

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

ECONOMY AND SKILLS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 17 APRIL 2024 AT 10:00 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.

3 - 8

4 **MINUTES**

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 6th March 2024.

9 - 10

5 **ACTION TRACKER**

To note the Action Tracker.

6 **COMMISSIONER'S REVIEW AND COMMENTS ON THE AGENDA**

To note there were no comments on the agenda from the Commissioner.

11 - 12

7 **ASSET DISPOSAL PROGRAMME UPDATE**

To provide an update to the Committee on the current progress of the Asset Disposals Programme.

Philip Nell, Acting Strategic Director Place, Prosperity and Sustainability and Kathryn James, Assistant Director - Investment and Valuation will be in attendance for this item.

13 - 18

8 **WORK PROGRAMME**

To consider the Committee's work programme and agree any updates/amendments.

9 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

To agree a date and time.

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.

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

ECONOMY AND SKILLS O&S COMMITTEE

1000 hours on 6th March 2024, Committee Room 2, Council House

Present:

Councillors Katherine Iroh (Chair), Bushra Bi, Jon Hunt, Richard Parkin, Jamie Tennant

Also Present:

Simon Delahunty-Forrest, Assistant Director (Development)

James Betjemaan, Head of Curzon and Enterprise Zone Development

Timothy Brown, Principal Development Planning Officer – City Centre

Fiona Wiltshire, Senior Overview and Scrutiny Manager

Baseema Begum, Scrutiny Officer

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chair, Councillor Iroh, 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.

Cllr Iroh confirmed that she was appointed Chair of Economy & Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the meeting of the City Council on 5th March 2024.

2. APOLOGIES

An apology was received from Councillor Lisa Trickett.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10th January 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair, Councillor Iroh.

5. ACTION TRACKER

RESOLVED: That the action tracker be noted.

6. COMMISSIONER'S REVIEW AND COMMENTS ON THE AGENDA

RESOLVED: It was noted that no comments had been received.

7. OUR FUTURE CITY 'CENTRAL BIRMINGHAM FRAMEWORK 2040' UPDATE

Simon Delahunty-Forrest, Assistant Director (Development); James Betjemaan, Head of Curzon and Enterprise Zone Development and Timothy Brown, Principal Development Planning Officer (City Centre Team) were in attendance for this item.

The Assistant Director, Development set out the context and background outlining the Committee's involvement in the consultation process in May 2023.

The Head of Curzon and Enterprise Zone Development detailed the Committee's involvement in the engagement and consultation process and confirmed that a report on the framework was scheduled to be presented to Cabinet in May. Once Cabinet has agreed the report it would be published as a final framework and Scrutiny involvement will continue as part of this.

The Principal Development Planning Officer (City Centre Team) clarified the timeline in the run up to the report being finalised for Cabinet in May and confirmed that equality and sustainability assessments had been carried out.

A discussion was then held with Members and the following were among the points made: -

- Ensuring that resident's vision and ward plans were considered as part of the wider vision of the Framework and ensuring that these fit in and work with key central Council strategies.
- Engaging and increasing participation with residents by using more digital means such as TikTok as well as providing information in different languages to help reach a wider audience.
- Officers clarified that the ethos of the Framework was ensuring that the city was being shaped together with residents inclusively and 800 representations were received although it was acknowledged that this was relative in relation to the population. Engagement with young people especially was explored through social media and this resulted in 128,000 people being reached.
- There should be a statement of community engagement that sets out how communities will be involved in the implementation of the OFCP framework. This should include how residents in the communities affected will be involved in governance and accountability.

