

Birmingham City Council

City Council

11 July 2023



Subject: Scrutiny Business Report

Report of: Cllr. Sir Albert Bore, Chair of Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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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: N/A

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the new way of working for Overview and Scrutiny Committees for 2023-24. This new approach has been designed to make improvements to the way scrutiny operates and ensure more effective democratic accountability and oversight.
- 1.2 The report provides an overview of the work programme delivered across all Overview & Scrutiny Committees during February – June 2023. The report also outlines the topics under consideration by Overview and Scrutiny Committee's for potential detailed examination during 2023-24.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That the report be noted.

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. 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

3.2 The functions of Overview and Scrutiny Committees are outlined in [The City Council's Constitution | Birmingham City Council](#):

- 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.

3.3 The remits and names of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees were reviewed in 2022-23. For 2023-24, the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for the City Council are:

- Co-ordinating
- Economy and Skills
- Education, Children and Young People
- Finance and Resources
- Health and Adult Social Care
- Homes
- Neighbourhoods
- Sustainability and Transport

3.4 Birmingham City Council also continues to be part of 3 regional scrutiny meetings. These are:

- Birmingham and Sandwell Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Birmingham and Solihull Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- West Midlands Police and Crime Panel

4 New Ways of Working

- 4.1 During 2022-23, members from the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee outlined concerns that the Overview and Scrutiny programme has not always delivered on adding value and driving service improvements or been enabled to deliver on the aspirations set out in the Overview and Scrutiny framework. In recent years, Overview & Scrutiny committees have pursued only a limited number of issues that have contributed significantly to the thinking and actions of the Council's Cabinet and the Chief Executives senior management team.
- 4.2 Following discussions between members in February and April 2023, the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to implement three key changes:
- The remits of Overview and Scrutiny Committees' have been revised– the previous configuration resulted in uneven workloads. New arrangements have been agreed and are now in place which provide a better alignment with Cabinet Member portfolios.
 - Engagement with Cabinet Members has been re-shaped – under the previous arrangements, Cabinet Members were asked to attend multiple Overview and Scrutiny Committees to provide overviews requiring a significant time commitment. Furthermore, these reports did not lead to scrutiny adding value or demonstrating impact and were usually only for noting. Moving forward, invites to Cabinet Members will be more focused with an emphasis on Overview and Scrutiny committees influencing, or reviewing the impact of decisions.
 - Meeting arrangements have been re-considered – Overview and Scrutiny Committees will be encouraged to consider the most effective scrutiny method to achieve the aims and objectives they have agreed. In some instances, this may be traditional, formal committee meetings but in other cases, this may involve a Task and Finish group approach or other flexibility in meeting arrangements. In addition to this, work programmes will include a 'menu' of options to enable individual committees to respond in a timely way to emerging topics.
- 4.3 The Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee will review the implementation of these changes throughout 2023-24.

5 Summary of Work Programme

- 5.1 This section provides a summary of the activities undertaken, and references how this is delivering change, across the whole Overview and Scrutiny programme since February 2023, following the Scrutiny Business Report in January 2023.
- 5.2 Furthermore, in June, the 8 Overview and Scrutiny Committees for 2023-24 considered their work programmes and their immediate priorities. This section also sets out the topics under consideration by each committee.

Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 5.3 In February, the Committee held a single themed meeting to review the existing Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy, and to inform the development of the new strategy. Prior to this, members from the Committee had met with providers in a roundtable event. There will be further engagement with the Neighbourhoods O&S Committee on this strategy in the Autumn 2023 before the strategy is approved by Cabinet.
- 5.4 In April, the Committee made recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities and to the Chief Executive following the Committee's task and finish review of the Council's Homes for Ukraine scheme. This followed a previous report to the Committee in January 2023 and motion approved by Council in December 2022.
- 5.5 The Committee also considered the continuing implementation of the recommendations from the Exempt Accommodation inquiry, as well as further progress on its Customer Services recommendations for Bereavement Services, Highways, Housing Repairs and Waste Services.
- 5.6 Future topics for consideration by this Overview & Scrutiny Committee will include Cost of Living; the Trailblazer Devolution Deal; The Elections Act, and Debate not Hate. There will also be further consideration on Homes for Ukraine and also Customer Services before appropriate Overview & Scrutiny Committees are asked to follow up on the recommendations of the Co-ordinating Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 5.7 Between February and April 2023, the Committee completed its evidence gathering for the Inquiry: Promoting Health and Wellbeing – a Commonwealth Games Legacy and finalised its report. During February, Members received evidence from The Active Wellbeing Society (TAWS) and Adult Social Care Directorate. The [inquiry's findings were presented to City Council in April 2023](#), where all the recommendations were agreed. Moving forward, these recommendations will be primarily monitored by the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 5.8 Members have also considered the financial challenges affecting Birmingham's culture sector, and how the Council is working with arts and culture organisations to mitigate these challenges and build on the impact of the Commonwealth Games.
- 5.9 As part of the re-balancing of the remits of Overview and Scrutiny Committees, this Committee has been disbanded. Its remit has been shared principally across Co-ordinating (Culture) Health and Adult Social Care (Physical Activity) and Neighbourhoods (Commonwealth Games Legacy) Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 5.10 Between February and April, this Committee also focused on finalising their inquiry into Employment and Skills for Young People ‘Something to Aim For’. The [inquiry’s findings were presented to City Council in April 2023](#), where the recommendations were agreed. Moving forward, the Committee will monitor the implementation of these recommendations.
- 5.11 The Committee has also received an update on the implementation of the East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy and considered the future consultation and engagement as part of the ‘Our Future City Plan: Shaping Our City Together’.
- 5.12 Future topics for consideration during 2023-24 include Regeneration of the city; Night Time Economy, and Local Skills Improvement Plan.

