

# Birmingham City Council

## Licensing and Public Protection Committee

14 May 2024



**Subject:** Partnership Approach to Illegal Street Trading  
on Coventry Road, Birmingham, during Ramadan 2024

**Report of:** Sajeela Naseer, Director of Regulation and Enforcement Division

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Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential :

### 1 Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides an update on the work of the Regulation and Enforcement Division and City Operations Directorate, in partnership with West Midlands Police, to tackle illegal street trading and other related offences on Coventry Road, Birmingham during the month of Ramadan.

### 2 Recommendation(s)

2.1 The report be noted.

### 3 Background

3.1 During Ramadan in 2023, illegal street stalls selling hot food and other merchandise were set up on Coventry Road, Small Heath, without obtaining the requisite permits and authorisations. These stalls acted like a market and became a focal point for anti-social behaviour due to the large number of people and vehicles visiting the “market”.

3.2 Local Councillors, community leaders and citizens voiced their concerns that the trading activities were not authorised or regulated, and that, through social media, the location had become an attraction for anti-social behaviour and high footfall that could not be controlled. They were very vocal in highlighting the need for

enforcement authorities to tackle anti-social behaviour and illegal street trading and asked that the authorities take action.

3.3 Whilst West Midlands Police and Birmingham City Council had carried out engagement and intervention on specific streets in Birmingham over the period of Ramadan for a considerable number of years, the magnitude of issues arising on Coventry Road in 2023 were significant.

3.4 The Council and Police carried out interventions on Coventry Road during Ramadan 2023, however, they were met with significant anti-social behaviour that was broadcast through social and traditional media. Enforcement action could not be taken safely at the time of the interventions but was taken afterwards in the form of a number of arrests.

3.5 Local Members, residents and community leaders felt a different, more robust and co-ordinated response was needed during Ramadan 2024.

#### 4. **Operation Belfray**

4.1 As consequence, Birmingham City Council (Regulation and Enforcement, Community Safety, Parking Enforcement, Highways) and West Midlands Police worked to develop a joint strategic and operational plan in advance of Ramadan in 2024. This joint action plan was produced and executed under the name of "Operation Belfray". Trading Standards led this plan on behalf of Birmingham City Council. The attached presentation provides an overview of the activities and results of this plan. (see appendix 1). A summary of results is shown below:

- 1412 Penalty Charge Notices (PCN) issued
- 1238 vehicles moved on
- 6 vehicles seized by Police
- One trailer seized by BCC, two towed off the highway.
- One arrest made for illegal street trading, bail conditions applied
- One voluntary interview arranged – Street Trading
- Two Street Trading Licences issued
- Counterfeit items seized
- Other items seized that were in breach of food/labelling legislation, including abandoned food (public health concern)

4.3 Community leaders and the Cabinet Member for Social Justice Community Safety and Equalities joined patrols to experience first-hand the issues faced by officers and to show local support for the action plan and to observe its delivery.

4.4 The feedback from community and religious leaders, has been overwhelmingly positive. The number of complaints to the Council about activities over Ramadan 2024 reduced significantly from previous years.

4.5 The planning and joint actions between the Police and Council for the illegal street trading on Coventry Road has created a blueprint for other joint interventions going forward.

## **5. Other options considered**

5.1 Birmingham City Council and West Midlands Police considered an engagement only approach, as used in previous years, but felt this was inappropriate given the increasing scale of the activities year on year and the potential for criminality and public disorder.

## **6. Legal Implications**

6.1 Officers acted within their authorisations for specific legislation and in compliance with Regulation and Enforcement's Enforcement Policy.

## **7. Financial Implications**

7.1 The report provides an update on Operation Belfray – this was carried out within existing service budgets.

## **8. Public Sector Equality Duty**

8.1 Birmingham City Council seeks to support all religious groups to observe and celebrate their religion safely within the city and in compliance with the relevant legislation. The activities of Operation Belfray supported this aim.

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

9.1 This is a briefing report and for noting only.

9.2 This report supports all the outcomes of the Corporate Plan 2022-26

- A Bold Prosperous Birmingham – enforcement action against illegal traders ensures that a level business playing field is supported.
- A Bold Inclusive Birmingham – listening to our citizens and responding to issues of concern delivers against the priorities: empowering citizens and enabling the citizen voice; promote and champion diversity, civic pride and culture.

## **10. Background Papers**

10.1 None

## **11 Appendices**

11.1 Appendix 1 – Operation Belfray LPPC presentation