

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 07 SEPTEMBER 2023 AT 14:00 HOURS
IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 3 & 4, COUNCIL HOUSE, VICTORIA
SQUARE, BIRMINGHAM, B1 1BB

A G E N D A

1 **NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST**

The Chair to advise/meeting to note that this meeting will be webcast for live or 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 are confidential or exempt items.

2 **APOLOGIES**

To receive any apologies.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Members are reminded they must declare all relevant pecuniary and other registerable interests arising from any business to be discussed at this meeting.

If a disclosable pecuniary interest is declared a Member must not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless they have been granted a dispensation.

If other registerable interests are declared a Member may speak on the matter only if members of the public are allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless they have been granted a dispensation.

If it is a 'sensitive interest', Members do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that they have an interest.

Information on the Local Government Association's Model Councillor Code of Conduct is set out via <http://bit.ly/3WtGQnN>. This includes, at Appendix 1, an interests flowchart which provides a simple guide to declaring interests at meetings.

5 - 10

4 **MINUTES**

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 12th July 2023.

11 - 12

5 **ACTION TRACKER**

To note the action tracker.

13 - 46

6 **ACTIVE TRAVEL INQUIRY - EVIDENCE GATHERING [14:05 - 15:35]**

Roundtable discussion with reference to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference with representatives from:

- Better Streets for Birmingham
- Pushbikes
- Living Streets
- Sustrans
- 20s Plenty for Birmingham
- Active Travel England
- Transport for West Midlands
- Wolverhampton City Council
- Adam Tranter, Mayor's Cycling & Walking Commissioner, West Midlands Combined Authority
- Cabinet Member for Transport, Birmingham City Council
- Birmingham City Council Officers

47 - 84

7 **SCRUTINY CONTRIBUTION TO BUDGET SAVINGS AND RECOVERY PLAN [15:35 - 15:55]**

To update the Committee on the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), and for the Committee to consider the implications for the Committee's work programme.

85 - 106

8 **WORK PROGRAMME**

That the Committee considers its work programme, and attached appendices, and agrees any amendments required.

9 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

To note the date and time of the next meeting on 12 October, 2023 at 1400 hours.

10 **REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)**

To consider any request for call in/councillor call for action/petitions (if received).

11 **OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

To consider any items of business by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) that in the opinion of the Chair are matters of urgency.

12 **AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS**

Chair to move:-

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

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE

1400 hours on 12th July, Committee Room 6, Council House

Present:

Councillor Lee Marsham (Chair)

Councillors Saima Ahmed, David Barker, Colin Green, Timothy Huxtable, Richard Parkin and Waseem Zaffar

Also Present:

Mel Jones, Head of Transport Planning

Fiona Bottrill, Senior Overview & Scrutiny Manager

Baseema Begum, Scrutiny Officer

The meeting started at 14:00 hours

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chair advised those present that the meeting would be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast and that Members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there are confidential or exempt items.

2. APOLOGIES

None.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Cllr Huxtable outlined that he was the Lead Member for Rail, Metro, SPRINT and Active Travel - Transport Delivery Committee, West Midlands Combined Authority

Cllr Brooks stated that he represents the Council as a guardian of the Birmingham Gun Barrel Proof House which has interests in the area of HS2.

4. MINUTES

(See Item No.4)

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th June 2023 were approved.

5. SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ACTION TRACKER

(See Item No. 5)

Noted.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

(See Item No. 6)

The Chair outlined the priorities of the Committee as discussed at the last meeting. As part of this Members were notified that an informal session on the Highways PFI procurement contract had been set for 2nd August and invitations had been circulated.

Cllr Marsham also informed the Committee that he was holding regular dialogue in relation to upcoming cabinet decisions with the respective Cabinet Members for Transport and Environment. He welcomed Members input on this and confirmed that he would be receiving a briefing on 21st July on the report due to go to Cabinet on Public Sector Carbonisation. Feedback from this will be provided at a future meeting.

As discussed at the Committee's last meeting Councillor Marsham explained that two of the key work priorities identified were 'Active Travel' and 'Road Safety'. It was agreed that Task and Finish Groups would be set up to look at the issues in more depth.

Membership of the Active Travel Task & Finish Group was agreed and will comprise of Cllrs Marsham (Chair), Brooks, Green and Huxtable. A Terms of Reference (TOR) has been shared for consideration and Members may wish to refine and shape this further. It was noted that evidence gathering will include site visits, informal sessions and a public committee meeting in September that will include council officers, external partners, and stakeholders.

A discussion on the TOR was then held and the following were amongst the points made: -

- Ensure that learning is taken from other local authorities. Hackney and Waltham Forrest were raised as good examples of where active travel schemes have been implemented quite quickly. There are examples of good practice internationally that can be looked at too.
- How integrated transport is a key feature of active travel. The Council needs to share its work with others and learn from others including those who help put active travel measures in place.

- In relation to design of schemes it is imperative that capacity is considered, and examples of similar schemes undertaken by other councils looked at.
- Funding is an issue especially in the maintenance of any schemes especially with the Council's Highways Management and Maintenance PFI in place. Therefore, it is imperative that maintenance costs are set out from conception in terms of when and how much will be delivered especially if it will be resourced from the Council's own funds.
- There is a need to look at communities that have large health inequalities and understand what the health data says. This should include looking at where there are examples of active travel in those areas.
- Engagement and consultation need to be done as early as possible and there is a need to be radical to deliver on Council priorities relating to environment and sustainability
- The key lines of enquiry should include how the Birmingham Cycle Revolution (BCR) work has evolved.
- Options for a site visit could include Perry Barr as a good example of integrated travel options and the blue route on the A38 Bristol Road to reflect on good practice, challenges, and lessons to learn.
- Invitations to the Walking and Cycling Commissioner (Adam Tranter) and Chris Boardman, Active Travel England should be made for the public session along with other stakeholders and interested parties. Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) should be invited as the holder of key funding.

Mel Jones, Head of Transport Planning welcomed the input from Members and made the following points: -

- The scale and pace of delivery of active travel schemes needs to change. This will be best achieved by working with partners to deliver on challenging agendas.
- There are many aspects to consider as part of the inquiry using case studies to look at scheme delivery in general as part of the delivery plan of the Birmingham Transport Plan which is focussed on a corridor and neighbourhoods' approach with the pooling of resources in each area to deliver on set outcomes.
- Members will have the opportunity to look at the challenges involved as well as the competing demands both from the road network and residents/business needs as part of the consideration of case studies.
- It was highlighted that finding the right balance in terms of resource, timescale, and demand was a challenge. Furthermore, where suggested schemes have failed to reach a consensus or there is no preferred option there is a challenge on how to move forward and any recommendations that the committee makes during this inquiry to help deliver schemes will be welcomed.

The Chair then outlined the next steps for the Task and Finish Group. This included meeting informally during August and carrying out site visits. A public session with stakeholders will be held in September. Further details will be finalised and shared with Members in due course.

Cllr Marsham stated that the work undertaken as part of the Active Travel Inquiry will have some crossover with the proposed Road Safety Inquiry that will commence following the completion of the Active Travel Inquiry.

A Task & Finish Group for the Road Safety Inquiry with 4 Members was then agreed. Cllrs Barker (Chair), Zaffar, Parkin were approved as part of the group. Cllr Green requested that he consult with his party members for a representative to join the group and will advise accordingly.

It was agreed that this Task & Finish Group will meet initially in August to outline a Terms of Reference that will be finalised and presented to Committee for agreement in September.

A discussion was then held, and the following points were made: -

- The current Road Safety strategy is being updated with a draft expected ready for consultation later in the year. It would be helpful for the Task & Finish Group to see some an early draft and provide constructive feedback. This can also be used as a basis for forming their Terms of Reference. There will also be the opportunity for the Task & Finish Group to provide further comments as part of the formal consultation process.
- It was acknowledged that there would be a cross-over with the Active Travel Inquiry.
- Suggestions for who to invite as part of the evidence gathering included the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Cllr Marsham then highlighted that consideration should be given to other key issues listed on the work programme for the Committee to consider in particular on the sustainability agenda and the Council's commitment on 'Route to Net Zero Carbon'. This includes issues relating to recycling, waste reduction and zero-emission bus schemes. It is anticipated that this could be programmed later in the municipal year.

In addition, the Cllr Marsham stated that the Committee has been assigned work on Customer Services relating to Highways issues initially considered by the Co-ordinating O&S Committee. It will be up to the Committee to give due consideration on how this is followed up in the future.

Members also raised other issues for consideration including parking enforcement, the local bus network, bus priority corridors and patronage and an update on the progress made with hydrogen buses and where these may be located in the city.

Issues relating to 'Car Free School Streets' and 20mph zones would best be covered as part of the work of the two Task and Finish Groups as appropriate.

The Chair added that the Committee receives an Annual Flood Risk Management Report in March and issues relating to customer services and responses can be picked up as part of this.

RESOLVED: -

1. The Active Travel Task & Finish Group membership and an approach for meetings was agreed. The TOR was agreed in principle further to any other comments.

2. The Road Safety Task & Finish Group membership was agreed. Cllr Green will advise of his party's representative to join the group.

7. DATES OF NEXT MEETING

Future meetings were outlined by the Chair.

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

None.

9. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Noted.

11. AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS

Agreed.

RESOLVED: -

That 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 14:47 hours.

**SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE
ACTION TRACKER 2023-24**

Date	Agenda Item	Action	Update	Completion
19 th April	City of Nature 25 Year Plan Update	Simon Needle to provide a copy Green Infrastructure Masterplan Vision document for committee members, following its publication end of April 2023.	Simon Needle confirmed that Arcardis were commissioned to complete the report and will be released to the Council upon receipt of payment for the work done – 15 th June	Awaiting payment of invoice by BCC.
12 th July	Work Programme	Arrangements and further information relating to the two Task & Finish Groups to be shared with the respective Members and the TOR for Active Travel Inquiry updated with any further comments from Members.		Completed.

Active Travel Inquiry – Evidence Gathering Pack

- a. Inquiry - Terms of Reference
- b. Submission - Birmingham Livings Streets
- c. Submission – David Cox, Pushbikes
- d. Submission – Better Streets for Birmingham



Work Outline / Terms of Reference

Active Travel Schemes Task and Finish Group

Reporting to Sustainability and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee

<p>Our key question:</p>	<p>How can Birmingham deliver Active Travel schemes quicker and make city roads safer for all users?</p>
<p>1. How is O&S adding value through this work?</p>	<p>Improving road safety is always a priority for communities across the city, however this has significantly increased in recent months. This follows several tragic incidents on Birmingham's streets where cyclists and pedestrians, both adults and children, have died or been injured, and resulted in strong public interest.</p> <p>Separately, the Council has been criticised for the time taken to deliver, and the design of, active travel schemes in comparison to neighbouring Local Authorities. If this is true, Birmingham residents will wait longer to enjoy the benefits of better cycling and walking infrastructure. In turn, the city will take longer to realise its ambitions outlined in the Birmingham Transport Plan to shift to a low traffic city.</p> <p>Through this inquiry, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee intends to understand if there are different and better ways for the Council to deliver Active Travel schemes and make recommendations to achieve this. This will also complement and feed into the new Road Safety Strategy for Birmingham, which is currently under development, as well as support the delivery of Birmingham's Transport Plan.</p>
<p>2. What needs to be done?</p>	<p>The Task and Finish Group will receive evidence from a range of stakeholders in order to consider the following key issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do Active Travel schemes contribute towards achieving the city's Be Bold outcomes and priorities? • How are Active Travel schemes funded within the city? • What is the current size, scale and scope of the activity under development and being delivered including joint projects with the WMCA? • What is the design, development and delivery process? • How does the Council work together as a single organisation to develop and deliver Active Travel schemes? • How does the Council work in collaboration with other organisations, such as Transport for West Midlands? • What are the current barriers and challenges the Council is facing to deliver these schemes? • Where are the opportunities for acceleration and what would this require? • How do other Local Authorities do it differently? What can we learn from their approaches?
<p>3. What timescale do we propose to do this in?</p>	<p>The Sustainability and Transport O&S Committee will agree its recommendations on 12 October 2023.</p>



<p>4. What outcomes are we looking to achieve?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 1: Make Birmingham’s roads safer for all users • Outcome 2: Enable more efficient development and delivery of Active Travel Schemes • Outcome 3: Complement work on the Council’s new Road Safety Strategy and the delivery of Birmingham’s Transport Plan.
<p>5. What is the best way to achieve these outcomes and what routes will we use?</p>	<p>A Task and Finish Group is the recommended approach comprising cross party membership.</p> <p>The Task and Finish Group will meet approximately 5 times. Initial scoping will take place at the Sustainability and Transport O&S Committee in July. The Task and Finish group will then meet to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session 1: Carry out site visits to pending, current and completed Active Travel schemes within Birmingham (these will be identified in conjunction with the relevant service and may involve some/ all of the Committee). • Session 2: Consider evidence from stakeholders including Active Travel England; Better Streets for Birmingham; Birmingham Cycling Revolution; Urban Transport Group; WMCA, Travel for West Midlands and or other appropriate stakeholders. • Session 3: Consider evidence from Birmingham City Council services. • Session 4: Consider evidence from other Local Authorities – both locally and nationally and or other appropriate relevant public bodies • Session 5: Identify key findings and discuss recommendations. <p>The order of the sessions may not follow the above.</p>

Member / Officer Leads

<p>Lead Member:</p>	<p>Chair: Cllr. Lee Marsham</p>
<p>Members of the Task and Finish Group:</p>	<p>Councillors Martin Brooks; Colin Green and Tim Huxtable.</p>
<p>Lead Officer and support:</p>	<p>Support for the Task and Finish Group will be provided by the Overview and Scrutiny team.</p> <p>This support will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaising with members to agree meeting dates • Liaising with Council services to arrange site visits and evidence gathering sessions • Inviting people to give evidence • Agreeing the agenda with the Chair • Circulating agenda and papers in advance of the meeting • Producing a record of Task and Finish Group meetings that is agreed with the Chair / Task and Finish Group members • Producing the report for Sustainability and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee



	<p>In addition, the Head of Transport Planning and Network Strategy (Mel Jones) and Transport Planning Manager, Streetscape (Martin Rowe) will act as Council service support.</p> <p>This support will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing evidence to the Committee• Liaising with other relevant services within the Council
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How to.... Make Roads Safer for All Users

Overview of key issues

a) Wasted money/opportunities : Streetscape design standards for ALL road schemes need to align with the Strategy for C&W growth. We must stop 1960's, pedestrian- and cycle-hostile standards being (re-)applied routinely.

*b) Commitment from Partners : Road Safety Partnerships need equal commitment **and plain-speaking** to succeed. The WMP/WMPCC's (indirectly) discriminatory neglect of vulnerable road users needs on-going focus and challenge by BCC representatives on WMRoad Safety Strategy steering group and Police and Crime Panel.*

c) Better measurements - and leadership : standard road safety metrics , which ignore the huge levels of immobility our population, - mask the regions sky high levels of risk (by trip/mile) of road injury to vulnerable users.

A - Streetscape design standards are outdated

All road schemes need to align with active travel growth strategy, but this isn't happening due to outdated standards ...and, maybe, designers' 'driver convenience' fixation ?

What TfL Design standards do - Side roads get standardised narrowed junctions and provision of level pedestrian surfaces visibly confirming pedestrian priority and, for cyclists, reducing 'left hooks' . **(Waltham Forest)**



What Birmingham does (A435 bus lane scheme, 2023 proposal) This £5m scheme proposes demolishing current kerb lines and relocating footways - **including re-building 1960's standards 'Bell-mouth' junctions** to encourage dangerous high speed turns (aka 'driver convenience')
...Safe for Hussein Bolt maybe, but hardly 'Everyone for 8 to 80" as per Strategy



Disregarding 'non Active Travel' schemes from consideration is a false dichotomy that wastes £m's and actually undermines Strategy progress.

B – Commitment from Partners

- WM Police road priorities. historically. were overwhelmingly driver safety/property focused. The major initiatives - Motorway Patrol Group (£5m pa), Camera vans on high speed A roads (c.£1m pa)and even the stolen prestige cars ‘task force’ (£80k pm) - contrast sharply with negligible enforcement of safety in neighbourhoods.

