. WORK PROGRAMME**

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services, updated Members on the inquiry into exempt accommodation agenda: responses to the call for evidence are under review and future meetings will be arranged.

The Chair noted that the scrutiny inquiry is already having an impact as intervention from the regulator appears to be increasing.

The items for the next meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> April were noted.

The Chair invited comments from Members, and these were:

Cllr Bore fed back from the Resources O&S work programme meeting and confirmed work to be undertaken regarding procurement and contract management, and the use of agency workers, consultants and interims.

Members discussed interim and temporary appointments to JNC posts and the impact of this on the organisation, including necessary processes for review and improvement.

Members agreed that data collection would inform issues for consideration regarding these matters, including comparison data with other local authorities. Consideration was also given to the legal and constitutional position regarding automatic transfer from interim to substantive posts following a two-year timeframe.

Members raised concerns about the impact of the lack of permanent senior officers on various service areas. Concerns were also expressed about the JNC recruitment process and requested that this be included as part of the review.

Members agreed that Cllr Bore should report back on the research undertaken by Resources O&S Committee. Data can be sought from the LGA to inform the national position of appointment to JNC posts.

**8. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is the 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021 at 1000 hours.

**9. REQUESTS FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED**

None.

**10. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

**11. AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS**

RESOLVED:

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

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The meeting ended at 1107 hours.