

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CO-ORDINATING O&S COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING

1000 hours on Friday 12th July 2019, Committee Rooms 3 & 4

Action Notes

Present:

Councillor Carl Rice (Chair)

Councillors Tahir Ali, Deirdre Alden, Albert Bore, Debbie Clancy, Liz Clements, Roger Harmer, Charlotte Hovalala and Rob Pocock.

Also Present:

Councillor Ian Ward, Leader of the Council

Richard Woodland, Principal Capital Investment Officer

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) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllrs Kath Scott.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

4. ACTION NOTES AND ACTION TRACKER

(See documents No 1 and 2)

The Chair confirmed that with regard to the reference to the call-in report and the Cabinet Member and officers leaving the room, this was within the Chair's discretion.

RESOLVED:

- The action notes from the meeting held on 14th June 2019 were agreed.

5. CHAIRS ACTIONS

The Chair informed the committee that there were three issues he had dealt with since the last meeting:

- Motion to City Council last December in relation to the Armed Forces – he had met with Councillors Debbie Clancy and Peter Fowler to discuss the potential options for this work. A meeting with Councillor Mike Sharpe is to be arranged and the Chair will report back to committee following that meeting;
- Full Council Inquiry – the draft report has been circulated and an informal meeting is to be held immediately following this meeting to discuss the report and its recommendations;
- Customer Services Inquiry – members of the committee should have received an amended Terms of Reference with a recommendation that the motion on Councillors' enquiries debated at Full Council, with an amendment referring the matter to Overview & Scrutiny, be incorporated in the inquiry.

6. LEADER'S UPDATE

(See document No 3)

Councillor Ian Ward outlined the work on the Combined Authority and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) as these are not often formally reported back into the Council.

The Leader talked about the challenges going forward and the need to continue the improvement journey with pace. In particular:

- The final Improvement Panel report referred to continuing external support and the Council has since been discussing with government the idea of appointing non-executive advisors to sit on a programme board alongside the senior management team. This has been well received by government and the intention is to bring a report to Cabinet at the end of July to formally put these arrangements in place;
- A budget has been set for the coming year without the reliance on reserves;
- Children's Services has, for the first time in ten years, shown signs of improvement, moving out of "Inadequate" and into "Requires improvement to be good";
- The Council is working hard to deliver the Commonwealth Games, including the changes to the Alexander Stadium and the building of the Athletes Village, which will add to the homes also being delivered which together will meet the 35% target for affordable homes;
- The waste collection service continues to be a challenge;
- There is an ambitious growth strategy with investment in the city as a whole. Housing delivery is in line with the Development Plan; in excess of 14,000 homes have been built and in excess of 61,000 will be built in the city

boundaries – an increase as more land has been identified and have increased density, primarily in the city centre;

- There are some key developments in the city, including Arena Central, Paradise and Birmingham Smithfield;
- Other projects being delivered are the Langley Sustainable Urban Extension (the equivalent of building Bridgnorth) and the Advanced Manufacturing Hub in partnership with Homes England;
- In terms of capital investment, the Council is now well on its way to delivering a successful track record in connecting with the global investment markets in the far east and in the United Arab Emirates;
- The Council is working to mitigate any negative effects of Brexit, including the opportunities of the Commonwealth Games and the arrival of HS2, but remains concerned on the impact on the automotive industry, particularly if the UK leaves the EU without a deal.

Members then asked about the following subjects:

- Commonwealth Games infrastructure: the Perry Barr flyover is a big project – are there concerns that the Perry Barr project will slip as other projects have? The Leader said that clearly the risk of slippage has to be managed with this and other developments leading up to the Commonwealth Games;
- At the Full Council meeting on Tuesday the third motion was not allowed to be debated – on the important issue of waste. That should not have happened when the end of the meeting had not been reached. The Lord Mayor needs further help to understand the Constitution.
- The Leader responded that motions are the most political element of the meeting, so sometimes a political view will be taken. He did not comment on the Lord Mayor other than that he is being supported by Legal officers and will continue to receive support.
- A lot of what has been said relates to the Economy & Skills O&S Committee remit, not this Committee. However others said that it is good to have the Leader in to talk about the vision for the city;
- Are there concerns relating to investment from Dubai, from an ethical point of view? The Leader responded that the UK's national policy is that Dubai is a country that the UK will do business with and good relations have been developed to invest to create jobs in Birmingham;
- As the Combined Authority lead on transport, how will bus regulation be progressed? That Midland Metro is back in-house is a good precedent. The Leader agreed that the bus market is broken and regulated market is needed, and so will be pushing for that. The Council will be purchasing 50 Hydrogen Buses for use on the network to ensure compliance with the Clean Air Zone;
- What impact has declaring a Climate Emergency going to have on the work of the Council and Combined Authority? The Leader said that this work needs to move forward without further impoverishing poor areas of the country, so

those with most will have to do more to address this issue. There some impressive green targets in the delivery of the Athletes village, and Smithfield will be an exemplar of green development. If the Council can persuade the government to do more, the Leader is in favour of asking the government for more funding around the Village and other housing developments across the city, in order to deliver a net carbon neutral position more speedily than the current UK target. An amendment was put to the Commonwealth Games Bill in the House of Lords and part of this is on housing, which would help. Targets should not be set that squeeze out affordable housing;