20 mph zone speed enforcement – Tickets issued					
Force	Pop'n (m)	2019	2020	2021	Enforcements per m. popn '21
West Midlands Police	2.8	251	394	224	80
Avon & Somerset	1.7	14,569	13,889	23,338	13,728
Metropolitan Police	8.9	47,137	53,213	85,820	9,643

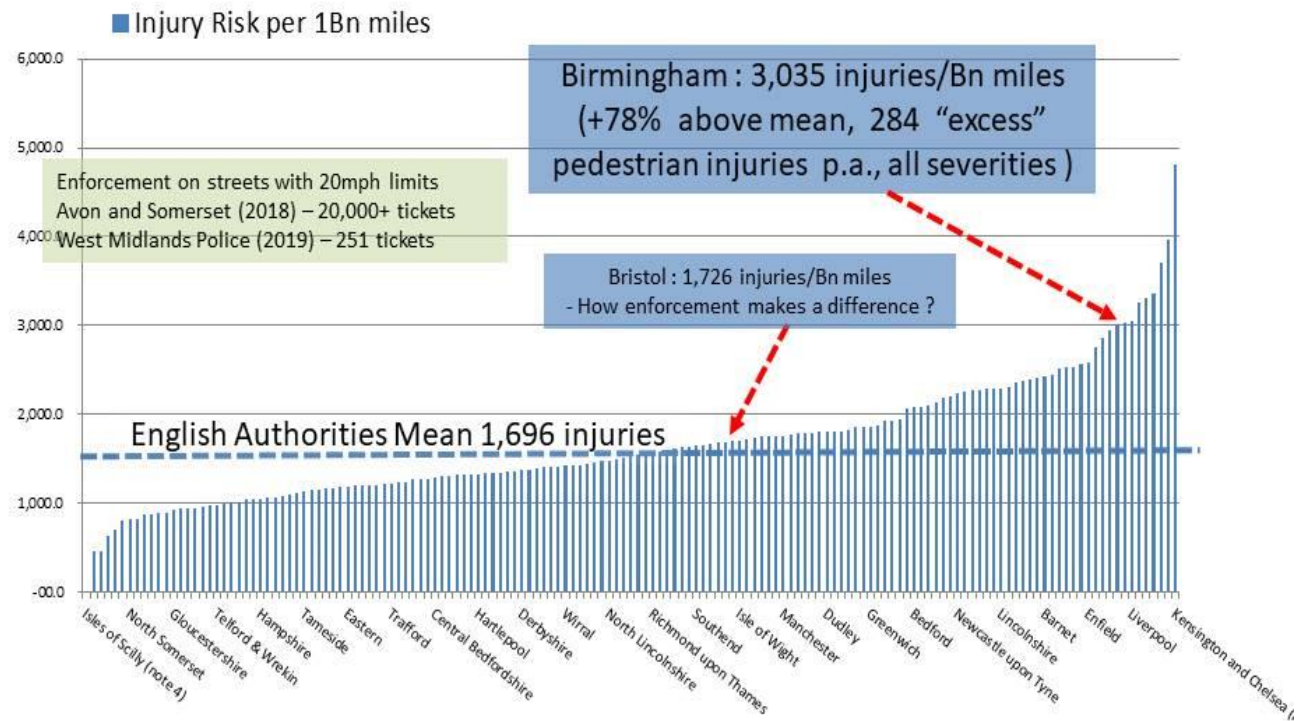
- Those who can't / don't drive **disproportionately include** the very old, very young, visually impaired and many other types of disability, women and those from poorer demographic groups. Unbalanced road policing priorities constitute indirect discrimination.

- Without on-going challenge from BCC's representatives we fear the (PR inspired?) Operation Triton will be a re-run of the disastrous WMRSS 2021 debacle, due to neglect.

C - Measurement and Ambition.....

- National Travel Survey data indicates we're a highly immobile region.
- Traditional roads safety statistics (injuries/deaths per popn. unit) therefore badly misrepresent the actual risk of injury to the C&W demographic in areas like ours.
- Creating injury risk per trip-mile reveals alarming poor VRU safety performance.
- We need also to use and set metrics and targets that more accurately show true performance against national/international best of class.

2019 Pedestrian Injury Risk stats : B'ham ranks 143rd worst performing LA of 152 authorities



English Local Authorities – Best to Worst , high tourist LAs (City of London, Westminster) not shown

Full table and data sources : <https://t.co/VNtxqw9GTY?amp=1>

Ambition.... and Leadership

We need leaders who set and explain a vision for our city to become a clean, safe sustainable ‘world class’ travel performer.

In the absence of clear, unapologetic statements by Leaders on what we have to achieve, and the public health, social & environmental drivers on why we must deliver ‘radical ...and unprecedented’ speed of change to behaviour, we encourage constant and endless debate and delay on all schemes that cause any level of inconvenience to any group.*

* WMCA’s 2021 5 year Climate Emergency plan

Deloitte's 'Urban Mobility Index' - Trip Rates by Mode (2018/19) in major European Conurbations.					
	Pop/km2	Walk/Bike	PubTrans	Car	Other
Bham+WMCA	3,247	9%	15%	75%	-
Dublin Met	1,515	25%	15%	59%	1.00
Amsterdam	1,520	35%	19%	42%	4.00
Helsinki2018	1,953	29%	30%	39%	2.00
Grtr Manc'r	2,202	30%	18%	52%	4.00
Copenh'n Met ²⁰¹⁸	436	47%	27%	26%	-
Rotterdam+Hg ²⁰¹⁸	2,323	44%	10%	43%	-
Warsaw2018	3,391	21%	47%	32%	-
Oslo2018	3,698	35%	30%	35%	-
Stockholm	3,858	22%	32%	46%	3.00
Berlin ²⁰¹⁸	3,948	43%	22%	30%	-
Barc'a Met	5,093	44%	17%	39%	-
London	5,672	28%	35%	37%	2
Paris2018	8,845	46%	25%	25%	4

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP INQUIRY INTO ACTIVE TRAVEL 2023

VIEWS ON THE KEY LINES OF ENQUIRY SUBMITTED BY DAVID COX CHAIR OF PUSHBIKES

We welcome this timely inquiry where the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can make a significant contribution. I am writing from a user perspective as someone who has cycled regularly in and across this City since 1973 and has also been involved in very many cycling, active travel and transport Summits, Forums and Stakeholder meetings with the Council since at least 2002.

How can Birmingham deliver Active Travel schemes quicker and make city roads safer for all users?

We are pleased to see that Birmingham's Road Safety Strategy is to be reviewed. The current Strategy is out of date, inadequate in the face of current challenges and not ambitious enough. These points have been made very effectively by the Better Streets campaign in the face of recent tragedies which have been well publicised in local and national media and have generated widespread support. It is good to see that Birmingham Council, West Midlands Combined Authority and the West Midlands Police Force have promised combined urgent action to stop the epidemic of dangerous driving.

It is better to plan for Road Danger Reduction rather than "Road Safety". Removing the threats to life through better street design and effective enforcement of traffic laws. Every City should be aiming for Vision Zero in road deaths as achieved in Stockholm and not just a percentage reduction in deaths and serious injuries. This will not be achieved by corralling pedestrians behind barriers with complex diversions and two or three stage, slow to respond, pedestrian and cycle crossings just to achieve marginally faster journeys for motorists. Some people will take risks and many others will be put off walking or cycling which means that all the health and environmental benefits of active travel won't be realised.

All of this is well understood at a strategic level in the Birmingham Transport Plan. Reducing road danger and making walking and cycling a pleasant, safe and convenient form of transport is essential if we want to see more active travel for local journeys and reduced car use. It will also promote public transport if walking to the bus stop or train station doesn't involve crossing dangerous junctions or dodging badly parked cars on cracked pavements.

The Birmingham Transport Plan is ambitious and in line with best urban practice world-wide. It needs to be delivered quickly to effect a change that will benefit safety, health, business and the reputation of the City. There is funding available for the West Midlands cities and good guidance and support from Active Travel England. While there has been a lot of improvement and learning since 2012 our experience of the Birmingham Cycle Revolution, the Road Safety Scheme at the Priory Rd/Pershore Rd junction, the Emergency

Active Travel Fund Schemes and more recent Active Travel Fund schemes in the City is of frequent delay in delivery, a lack of attention to detail and some disappointing outcomes, a lack of quality control and remedial action.

While there has been a lot to celebrate about improvements in cycling across the City, whole areas have been left out, for example the Hagley Rd corridor or much of East Birmingham. We are a long way short of a well signed network which would enable a visitor to hire a West Midlands bike and cycle between the City's attractions, or major commercial, hospitality, educational destinations. In the City Centre walking has improved but cycling gets more difficult. Too often cycling routes are add-ons, diversions or compromises while much greater priority is given to the needs of the Metro system, motorists, developers etc.

Often final delivery is very slow as demonstrated by the decidedly sub-optimal route on Bradford Street which is apparently due to be revised but with nothing much happening.

What needs to be done?

Key lines of inquiry rightly focus on the process of funding, decision making, design, development and delivery. Other experts will be able to provide up to date information on these processes which should be well understood by now.

The Cycle City Ambition Grant funded the Birmingham Cycling Revolution and led the way in the West Midlands as intended while in Wolverhampton and Coventry progress had stalled. Birmingham led on LCWIPs and a Design Guide. It good to see recent progress in Coventry, Wolverhampton and now Sandwell. Having a Regional Cycling and Walking Commissioner has been beneficial as in London and Manchester.

Our experience suggest that the Active Travel Team have never had enough staff to confidently manage the complex processes involved from consultations, commissioning external consultants at the design stage and overseeing delivery.

Regular Stakeholder Meetings have been held throughout the last decade and we are very grateful for this. We have been kept well informed and been able to have input into plans and schemes. Push Bikes had endeavoured to respond to every consultation with expert user input.

However, too often Birmingham presents schemes in a top-down manner. Decisions have been made and proposals determined and then go out to consultation often in complex presentations which can be difficult for the general public to interpret or respond to. There are reasons for this - money has to be committed quickly e.g. with the Emergency Active Travel Fund, business cases prepared, consultants found etc. Brian Deegan now at Active Travel England developed a bottom-up "Beeline" approach in London and then Manchester where you start in the community and explore what would be needed in terms of filters and junction treatments to enable a trained 12-year-old to cycle to the main local destinations. This is an invigorating exercise although I don't know if it's been tried in the highly politicised context of 2022/3.

“Working as a single organisation” and in partnership with WMCA, WMPCC, Police, Health, Private Sector and Voluntary Organisations is a good principle which we would like to see put into practice. This is always difficult but essential. We don’t expect to see rivalry and tension between these public organisations and look for constructive relationships and shared delivery objectives for the public good. Recent official developments in response to the road violence epidemic are welcome and must be sustained with promises implemented and outcomes reported.

Every road and transport scheme should be supporting active travel. Too often as is shown recently in the Dudley Rd proposals a marginal improvement in a section of cycle infrastructure and bus lanes in accompanied by widening traffic lanes to accommodate more motor vehicles. In pursuit of marginal and temporary reductions in congestion. Quite dangerous junction “improvements” have been introduced like at the Longbridge roundabout and a cycle lane recently removed on the A47.

A comprehensive cycle network in a City of Birmingham’s size will take time but we have been waiting for a long while so we welcome the theme of “acceleration” in your Terms of Reference.

Certainly since 2013 with the Birmingham Mobility Action Plan and the publication of Changing Gear by a previous Transport and Connectivity Overview and Scrutiny Committee with cross-party support there has been no lack of ambition at a strategic political leadership level. The Birmingham Cycle Revolution and now the current Transport Plan embody Be Bold Birmingham. The election of a West Midlands Mayor in 2017 reinforced this consensus on the need for investment in public transport and active travel to improve safety, liveability and economic growth and prosperity across the West Midlands.

But the follow through to implementation often seems to be missing with a gap between the Council House and the officers working at Lancaster Circus or Woodcock Street. Ambition is fine but political will is also needed to engage with the public and staff and consultants through to delivery. This has improved under the last two Cabinet Transport Leads with better engagement between lead politicians and professional staff.

David Cox
Push Bikes

28th August 2023



Better Streets for Birmingham submission to the Sustainability and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee: How can Birmingham deliver Active Travel schemes quicker and make city roads safer for all users?

Thursday 31 August 2023

Written by Martin Price,
Co-chair of Better Streets for Birmingham



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Introduction

About Better Streets for Birmingham

Better Streets for Birmingham campaigns for changes to our travel and planning infrastructure to improve the sustainability, efficiency and safety of our streets. By identifying, supporting and advocating for changes to our environment that enable car-free journeys, we aim to make active travel and public transport the default options for trips around our city.

We believe in a Birmingham where children can play safely in residential streets, where people improve their physical and mental wellbeing through active travel and where our environment is not sullied by acres of public space given over to private vehicle usage. By connecting this city to make car-free travel the easiest option, we will make it a more pleasant place to work, live and play.

We welcome and support the vision set out in the October 2021 Birmingham Transport Plan (https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/14861/birmingham_transport_strategy), which seeks to deliver “safe and attractive environments for active travel, and a high quality sustainable public transport system fit for all users.” We also support the 10 year plan set out in Birmingham’s 2020 Walking and Cycling Strategy (https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/27662/walking_and_cycling_strategy_year_3_-_2022_progress_report_with_lcwip), “to make walking and cycling the everyday choice for local journeys and leisure activities, as part of a safe and integrated transport network for Birmingham”.

However the experience of people who walk, wheel, cycle or scoot in Birmingham is that this is a city which is largely hostile to active travel. There are a handful of protected cycle routes, and certainly no integrated network which facilitates safe travel by bike across the city. Birmingham’s streets are dominated by vehicular traffic both on our roads, as well as parking on our pavements, forcing pedestrians including disabled and partially sighted people; parents with babies and children in pushchairs; the elderly and vulnerable to walk onto the roads. It is clear that not enough space, design, thought or funding is given to making streets safer for active travel. As the Transport Plan states, “we cannot tackle the climate emergency without fundamental changes to the way people and goods move around our city.”

There is a fundamental mismatch between what the Council states as its vision for active travel as opposed to what has been delivered. Excuses about lack of staffing, funding cuts are given as a reason for planned projects not being delivered on time, despite them already being fully funded by the Department for Transport. We have a Council Leader and Cabinet Member for Transport

who are both committed to active travel, yet the pace of change in Birmingham has been woefully slow as opposed to other cities in the region. Currently, the only project under construction is a long-running project on Dudley Road.

We hope this committee can identify why that is and recommend improvements in process and culture to facilitate change. The people of Birmingham deserve to be able to walk, wheel and cycle across our city without fear of being intimidated, maimed or killed on our roads.

Why we are submitting evidence

Our letter to the Council

In June 2023 we sent an open letter (see Appendix 1) co-signed by 16 community organisations, to Birmingham City Council's senior leadership team, the Council Leader and the Cabinet Member for Transport. We sent the letter following a spate of road violence which killed and seriously injured several people, including a four-year-old child. In the time between scheduling the letter and it being sent, news broke that 12-year-old Azaan Khan had been killed on the A45.

In the letter, we outlined three measures we would like to see the Council take in order to speed up the provision of already-funded cycling infrastructure.

Our first proposal was to “empower the Council’s transport project teams to be robust with consultancy partners when designing and implementing schemes, especially when defining timescales.” This is because we have seen grand plans being created by the Transport Planning side of the transport department: the Birmingham Transport Plan (BTP), which aims to be implemented by 2030, and Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan (LCWIP) clearly shows there is ambition within the Council to rapidly provide active travel infrastructure. We also know there is money to be spent on plans and that there is a constraint with delivery.

The Council uses consultancy partners through the Council’s framework. We encourage the creation of capacity through the use of consultancies. It is therefore, we would suggest, within the Council’s gift to demand a faster pace of work from consultancies. We appreciate that schemes can be complex and have lots of considerations, however every scheme since 2021 has moved at a glacial pace.

Our second proposal was to “produce consultation reports faster. They can take six months to produce. This can and must be shorter. Consultations are an important part of scheme development, however, they can be made more efficient.” This evidence submission will largely centre around the consultation process and lack of communication from the Council. We want to

see more efficient consultation, not, as the Cabinet Member for Transport suggested, less consultation. The A34 and A38 blue route consultations had over 1,000 responses yet were summarised and published in less than six months. We are still waiting for consultations from 2021 to be published.

Our final proposal was to “Review internal council processes to improve efficiency. We were encouraged to hear at the Birmingham Transport Plan Delivery Plan launch that business cases will be combined into one Cabinet submission.” We appreciate there is a level of bureaucracy within the delivery of schemes and during our meetings with senior officers have been pleased to learn that the Council have been seeking to address this.

Ultimately, we will not achieve the Birmingham Transport Plan at today’s pace. We do not have confidence in the council’s transport project delivery function. As the Council appears to be bumbling along, passing funding deadlines as if they were meaningless, Birmingham will miss out on hefty funding pots.