- The pre-cabinet discussion on the Jewellery Quarter Neighbourhood Plan was highlighted as good practice and officers were supportive of this approach. Information sessions for Members pre-Cabinet are also planned.
- Members were assured that culture and heritage was considered as a distinct theme in the consultation process. It was imperative that due to the financial position of the Council that local assets of importance to residents are protected and preserved through use of statutory policies and tools available to the Council. It was explained that a multi-disciplinary approach was being taken so that the Council works with businesses and key stakeholders to safeguard heritage assets by using the local planning process.
- The financial position of the Council and how this would be incorporated into the Framework was raised due to the changing priorities and that there would be no funding for ward plans. It was explained that other avenues of funding were being considered such as Growth Zones, Enterprise Zones and the Levelling Up Fund to tackle this for the most deprived areas. Costs have been kept down with businesses having endorsed the vision and have provided in-kind support.
- Members raised economic, environmental and sustainability impacts of the framework and whether risk assessments had been completed for the Cabinet to consider alongside consideration of the risk of the Council's current financial position.
- Members were informed that the Council will consider projects in more detail and look at what can be done to make a difference in the current financial climate. As part of this the input from the private sector to deliver especially in relation to housing is key.
- Analysis of the responses and feedback from the public consultation were considered and changes have been made. This will form part of the report to Cabinet. This includes equality and sustainability considerations.
- As part of the governance of funding for projects and interventions that receive funding social value consideration is required. Additionally, the Council's own Charter for Social Responsibility is a requirement for all partners and contractors working with the Council to adhere to including as part of delivery on key projects.
- Officers confirmed that the funding landscape at both local and regional level had changed since the economic benefits were considered when the Framework was first presented to the Committee. Economic impacts will now be carried out through the Place Based Strategy and the Single Funding settlement. Each intervention for funding and delivery will have its own economic impact process undertaken.
- A workshop will be held that will review each project to see if they are financially viable and that the outcome of this would be shared with Members.

RESOLVED: -

1. That the report be noted.

2. That an informal meeting is held with the Committee for consideration of the report to Cabinet. Further information will be shared on the feedback from the public consultation.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair outlined the items for the April meeting.

It was confirmed that an informal session would be held on 20th March to undertake pre-decision scrutiny on assets for disposal to be considered at Cabinet Committee Property on 28th March. Invitations will be sent to Members.

RESOLVED: -

1. That the report be noted.
2. An informal meeting to undertake pre-decision scrutiny on 20th March was agreed.

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

There were no requests for Call In received.

10. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair proposed the election of a Deputy Chair as there was a vacancy following Cllr Iroh becoming Chair. Cllr Tennant was proposed and agreed as Deputy Chair.

11. AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS

Agreed.

The meeting ended at 11:08 hours.

Informal Meeting

Paul Kitson, Strategic Director, Places, Prosperity and Sustainability was present for this item.

- Arrange a meeting with new Strategic Director and Philip Nell (for 17th April committee).
- On 20th March PK confirmed that he will be able to give an idea of numbers in terms of VR.
- PK to confirm other admin building under scope.

ECONOMY AND SKILLS O&S COMMITTEE
ACTION TRACKER 2023-24

| Date | Agenda Item | Action | Update |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|
| 11 th October | Financial Challenges - Scrutiny Contribution to the Budget Saving and Recovery Plan | a) Further information to be provided on the process undertaken by CLT considering the new budget recognition challenge and the overall balancing of the budget at the next meeting. b) A delivery plan tracking fortnightly/monthly performance to ensure that the directorate and Council is operating within its means. c) Further information to be reported back on at the next meetings on progress made against savings targets for the following 4 key areas: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staffing costs (vacancy management); - What pieces of work can be paused and stopped; - In respect of third-party payments – what can be paused and stopped here; and d) - Income optimisation (what can we do to generate more). | It has been agreed that the Co-Ordinating & Finance O&S Committees have set up a Task & Finish Group to consider how the Council might close the in-year (2023-24) budget gap and how Scrutiny could contribute to the development of the Budget proposals for 2024-25. This T&F Group commenced its meeting in November and will conclude with a report to Cabinet later this month. All O&S Chairs are represented on this T&F Group, together with representatives from Opposition Groups. a) – c): This is being picked up and reported to the T&F Group. d): To be considered as part of informal meeting to consider future work programme on 10 January. |
| 11 th October | Financial Challenges - Scrutiny Contribution to the Budget Saving and Recovery Plan | a) An outline of the strategy and rationalisation on the CAB estate including occupancy rates in CAB building over the past 12 months. b) Asset strategy and review with respect to smaller commercial properties and the disposal programme actual figures on what can be delivered realistically this year will be shared with Committee. | a): To be considered as part of informal meeting to consider future work programme on 10 January. b): To be picked up as part of Agenda item 7, OSC on 10 January 24. |

