

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

**HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOODS O&S COMMITTEE –
PUBLIC MEETING**

1400 hours on Thursday 14th July 2022

Committee Room C, Council House Extension, Margaret Street

Action Notes

Present:

Councillor Mohammed Idrees (Chair)

Councillors: Kerry Brewer, Marje Bridle, Ray Goodwin, Roger Harmer, Lauren Rainbow and Ken Wood

Also Present:

Councillor Majid Mahmood, Cabinet Member for Environment

Daren Share, Assistant Director, Street Scene

Paul Lankester, Interim Director, Regulation and Enforcement

Mira Gola, Head of Business Improvement and Support, City Housing

Stephen Philpott, Head of Service, Housing Solutions and Support

Natalie Smith, Head of Service, Housing Management

Sarah Ager, Head of Capital Investment

Jonathan Antill, Head of Business Improvement and Support, City Operations

Amelia Murray, Overview and Scrutiny Manager

Fiona Bottrill, Senior Overview and Scrutiny Manager

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chair advised that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's meeting You Tube site (www.youtube.com/channel/UCT2kT7ZRPFCXq6_5dnVnYlw) and that members of

the press/public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

2. APOLOGIES

An apology was received on behalf of Cllr Saqib Khan.

3. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE, CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR

The Chair nominated Cllr Marje Bridle as Deputy Chair.

This nomination was seconded by Cllr Kerry Brewer

RESOLVED: -

The City Council resolution appointing the Members and Chair of the committee was noted.

Cllr Marje Bridle was appointed Deputy Chair of the Housing and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the purposes of substitution for the Chair, if absent, for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the City Council in 2023.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

5. HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOODS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

RESOLVED: -

The Terms of Reference were noted.

6. ACTION NOTES

(See documents No. 1 and No. 2)

It was recognised that due to the changes in the membership of the Committee there were three members who had been present at the previous meetings.

The action notes from the 17 February 2022 and the 10 March 2022 were agreed by members who had been present at the meetings.

7. CABINET MEMBER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

(See document No. 3)

The Chair welcomed Cllr Majid Mahmood, Cabinet Member for Environment, to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member explained the new ways of working that have been adopted within the waste service to continually improve services including the Joint Service Improvement Board, weekly meetings with the Leader and Chief Executive and an action plan that is reported to the Star Chamber. He also described the work with planning and developers to consider new developments and ensure that a waste crew is allocated to new developments which has had positive results in Perry Barr. Crew members have also been trained as drivers which provides additional capacity to cover leave and sickness. The Cabinet Member receives daily reports on dropped bin collections including the top 10 wards and any repeat dropped collections.

It was recognised that more can be done in relation to recycling and that this is not even across the city e.g., recycling in the city centre is 20% and is 50% in Sutton / Harborne. It was reported that mobile trucks have collected 1497 tonnes of household waste and 76 tonnes of recycling. The members' survey has had 46 responses, and this adds additional information about services and how they can be developed and it was reported that residents are contacting the service to report that they are pleased with the response, it is not just complaints.

It was discussed that Members can provide information about areas where there are historical problems and work with residents to identify private alleys where fly-tipping is an issue. The Council does not cover these but can locate a mobile truck in a strategic location that enables residents to dispose of the waste.

The Cabinet Member also reported on the work of the City of Nature which sets out that by 2047 the Council will be a city of 1000 green spaces. Five parks have been identified as pilots and Community Infrastructure Funding has been used to fund improvements and this will be developed across the city as resources allow. Members have been made aware of the Section 106 funding that is available and this is being linked to Friends of Parks Groups. The Commonwealth Games Legacy is also improving parks and green spaces e.g., volleyball and basketball courts. The work of volunteers was recognised, and the Cabinet Member thanked litter pickers for their work.

In response to questions from the Committee the Cabinet Member and officers provided the following information:

The need for accurate information on missed collections e.g. the Council is required to report the number of missed collections per 100,000 collections scheduled. The reported figure of 3% seems too low: The daily reports on missed collections is cross referenced with feedback from residents and elected members. Currently data on missed collections is recorded by ward and then the streets are listed in alphabetical order. Ideally there would be no missed collections but the Cabinet Member explained that the technology is available to track collections so people will know when their bin is collected and this is used in other areas. The size of the city is also an issue and that a small percentage of missed collections is still a large number. It was highlighted that crews want to deliver a good service and there are 133 crews

daily. The Cabinet Member said he wanted to be in a position to share information with members of the public more easily. Overtime for missed collections is offered to crews that have not dropped collections.

The Cabinet Member was asked to provide assurance that where some rounds are missed continually this will be looked into. The example of Newcastle was given where missed collections do not have to be reported as it is recorded on an App. The Committee also requested comparative data to be provided for the previous year and with other authorities. The Cabinet Member said that contingency arrangements were being put in place so collections missed in the morning can be reported and picked up on the same day.

Performance management indicator for missed collections: This is being developed by the corporate performance team and will be reported to the Committee.

More local control for waste services which might mean a less frequent but more reliable service: The Love Your Street programme has been successful and needed to be expanded. Work is also taking place in schools regarding education on recycling and with the Council of Mosques on how they can support recycling.