Our letter to the Chair of this Committee

In conjunction with our letter to the Council, we wrote to the Chair of this Committee to request that the delivery of active travel projects be included as part of the Committee’s work programme. It is important that this is scrutinised properly and recommendations made for improving the Council’s delivery, from both looking inwardly and outwardly to other cities, regions and countries where active travel projects have been and are being delivered successfully..

In 2013, the then-Transport, Connectivity and Sustainability Scrutiny Committee held an inquiry called: Transforming Urban Movement through Cycling and Walking in Birmingham. While we are in a different place in terms of funding and policy for active travel, it was concerning that much of the written evidence, particularly that submitted by Pushbikes (<https://www.pushbikes.org.uk/sites/default/files/ScrutinyCtteOct2012Submission.pdf>) rings true today. Meanwhile, other areas of the country, and indeed our region, far exceeds Birmingham for delivering active travel infrastructure.

We thank the Committee for selecting this topic for its work programme, as well as the Task and Finish Group’s member’s time and the time of officers. We look forward to hearing its recommendations and would encourage the Task and Finish Group to submit its report to Full Council.

Our evidence submission

Our evidence centres around the consultation and communication of schemes. This is where we directly experience the service the Council delivers.

Showing how schemes have been funded

There is a general misunderstanding with how things are funded because funding streams are too complicated. The Government is requiring a “Funded by UK Government” logo to help the public identify centrally-funded projects. When the UK was part of the EU, projects funded by them required a logo. See Appendix 2 for examples.

In Birmingham, for projects funded through the Brums Breathes Fund, the Council is requiring use of a new mark. It might be more helpful to directly associate projects with funding from the Clean Air Zone if the Brum Breathes Fund instead said “Funded by Birmingham’s Clean Air Zone”. This would create a direct link between CAZ monies and local infrastructure projects.

Similarly, branding the new package of schemes as the Birmingham Cycling Revolution 2 is a wasted pursuit. This is something pursued by every level of government but in practice just means they end up spending money marketing their pet project name when their residents just want infrastructure they can use.

Communication and consultation throughout the design and delivery of schemes

Communication of scheme updates

Updates about schemes are provided through:

- Cycle Stakeholders Group
- Birmingham City Council’s website
- Birmingham Connected newsletter
- Birmingham Be Heard consultation platform
- Birmingham City Council committee management information system (board papers)
- West Midlands Combined Authority committee management information system (board papers)

Cycle Stakeholders Group

Better Streets for Birmingham is part of the Cycle Stakeholders Group. The group met infrequently but several times a year and was given scheme updates from the Birmingham Connected team. For

example, a scheme might have been redesigned and about to have traffic regulation orders published online.

The meetings were generally a good source of information, however scheme updates were often already out of date and based on whether the Birmingham Connected team had managed to talk to project teams in the office. Any further questions from stakeholders generally could not be answered during meetings.

The last meeting of the Cycling Stakeholders Group was held on 14 December 2022. A subsequent meeting on 8 March 2023 was cancelled and no meetings have been scheduled since.

A stakeholder group workshop to review a refresh of the city's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan was held on 16 February 2023. The group was also invited to the Birmingham Transport Summit on 26 April 2023.

The stakeholder group was told that it would be involved in co-design workshops for major schemes like the A38 and A45, which are being delivered as part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement 2022-27. This is yet to materialise and it is unclear as to whether this will be early public engagement or the chance to have a material impact on the design approach based on local knowledge.

Birmingham City Council's website

The Council website is not kept up to date with scheme updates. For example, the Bristol Road enhancement scheme (converting the pop-up cycle lane in Selly Oak to a permanent lane) still points users to fill in a consultation that closed in July 2022.

The website should be kept up to date with all funded schemes. This section of the website is also hard to navigate as schemes are not called the same thing depending on which system you look at.

We would like to see a page for each scheme available on the Council's website, kept up-to-date with project updates as they become available. It would also help for the Council to have web content that explains the process of delivering a scheme.

Birmingham Connected newsletter

While a good update about transport in the city, this tends to promote consultations, roadworks, initiatives and finished schemes to the public. It is not so good for stakeholders who want to be closer to the details.

Birmingham Be Heard consultation platform

Consultations for schemes are published on the Birmingham Be Heard platform, which is a platform called Citizen Space developed by a company called Delib. Consultations become mixed up with other Council initiatives. Transport consultations are also for different reasons: strategy, scheme details, specific elements of in-progress schemes, statutory Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) consultations, or post-delivery feedback surveys. It is not unusual for one scheme to have several consultation pages throughout its lifecycle.

The Council does not utilise many of the functionalities available on Citizen Space. These include using mapping, publishing responses as they're submitted (and moderated). The platform provider has a demonstration website for these features: <https://uk-geo-demo.citizenspace.com/>. The Council uses Citizen Space to run survey-based consultations. We would urge the Council to review this approach.

It can take years for the summary of consultations to be uploaded, whereas it is much faster for other parts of the Council. It has previously been possible for the Council to upload a consultation report within two months.

Table: Schemes with active travel elements consultation turnaround time, data collated from Birmingham Be Heard consultation platform

Scheme	Consultation deadline	Results published	Lead time	No. of responses	Scheme complete?
A38 Cycleway (Selly Oak to City Centre)	24 March 2017	16 August 2017	5 months	1,000	Yes - June 2019
A34 Cycleway (Perry Barr to City Centre)	7 April 2017	27 March 2019, no details published	23 months	137	Yes - June 2019
Dudley Road Transport Improvements 1	31 October 2018	17 November 2020	25 months	168	Partially
Highway Improvement Scheme at Pershore Road / Priory Road / Edgbaston Road Junction	09 November 2018	11 November 2021	36 months	146	Partially
A34 Perry Barr Highway Improvement Scheme	2 August 2019	14 October 2019	2 months	1,590	Yes - July 2022
Selly Oak Canal Ramp (Canals and Rivers Trust)	16 August 2019	Not published			Withdrawn
Birmingham Transport Plan	9 April 2020	01 June 2021	14 months	619	N/A
Dudley Road Transport Improvements 2	15 December 2020	13 April 2021	5 months	104	Partially

Scheme	Consultation deadline	Results published	Lead time	No. of responses	Scheme complete?
Birmingham City Centre Segments	10 September 2021	Not published			Partially
A45 cycle lane	30 November 2021	12 May 2022	6 months	202	No
A457 Jewellery Quarter to City Hospital cycle lane	30 November 2021	February 2022, PDF uploaded on 12 May 2022	6 months	140	No
Cannon Hill Park to Moseley cycle lane	3 December 2021	11 February 2022	3 months	546	No
Lozells Places for People	17 December 2021	Not published			No
Kings Heath local centre public consultation	10 June 2022	Not published			No
Tangmere Drive - proposed controlled pedestrian and cycle crossing	24 June 2022	Not published			Yes - July 2023
Selly Oak pop-up lane	8 July 2022	Not published			No
Kings Heath & Moseley Places for People - pink area	22 September 2022	Not published			No
Kings Heath & Moseley Places for People - light blue area	26 September 2022	Not published			No
Kings Heath & Moseley Places for People - grey area	30 September 2022	Not published			No
Moseley local centre public consultation	30 September 2022	Not published			No
Kings Heath & Moseley Places for People - west of High Street	4 October 2022	Not published			No
Kings Heath & Moseley Places for People - green and cream areas	5 October 2022	Not published			No
A435 Alcester Road South Bus Priority	25 November 2022	14 April 2023	5 months	1,164	No
City Centre & Snow Hill public realm improvements - Phases 2 and 3A	6 March 2023	Not published			No
Bournville and Cotteridge Places for People (consultation)	3 June 2023	Not published			No
Bournville and Cotteridge Places for People (initial engagement)	August and September 2022	Not published			No

It is important that consultation analysis is uploaded quickly. It helps to show that residents responding have been acknowledged.

We would like to see a commitment that all consultation findings will be uploaded to Birmingham Be Heard and the Council's website within three months of a consultation closing.

Emergency Active Travel Fund online platform

This platform is now largely defunct but was previously used for engagement as part of Emergency Active Travel Fund tranche 1 and 2 schemes. This platform has more functionality and there appeared to be more engagement and regular updates through it.

Birmingham City Council's committee management information system (CMIS)

Formal board papers are submitted through the CMIS and this is what Better Streets for Birmingham has been relying on since stakeholder meetings ceased.

Sometimes it can be hard to interpret these documents as they are operational documents for the Council - so not written to be understood by the public - and incorrect interpretations can be made. Sometimes things are not well-explained and there are mismatches for what schemes are called.

West Midlands Combined Authority's CMIS

Regional updates on schemes are given via the WMCA's Transport Delivery and Scrutiny Committee. These are infrequent and often the information is out of date due to board paper governance.

While board papers are essential for decision-making and scrutiny, we ask that plain English versions are made available, ideally through regularly updated scheme pages on the Council's website.

Consultations

Consultations are critical for ensuring that views are heard about schemes. Schemes make changes to the city's communities and how residents navigate their everyday life.

The Council is committed to public consultations as part of its Constitution. There is no prescribed method or approach for consultation. The Local Government Association (LGA) has written guidance on how to run consultations:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/communications-and-community-engagement/resident-communications/understanding-views-2>.

Previously, the cabinet member for Transport has stressed the need for consultation as a democratic organisation. Better Streets for Birmingham agrees with this, however has argued that consultation must be far more efficient with a step change in how projects commission, run, report and respond to research. This is evidenced in the earlier table of consultation turnaround times.

The current administration has a democratic mandate to implement the Birmingham Transport Plan. Therefore, the question of whether schemes should happen has been answered. Consultations should now be used to understand problems communities face and for feedback to iterate designs based on lived experience.

Responding to a consultation

Responding to consultations can be difficult as it requires a level of skill to understand scheme drawings, associated standards such as Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20), as well as the constraints in place.

Schemes are usually poorly explained, which leads to confusion, rejection and sessions for questions being taken up by basic questions that could have been part of the accompanying information. In the Bournville and Cotteridge Places for People consultation, lots of people were confused about the scheme's aims, which led to opposition despite acknowledging the need for less through-traffic.

While most of the time there is an overview plan to point out the changes, it would be useful to have explanatory notes to explain why a design decision has been made. For example, a section is a shared path because the highway is too narrow at this point to continue the protected cycle lane.

There are drop-in sessions both online and in-person, but often the scheme designers are not able to answer questions about elements of the scheme. In Places for People drop-in sessions, many

residents noted that the people answering their questions were not familiar with the local area or streets they were changing. This is important to rectify as being able to discuss local needs can go some way towards persuading people about the benefits of a scheme. Often the timing of these sessions are inconvenient for workers and parents, though online consultations have made this easier.

Usually, consultations have designs that are far too developed for meaningful change. We tend to only see minor changes which materialise during the Full Business Case report or the Traffic Regulation Order statutory consultation. Any schemes put out for another consultation have a long delay between consultations and little communication as to why this delay has happened.

Alternative consultation models

We would like to see Birmingham City Council iterate its approach to consultation for transport schemes. We have looked at alternative models and provided a summary.

London Cycling Campaign report

In 2020, the London Cycling Campaign and Urban Movement made recommendations for improving consultations in a report called *How to Talk to People About the Future of Their Streets*: https://s3.amazonaws.com/lcc_production_bucket/files/13729/original.pdf?1596021956. The report likens current consultations as referenda given they essentially offer a vote on a single, or series of options. Their suggested approach is more collaborative with the public.

Their recommendation was to run design and consultation in ten steps:

1. Brief and purpose
2. The Team
3. Data, data, data
4. Ask the residents (and businesses)
5. Create principles
6. Create scheme options
7. Engage
8. Create a final scheme
9. Build, monitor, benefits
10. Rapid mitigation and roll-out

Representative opinion polling

Currently, the Council asks for public opinion on its presented schemes through the consultation platform. This enables people who are opposed to any active travel measures in the UK to create a national campaign to oppose local schemes, which skews the results. The same can be said for

pro-scheme campaigners. The question of implementing schemes in line with the Birmingham Transport Plan was answered in the 2022 local election.

Representative opinion polling, for example through YouGov, could help to understand the community's acceptance of the radicalness of a scheme. This could be done after a conversation is held with the community to understand its challenges and needs.

Engagement with stakeholders through the current scheme delivery process

We would like to see early engagement with stakeholder groups and road users. This could take place after the constraints are understood through surveys and be part of a collaborative workshop. By having early conversations, it would help to de-risk the project from being rubbished by both people sympathetic to the scheme and those opposing it because sticking points could be designed out early on.

Co-design is an emerging approach to consultation in the public sector, however to co-design is to have an equitable relationship between the scheme designers, funders and road users. Co-design decisions must be made in the room and there must not be a power imbalance during these workshops. Better Streets for Birmingham fears that the planned co-design workshops would not achieve this.

Community-led consultation

Better Streets for Birmingham has recently engaged with neighbourhoods by funding and taking ward maps to community events. Improvements raised are being sent to ward councillors and Birmingham Connected. This engagement helps officers and councillors to understand where the most pressing issues are for road safety and anti-social behaviour. However, Better Streets for Birmingham does not have the volunteer resource to visit all wards or be present at all local events.

During the pandemic, the Council opened an online map for residents to submit feedback about their streets. It was closed because the Council didn't want residents to feel that because the issue had been identified, they would be funded and fixed.

However, this is a useful mass engagement tool and would help councillors to identify improvements for the Minor Ward Measures Fund and Brum Breathes Fund. By building community interest in what could improve communities, especially the ability for residents to upvote or downvote each other's suggestions, it empowers the community to take ownership of local issues and is a good starting point for changes to neighbourhoods. This type of consultation

would also help the approach outlined in the draft Birmingham Road Safety Strategy, which takes a neighbourhood approach to road safety interventions.

We would urge the Council to reopen this type of online platform with a disclaimer that suggestions are not guaranteed to be implemented.

Digital consultation approaches in other authorities

Most authorities have developed different approaches using one of three platforms: Commonplace, Citizen Space (Delib) or EngagementHQ (Granicus). Birmingham uses Citizen Space, however previously used Commonplace for Emergency Active Travel Fund schemes.

Where this has been done well, authorities have provided a single webpage for the scheme, throughout its design, development and delivery lifecycle. This means that everything is in one place, not spread across several websites and systems.

A scheme consultation page tends to include:

- Different stages of consultation: discuss [the challenge], consult [on plans], inform [on progress] - this helps to have different types of conversations and sets expectations for respondents
- A named officer with project email address
- A project timeline with plain English stage labels, kept up-to-date with progress
- The ability to publicly ask questions at any point
- Easy-to-understand maps and explainers
- Accessible documents, including BSL videos
- The ability to plot feedback directly onto maps and plans

This level of information and interaction would greatly improve the Council's consultations and delivery process.

Conclusion

In this response, we have focused on consultation as this is where we mainly interface with scheme development. Consultation is a communication exercise and we find the Council's communication to be insufficient: schemes go into a black box and some come out of the other end with spades in the ground.

The Council must greatly improve its approach to communicating about schemes and initiatives, as well as become far more collaborative with neighbourhoods when redesigning travel. This is crucial for delivering the changes needed to achieve the aims of the Birmingham Transport Plan by 2030.

We ask the Task and Finish Group to consider recommending:

1. The Council revises their consultation approach to allow for meaningful input, a quicker pace and more informed officers and contractors for engagement events
2. Greater transparency from the Council on scheme progress, published online and kept up-to-date
3. Clearer communications about the details and benefits of schemes, written in plain English

As we have stated throughout this document, we want to see the full implementation of the Birmingham Transport Plan. This is necessary and urgent. We now need to see a comprehensive and new approach from the Council to speed up delivery.

We stand ready to help in any way we can.

Appendices

Appendix 1: 2025, not 2027 open letter



hello@betterstreetsforbirmingham.org

Councillor John Cotton,
Council Leader, Birmingham City Council

Deborah Cadman OBE,
Chief Executive Officer, Birmingham City Council

Cc: Councillor Liz Clements,
Cabinet Member for Transport, Birmingham City Council

Craig Cooper, Paul Kitson, Dr Justin Varney and Richard Brooks,
Directors on the Management team, Birmingham City Council

Sent by email

9 June 2023

2025, not 2027: Accelerating delivery with a Games mindset

Dear all,

We are writing following more incidences of road violence with three cyclists and a four-year-old child being killed, as well as two other cyclists being seriously injured.

We know that preventing road violence and improving air quality requires better cycling and walking infrastructure. This must happen concurrently with the vision for fewer cars.