**ECONOMY AND SKILLS O&S COMMITTEE
ACTION TRACKER 2023-24**

| Date | Agenda Item | Action | Update |
|-----------------------------|---|--|---|
| 11 th October | Implementation of Recommendations: Employment and Skills Inquiry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Financial information including live information will be provided at the next update. b) A letter to government has been drafted in relation to matters raised by young people during the Employment & Skills Inquiry with reference to education, careers advice and guidance and employment support. This is awaiting comment from the Cabinet Member and will be followed up. c) A request for Cabinet Member attendance for future monitoring reports will be made. d) The Committee agreed that the next report would be in 6 months' time and added to the work programme for April. | <p>a), c)-d): Had been intended to be picked up in April as part of standard monitoring of inquiry. Committee to consider as part of informal meeting to consider future work programme on 10 January.</p> <p>b): Letter drafted and approved by Cabinet Member with changes. Pending Chair approval.</p> |
| 10 th January | Asset Disposal Programme and Cabinet Property Committee – Scrutiny Approach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A workshop to be set up with officers on Asset Disposal. This should include a list of assets by ward, clarity on the process being carried out including notification to ward members and the role of the scrutiny committee. b) Examples of reports detailing progress made on the disposal of assets in other Councils to be shared with the committee. | <p>a) The Asset Disposal Workshop took place on 24 January.</p> <p>b) Information was circulated to the committee on 19 January.</p> |
| 6 th March | Our Future City 'Central Birmingham Framework 2040' Update | That an informal meeting is held with the committee for consideration of the report to prior to Cabinet. Further information will be shared on feedback from the public consultation. | Scrutiny office in discussion with officers. |
| 6 th March | Work Programme | An informal session to be set up for 20 th March for pre-decision scrutiny to take place in relation to the Asset Disposal Programme. | Completed. |

Birmingham City Council

Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee

17 April 2024



Subject: **Asset Disposal Programme Update**

Report of: Philip Nell, Strategic Director Place, Prosperity and Sustainability

Report author: Kathryn James, Assistant Director - Investment and Valuation
kathryn.james@birmingham.gov.uk
David Harris, Assistant Director – Corporate Landlord
david.harris@birmingham.gov.uk

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides an update to the Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the current progress of the Asset Disposals Programme.
- 1.2 This report contains details of the sales completed to date, properties under offer and provides a highlight of new assets which will be marketed imminently. This report will be shared with the monthly Cabinet Committee Property (CCP), which will next meet on 8 May 2024.

2 Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 2.1 **Notes the assets disposed of since 1 January 2024 to end March 2024.**
- 2.2 **Notes current progress in the disposals of assets where authority has been approved; and**
- 2.3 **Notes the status of the pipeline of future assets being brought forward for disposal in the coming months.**

3 Background

- 3.1 The disposal of assets is an integral part of the Council's Improvement Recovery Plan (IRP).

- 3.2 To provide oversight on the delivery of the Asset Disposals Programme and the rationalisation of the property portfolio and enable the Council to focus on its core activities and services.
- 3.3 Agreement to the recommendations in this report will contribute to the reduction in the Council's future financial commitments, general disposal receipts at the earliest opportunity and reduce the Council's borrowing.
- 3.4 The disposal strategy supports the priority of the new Corporate Plan for 'a Council that lives within its means, balances the budget and delivers best value for taxpayers and service users'.

4 Update on Asset Sales

- 4.1 Appendix 1 (exempt) sets out the current update on asset sales.

5 Any Finance Implications

- 5.1 The asset disposal programme has generated capital receipts of £9.29M to date.
- 5.2 Further financial implications are set out in Appendix 1 (exempt).

6 Any Legal Implications

- 6.1 A local authority has a statutory duty under section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 when disposing of an interest in land to obtain the best consideration reasonably obtainable. It is for the authority to demonstrate that it has achieved best consideration; if best consideration is not obtained, Secretary of State approval is required.