- The Enterprise Zone note talked about business rate projections and secured investment – is this ring fenced to the Zone? The Leader explained that business rate growth is captured by the LEP to spend inside and outside the zone;
- The importance of arts and culture, as a pull to the city, was also noted. The Leader agreed that the larger the cultural offer, the more attractive the city will be. He noted that a Peaky Blinders festival is due to be held in September;
- How will disparity of jobs and income within the city be addressed, and not masked by overall figures? The Leader said that there is a skills gap in the city, and there is a workstream in the LEP and WMCA to address that. The development at Peddimore will help by diversifying the offer;
- How might the Council Plan evolve in the year ahead? The refresh of the Plan was delayed by a month specifically to address the issue of localisation so that is written into the plan in a more meaningful way and to respond to the climate emergency plan;
- Discussion in the media and lobbying to get HS2 cancelled – is that a real threat? The Leader said that Birmingham, the Combined Authority, the Mayor and the other core cities have been lobbying on this. Around £8bn has already been spent on line 1 and many jobs depend on this; the risk is to the second stage;
- Looking at construction sites across the city, the workers there do not seem to reflect the city's demographic. This needs to be addressed not only through skills training but also raising expectations of children across the city;
- There is a huge difference between affordable housing and social housing. The latter is expensive but is needed;
- It is necessary to ensure that arrangements for the WMCA and Police and Crime Commissioner do not undermine existing scrutiny arrangements. There are appointees on both the WMCA Scrutiny Committee and the Police and Crime Panel and to ensure feedback to the City Council or to Scrutiny, would it be possible for there to be a lead member from each designated to lead on that? The Leader agreed to have leads, Cllr Shah for the PCP and Cllr Lisa Trickett, who will be chairing the Joint Scrutiny Committee;
- A further report was requested to go to Economy & Skills O&S Committee giving an update on project activity for the public realm around the HS2

station and the station itself, re-modelling of Moor Street Queensway and Digbeth High Street, to ensure the quality and design are of the highest standard. The Leader agreed;

- Following the Chief Executive's announcement that she is leaving, what will the timescale be for the recruitment process? The Leader was also asked for comment on how things can be as smooth as can be. He said that in the short time the Chief Executive has been here, she has achieved some significant things including the ending of the Improvement Panel and delivering a better than balanced budget with a budget being set for this year without the use of reserves. She will work her notice period to the end of September. Advice will be taken on managing the period beyond that, but there will be an advert in September with the intention of appointing by the end of the year. The Council will be kept informed during this process;
- The Executive/Scrutiny partnership role – there used to be regular meetings to agree key policy issues before the Executive made a decision (eg NRPF, devolution of certain council tax functions and the future of the wholesale markets – all of which illustrated what the partnership is all about, leading to more informed, better decisions if Scrutiny is involved in the process. What are the Leader's thoughts on how this approach is replicated across the city? For example, Cllr Bore mentioned he was asked to assist with understanding and working out a better approach to long term financial planning, no support from the Finance directorate was forthcoming and therefore that piece of work has not happened. The Executive has to agree and work collaboratively to make it happen. The Leader said he has always been in favour of this approach, so would welcome discussion on what might come through this and other committees and can also talk about resources for the scrutiny function;
- The Executive is all aware of issues surrounding waste but residents are not clear whether it is the lack of appropriate vehicles, rounds not being programmed in properly, or is it staff not having settled in to new working arrangements. The Leader noted that most of the operational issues were around Redfern Road Depot; he had seen a briefing indicating that there has been an improvement in the number of missed collections but the Council is still not where it should be.

RESOLVED:

The update was noted.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

(See document No 4)

The following amendments to the work programme were proposed:

- That the Leader return to the committee to focus on governance, partnerships and the Council Plan;
- That updates on progress implementing the motion on the climate change emergency be reported;
- That an item on JNC recruitment be added, partly to take into account the recruitment exercise needed for a new Chief Executive, but also to understand the process and how competencies are identified. Cllr Bore, Chair of Resources O&S Committee, agreed that whilst this would normally sit within the remit of his committee, as this related to the Chief Executive, Co-ordinating O&S was the right place for this;
- Citizen engagement and the citizens' panel.

The issue of local scrutiny of service issues was also picked up and the Chair undertook to speak with the Chair of Housing and Neighbourhoods O&S Committee as to how the two committees could work together on this.

In relation to the work on customer services, the Chair said that he planned to write to all elected members to ask for their views, and to offer the opportunity to meet with him to listen to their experiences and ideas for improvement. He will make the dates available and other members of the Committee can attend if they wish.

RESOLVED:

The work programme was noted.

The amended Terms of Reference for the Customer Services Inquiry was agreed.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Noted.

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

None.

14. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

15. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN 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

The meeting ended at 1155 hours.