In recent years, consultations have been and gone with a response time of years. For example, the Bradford Street scheme, Bristol Road (Selly Oak) enhancement scheme, and Places for People

schemes are all now overdue for delivery. When updates are shared, the schemes have barely moved forward. We need an urgent and robust assessment of the Council's delivery capacity, including for often smaller measures such as Traffic Regulation Orders.

We cannot afford to wait for new infrastructure. They are critical interventions.

We share the widespread concern that the delivery of funded schemes is not quick enough. We have listened to the capacity issues, but can no longer accept this as an excuse for delay.

While the Council has published several laudable and ambitious strategies and visions for a low-traffic future, we have seen that there is a severe operational constraint within transport project teams and their consultancy partners.

The Council was able to deliver collaboratively with partners before and during the Commonwealth Games. This Games mindset needs to be harnessed again for the delivery of our shared transport ambitions.

We cannot view funding delivery deadlines as implementation dates: they must be worst-case scenarios. Schemes must be delivered by 2025, not 2027.

We challenge you, your officers and your project teams to accelerate the delivery of currently-funded schemes to 2025 at the latest.

We have three initial proposals for how timescales can be reduced:

1. Empower the Council's transport project teams to be robust with consultancy partners when designing and implementing schemes, especially when defining timescales.
2. Produce consultation reports faster. They can take six months to produce. This can and must be shorter. Consultations are an important part of scheme development, however, they can be made more efficient.

The London Cycling Campaign [published a report](#) that provides alternatives to current long-loop, summative consultations, which could further reduce timescales.

3. Review internal council processes to improve efficiency. We were encouraged to hear at the Birmingham Transport Plan Delivery Plan launch that business cases will be combined into one Cabinet submission.

The Department for Transport's 'Once in a Programme' rebaselining provides an opportunity to bring forward delivery timelines on City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) schemes

and their associated spending profiles. This is outlined in [section 10 of a report at today's WMCA Board](#) and needs to be completed ahead of September's WMCA Board meeting.

Finally, we are writing separately to the Chair of the Sustainability and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee to request the inclusion of active travel schemes within the Committee's work programme. This will increase transparency and provide more comprehensive updates on the progress of schemes and, ultimately, the Birmingham Transport Plan.

We continue to advocate for the Birmingham Transport Plan and have been impressed by future visions, schemes and strategies. However, this must rapidly translate to delivery.

We need our funded schemes delivered by 2025, not 2027.

Kind regards

Martin Price and Mat MacDonald, Co-chairs, **Better Streets for Birmingham**

David Cox, Chair, **Pushbikes - The Birmingham Cycle Campaign**

Denis Murphy, **Living Streets Birmingham Group**

Shivaji Shiva, **Cycling Works Birmingham**

Birgit Kehrer, **ChangeKitchen CIC**

Naomi Fisher, **ROAM**

Extinction Rebellion (XR) Birmingham

Michael Bryant, **Moseley Missiles Cycling Club**

Fabio Henriques, **Biclas B12**

Rob Anderson, **More Than A Cyclist**

Tim Wall, **Cycling UK Local Representative for Sutton Coldfield and Erdington**

Libby Harris, **Birmingham Friends of the Earth**

David Isgrove, Chair and Radley Russell, Vice Chair, **Moseley Forum**

Steve Halliday, Chair, **Better Streets for Moseley**

Huw Davies, Chair, **Better Streets for North Moseley**

Kevin Carmody, Chair, **Better Streets for Harborne and Quinton**

Appendix 2: Funding brands



**Funded by
UK Government**



Co-funded by
the European Union

Submission from 20's plenty

At face value 20s plenty is merely about cars driving slower to reduce serious injury and fatalities of which there are more than 500 annually in Birmingham annually

However it misses the point if you believe the population driving round the city in their Teslas or other electric cars solves our city's problems.
All cars are a major source of greenhouse emissions (electric cars have 12 tons of embedded emissions)

20's plenty is really about policy makers understanding that, at least in urban settings, cars should be designed out of the equation with concepts like 15 minute cities <https://www.15minutecity.com> Vision Zero <https://visionzeronetwork.org/about/what-is-vision-zero/> and 880 cities <https://www.880cities.org> becoming reality rather than convenient and empty soundbites.

We don't have long!

By 2030 if we don't have carbon emissions down by 45% as per the IPCC report in 2019 <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/> then the consequences are dire and with polar icecaps dwindling irreversibly and ultra toxic methane emissions being released from the Tundra. This will make the current conflicts, droughts, wildfires, floods and forced migration appear trivial

Cars, electric or otherwise, also cause debt, air pollution, social isolation and as well as KSI's more significantly cause thousands of 'slow deaths' due to weight gain and lack of exercise which are inevitable consequences of sitting in a car for hours

Our city is very inactive and unhealthy with 45% of our adults being inactive and 55% of our children. The NHS doesn't need loads more doctors and nurses it need fewer patients, 40% which are due to the toxic combination of inactivity, obesity and misery

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201617/ldselect/ldnhssus/151/15109.htm>

This accounts for 45,000 of the 120,000 people on waiting lists in Birmingham and the Councils burgeoning adult social care bill

You must disincentivise car ownership now because as soon as somebody owns a car they will drive it frequently to get a return on their investment and often drive it dangerously.

Public transport, active travel and localism are one of the main ways to achieve equity in this city

Ewan Hamnett

Retired GP Parent and Grandparent

Birmingham City Council

Sustainability and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date 7 September 2023



Subject: Scrutiny Contribution to Budget Savings and Recovery Plan

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

Report author: Christian Scade, Head of Scrutiny and Committee Services
christian.scade@birmingham.gov.uk
07517 550013

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), and for the Committee to consider the implications for the Committee's work programme.

2 Recommendations

The Committee:

- 2.1 Notes the Medium-Term Financial Plan report agreed at Cabinet on 25 July 2023 (Appendix 1).
- 2.2 Considers the issues that are relevant to the Committee's terms of reference (outlined in the [Council's Constitution, Part B, section 11.5](#)) as set out in appendices 2 and 3 and agree any recommendations to Cabinet.

3 Any Finance Implications

- 3.1 The financial implications are set out in section 10.3 of the Cabinet report (appendix 1).

4 Any Legal Implications

- 4.1 The legal implications are set out in section 10.2 of the Cabinet Report (appendix 1).

5 Any Equalities Implications

- 5.1 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.

5.2 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.

5.3 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; Whether any positive opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and/or good relations between people are being realised.

5.4 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.

5.5 Section 10.6 in appendix 1 also provides specific information on equalities implications for the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

6 Appendices

6.1 Appendix 1: Medium Term Financial Plan, Q1 2023-24 – Report to Cabinet, 25 July 2023.

6.2 Appendix 2: Slides from Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee training session delivered by Fifield Training Ltd, 26 July 2023.

6.3 Appendix 3: Agreed Savings 2023-24, Q1.

Birmingham City Council

Report to Cabinet

25th July 2023



Subject: **Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Refresh – update to Cabinet at Quarter 1 of the 2023/24 Financial Year**

Report of: **Fiona Greenway, Interim Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer**

Relevant Cabinet Member: **Councillor John Cotton, Leader
Councillor Sharon Thompson, Deputy Leader
Councillor Brigid Jones, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources**

Relevant O &S Chair(s): **Councillor Jack Deakin, Finance and Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Report author: Peter Sebastian
Head of Financial Planning (interim)
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Are specific wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No – All wards affected
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Is this a key decision?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference: 011384/2023		
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 As part of the Council’s approach to financial management, the Council provides updated forecasts across the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) period to Cabinet three times a year – at Quarter One (this report); Quarter Two (in October) and at

Quarter Three (December/January, in the run up to formal budget-setting for the next financial year).

- 1.2 This report shows forecast budget pressures and inflation forecasts over the current financial year (2023/24) and the remaining financial years that make up the MTFP. It is projected that there is in-year budget shortfall of £87.4m in 2023/24, rising to £164.8m in 2024/25, reflecting the extent to which the costs of current service provision exceed the funding levels. These projected budget shortfalls do not reflect any additional costs relating to Equal Pay, including potential future liabilities as well as the cost of implementing any scheme of job evaluation.
- 1.3 Across the country, many councils are facing significant and similar budget pressures – mainly due to increased demand for services from residents, higher than forecast inflation and difficulty with delivering existing savings programmes in this current economic climate. Therefore, the current MTFP forecasts for Birmingham City Council (BCC), while serious and requiring immediate attention, are not unique.
- 1.4 What is unique, in the BCC context, is the significant and additional forecast liability for Equal Pay claims of between £650m and £760m. The Council has engaged with its External Auditors and is having ongoing discussions with the Department of Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).
- 1.5 It is for this reason that this report supports the implementation of mandatory spending controls to give the Council time to further review financial pressures (including finalising the details of the Equal Pay liability) and mitigations.
- 1.6 In addition, this report recommends the implementation of a Robust Budget Savings & Recovery Plan to tackle existing budget pressures and the financial implications of the additional Equal Pay liability. This Plan sets out a series of activities that need to be delivered over the next five years to achieve financial stability within the Council, reviewing all aspects of BCC's financial management systems, processes and capability. This Plan will also seek to tackle financial pressures and rebuild corporate reserves over the medium term.

2 Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the MTFP budget pressures (inflation, savings, directorate pressures, Collection Fund update), as well as the Quarter One 2023/24 position (which provides a high-level assessment of a budget gap for this financial year) (**Section 5 of this report**);
- 2.2 Note the wider financial position of the Council, in terms of capital expenditure and available corporate resources, which demonstrate that the additional Equal Pay liability, alongside MTFP budget pressures, cannot be found within existing BCC resources (**Section 5**);

- 2.3 Note the work carried out to date to assess the potential scale of additional Equal Pay liabilities (**Section 4**);
- 2.4 Endorse the mandatory spending controls which came into effect from 5 July 2023 (**Section 6**);
- 2.5 Endorse the robust Budget Savings & Recovery Plan – to close the forecast budget gaps in the current financial year and future financial years– as per the timetable included in this report (**Section 6**); and
- 2.6 Agree the 2024/25 budget-setting timetable, including the dates for the implementation of the recommendations in this report (**Section 7**)

3 Background

- 3.1 Birmingham City Council (BCC) approved its 2023/24 annual budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) on 28 February 2023 as part of the annual budget setting cycle. Budgets were balanced up to 2023/24 (and across the MTFP period) on the assumption that:
 - a. £97.1m of savings were to be delivered over the next four years to 2026/27 (assuming no savings are brought forward undelivered from 2022/23);
 - b. Budget managers and budget holders are diligent in working within budgetary envelopes; and
 - c. Council tax was increased by 4.99% (including 2% for social care) with income levels largely returning to pre-Covid levels.
- 3.2 This paper:
 - a. Updates the assumptions (particularly inflation) that were used to set budgets for the 2023/24 financial year and provide an initial high-level

forecast (as at Period 3; Quarter One, April – June 2023) for the 2023/24 financial year;

- b. Updates the budget assessments over the MTFP period (from 2024/25 to 2027/28) based on the most recent forecasts (particularly with regard to inflation);
- c. Provides an update on Directorate spending to identify recent spending pressures, as well as progress against the agreed savings programme within the 2023/24 Financial Plan;
- d. Provides an outline of the Robust Budget Savings & Recovery Plan, including proposals for spending controls and key workstreams;
- e. Outlines the timetable and next steps required for the budget-setting process for the 2024/25 financial year, including budget consultation and engagement;
- f. Outlines the scale of the Council's existing capital programme – including a summary of existing borrowing (a full Capital and Treasury Management will come to Cabinet later this year); and
- g. Provides an initial assessment of potentially available corporate reserves that could be used to cover potential upcoming financial liabilities. It should be noted that these reserves are currently an estimate; a full review of reserves will be completed as part of the 2022/23 outturn report that will come to Cabinet in Autumn 2023.

3.3 This paper does not cover ringfenced revenue funding in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) or the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) – it solely focuses on General Fund revenue budgets. The HRA Business Plan is expected to come to Cabinet in September 2023 for review; the DSG budget position is covered as part of the usually cycle of quarterly reporting to Cabinet.

4 National & Local Financial Context

4.1 Cabinet should note that there are a significant range of challenges that this Authority, and all public bodies, are currently facing. Research by the Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA) which represents 47 urban authorities, published on 19 June 2023, found that 55% of respondents were unsure whether they would be able to meet the budgets that were approved in March 2023 for the 2023/24 financial year. Based on the updated MTFP forecasts in Section Four of this report, without immediate and urgent action, BCC is in a similar position. The macroeconomic factors that are causing financial pressures include:

- a. **The impact of inflation** – compared to February 2023 when the budget for the 2023/24 financial year was agreed, inflation looks set to be higher than forecast. This manifests itself in a number of ways, from increased pay and materials budgets to rising energy costs; for example, the 2023/24 Financial Plan included an increased budget allocation of £18 million for the Council's energy bills and a £6 million increase for our schools. Further details on the impact of inflation are detailed in Section Five of this report;
- b. **Impact of Covid** – this continues to impact in a number of ways, from increased support needs for our residents (resulting in additional pressures on public services) to the income collection, as can be seen in the movement in the Collection Fund (most notably for business rates) that is described in Section Five;
- c. **Uncertain central government funding** – the Council's net revenue budget is funded from four main sources: Business Rates, Council Tax, government grants and fees & charges. (Where necessary, corporate reserves may also be used to cover specific expenditure or cover budget shortfalls.) Fees & charges are dependent on activity levels and residents' ability to pay. While Council Tax and Business Rates are also dependent on ratepayers' ability to pay, there are a number of uncertainties over these funding streams in future. Central Government has provided some clarity for the 2024/25 financial year only – namely that current Council Tax threshold levels (i.e., the amount that rates can be increased without the need for a referendum) will remain at 3% for Council tax and 2% for the Adult Social Care precept. Future reforms to the Business Rates system are currently delayed until 2025/26 at the earliest but may have a significant impact on BCC.

4.2 At present, there are also a number of challenges that are specific to BCC:

- a. Oracle finance system implementation – as approved by Cabinet on 27 June, this MTFP refresh includes £33.7m of costs from 2023/24 onwards to fix urgent issues, and to develop a plan that will deliver the Council's vision for an optimised Oracle. The total cost is £46.5m, including £12.8m of costs that had related to the 2022/23 financial year. In addition, the time taken to fix this Oracle system has delayed the completion of the 2022/23 outturn report and final reserves position, which means that this report cannot fully consider the impact on reserves of future cost pressures. This will be done at the Quarter Two MTFP refresh report due to come to Cabinet in October.
- b. Equal Pay challenges – the additional forecast Equal Pay liability is a key driver for the recommendations in this report. As noted above, initial estimates of the potential additional Equal Pay liability are between £650m and £760m.

4.3 Before the financial implications of this Equal Pay liability can be fully quantified for the MTFP, a more detailed calculation, using individual time-series data, to assess the full extent of the Equal Pay liability is being carried out. The results of this work are expected in August.

- 4.4 The overall scale of the liability needs to be quantified to assess total costs and enable BCC to explore all options for payment. A provision for Equal Pay liability will also need to be made within all accounts that are not currently signed off by auditors – this includes the 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years – to demonstrate the scale of the issue at that point in time. This provision cannot be made until a financial solution is agreed with national government and stakeholders. At that point, the accounts can be reviewed and signed off by auditors.

5 MTFP – updated forecasts

- 5.1 The key movements from the MTFP position since BCC approved the budget for 2023/24 (and forecasts for future years) in February 2023 are shown in the table below. The projections identify a significant in-year budget shortfall of £87.4m in 2023/24, rising to £164.8m in 24/25, reflecting the extent to which the costs of current service provision exceed the funding levels:

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Total Net Expenditure (as per 2023/24 Financial Plan)	925,078	1,018,314	1,035,612	1,049,934	1,083,206
Total Resources (as per 2023/24 Financial Plan)	(925,078)	(1,018,314)	(1,035,612)	(1,049,934)	(1,079,093)
Budget gap as (as per 2023/24 Financial Plan)	-	-	-	-	4,113
Expenditure					
Budget Pressures					
Staffing	3,844	3,973	4,070	4,170	4,273
Demand/Complexity Growth	55,586	37,736	44,027	42,240	39,840
Statutory Requirement	-	-	-	-	-
Borrowing costs, investment etc	-	-	-	-	-
Budget Pressures Subtotal	59,430	41,709	48,097	46,410	44,113
Corporately Managed Budgets	(4,240)	(4,097)	(3,935)	(4,154)	(5,461)
Pay Inflation	-	-	(2,532)	(5,178)	(7,943)
Contract Inflation	1,042	27,346	51,904	55,348	58,666
Other Inflation	19,875	28,352	35,367	42,593	50,063
Fees and Charges Inflation	-	(357)	(365)	(372)	(378)
Inflation Sub-total	20,917	55,341	84,374	92,391	100,408
Savings					
High Risk Savings	35,141	56,274	75,374	75,374	75,374
Savings Subtotal	35,141	56,274	75,374	75,374	75,374
Total Net Expenditure Movements	111,248	149,227	203,910	210,021	214,434
Resources					
Business Rates	-	14,100	(27,677)	(40,165)	(41,052)
Council Tax	-	2,019	-	-	-
Other Grants Excl DSG & ABG	-	-	-	-	-
Top Up Grant	-	-	-	-	-
Other income	5,044	2,589	2,589	2,589	2,589
Net Payment to/(from) Reserves	(28,907)	(3,096)	(1,687)	-	-
Total Resources Movement	(23,863)	15,612	(26,775)	(37,576)	(38,463)
MTFP Budget Gap at July 2023	87,385	164,838	177,135	172,445	180,084

- 5.2 These projected budget shortfalls do not reflect any additional costs relating to Equal Pay, including potential future liabilities as well as the cost of implementing

any scheme of job evaluation. Full detail on these projections is included in paragraphs 5.3 – 5.15 below.