7 Risk Management Implications

- 7.1 Appendix 1 (exempt) sets out the risk management implications.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 (exempt): Update on Asset Sales, additional financial implications and risk management implications

9 Background Papers

- 9.1 There are no background papers.

Birmingham City Council

Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee

18 April 2024



Subject: Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme

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

Report author: Amelia Wiltshire, Overview and Scrutiny Manager
amelia.wiltshire@birmingham.gov.uk

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This report sets out the work programme for the Economy and Skills 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 major physical regeneration and infrastructure projects in the city (with Cabinet Member for Housing & Homelessness)
 - 3.1.2 promotion of the city and inward investment (with the Cabinet Member for Digital, Culture, Heritage and Tourism)
 - 3.1.3 land use and property assets
 - 3.1.4 economic growth and jobs
 - 3.1.5 skills expansion for key growth sectors along with lifelong learning for post-14 skills and lifelong learning

- 3.1.6 access to employment and delivery of local employment plans
- 3.1.7 economic impact of arts, culture, tourism and sport
- 3.2 The Committee is chaired by Councillor Katherine Iroh. Its cross party membership comprises Councillors Akhlaq Ahmed, Bushra Bi, Jon Hunt, Katherine Iroh, Simon Morrall, Richard Parkin, Jamie Tennant and Lisa Trickett.
- 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 – December 2023, the Committee considered the following topics:

4.1.1 Regeneration across the City (July) – the Committee reviewed the Our Future City: Draft Central Birmingham Framework and provided feedback as part of its consultation. In summary, the Committee supported its vision. However it raised concerns that the title of the framework indicated that it was only concerned with Central Birmingham. In addition, the role of communities in developing these proposals and governance arrangements as well as how it will reduce inequalities needed to be better articulated.

4.1.2 Tracking of the Scrutiny Inquiry: Increasing the opportunities for employment and skills for young people (July, October and December) – this included a presentation on the Local Skills Improvement Plan by Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce.

4.1.3 Financial Challenges and Budget Savings and Recovery Plan (September and October) – 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.

4.2 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 10 January 2024, the Economy and Skills 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 January - April and reframed it to ensure it aligns with the issues set out above.

4.4 In light of this, the Committee considered the following topics in January, February and March:

4.4.1 The proposed budget for 23-24 and specifically how the Place, Prosperity and Sustainability Directorate is mobilising to deliver these savings (January, February and March).

4.4.2 A briefing on the proposed Improvement and Recovery Plan (February).

4.4.3 A workshop to inform a new corporate performance management framework (February).

4.4.4 Asset Disposals – a briefing on the asset disposal programme and methodology (January).

4.4.5 Sale of Bordesley Park (March) – the Committee undertook pre -decision scrutiny of this asset disposal and made seven recommendations to the Cabinet Committee – Property to consider when making its decision.

4.4.6 Our Future City Plan – the Committee suggested that there should be a Statement of Involvement setting out how communities will be involved in the implementation of the framework; confirmation that issues raised by the Jewellery Quarter Neighbourhood Plan have been taken on board; further information on the economic, environmental and sustainability impact of the framework, and how risks around the Council's current financial position have been mitigated (March).

5 Looking Ahead

5.1 In April and May, the Committee will be undertaking further pre decision scrutiny around asset disposals. The Committee will also be holding an informal Budget Task and Finish Group to consider the delivery plans for relevant savings for 2023-24.

5.2 Other areas the Committee identified include (any future work will need to consider how it contributes towards the delivery of the Improvement Recovery Plan and Governance Stabilisation Plan:

5.2.1 Local Enterprise Zones and Business Rates Maximisation

5.2.2 Scrutiny Inquiry: Increasing the opportunities for employment and skills for young people – further tracking of recommendations

5.2.3 Night-time Economy

5.2.4 East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy

5.2.5 Integration of Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) functions

5.3 The Council's latest [Forward Plan April 2024](#) may assist Members in identifying further areas for the Committee to explore.

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 There are no appendices.

10 Background Papers

10.1 [Birmingham City Council Constitution](#)

10.2 Birmingham City Council Overview and Scrutiny Framework April 2021