Education, Children and Young People’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 5.13 In February, the Committee considered school attainment and improvement, school exclusions, part-time timetables, and unsuitable school places.
- 5.14 In April, the Committee considered progress on the Improving Services for Children and Families Improvement programme. The Committee was also updated on the how the Birmingham Children’s Trust is progressing towards their priorities for 2022-23, and its proposed strategic priorities for 2023-24.
- 5.15 In May, the Committee focused on evidence gathering for the Children and Young People’s Mental Health inquiry (in collaboration with the Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee), and also the Child Criminal Exploitation inquiry. Evidence was received for both inquiries from Aquarius, the commissioned provider for young people’s substance misuse services in Birmingham; the Council’s Youth Services provided evidence for the Child Criminal Exploitation inquiry only.
- 5.16 The Child Criminal Exploitation inquiry is continuing its evidence gathering with additional sessions over the next few months and intends to report by the end of the year.
- 5.17 The Committee was also informed on progress on the SEND Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) and received an update on the most recent OFSTED inspection of the Children’s Service.
- 5.18 Future topics for consideration for 2023-24 include Children and Young People’s travel services; SEND tribunals; hidden children; short breaks review; the Birmingham Children’s Safeguarding Partnership’s annual report; Early Years and child poverty.

Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 5.19 As part of the Committee’s remit for strategic finance and budget setting and in advance of its presentation to Cabinet and approval at City Council in February, the Committee considered the Draft Financial Plan 2023-27.

- 5.20 This Committee also considered Quarter 3 (Month 9 and 10) Financial Monitoring Reports and continued to receive reports on Planned Procurement Activities. It considered a report on the Review of Reserves to assess whether the level of corporate reserves held by the Council is sufficient; this report also looked at the General Fund revenue reserves.
- 5.21 The Committee has been briefed on the processes and procedures regarding planning obligations (Community Infrastructure Levy CIL) and S106.
- 5.22 Members from the Committee also took part in an informal session to demonstrate the Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Dashboard.
- 5.23 Future topics for consideration include implications of Equal Pay; Budget Recovery Plan; Medium Term Financial Plan; Oracle; continued monitoring of Planned Procurement Activities; financial monitoring and implementation of recommendations from previous Scrutiny Inquiries.

Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 5.24 In February, an annual overview on the performance of Birmingham Sexual Health Treatment & Prevention Services commissioned by Public Health and delivered by Umbrella (University Hospitals Birmingham) was presented to the Committee. It also considered a report on from Public Health, Integrated Care Board (ICB) and NHS colleagues on what immunisation uptake looks like in Birmingham, local immunisation system roles and an indication of local challenges faced when working to improve immunisation uptake across the city.
- 5.25 In March, the Committee were updated on the co-produced review of Day Opportunities in Birmingham with Red Quadrant and Empowering Team (consisting of Service users), and in collaboration with the Council's Adult Social Care directorate. The Committee intends to consider this further in 2023-24. The Committee also reviewed the Council's Adult Social Care performance monitoring report for Q3, 2022-23.
- 5.26 In April, the Committee considered the new [10-year strategy](#) for the Integrated Care Partnership. It also received an update on the cabinet decision for the approval of the ['Staying Independent at Home \(SIAH\) Policy'](#) and the associated implementation measures. This policy focuses on the provision of support and assistance that can be provided to enable citizens to staying independent within their own homes.
- 5.27 Future topics for consideration are the CQC Pilot inspection; Integrated Care System governance arrangements; the Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health Inequalities Review (BLACHIR) and NHS Quality Assurance.
- 5.28 The Children and Young People's Mental Health inquiry continues to receive evidence. This inquiry intends to report to City Council in November 2023.