5.3 **Budget Pressures & Policy Choices** – this is made up of two elements:

- a. **Staffing** – this includes the correction of a previous budget issue that relates to the 1.25% planned increase in National Insurance contributions (and therefore pay costs) which was subsequently scrapped in September 2022. This planned increase was removed from base budgets, leaving a shortfall (£3.4m in 2023/24) to cover the forecast pay award.
- b. **Demand / Complexity** – this covers a range of directorate-specific spending pressures. The four largest areas of cost pressures are:
 - i. Oracle costs (assumed £33m from 2023/24 to 2025/26);
 - ii. Temporary Accommodation (assumed pressure of £8.6m in 2023/24, rising to £18.2m in 2024/25; based on the recent proposal to June Cabinet to purchase additional temporary accommodation which was approved);
 - iii. Children & Families pressures (£6.7m in 2023/24 and £3.9m in 2024/25), driven by demographic pressures requiring care (particularly in Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children) and home-to-school transport support, as well as an additional liability relating to Birmingham’s Children’s Trust pension liabilities for 2023/24 only (all of which will be further reviewed at Quarter Two); and
 - iv. Adult Social Care demand pressures (forecast £6.2m in 2023/24 and £8.9m in 2024/25) relating to increased numbers seeking care and increased placement costs (i.e. additional demand for more expensive residential care).

5.4 **Corporately Managed Budgets** – this includes a forecast reduction in borrowing costs of £3.9m in 2023/24 and £2.3m in 2024/25, as delays in the capital programme have led to lower than forecast loan debt (and therefore lower Treasury costs).

Inflation

5.5 **Other inflation** – this line covers General Price inflation on premises, transport, and supplies and services costs. The assumptions used in the 2023/24 Financial Plan have been reviewed in light of the latest Bank of England Consumer Price Index (CPI) forecasts from May 2023. The updated forecasts are based on the following assumptions:

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Apr-Jun	8.2%	3.4%	1.1%
Jul-Sep	7.0%	2.9%	1.0%
Oct-Dec	5.1%	2.3%	1.0%
Jan-Mar	4.4%	1.5%	1.1%
Average CPI Inflation	6.2%	2.5%	1.1%
MTFP refresh assumptions used:	6.2%	2.5%	2.0%
Assumptions used in 2023/24 Financial Plan:	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source for MTFP refresh assumptions: Bank of England CPI forecasts, May 2023

Note: for the 2025/26 financial year and future financial years, MTFP forecasts are assumed to be 2.0% - a slight increase from Bank of England forecasts to ensure the MTFP is calculated on a prudent basis

5.6 As noted above, the increase in forecast inflation is due to the increase compared to the 2023/24 Financial Plan, in which assumptions were made that Directorates would not receive any inflationary uplift for premises, transport and supplies & services costs and would need to manage pressures within existing budgets.

5.7 **Contract inflation** – this relates to areas of spend which are tied to specific contracts, and so require specific inflation assumptions. The largest area of spend – and therefore the largest impact on the MTFP – relates to Adult Social Care (packages of care; estimated £18.6m increase in inflation forecasts in 2024/25) and Children’s Social Care (third party payments to the Birmingham Children’s Trust for care packages; estimated £7.3m increase in inflation forecasts in 2024/25). This is based on the following assumptions:

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
<u>Adult Social Care packages</u>			
Assumptions used in the 2023/24 Financial Plan:	7.5%	0.6%	0.0%
MTFP refresh assumptions used:	8.7%	6.5%	4.9%
<u>Children's Social Care third party payments</u>			
Assumptions used in the 2023/24 Financial Plan:	7.4%	0.6%	0.0%
MTFP refresh assumptions used:	7.4%	6.5%	4.9%

Source for MTFP refresh assumptions: Analysis of future ASC care package costs as at end of May 2023

Note: for Children’s third-party payments, it is assumed that they will track ASC inflation movements in 2024/25 and 2025/26. The 2023/24 figures have not yet been updated and will form part of the next MTFP Refresh paper to Cabinet in October

5.8 **Pay inflation** – at present, pay inflation budgets look broadly accurate. The Financial Plan 2023/24 assumed 5.0% increase in 2023/24, 2.5% in 2024/25 and in future years. Based on Bank of England forecasts, this update revises this forecast to 2.0% from 2025/26 onwards.

5.9 **Savings** – progress against the savings agreed in the 2023/24 Financial Plan has been reviewed. Based on the table below, it is estimated that a total of £35.1m of savings are at high risk (i.e., assessed as unlikely to deliver). These are described in paragraphs 5.10-5.11 (£33.2m of savings at risk within the agreed corporate savings programme) and 5.12 (an additional £1.9m of savings that had been incorrectly applied).

- 5.10 From the agreed corporate savings programme, as laid out in the 2023/24 Financial Plan approved by Cabinet in February, the Financial Sustainability Programme Board is currently forecasting that £33.2m of savings are at high risk (i.e., assessed as unlikely to deliver) in 2023/24 with a further £21.1m unlikely to be delivered in 2024/25:

£'000	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Total	% of Target
MTFP Target 23/24 to 25/26	(55,165)	(28,137)	(19,544)	(102,846)	92%
Previous Undelivered Savings	(9,454)			(9,454)	8%
Total Target	(64,619)	(28,137)	(19,544)	(112,300)	100%
Delivered					
Low Risk	(2,623)	(1,116)	(84)	(3,823)	3%
Medium Risk	(28,517)	(5,888)	(360)	(34,765)	31%
High Risk	(33,479)	(21,133)	(19,100)	(73,712)	66%
To Be Confirmed					
Potential Write-Off					
Total Forecast	(64,619)	(28,137)	(19,544)	(112,300)	100%

- 5.11 The following points should be noted about this savings forecast:

- a. This assumes that, in addition to the £55.2m of budgeted savings in the MTFP for 2023/24, there will be £9.5m of undelivered savings in 2022/23 that will need to be rolled forward for a total savings target of £64.9m in 2023/24. This will need to be confirmed as part of the outturn report for 2022/23 (and the number of undelivered savings could rise or fall).
- b. The projects that are not expected to deliver target savings in 2022/23 include: Workforce savings (£2m); Traded Services (£1.6m); Council Admin Buildings Premises (£1.3m); Automation (£0.85m); Fieldworker / new ways of working (£0.8m); and Customer Services (£0.4m).
- c. An initial high-level review of savings projects by the Financial Sustainability Programme Board, as at mid-May, suggests that approximately £33m (50%) of the total £64.9m required in 2023/24 is currently at risk of slippage/non-delivery. Key projects currently at high risk of slippage/non-delivery include: Children's Trust Savings - £6m; Reducing Bed and Breakfast spend - £5.5m; Commercial Investment/Property - £4.7m; Workforce Savings - £4m; CAB Premises - £3.7m; Traded Services - £3.1m; EIP/Localities Hub - £2.5m; Automation - £1.850m; Centres of Excellence - £1.8m; Customer Services - £0.990m; and Fieldworker - £0.8m
- d. Work is currently progressing to review the risk levels and options for mitigation. Further information will be provided in subsequent reports to Cabinet on the 2022/23 outturn and the Quarter Two MTFP Refresh in October.

- 5.12 In addition to the savings above, this MTFP includes an additional £1.95m of vacancy factor savings (i.e., holding staff positions vacant as people leave) that

had been incorrectly applied to Children & Families and City Operations. These had been applied on top of existing 3% savings across all Directorates.

5.13 **Resources** – this paper also considers a range of factors affecting future income. These include:

- a. **Business rates** – based on the draft 2022/23 outturn position for the Collection Fund, it is forecast that there is a deficit in business rates income of £27.8m due to a challenging economic environment for businesses (resulting in lower than forecast collection rates), a delay in enforcement activity (due to Oracle implementation issues) and an increase in business rates appeals (as this is the last year of the six year period in which businesses can query the latest set of rateable valuations (i.e. tax due) which were carried out in 2017).
- b. Under statutory guidance, the 2022/23 Collection Fund deficit will be charged to the General Fund for the next financial year (i.e. in 2024/25). However, this is offset by additional forecast income from business rates of £13.8m in 2024/25 and in subsequent years. Business rates are calculated by multiplying the rateable value of the property by the “non-domestic multiplier” which is adjusted to reflect the Consumer Price Index inflation figure for the September prior to the billing year. As Bank of England forecasts for CPI are expected to be higher than the forecasts used in the Financial Plan for 2023/24, this could result in additional income for the Council in future years.
- c. **Council tax** – as with Business Rates, there is projected to be a £2.0m deficit for 2022/23 in Council Tax income due to a reduction in collection rates. This will also be charged to the General Fund for 2024/25. It is worth noting that collection rates across Council Tax and Business rates fell in 2022/23, relative to 2021/22. For Council Tax, in year collection fell from 92.9% to 90.2%; for Business Rates, in year collection fell from 95.8% to 90.1%.
- d. **Grants** – there are two main categories of grant: 1) those used to fund wider Council services (e.g., Top Up Grant, Business-rates related Section 31 grants); and 2) those ringfenced to fund specific services (e.g., the Social Care Grant). At present, there is not sufficient information from central government to update forecasts for grant funding in 2024/25 and beyond. Further information is expected later in the 2023/24 financial year.
- e. **Other income** – this includes a range of pressures including a pressure of £1.5m on parking income (due to reduced demand with the city) and £1.5m on business waste collection income (again likely due to reduced office usage across the city).
- f. **Reserves** – at present, the only use of reserves assumed is to cover the additional expenditure required to support the remediation of the Oracle

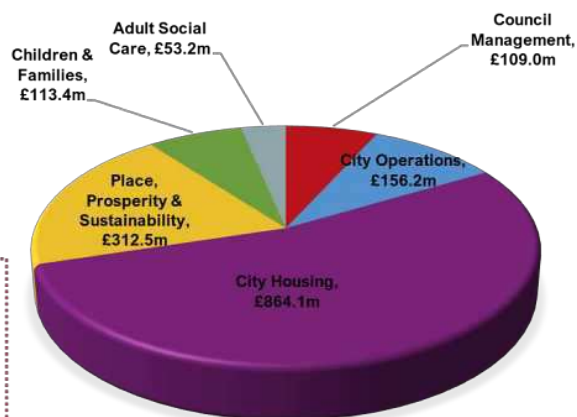
finance system. A further review of reserves will be provided to Cabinet as part of the 2022/23 outturn report in the Autumn.

- 5.14 **Additional risks** – there are a range of other possible service pressures that are being reviewed by officers. For the purposes of this paper, only pressures that are 1) viewed as more than 50% likely to take place and 2) can be quantified are included in this report. Others will be reviewed and may be quantified as part of the Quarter Two refresh of the MTFP for Cabinet in October. This could include the potential cost implications relating to the current Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract between the Council and Birmingham Highways Limited – a procurement exercise for a new sub-contractor is currently ongoing, so it is not possible to quantify any additional costs at this stage.
- 5.15 **Equal Pay** – further to the description in Section Four of this report, and for the purposes of this paper, a high level estimate of the potential financing costs has been made for information purposes. It is not yet included in the MTFP forecasts in this paper, as the work to finalise the figures is ongoing.

Capital Programme

- 5.16 **Size** – a review of the Capital programme is needed in light of the current financial situation with a view to add, reprioritise, accelerate, defer and descope the programme. This will need to be looked at across all Directorates within scope of the Capital Programme.
- 5.17 The current approved capital programme is for £1.6 billion of spending over this MTFP period:

	2023/24 to 2026/27
Directorate	£m
Council Management	£109.0m
City Operations	£156.2m
City Housing	£864.1m
Place, Prosperity & Sustainability	£312.5m
Children & Families	£113.4m
Adult Social Care	£53.2m
Total	£1,608.3m



Core City Comparison		
	4yr Programme	HRA
City	£m	£m
Birmingham	1,608	821
Manchester	1,104	105
Leeds	1,978	520
Bristol	1,118	700
Liverpool	345	0

- 5.18 The capital spend by Directorate includes:
- City Housing includes £820m for the Housing Revenue Account: investment in current housing stock as well as new social housing;
 - Council Management includes £54m transformation projects and £30m Corporate Contingency over four years;

- c. The above figures do not include the proposed £400m investment in the Council's Temporary Accommodation strategy, approved by Cabinet on 25 June; and
- d. Place, Prosperity & Sustainability includes £52.9m Enterprise Zone funded by borrowing to be repaid by the retention of future Enterprise Zone business rates.

Corporate Reserves

- 5.19 At present, officers are reviewing corporate reserves to finalise the outturn position for the 2022/23 financial year. These will need to be compared to the MTFP budget gap included in this paper and additional costs as a result of additional Equal Pay claims.
- 5.20 Using corporate reserves will, of course, significantly reduce the financial resilience of the council against future pressures. Once reserves have been used, they need to be rebuilt from existing budgets (i.e., through future savings that can be contributed to reserves). Once reserves have been spent, they are no longer available. That is why it is worth pursuing a savings programme first and retaining reserves to enable the authority to have some protection against future budget pressures. The method for pursuing these savings will be the Robust Budget Savings & Recovery Plan – outlined in the next Section of this report.

6 Robust Budget Savings & Recovery Plan

Background

- 6.1 The financial challenges being faced by the Council are of a sufficient size that they require immediate and sustained action to control. There is no doubting the scale of the financial challenge. There is a significant budgetary challenge arising, which includes:
 - a. The sizeable MTFP budget gaps identified in Section Five of this report; and
 - b. Additional financing costs for any future Equal Pay costs.
- 6.2 The Robust **Budget Savings & Recovery Plan** is made up of:
 - a. **Mandatory spending controls** – to enable the Authority to pause non-essential spending and to enable time to tackle the budget gap; and
 - b. **Detailed workstreams** – including Oracle Remediation, MTFP and Budget, and Workforce.

Mandatory Spending Controls

- 6.3 Based on the rationale in this report, **Mandatory Spending Controls** were implemented on 5 July.

6.4 **Mandatory spending controls mean that:**

- a. **No new agreements or commitments for expenditure can be made, without engagement with the three statutory officers.**
- b. Temporary measures will be brought in to ensure all **new** non-essential expenditure will stop with immediate effect.

