

Birmingham City Council

Sustainability and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee

16 May 2024



Subject: Sustainability and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme

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1 Purpose

- 1.1 This report sets out the work programme for the Sustainability and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee during 2023-24. Following the findings and recommendations from the independent Governance Review of the Council, and specifically recommendation 5, the Committee reframed its work programme to be aligned to the Council's improvement and recovery priorities.

2 Recommendations That the Committee:

- 2.1 Notes the report.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Committee's Terms of Reference is to fulfil the functions of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee as they relate to any policies, services and activities concerning:
 - 3.1.1 Sustainable transportation policy and programmes, projects and initiatives
 - 3.1.2 Strategic highways matters
 - 3.1.3 Maintenance of roads and streets, traffic management and car parks and enforcing rights of way
 - 3.1.4 Cooperation with the WMCA and Mayor in relation to the key route network
 - 3.1.5 An Air Quality strategy for Birmingham
 - 3.1.6 A financially and environmentally sustainable waste strategy

- 3.1.7 A robust re-use and recycle strategy
- 3.1.8 A strategy for sustainability, liveability and environmental improvements
- 3.1.9 Citywide and national policy development to tackle the causes and consequences of climate change
- 3.2 The Committee is chaired by Councillor Lee Marsham, and its membership comprises Councillors Saima Ahmed, David Barker, Martin Brooks, Timothy Huxtable, Colin Green, Richard Parkin and Waseem Zaffar.
- 3.3 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. 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.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 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.

3.7 Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee identified a 'menu' of issues (including policy development, policy review, issues of accountability and statutory functions). Each Committee has then regularly reviewed their 'menu' and decided which issues needed to be examined further, and how that work would be undertaken. Committees have been advised to consider where they can best add value aligning to the Council's priorities and improvement journey, and how it can prioritise topics for consideration based on the Scrutiny Framework referred to in paragraph 3.5 above.

3.8 There are a range of ways to undertake scrutiny. In line with statutory guidance from 2019, the approach for 2023-24 has enabled a more flexible scrutiny and outlined a shift from monthly formal meetings to a combination of approaches. The Committee has chosen the most effective scrutiny method to achieve the desired aims and objectives for each topic.

4 Outcomes from 2023-24

4.1 During June 2023 – April 2024, the Committee considered the following topics:

4.1.1 Financial Challenges and Budget Savings and Recovery Plan (September) – the Committee received reports on the s114 notice, the Medium Term Financial Plan and the context for services falling under the remit of this Committee including performance on current savings.

4.1.2 Birmingham Road Harm Reduction Strategy (October) – the Committee received a presentation on the proposed strategy in an informal meeting. The Committee was also invited to consider its proposed consultation plan.

4.1.3 Highways Maintenance and Management PFI (August, October, November, February, March and April) – the Committee has received regular briefings and updates on the progress of the PFI and decision.

4.1.4 Brum Breathes Clean Air Strategy (November) – the Committee considered progress on the strategy and future steps.

4.1.5 Customer Services and Highways Repairs (April) – the Committee received a report on the progress towards the recommendations agreed by Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2022-23. The Committee provided valuable feedback on resident and Member experience of reporting issues. The Committee also made recommendations to take forward.

4.2 The Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 December 2023 acknowledged the recommendations in the Governance Review of Birmingham City Council agreed by Cabinet on 12 December 2023. Recommendation 5 stated the

need to reframe scrutiny work programmes on the Council's improvement and recovery priorities, and that alignment of work programmes should focus on:

- a) Having an active part in the 2024/25 budget development process.
- b) The safe and effective delivery of key services supporting vulnerable people.
- c) Critical performance issues emerging "by exception".
- d) Equality and equity issues arising from the development of the 24/25 Budget, the Emergency Budget (to be identified by exception), and other priority scrutiny activity relating to the Budget.
- e) Culture, behaviour change and organisational development.

4.3 On 11 January 2024, the Sustainability and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee met informally to consider the developing Improvement and Recovery Plan and the findings and recommendations of the Governance Review. The Committee reconsidered its work programme for February - April and reframed it to ensure it aligns with the issues set out above. It also agreed to set an additional meeting in May.

4.4 In light of this, the Committee considered the following topics in February- May:

- 4.4.1 A briefing on the proposed Improvement and Recovery Plan (January).
- 4.4.2 A workshop to inform a new corporate performance management framework (January).
- 4.4.3 The proposed budget for 23-24 and specifically how the Council is mobilising to deliver these savings (January).
- 4.4.4 Highways Management and Maintenance PFI (February – April) – refer to 4.1.3.
- 4.4.5 Customer Services and Highways Repairs (April) – the Committee received a report on the progress towards the recommendations agreed by Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2022-23. The Committee provided valuable feedback on resident and Member experience of reporting issues. The Committee also made recommendations to take forward.
- 4.4.6 Flood Risk Management Plan (May) – the Committee received its annual report on Flood Risk.

5 Inquiries

Active Travel Inquiry

5.1 In July 2023, the Committee agreed to undertake an inquiry into improving Active Travel. Evidence gathering commenced in August and was concluded in September. This included a site visit to different Active Travel schemes in the city, as well as sessions with Council services and external stakeholders.

- 5.2 The preparation of the final report was delayed by the resources required from the Scrutiny and Committees services team to respond to the budget challenges and financial recovery plus Governance Stabilisation. A final report is now drafted and is scheduled to report to Council in either June or July 2024.

Road Safety Inquiry

- 5.3 In July 2023, the Committee agreed to undertake an inquiry into Road Safety. This was in response to public concerns following a number of serious and fatal accidents. The Committee agreed to programme this inquiry after the Active Travel inquiry had concluded. A Terms of Reference for this inquiry was agreed on 8 February 2024.
- 5.4 Evidence gathering for this inquiry commenced in April and is scheduled to conclude in June. It is anticipated that this inquiry will report to Council in Autumn 2024.

6 Looking Ahead

- 6.1 Other areas the Committee identified for potential consideration include (any future work will need to consider how it contributes towards the delivery of the Improvement and Recovery Plan and Governance Stabilisation Plan):
- 6.1.1 Recycling and waste reduction
 - 6.1.2 Route to Net Zero – this was earmarked as an ‘in depth’ piece of work to commence following the Road Safety inquiry.
 - 6.1.3 Public transport
 - 6.1.4 Management of Highways Network – this was earmarked as an ‘in depth’ piece of work.
- 6.2 The Council’s latest [May 2024 Forward Plan](#) may assist Members in identifying further areas for the Committee to explore.

7 Any Finance Implications

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

8 Any Legal Implications

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

9 Any Equalities Implications

- 9.1 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.

9.2 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.

9.3 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.

9.4 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.

10 Appendices

10.1 There are no appendices.

11 Background Papers

11.1 [Birmingham City Council Constitution](#)

11.2 Birmingham City Council Overview and Scrutiny Framework April 2021