Housing and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 5.29 The Committee completed its work on Cleaner Streets and made recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environment. These recommendations were based on evidence-based practice from other Local Authorities. The impact of these recommendations will be monitored by the Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2023-24.
- 5.30 The Committee signed off the remaining outstanding recommendations from the Reducing Fly-tipping inquiry report which had been presented to City Council in February 2021. However, due to Members' on-going concerns around the deployment of CCTV cameras and prosecution strategies, the Committee received further information on the process, timescale and installation of CCTV, engagement with local councillors, and Fixed Penalty Notice strategies.
- 5.31 The Committee also considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities outlining the process for the deployment of Birmingham Community Safety Partnership's temporary (or re-deployable) cameras.
- 5.32 In March, the Committee considered the current position for void standards for the Council's City Housing service. Members from the Committee undertook visits to void properties at different locations throughout the city. In addition to this, the Committee also held a single-themed meeting to understand in more detail the current position for City Housing. This will form a key strand of work for the Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2023-24.
- 5.33 In April, the Committee was updated on localisation, in particular on localised budgets, and how the Council's Localism policies compare with other Local Authorities. Information was also provided on the Neighbourhoods Action Co-ordination Pilot.
- 5.34 In May, the Committee 'called in' the Cabinet Decision: 'Development of Housing at Dawberry Fields Road' and referred the decision back to Cabinet for re-consideration.
- 5.35 As part of the re-balancing of the remits of Overview and Scrutiny Committees, this Committee has been disbanded. Its remit has been divided between two new committee's: Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 5.36 Future topics for consideration include improving void standards; Decent Homes standards; tenant engagement; affordable housing and exempt accommodation.

Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 5.37 Future topics for consideration include fly tipping enforcement; community safety localities' approach; Youth Justice plan; localisation; delays in births and deaths

registrations, Domestic Abuse and Birmingham Community Safety Partnership's annual report.

Sustainability and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 5.38 In February, the Committee considered information from Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) and National Express relating to current trends in particular level of bus services running, fares and reliability. The Committee also explored how this relates to the Council's ambitions to increase the use of public transport and active methods of travel.
- 5.39 Following a visit to University Station, the Committee held follow up discussions with West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) about the lessons that could be learnt and adopted for upcoming stations redevelopments, particularly the Camp Hill line.
- 5.40 In March, the Committee considered the Annual Flood Risk Management and Maintenance Report, which outlined the flood mitigation activities that been undertaken during the past 12 months and the updated Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for Birmingham.
- 5.41 In April, the Committee provided initial feedback on the proposed priorities to be included into a new road safety strategy.
- 5.42 In May, the Committee 'called in' the Cabinet Decision: Contract Award for the Operation and Maintenance of the Tyseley ERF, Waste Transfer Stations and Household Waste Recycling Centres, and referred the decision back to Cabinet to re-consider.
- 5.43 Future topics for consideration include Road Safety; Active Travel schemes; Route to Net Zero and the Highways PFI Contract award.

6 Regional Scrutiny

- 6.1 The Council's Overview and Scrutiny team also provides support to three regional scrutiny committees: The Birmingham and Sandwell Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Birmingham and Solihull Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel.

Birmingham and Sandwell Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC)

- 6.2 Following the establishment of NHS Integrated Care Systems in July 2022 the boundaries of Birmingham City Council now align with the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System; this has reduced the need for the Birmingham and Sandwell Joint HOSC to meet. However, the joint committee with Sandwell will continue to scrutinise the development of the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital that will serve patients from Birmingham.

Birmingham and Solihull Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC)

- 6.3 In March, the JHOSC considered progress on the independent Governance, Well-led and Culture Reviews into the University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust. This was followed up by a further update in April on the now-published [Bewick Review \(phase1\)](#) on University Hospital Birmingham (UHB) regarding clinical safety.
- 6.4 Also in March, the Committee considered the West Midlands Ambulance Service activity and conveyance to hospitals; lost hours to handover delays; response time by call category; profile of serious incidents; actions taken by WMAS; high impact actions to make a difference and outcomes from a WMAS perspective.

West Midlands Police and Crime Panel

- 6.5 A separate report including an overview of the key activities of the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel for the past 12 months will be provided to City Council later in the year.

7 Legal Implications

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

8 Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no procurement implications or financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

9 Public Sector Equality Duty

- 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 All Overview and Scrutiny Committees ensure they address these duties by considering them during work programme development, and specifically the scoping of work, evidence gathering and making recommendations. This has included 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.

9.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Committees 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 Other Implications

10.1 The work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees contributes towards the Birmingham City Council Corporate Plan 2022-2026, its Grand Challenges and Strategic Priorities and Outcomes.

11 Background Papers

11.1 [Scrutiny Business Report – November 2022](#)

11.2 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes – November – January 2022

11.3 [Council Constitution, May 2023](#)

11.4 Birmingham City Council's Overview and Scrutiny Framework, April 2021

12 Appendices

12.1 There are no appendices to this report.