6.5 **The only allowable expenditure permitted under an emergency protocol includes the following categories:**

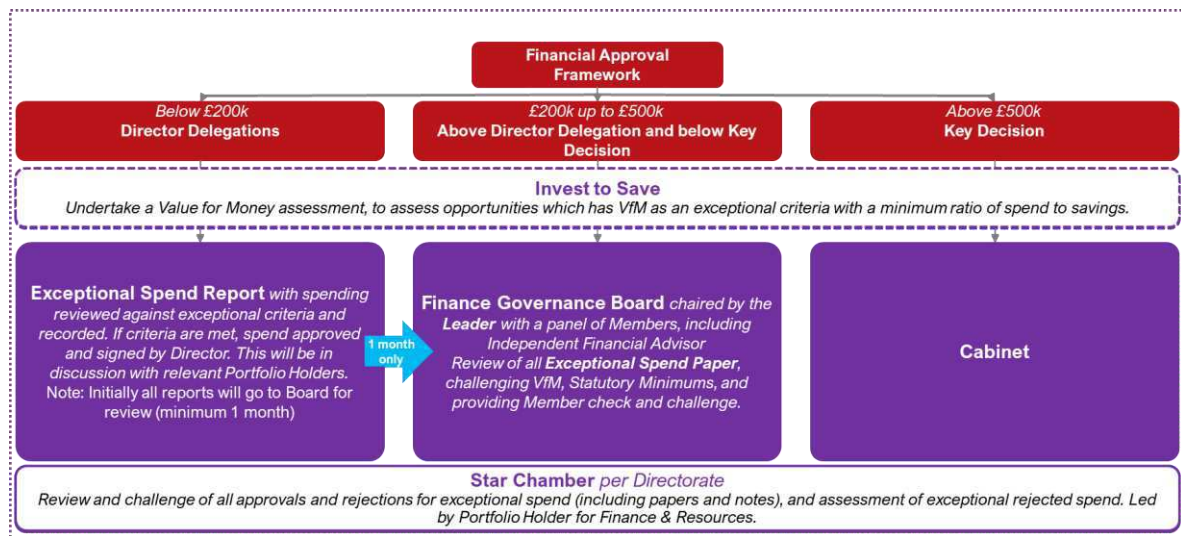
- a. Existing staff **payroll** and **pension** costs
- b. Expenditure required through **existing legal agreements and contracts**
- c. Expenditure on **goods and services** which have **already been received**
- d. Expenditure required to deliver the council's **provision of statutory services**
- e. Urgent expenditure required to **safeguard vulnerable citizens**
- f. Expenditure to address **services** which are **under regulation**
- g. Expenditure funded through **ring-fenced grants**
- h. Expenditure necessary to achieve **value for money** and / or **mitigate additional in year costs**
- i. Expenditure necessary to achieve **value for money** and / or **mitigate additional in year costs**
 - i. *Robust business case with short payback period required, i.e., less than 24 months;*
 - ii. *Value-for-Money Framework to be developed; and*
 - iii. *Business Cases to be reviewed by a group (to be established by Chief Executive)*

Robust Budget Savings & Recovery Plan

6.6 **Governance Arrangements – three governance forums will be used to challenge spend within the Council:**

- a. **Director Delegations with Exceptional Spend Report** – To review spend against exceptional criteria and take delegated decisions against spend thresholds. In discussion with relevant Portfolio Holder.
- b. **Finance Governance Board** – To review spend above certain thresholds based on exceptional criteria, utilising senior stakeholders to challenge spend, and regularly review Director delegated decisions.
- c. **Star Chamber** – To review and challenge all approved exceptional spend (including papers and notes) and an assessment of exceptional rejected spend.

6.7 This will be implemented in line with a temporary scheme of delegation, aligned to the Finance, Procurement and Contract Governance Rules in Part D of the constitution:



*Notes: All forums will occur on a weekly basis to ensure spend is agile and responses to Directorate needs. This will apply to all spend over £500 as a de-minimus level. All spend must adhere to Council Procurement Governance. This includes spend and call-offs from frameworks. This includes **Capital and Ring-Fenced Grant Spend**. Consideration will be given to the volume of reports, needs to split by General Fund and Housing Revenue Account spend, and the timeliness of reporting and governance. This covers increase in spend **and** decrease in income.*

6.8 **Work plan** – this plan will inform the roadmap of activities that need to be delivered over the next five years to achieve financial stability within the Council.

6.9 There are nine activities which form this plan, split into Strategic and Operational Activities. The Strategic work streams are:

- a. **Organisational Spending Review** – Review all spending for Value for Money and Outcome Focus across all services and budgets, including General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Capital and external funding, Companies, Traded Services (i.e. Schools);
- b. **Equal Pay Resolution** – Roadmap of activities to understand and resolve the Equal Pay challenges, including detailing the potential costs over the next 5 years;
- c. **MTFP and Budget** – Quantification and remediation of the budget gap, revising the MTFP (next four financial years, Long-Term Financial Plan (next ten financial years), and Budget setting process. This will include the identification and delivery of savings, to be owned by the Corporate Leadership Team and Cabinet; and

- d. **Workforce** – Ensuring recruitment and retention is not at risk within the workforce, and developing contingency, creating capacity and flexibility, and exploring staff and people costs, including agency and interim costs.

6.10 The Operational work streams are:

- a. **Mandatory Spend Controls** – Implementation of mandatory spend controls, as outlined above, and the delivery of in-year spending savings through these controls, including Collection/Recovery of Income, balance sheet controls and use of Minimum Revenue Provision;
- b. **Oracle Remediation** – Activities to achieve Safe and Compliant, Stabilisation, and Optimisation of the Oracle Fusion implementation;
- c. **Governance and Controls Framework** – Review and remediation of governance and key financial controls, including but not limited to Internal Audit, Procurement, Value-for-money, Risk Management, Annual Governance Statement;
- d. **Closure of the Accounts** – Activities to deliver accounts for the Council across all financial years that remain open with External Auditors, including any further investigations and assessments; and
- e. **Finance and Governance Capacity and Capability** – Strengthened finance and governance knowledge, capability and capacity to deliver the planned improvements, including development of a Service Improvement Programme.

6.11 Work is already underway against a number of these areas. Each of the nine pillars above has a detailed plan of activities with responsible owners, risks, timelines, and allocated resources against each step.

6.12 The Robust Budget Savings & Recovery Plan will be reported to, and monitored by, the Finance Governance Board.

7 Next Steps

7.1 Significant work is required over the next few weeks to deliver on the proposed Budget Savings & Recovery Plan. A further update will come to Cabinet in October to update the MTFP position and assumptions over the medium term, in advance of the formal budget-setting process for 2024/25.

7.2 The timetable for the 2024/25 budget-setting process is as follows:

Activities	Date
Spending Controls implementation	5 July 2023
Implementation of Budget Savings & Recovery Plan	25 July 2023
Quarter Two Update on MTFP assumptions, budget position to Cabinet	10 October 2023

Budget engagement on resource prioritisation	Mid October – December 2023
Scrutiny of budget development proposals and Scrutiny review of Budget Savings & Recovery Plan for 2024/25 budget	November/December 2023
Provisional Local Government Settlement	Mid December 2023 (TBC)
Cabinet – setting of council tax and business rate tax base	16 January 2024
Final Local Government Settlement	January/February 2024 (TBC)
Cabinet consideration of the 2023/24 budget and Financial Plan	13 February 2024
Full Council approval of 2023/24 budget and setting of Council tax	28 February 2024

8 Next Steps

- 8.1 The Council believes that it is important that it engages with citizens and business when planning activity and the financial implications of those plans. An engagement plan is currently in development, focusing on gathering the views of Council Tax and Business Rates payers to feed into the 2024/25 budget setting process.

9 Risk Management

- 9.1 There remains significant uncertainty in respect of public spending levels and the level of funding for local government and therefore the assumptions outlined in this report will be subject to continual review over the coming months to ensure that the Council's short term and medium term financial stability can be protected and critical services delivered.

10 Compliance Issues:

10.1 How are the recommended decisions consistent with the City Council's priorities, plans and strategies?

- a. The Robust Budget Savings and Recovery Plan is an essential part of the Medium Term financial planning process. This will be informed by the priorities that led to its implementation, namely to provide a stable footing for the future financial position of the Council. In doing so, the Robust Budget Savings and Recovery Plan will seek to support the delivery of the Council's priorities, as laid out in the Council Plan, wherever possible within current and potential financial constraints. The

MTFP must remain focused on social justice, frontline services and the needs of residents and communities of the city.

10.2 Legal Implications

- a. A local authority is required under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to produce a balanced budget.

10.3 Financial Implications

- a. The detailed financial implications have been covered throughout the report.

10.4 Procurement Implications (if required)

- a. There are no procurement issues arising directly from the contents of this report. Any procurement implications will be identified as specific budgets are developed.

10.5 Human Resources Implications (if required)

- a. There are no specific human resources implications arising from this report. Any Human resource implication will be identified as specific budgets are developed.

10.6 Public Sector Equality Duty

- a. In compliance with the Council's duties on equality, changes in the budget that impact on the provision of services will need to be properly assessed. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken on proposals as they are developed where this is considered necessary to do so.

FINANCE SCRUTINY WORKSHOP

Birmingham City Council
26th July 2023

Ian Fifield

Objectives



- To ensure that everyone understands the nature and depth of the financial challenge faced by the Council
- To plan Scrutiny's approach and contribution to the Council's overall approach in meeting the challenge
- To develop a timetable and action plan for Scrutiny, especially over the autumn period

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Total Net Expenditure (as per 2023/24 Financial Plan)	925,078	1,018,314	1,035,612	1,049,934	1,083,206
Total Resources (as per 2023/24 Financial Plan)	(925,078)	(1,018,314)	(1,035,612)	(1,049,934)	(1,079,093)
Budget gap as (as per 2023/24 Financial Plan)	-	-	-	-	4,113
Expenditure					
Budget Pressures					
Staffing	3,844	3,973	4,070	4,170	4,273
Demand/Complexity Growth	55,586	37,736	44,027	42,240	39,840
Statutory Requirement	-	-	-	-	-
Borrowing costs, investment etc	-	-	-	-	-
Budget Pressures Subtotal	59,430	41,709	48,097	46,410	44,113
Corporately Managed Budgets	(4,240)	(4,097)	(3,935)	(4,154)	(5,461)
Pay Inflation	-	-	(2,532)	(5,178)	(7,943)
Contract Inflation	1,042	27,346	51,904	55,348	58,666
Other Inflation	19,875	28,352	35,367	42,593	50,063
Fees and Charges Inflation	-	(357)	(365)	(372)	(378)
Inflation Sub-total	20,917	55,341	84,374	92,391	100,408
Savings					
High Risk Savings	35,141	56,274	75,374	75,374	75,374
Savings Subtotal	35,141	56,274	75,374	75,374	75,374
Total Net Expenditure Movements	111,248	149,227	203,910	210,021	214,434
Resources					
Business Rates	-	14,100	(27,677)	(40,165)	(41,052)
Council Tax	-	2,019	-	-	-
Other Grants Excl DSG & ABG	-	-	-	-	-
Top Up Grant	-	-	-	-	-
Other income	5,044	2,589	2,589	2,589	2,589
Net Payment to/(from) Reserves	(28,907)	(3,096)	(1,687)	-	-
Total Resources Movement	(23,863)	15,612	(26,775)	(37,576)	(38,463)
MTFP Budget Gap at July 2023	87,385	164,838	177,135	172,445	180,084

Additional issues

- 2023/24 agreed budget savings - £33.479m out of £64.619m are “high risk” (i.e. unlikely to be delivered)
- Equal pay - £650 - £760m not currently included in the MTFS
- Oracle implementation – impact on reserves

My thoughts.....

- Both capital and revenue budgets require fundamental review to generate savings
- Work to be done on the deliverability of savings
- Much work is underway – including a “star chamber” process
- The end point is a scrutiny review of the Budget Savings and Recovery Plan for the 24/25 budget – November/December 2023

But....

- Should Scrutiny just wait for the results of the review and scrutinize the saving list?
- How can Scrutiny engage with the star chamber process?

How can Scrutiny be proactive and add value to this process, avoiding duplication?

Workshop

Generating Scrutiny Questions

“The important and most difficult job is never to find the right answers, it is to find the right questions” (Peter Drucker)

The Challenge

What questions can scrutiny ask and explore in order to make a positive contribution to the savings identification process?

Questions and Key Lines of Enquiry Discussed at the Workshop

- All scrutiny committees need to review their work programme and identify what can be delayed to give space to this work.
- Information required on:
 - What and who the “star chamber process” is, including what they will be reviewing to ensure there is no duplication.
- Are there any previous scrutiny recommendations that suggested ways that savings / efficiency could be achieved that have not yet been implemented? Can these be taken forward?

Cont'd

- Officers to be asked for the current list of agreed savings to be broken down per committee so that scrutiny committees can;
 - Undertake a reality check of how / when / how much can now be delivered.
 - Understand why these savings were put forward and agreed as part of the budget process but are now considered high and medium risk.
 - Ensure that all further savings proposals can be implemented on time and that they deliver the savings identified.
- Resources scrutiny committee to:
 - Review the various assumptions in the MTFP
 - Request other scrutiny committees review the assumptions made in lines such as “demand and complex growth”

Cont'd

- Potential more detailed reviews:
 - Duplication between departments.
 - Income generation possibilities e.g. commercial rental income
 - Invest to save possibilities in the capital programme
- Timescale
 - Much work needs to be completed over the next few weeks to ensure that recommendations are formally discussed and approved in the September scrutiny meetings
 - Scrutiny review of the Budget Savings & Recovery Plan need to be timetabled for later in the autumn (November/ December)

23/24 Savings Q1 Position by O&S Committee

Summary

Savings by OSC Portfolio	Delivered	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk	TOTAL
Co-ordinating OSC				(14,851)	(14,851)
Economy and Skills OSC		(133)	(816)	(9,595)	(10,544)
Education, Children and Young People OSC			(4,465)	(6,000)	(10,465)
Finance and Resources OSC		(1,269)	(8,799)	1,457	(8,611)
Health and Adult Social Care OSC		(700)	(9,008)	2,000	(7,708)
Homes OSC		(502)	(592)	(5,500)	(6,594)
Neighbourhoods OSC		(19)	(4,837)	(990)	(5,846)
Sustainability and Transport OSC					
TOTAL		(2,623)	(28,517)	(33,479)	(64,619)

List of Savings Projects

Directorate	O&S Committee	Savings Description	2023/24 (Saving) £'000
Adult Social Care	Health and Adult Social Care OSC	Adults Transformation Programme.	(3,700)
Adult Social Care	Health and Adult Social Care OSC	Adult Packages of Care (Reversal of previous year one-off savings)	1,000
Adult Social Care	Health and Adult Social Care OSC	Income Collection (Reversal of previous year one-off savings)	1,000
Adult Social Care	Health and Adult Social Care OSC	3% Turnover factor (Vacancy management)	(2,850)
Adult Social Care	Health and Adult Social Care OSC	Special Impact team (SIT) complex case review accelerated and expanded to cover high cost packages	(500)
Adult Social Care	Health and Adult Social Care OSC	Case load packages Review	(200)
Adult Social Care	Health and Adult Social Care OSC	Looking at ways to enhance ICS/CCG partnership to harness pooled resources more efficiently eg BCF Inflation	(1,000)
BCT	Education, Children and Young People	Children's Trust - Family and Friends Cars	(2,000)
BCT	Education, Children and Young People	Children's Trust - Stronger Families Programme	(3,000)
BCT	Education, Children and Young People	Children's Trust - Tackling Domestic Abuse to Support Families	(1,000)
Children & Families	Education, Children and Young People	Schools Balances	(328)
Children & Families	Education, Children and Young People	Education and Skill Early Retirement	(210)

Children & Families	Education, Children and Young People	3% Turnover factor (Vacancy management)	(1,921)
City Housing	Homes OSC	Reducing / Eradicating B&B Accommodation	(5,500)
City Housing	Homes OSC	3% Turnover factor (Vacancy management)	(502)
City Ops	Sustainability and Transport OSC	Street Work Permits	(100)
City Ops	Neighbourhoods OSC	Removal of Universal Superloos	(19)
City Ops	Co-ordinating OSC	Capitalise Salaries of Alexander Stadium Build (Reversal of previous year one-off savings)	40
City Ops	Co-ordinating OSC	Revenue Benefit from Capitalising the Cost of Indoor Track at Arena (Reversal of previous year one-off savings)	150
City Ops	Neighbourhoods OSC	3% Turnover factor (Vacancy management)	(3,307)
Corporate Items	Co-ordinating OSC	Localities / Public Hub (Savings from implementation of EIP Model)	(2,500)
Corporate Items	Co-ordinating OSC	BCC Target Operating Model Design Principles - Voluntary Workforce Savings Programme	(2,000)
Corporate Items	Co-ordinating OSC	B/F_BCC Target Operating Model Design Principles - Voluntary Workforce Savings Programme	(2,000)
Corporate Items	Finance and Resources OSC	Maximise the Use of Grant Funding – Identifying opportunities to use grant funding to fund existing GF spend releasing GF budgets for savings.	(1,000)
Corporate Items	Finance and Resources OSC	B/F_Maximise the Use of Grant Funding - Identifying opportunities to use grant funding to fund existing GF spend releasing GF budgets for savings.	(1,000)
Corporate Items	Finance and Resources OSC	Improvements in Debt Management – Review Debt Management Process with a view to improving collection and reducing bad debt.	(900)
Corporate Items	Finance and Resources OSC	B/F_Improvements in Debt Management – Review Debt Management Process with a view to improving collection and reducing bad debt.	(1,000)
Corporate Items	Co-ordinating OSC	Traded Services – Review of traded services with a view to greater commercialisation and reduced GF subsidy)	(1,500)
Corporate Items	Co-ordinating OSC	B/F_Traded Services - Review of traded services with a view to greater commercialisation and reduced GF subsidy)	(1,600)
Corporate Items	Finance and Resources OSC	Repayment of Borrowing Following Asset Disposal Resulting in Reduced Debt Management Costs (Reversal of one-off savings from previous years)	4,500
Corporate Items	Finance and Resources OSC	Release Highways policy contingency for one year – Accounting Adjustment (Reversal of one-off savings from previous years)	800
Corporate Items	Economy and Skills OSC	B/F_Corporate Landlord (Efficiencies in Asset Management through Consolidation and Rationalisation of Council Assets/ Buildings)	(500)
Corporate Items	Co-ordinating OSC	Automation – Use of Robotic Process Automation Technology to automate manual processes and reduce manual handling, leading to efficiencies in process and savings on time/resource required to deliver services.	(1,000)
Corporate Items	Co-ordinating OSC	B/F_Automation - Use of Robotic Process Automation Technology to automate manual processes and reduce manual handling, leading to efficiencies in process and savings on time/resource required to deliver services.	(850)
Corporate Items	Co-ordinating OSC	Reducing Workforce (Centres of Excellence) – Consolidation of similar roles and teams to reduce duplication of effort and achieve efficiency in resource/process	(1,791)

