

# Birmingham City Council

## Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee

21 September 2023



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**Subject:** Homes 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 Homes 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.

### 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.
  - Identifies, subject to further input from the Chair and Deputy Chair, the issues that the Committee will consider in November 2023, the proposed aims and objectives and the preferred method of scrutiny.
  - Agrees the outline terms of reference for an inquiry on 'Improving standards of Council Homes'.
  - 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.

## ***Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee***

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

- Council Housing management services, repairs and maintenance programmes.
- Best use of housing stock across all housing providers.
- Neighbourhood management initiatives and the housing growth agenda (Birmingham Social Housing Partnership).
- Private rented sector, licensing and regulation.
- Tenancy engagement in the management and development of social housing and Housing Liaison Boards.

- Exempt accommodation.
- Housing Options for vulnerable adults, children, young people and offenders.
- Temporary accommodation provision.
- Homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Supply of homes to meet housing need.

3.9 The Committee is chaired by Cllr Mohammed Idrees, and its membership comprises Cllrs Ziaul Islam, Saqib Khan, Lauren Rainbow, Rinkal Shergill, Ron Storer, Penny Wagg and Ken Wood.

#### 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](#) may assist Members in identifying future topics. The following reports are of particular relevance to this Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

ID Number	Title	Proposed Date of Decision
010625/2023	Bromford Housing Development, Open Space Improvement, Procurement Strategy and revised FBC	17 Oct 23
010770/2023	Housing Revenue Account Business Plan	17 Oct 23
010840/2023	Asset Management Strategy	17 Oct 23
011496/2023	Procurement Routes for Affordable Housing Delivery	17 Oct 23
011746/2023	Local Authority Housing Fund – Round 2	17 Oct 23
011849/2023	Housing Repairs and Maintenance Contract Extension	16 Jan 24

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.

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 – October 2023, the work of this Committee will contribute to 3 Corporate Priorities.

## **5 Any Finance Implications**

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

## **6 Any Legal Implications**

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

## **7 Any Equalities Implications**

7.1 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.

7.2 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.

7.3 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.

7.4 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.

## **8 Appendices**

8.1 Appendix 1: Work Programme 2023-24 – September

8.2 Appendix 2: Improving Standards of Council Homes – Outline Terms of Reference

## **9 Background Papers**

9.1 [Birmingham City Council Constitution](#)

9.2 Birmingham City Council Overview and Scrutiny Framework April 2021