Corporate Items	Co-ordinating OSC	Automation (Voice Automation) – Use of voice automation technology to reduce volume of manual call handling, leading efficiencies and better customer services.	(1,000)
Corporate Items	Finance and Resources OSC	Automation (Oracle Optimisation) – Use of new oracle system to generate process efficiencies	(500)
Council Management	Finance and Resources OSC	Digital advertising on key assets to generate additional income	(200)
Council Management	Finance and Resources OSC	Operational Hub Programme – rationalisation of assets.	(161)
Council Management	Finance and Resources OSC	Application platform modernisation.	(11)
Council Management	Finance and Resources OSC	3% Turnover factor (Vacancy management)	(4,265)
Council Management	Finance and Resources OSC	Review all BCC leased properties and reduce cost of lease payments for assets	(460)
Council Management	Finance and Resources OSC	System Efficiencies	(600)
Council Management	Neighbourhoods OSC	Customer Services – Bereavement. Improvements in service design to deliver efficiencies	(460)
Council Management	Neighbourhoods OSC	B/F_Customer Services - Bereavement. Improvements in service design to deliver efficiencies	(250)
Council Management	Neighbourhoods OSC	Customer Services - Garden Waste. Introduce autorenewal and other process improvements to maximise levels of annual subscriptions.	(40)
Council Management	Neighbourhoods OSC	B/F_Customer Services - Garden Waste. Introduce autorenewal and other process improvements to maximise levels of annual subscriptions.	(40)
Council Management	Neighbourhoods OSC	Customer Services - Markets	(50)
Council Management	Neighbourhoods OSC	B/F_Customer Services - Markets	(50)
Council Management	Neighbourhoods OSC	Customer Services - Pest Control	(50)
Council Management	Neighbourhoods OSC	B/F_Customer Services - Pest Control	(50)
Council Management	Finance and Resources OSC	Development & Commercial - Digital advertising income and offer up of growth	(60)
Council Management	Finance and Resources OSC	Procurement - 2020/21 Expenditure Budget covered by funding	(106)
Council Management	Finance and Resources OSC	Audit - increase trading opportunities with Police, Housing Associations and Acivico	(60)
Council Management	Finance and Resources OSC	Finance - refinancing legacy systems	(700)
Council Management	Finance and Resources OSC	Personal Assistant Allocation - review use of Personal Assistant Support	(200)
Council Management	Finance and Resources OSC	Business Support Efficiencies	(50)

Council Management	Finance and Resources OSC	Customer Services Efficiencies	(50)
Council Management	Finance and Resources OSC	Review Human Resources Target Operating Model - reduce posts that are vacant	(170)
Council Management	Finance and Resources OSC	Human Resources reduce growth request in Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)	(113)
Place, Prosperity & Sustainability	Economy and Skills OSC	B/F_CAB Premises - excluding Council House. Reduced costs associated with Council Admin Buildings	(1,314)
Place, Prosperity & Sustainability	Economy and Skills OSC	CAB Premises - excluding Council House. Reduced costs associated with Council Admin Buildings	(2,431)
Place, Prosperity & Sustainability	Economy and Skills OSC	CAB Premises - Council House Commercialisation Income generation through improved commercial offer including banqueting and events.	(50)
Place, Prosperity & Sustainability	Economy and Skills OSC	Commercial Property - Lease Event Opportunities Review of commercial property leases – includes rent reviews and extension options	(600)
Place, Prosperity & Sustainability	Economy and Skills OSC	Commercial Property - Active Investment Additional income through investment in Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) compliant commercial property	(2,250)
Place, Prosperity & Sustainability	Economy and Skills OSC	Commercial Property - Blended Approach Investment and Lease Events Additional income generated through a combination of lease reviews and investment	(2,500)
Place, Prosperity & Sustainability	Sustainability and Transport OSC	Street Work Permits - moved directorate	100
Place, Prosperity & Sustainability	Economy and Skills OSC	3% Turnover factor (Vacancy management)	(666)
Place, Prosperity & Sustainability	Economy and Skills OSC	Review all £5-10k leases – with a view to optimising lease income.	(150)
Strategic Equals & Partnership	Finance and Resources OSC	3% Turnover factor (Vacancy management)	(116)
Strategic Equals & Partnership	Finance and Resources OSC	Efficiencies amongst non-staffing budgets	(116)
Corporate Items	Co-ordinating OSC	B/F_New Ways of Working_Fieldworker. Rolling out field worker module to allow staff working in the field to update host systems directly rather than returning to office to update	(800)
Adult Social Care	Health and Adult Social Care OSC	Fees & Charges 5%	(1,458)
Children & Families	Education, Children and Young People	Fees & Charges 5%	(2,006)
Council Management	Finance and Resources OSC	Fees & Charges 5%	(2,073)
City Ops	Neighbourhoods OSC	Fees & Charges 5%	(1,530)
City Housing	Homes OSC	Fees & Charges 5%	(592)
Place, Prosperity & Sustainability	Economy and Skills OSC	Fees & Charges 5%	(83)
		Total	(64,619)

Caveats:

- Many targets fit into multiple O&S portfolio, such as Fees & Charges, vacancy factor, thus for simplicity we have allocated to the O&S Committee where most of the target is more likely to fall.
- Some services also fall into more than one O&S portfolio – we have allocated the full target for these to the committee of higher alignment rather than split amounts.
- The total savings that need to be delivered in the 23/24 financial year may increase. Finance is currently working to close the 22/23 financial year accounts – this includes final assessment of savings delivery for the last financial year. Any further undelivered savings in 22/23 will need to be brought forward and found in 23/24 thereby increasing the overall target for 23/24.

Criteria for determining the RAG status of savings

Assessment Criteria	Delivered	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk
Savings RAG	Saving or income realised and evidence provided that costs have been reduced or income increased.	Saving or income detail documented and robust plan in place to deliver agreed targets, showing when and who is responsible. - and / or - Saving / income will be delivered within agreed timeframes.	Saving or income lacks some clarity and / or not detailed at an adequately granular level, or at risk, but agreed plan in place to resolve and being actively managed. - and / or - Some risk of not delivering saving within agreed timeframe, leading to cost of slippage.	Limited confidence in agreed saving / income being delivered - and / or - Saving / income unclear and / or not specified at adequate granular level. - and / or - Inadequate plan / no plan agreed. - and / or - <i>Saving not yet agreed by Directorate / Service Manager</i> - and / or - Major risk of not delivering saving / income within agreed timeframe, leading to cost of slippage.
Headcount Example	Officer has departed, budget has been reduced and posts have been deleted from the approved establishment.	Timescales and the specific posts to be vacated / deleted have been agreed.	Budget Manager has confirmed that posts (to agreed value and timing) will be vacated and deleted from budget.	Headcount saving proposed, but no clarity RE timescales/ posts.

Birmingham City Council

Sustainability and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee

7 September 2023



Subject: Sustainability and Transport 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 Sustainability and Transport 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.
- 1.3 The report also outlines a proposed Terms of Reference for a detailed piece of work considering Road Safety.

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 October - November 2023, the proposed aims and objectives and the preferred method of scrutiny.
 - Reviews and agrees, subject to further input from the Chair and Deputy Chair, the proposed Terms of Reference in relation to Road Safety (Appendix 2).

- Agrees how it intends to follow any further action required to ensure that the identified end-to-end customer service improvements are implemented for Highways Repairs (Appendix 3).
- 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.

Sustainability and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

- Sustainable transportation policy and programmes, projects and initiatives
- Strategic highways matters

- Maintenance of roads and streets, traffic management and car parks and enforcing rights of way
- Cooperation with the WMCA and Mayor in relation to the key route network
- An Air Quality strategy for Birmingham
- A financially and environmentally sustainable waste strategy
- A robust re-use and recycle strategy
- A strategy for sustainability, liveability and environmental improvements
- Citywide and national policy development to tackle the causes and consequences of climate change

3.10 The Committee is chaired by Cllr Lee Marsham, and its membership comprises Cllrs Saima Ahmed, David Barker, Martin Brooks, Timothy Huxtable, Colin Green, Richard Parkin and Waseem Zaffar

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 \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com) may assist Members in identifying future topics. The following reports are of particular relevance to this Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Reference	Title	Portfolio	Proposed Date of Decision
011525/2023	Package 4: Processing of Dry Mixed Recycling (DMR)	Environment	05 Sep 2023
010416/2022	NEC Masterplan and Property Strategy	Leader	05 Sep 2023
011139/2023	Highway Maintenance and Management PFI Contract – Commercial Arrangements	Transport	05 Sep 2023
011439/2023	Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme	Environment	17 Oct 2023
011741/2023	Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Refresh Update at Quarter 2 of the 2023/24 Financial Year	Finance & Resources	17 Oct 2023
007686/2020	Historic Environment Supplementary Planning Document	Leader	17 Oct 2023
010756/2023	A45 Birmingham to Airport and Solihull SPRINT Phase 2 – Full Business Case	Transport	14 Nov 2023

010763/2023	A34 Walsall to Birmingham Sprint Phase 2 – Full Business Case	Transport	14 Nov 2023
011429/2023	Southside Public Realm Improvement Scheme - Revised Financial Appraisal	Transport	14 Nov 2023
011584/2023	Average Speed Enforcement: Revised Approach	Transport	14 Nov 2023
011851/2023	Clean Air Zone update – expansion of the scope of the vehicle scrappage scheme	Transport	14 Nov 2023
011821/2023	Transportation & Highways Programme 2024/25 to 2029/30	Transport	12 Dec 2023
010635/2023	Paradise Phase 3	Leader	12 Dec 2023
010173/2022	Our Future City Plan 2040 – Draft Central Birmingham Framework	Leader	16 Jan 2024
011742/2024	Draft Financial Plan 2024-2028	Finance & Resources	13 Feb 2024
011743/2024	Financial Plan 2024-2028	Finance & Resources	27 Feb 2024

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. Appendix 3 provides additional information on the Cabinet Member for Environment’s current priorities as they fall across this Committee, and also the Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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 – December 2023 the work of this Committee will contribute to 7 Corporate Priorities.

5 Customer Services Programme

5.1 Appendix 3 sets out the Customer Service programme and the work undertaken by the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the recommendations submitted to the Highways, Waste, Bereavement Services and Housing Repairs services leads, and the further action to ensure the identified end-to-end customer service improvements are implemented. This work commenced in 2022-23 with a first review completed by January 2023. The review was undertaken by a Task and Finish group comprising Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee members.

5.2 Following a further review in June and July 2023, the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that service owner committees will follow up any further action required to ensure that the identified end-to-end customer service improvements are implemented. The relevant service owner committees are:

- Homes: Housing Repairs

- Neighbourhoods: Waste and Bereavement Services
- Sustainability and Transport: Highways Repairs

5.3 During the June and July review, the Chairs for the relevant service owner committees were invited to attend to enable an effective transition and provide continuity.

6 Any Finance Implications

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

7 Any Legal Implications

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

8 Any Equalities Implications

8.1 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.

8.2 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.

8.3 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.

8.4 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.

9 Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1: Work Programme 2023-24, September
- 9.2 Appendix 2: Terms of Reference – Road Safety
- 9.3 Appendix 3: Customer Service Programme Task and Finish Group - Report to Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 14 July 2023

10 Background Papers

- 10.1 [Birmingham City Council Constitution](#)
- 10.2 Birmingham City Council Overview and Scrutiny Framework April 2021

Sustainability and Transport 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*
August	Highways PFI Corporate Priorities: 1 and 9	Inform the development of the proposed Highways PFI contract	Other – Briefing outside of Committee	PFI Contract Manager - Domenic De Bechi		This took place on 2 August 2023. Outcome – informed Sponsorship Board ahead of Cabinet consideration in September.
August	Active Travel Corporate Priorities: 1, 9, 14 and 19	Gather evidence for the inquiry, specifically carrying out site visits to identified locations within Birmingham	On Location	Head of Transport Planning – Mel Jones	Active Travel Portfolio Lead - Andy Middleton	Further information on this inquiry can be found in the Terms of Reference (CMIS > Meetings) agreed in July’s O&S Committee. This will take place on Thursday 10 August, and will be hosted by Birmingham City Council’s Transportation team. The identified locations are: A38 Bristol Road ‘Blue Cycle Route’/Selly Oak High Street and some examples of cycle infrastructure in the City Centre
August	Active Travel Scheme Corporate Priorities: 1, 9, 14 and 19	Gather evidence for the inquiry, specifically to understand how the Council currently delivers Active Travel schemes	Task and Finish Group	Assistant Director, Transport and Connectivity – Phil Edwards	Head of Transport Planning – Mel Jones	Further information on this inquiry can be found in the Terms of Reference (CMIS > Meetings) agreed in July’s O&S Committee.

Month	Item/Topic	Aims and Objectives	Scrutiny Method	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer	Other Witnesses	Additional Information and Outcome*
August	Road Safety Corporate Priority: 9	Prepare the Terms of Reference for this inquiry	Task and Finish Group	Overview and Scrutiny Manager – Amelia Wiltshire		To be agreed at September's O&S Committee meeting. Further sessions to be updated to the work programme after this approval and will follow the conclusion of the Active Travel schemes work.
September	Active Travel Schemes Corporate Priorities: 1, 9, 14 and 19	Gather evidence for the inquiry, specifically to consider information from key stakeholders who	Committee Meeting single item: 7 September 2023 at 2pm Venue: Committee Room 3 and 4, Council House Deadline for Papers: 30 August 2023	None	Better Streets for Birmingham Pushbikes Living Streets Sustrans 20s Plenty for Birmingham Active Travel England Transport for West Midlands Wolverhampton City Council Cabinet Member for Transport Officers from Transport & Connectivity (BCC) Others TBC	An outline Terms of Reference will be discussed and confirmed at July's Committee. The work will contribute towards the broader road safety work. Report with recommendations to October's Committee.

*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
Bus Network	To be confirmed following further discussion at July Committee	To be confirmed. However, could consider on location and a visit to a bus garage	To involve multiple providers of bus services within the city
Clean Air Strategy	To monitor the impact of the strategy	To be confirmed	This item will also refer to the New Street Air Quality Plan
Customer Services – Highways Repairs	Monitor the progress and impact of the recommendations from the Customers Services programme (as previously undertaken by Co-ordinating O&S Committee)	To be confirmed in September 2023	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 Highways Repairs. A final Task and Finish group took place on 7 July 2023, and a report presented to Co-ordinating O&S in July. It was agreed that Sustainability and Transport O&S Committee takes forward this work for Highway Repairs in the future.
Flooding	Understand the work undertaken to mitigate against flooding within the city over the past 12 months	To be confirmed	This is an annual report. Latest report to the Committee is here . Previously this item has been scheduled for March.
Parking Enforcement	For further consideration, as this item may be picked up as part of the Road Safety inquiry	To be confirmed. However this could consider on location visits.	

Item/ Topic	Proposed Aims and Objectives	Proposed Scrutiny Method	Additional Information
Rail	To be confirmed following further discussion at September Committee	To be confirmed. However, could consider on location including visits to stations under development	To involve other stakeholders, for example, WMCA.
Recycling and Waste Reduction	To be confirmed following further discussion at September Committee	To be confirmed	No further information at this time
Route to Net Zero	Consider how the Council is supporting community leadership	To be confirmed	If this is an in-depth piece of work, to be scheduled following the completion of the Road Safety topic. Therefore, this is likely to be picked up in early 2024.

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

2 Tackle unemployment

3 Attract inward investment and infrastructure

4 Maximise the benefits of the Commonwealth Games

5 Tackle poverty and inequalities

11 Increase affordable, safe, green housing

12 Tackle homelessness

13 Tackle health inequalities

14 Encourage and enable physical activity and healthy living

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 Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee OSC in June 2023: [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com)

Birmingham City Council

Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Friday 14th July 2023



Subject: Customer Service Programme Task & Finish Group
Report of: Councillor Sir Albert Bore
Chair Co-ordinating Overview & Scrutiny
Report author: Nikki Spencer
Lead Delivery Manager, Digital & Technology Services
Nikki.Spencer@birmingham.gov.uk
07766 924234

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the 9th December and supplementary 27th January report on the actions of the Co-ordinating Overview & Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group, established following the Customer Service Programme update report to Co-ordinating Overview & Scrutiny Committee in September 2022.

2. Recommendations

Co-ordinating O&S Committee:

- 2.1. Notes that the Task & Finish Group has completed its review of the recommendations submitted to service leads for Bereavement Services, Housing Repairs, Waste Management and Highway Repairs
- 2.2. Agrees that the Task & Finish Group should ask service owner Committees to follow up any further action required to ensure that the identified end-to-end customer service improvements are implemented.
- **Neighbourhoods:** Waste and Bereavement Services
 - **Sustainability & Transport:** Highway Repairs
 - **Homes:** Housing Repairs
- 2.4. Supports the further work of the Task & Finish Group to scrutinise how senior managers are responding to feedback from the Customer Standards Workshops to embed the Customer Service Strategy.

3. Background

- 3.1. Following approval of the Customer Service Strategy by Cabinet in December 2021, the Customer Service Programme was established in January 2021 for an initial 12-month period, to implement the Strategy deliverables and 'Fix the Basics'.
- 3.2. Phase 1 saw the programme deliver a number of customer benefits' from the creation of an [easy-read Customer Service Strategy](#), co-creating Our [Customer Charter](#), establishing the Customer Panel; to the cleanse and improvement of 948 web pages and counting; roll out of products such as the Landlord's Portal and features for automated advanced payments.
- 3.3. The user research the programme conducted of four high volume, high priority service areas for the Council resulted in a set of service improvement recommendations which highlighted opportunities for services to improve the customer experience and increase customer satisfaction.
- 3.4. This report follows the Task & Finish Group's first review of the recommendations submitted to the Highways, Waste, Bereavement Services and Housing Repairs service leads, reported to Co-ordinating Overview & Scrutiny Committee in January 2023; and the further action to ensure the identified end-to-end customer service improvement are implemented.
- 3.5. This round of Task & Finish Groups was also attended by Committee Chairs for Neighbourhoods, Homes and Sustainability and Transport to enable an effective transition of the responsibility of these committees and provide continuity in what we've done, where we've got to, and what is outstanding and still needs to be done.

4. Update on Customer Service Programme Task & Finish Group

- 4.1. Appendix A provides the outcomes of all Task & Finish Group meetings with the service area sponsor/leads for improving the customer experience and details the recommended opportunities for improvement.
- 4.2. Feedback was previously submitted to the committee (9 December 2022) on Bereavement Services, Housing Repairs and Waste Management; and a supplementary update (27 January) on Highway Repairs.
- 4.3. In this second review, it was noted the overall positive progress has been achieved in implementation by service leads of the Customer Service Programme service improvement recommendations but more still needs to be done to achieve 'Best in Class' customer service and ensure the best customer journey for our users to improve satisfaction levels and reduce complaints.

4.4. Highway Repairs

- 4.4.1. The Task & Finish Group is due to meet on 7th July 2023 with the Assistant Director for Inclusive Growth also to be attended by Customer Service Programme Operational Sponsor, Strategic Product Manager and Delivery Manager. A supplementary report will be issued following the meeting on the review of previous recommendations and a status update provided.
- 4.4.2. In summary, a total of 10 service improvement recommendations were presented to Highway Repairs, and all 10 retain an implementation status of 'to do'.

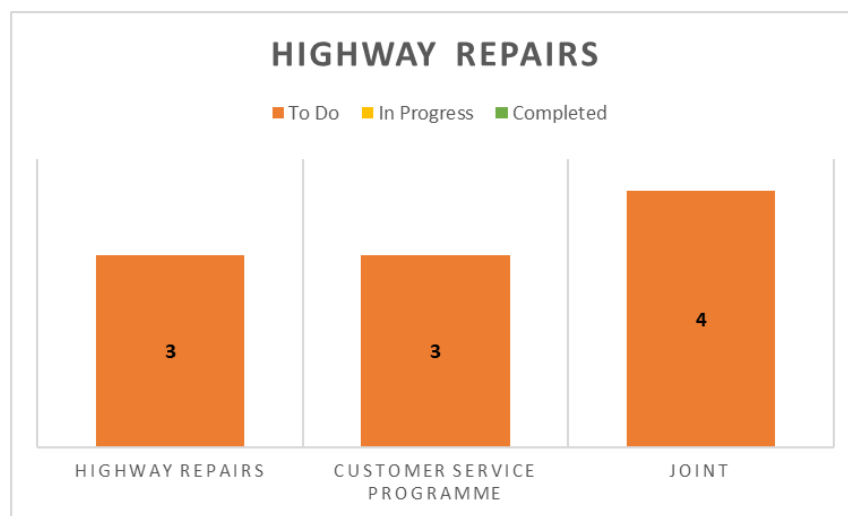


Figure 1 - Highway Repairs Status Overview

4.5. Bereavement Services

- 4.5.1. The Task and Finish Group met on 12th June 2023 with Assistant Director, Regulation and Enforcement, Head of Bereavement Services, Customer Service Programme Operational Sponsor and Strategic Product Manager, Lead Delivery Manager in attendance. All recommendations were reviewed, and status updates provided and clarified by the service leads.
- 4.5.2. Clear guidance has been created and improved content published on 'What to do when someone dies', and also clearly communicating to relatives' grave ownership and responsibilities in grave maintenance. Further work is required to include Coroners Service in online guidance and progress a small print run of the offline guidance.
- 4.5.3. A review of all onsite signage will be completed.
- 4.5.4. The top 20 paper forms have been prioritised for redesign and digitisation and will include automated advanced payment features, eliminating manual paperwork and enabling customers to complete requests in an easy and efficient way.
- 4.5.5. Exploration of technical options is underway to inform user need requirements for a new bereavement system / funeral directors' portal to support online

burial bookings, giving Funeral Directors' the ability to view, book and be updated.

- 4.5.6. A partial manual/mechanical back fill option is available to relatives on request where the resources to enable this are available. Resources to increase availability will be considered as part of any future operating model.
- 4.5.7. There are standardised processes, based upon best practice, in place across all sites. There are also individual standardised processes for particular sites which are based upon the specific needs of the site.
- 4.5.8. Recruitment of staff remains an issue within the service. There also needs to be a corporate response to more easily recruit agency staff as permanent staff.
- 4.5.9. In summary, a total of 28 service improvement recommendations were presented to Bereavement Services, and to date 10 have been implemented and 18 have an implementation status of 'in progress'.

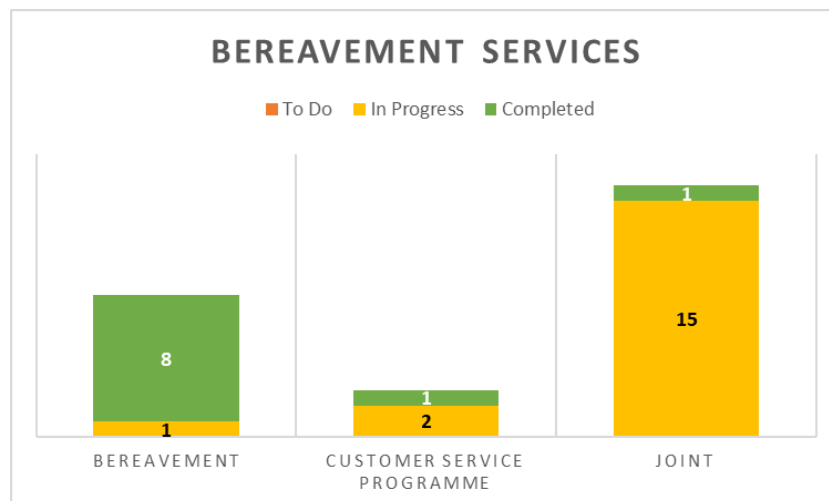


Figure 2 - Bereavement Services Status Overview

4.6. Waste Management

- 4.6.1. The Task and Finish Group met on 9th June 2023 with the Assistant Director, Street Scene and the Customer Service Programme Operational Sponsor and Strategic Product Manager, Lead Delivery Manager in attendance. All recommendations were reviewed, and status updates provided and clarified by the service leads.
- 4.6.2. The in-cab technology has been in place and in use in all vehicles since late January 2023 and addresses a number of the recommendations, although there are separate issues regarding provision of in-cab technology in rented vehicles. Work was undertaken to cleanse the data and the crews are monitored on their usage and reports are produced showing any problems; and work can be reallocated in real time to minimise missed collections, which is monitored by Service Managers.

- 4.6.3. A session with Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny is being planned to provide a more in-depth view of the in-cab technology.
- 4.6.4. Missed collections are tracked, monitored and reported on a daily and weekly basis. The reports are showing an improvement in missed collections (alongside a significant reduction in missed collection complaints - down by 41% this April compared to April 2022). However, it is fully accepted that things are still not right, and more work is needed - particularly for the now vacated Montague Street (relocated to new Atlas depot in May 2023), and Lifford Lane depots where missed collections remain off target.
- 4.6.5. HMO's / Exempt accommodation continue to be an issue but work is underway to ensure that, where these properties are licenced, the appropriate bins are provided and the correct use of bins is monitored.
- 4.6.6. The service has a stable workforce (previously, the level of agency staff covering full time posts was approximately 30%). The service still operates with 23% agency cover for sickness and leave but teams are kept together where possible.
- 4.6.7. Over 70 of the older vehicles have been replaced, providing a more reliable service with a planned procurement to replace the remaining vehicles.
- 4.6.8. Working with Corporate Communications to develop simple comms for residents when there has been a need to remove their broken bin or pod.
- 4.6.9. In summary, a total of 12 service improvement recommendations were presented to Waste Management, and to date 6 have been implemented, 3 are 'in progress', and 1 retains an implementation status of 'to do'.

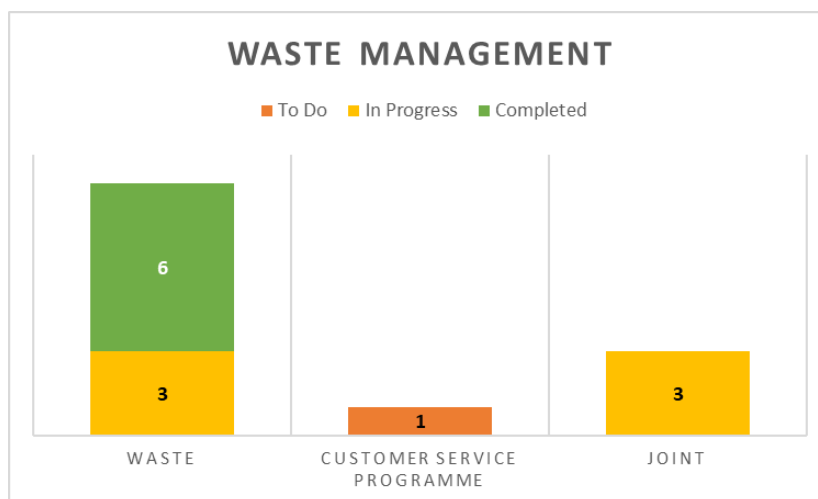


Figure 3 - Waste Management Status Overview

4.7. Housing Repairs

- 4.7.1. The Task and Finish Group met on 14th June with the Director, Asset Management Housing, Interim Head, Housing Repairs with the Customer

Service Programme Operational Sponsor, Strategic Product Manager and Lead Delivery Manager in attendance. All recommendations were reviewed, and status updates provided and clarified by the service leads.

- 4.7.2. The BRUM account process to report 'track a repair' has been end to end tested and issues highlighted, for example, some of the information submitted was not getting passed on to the contractor. The new functionality is now confidently expected for end August / early Sept. The delay was due to a dependency on the pending NEC (Housing Management software) Upgrade. Work is also in process into the quality of repairs and repeat calls about the same issue.
- 4.7.3. An option for tenants to book / manage their own repair appointments will be delivered as part of the changes to the Brum account. There is also ongoing work by repairs teams to look into and maximise appointment availability which has diminished. This work is expected to conclude by the end of September 2023.
- 4.7.4. Live updates to keep customers informed about changes regarding a repair, for example notifying a tenant that a contractor is running late, has been included in the Repairs Contract 2024, allowing text communication between operative and customer and live tracking.
- 4.7.5. Analysis of missed appointments due to no access is being carried out, to identify trends / customer profiles and check if our comms processes are working or need improvement. Findings to date are that process are not always being followed. Many customers say they were not aware of appointments, so focus is on the evidence around text and phone ahead which is part of the current process. This analysis is expected to conclude by December 2023.
- 4.7.6. Customer satisfaction on call handling is measured for randomly sampled calls – satisfaction levels are routinely around 80% for the way the agent handled call. Feedback is provided to service area and agents as appropriate.
- 4.7.7. The [Birmingham Choice](#) site is currently being reviewed and updated to make information more available to our customers. In addition there is a link on the front page of Birmingham Choice to a '[Housing Advice Pack](#)'. This gives customers information on numbers on the Housing Register, numbers of lets completed, waiting times, other housing options, etc.
- 4.7.8. The online information, advice and guidance on damp, condensation and mould has been reviewed and was updated 27 February on birmingham.gov.uk.
- 4.7.9. In summary, a total of 13 service improvement recommendations were presented to Housing Repairs, and to date 4 have been implemented and 9 have an implementation status of 'in progress'.

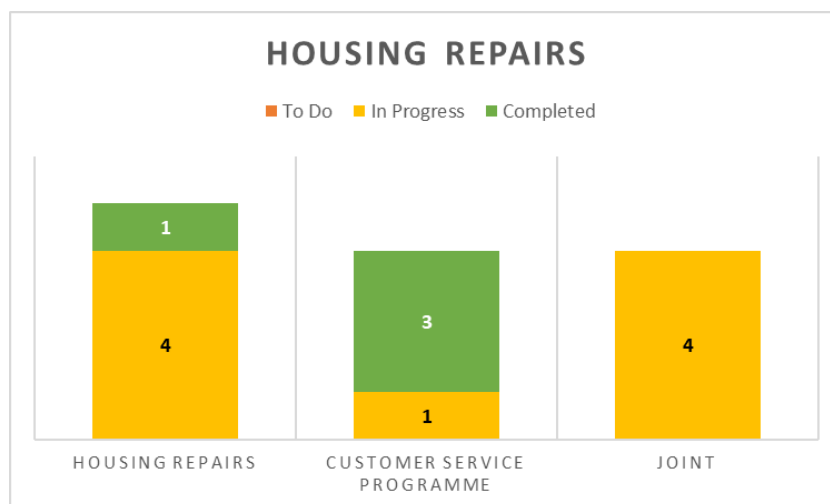


Figure 4 - Housing Repairs Status Overview

5. Any Financial Implications

- 5.1. The original Enhanced Business Case sought and approved total funding of £1.7m for Year 1 in December 2021. The Customer Service resource profile forecasts budget spend at the identified £ 1.7m costs allocated to the programme in final Quarter of 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- 5.2. The savings that are currently set out in the MTFP increase by £600k in 2023/2024, and phase 2 of the programme will help to deliver these and also identify future potential savings of over the next 2 years.
- 5.3. There are no procurement implications or financial implications of the recommendations in this report.

6. Any Legal Implications

- 6.1. The Council is under a duty under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.
- 6.2. The City Council will carry out this work under the General Powers of Competence Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

7. Any Equalities Implications

- 7.1. Overall, implementation of the Customer Service Strategy and therefore the activities of the Task and Finish Group may impact a number of the nine protected characteristics (specifically Age, Disability and Race) with the channel shift to self-serve; however the vision of the Strategy is clear and will endeavour to ensure a high quality, consistent and efficient approach to the customer journey across all channels by ensuring our customers access the right information at the right time and content is accurate and up to date regardless of the channel.

8. Background Documents

8.1. [Customer Service Strategy](#)

8.2. [Our Customer Charter](#)

9. Appendices

9.1. A: Status overview of the Customer Service Programme recommendations