The Council should consider collecting food waste starting with small scale trials. The technology is available to recycle waste nappies and the Council could work with a partner to provide this service: The Environment Bill includes food recycling, but this has been delayed. The mapping for food waste has been completed. The Cabinet Member agreed to consider a pilot for food waste and nappy recycling where there would be uptake.

Why is the Council mowing grass in the summer when it does not grow: The Mobile Household Recycling Teams are watering trees and flowers – could the staff who cut grass be re-directed to watering duties? Grass mowing has stopped in June. The street cleansing crews have the training and skills to undertake watering and there are more flowers to water due to the Commonwealth Games. The grounds maintenance will be upskilled.

Confusion across council services regarding the Council's duty to clear fly tipping and rubbish from publicly owned land: Where there is an alley way between 2 houses on private land it is not the Council's responsibility, however there is a duty under the Pest Control Act to keep alleys clear of mice and rats and the Council can issue an order notice. Where there is an alley way between 4 or 5 private houses, residents can contact their ward member who can request that a truck is placed in a strategic location for residents to remove waste. The Cabinet Member also highlighted with Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs), exempt accommodation and work with Birmingham University to communicate with students.

During the Commonwealth Games visitor numbers to the city will increase and it is important to get street cleansing right: Last month the number of missed collections was the lowest since the start of the pandemic. One of the main issues has been access for vehicles due to double parking.

Use of mobile cameras to prosecute and deter fly tipping and sharing data between the Council and police for enforcement and prosecution: There are GDPR implications when using cameras. These are used for large commercial fly tipping,

more, smaller mobile units are needed. The Community Safety Partnership has signed off locations and another 10 cameras are being procured.

Access and security in parks to reduce illegal use of bikes, quad bikes and illegal encampments: The Transit Sites are out of commission. The response to illegal encampments is reported to the Public Protection Committee and a report can be brought to the Housing and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was suggested that this could be a topic for a future Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED: -

- Cabinet Member to provide response on recommendation to pilot food waste and nappy recycling.
- Cabinet Member to provide assurance that repeat missed collections will be accurately monitored and inform the Committee of the indicators that will be used to measure missed collections.
- Cabinet Member update was noted

8. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

(See documents No. 4 and No. 5)

Jonathan Antill, Head of Business Improvement and Support, City Operations, presented the City Operations Performance Report for May 2022. It was highlighted that the red indicators for vital signs were:

- Number of Houses in Multiple Occupation licence applications within adopted standard (time taken)
- Number of completed inspections for licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation
- Reported missed collections per 100k collections scheduled

The red Corporate Plan indicator was:

- Number of properties improved in the Private Rented Sector as a result of Local Authority intervention

During the discussion the following points were made:

Information to be provided on national recycling Key Performance Indicators and data on previous year for comparison.

Is the low number of HMO inspections, 4 of target of 30, due to cancellation by landlords, is the baseline of 220 inspections enough and will inspections be extended to 3 and 4 bedroom HMOs? This is a new indicator as HMOs were not previously being inspected as necessary and as part of the licensing scheme a compliance visit is carried out. It was recognised by management that these had not been carried out satisfactorily, but this arrangement is being changed and the aim is to increase the visits to 1000 but this is the start of the journey. The backlog has been addressed and the proposed selective licensing scheme is being considered by the Government and the proposed additional licensing scheme is subject to a consultation exercise. It is a ring-fenced budget, and the cost of the service is met by the licence fee. It is expected that there will be an additional 90 staff as a result of licensing schemes that

are proposed. Cabinet had put in additional resources last year for enforcement to ensure that statutory responsibilities are met.

Data to compare performance with national comparators and previous years' data to know where we are and where we should be: A five-year scheme should do 20% of licence each year. Other authorities are working at a different scale. The service in Birmingham is striving to be best in class.

With regard to the outcome of the inspections, a quarterly report is provided to the Licensing and Public Protection Committee on regulatory activity and non-executive function and this can be included in the commentary on enforcement activity.

Mira Gola, Head of Business Improvement and Support presented the City Housing performance monitoring report for May 2022 and highlighted the 5 vital signs showing one blue indicator, 2 green, 1 amber and 1 red. From month 3 there will be 2 new vital signs for total households in Bed and Breakfast accommodation and total families in bed and breakfast accommodation.

In the subsequent discussion the following points were made, and responses provided:

There is no measure for anti-social behaviour which is the largest source of case work and the lack of response to these issues implies the system is overloaded, consideration to be given to KPI to measure timeliness of the progression of ASB complaint: The performance dashboard was being developed which includes customer contacts and working with the customer access strategy and build in the customer feedback. KPIs are being refreshed to understand what indicators are needed and link to the 20 priorities in the Corporate Plan. Information can be reported to the Committee.

The turn-around for voids had reduced but there is a question regarding the standards that incoming tenants are expected to accept: The background to housing applications was that a year ago there was a backlog of 15,000 applications for the housing register and to address this staff were secured from the contact centre and agency staff and this reduced the number of applications that have not been seen to 4,000 with a small percentage outside the 6 weeks. The contact centre staff have returned to their duties and around 30 additional staff have been taken on some of whom are agency staff that have secured permanent roles within Housing Solutions and Support. The new allocations policy went to Cabinet in March 2022 and this will involve a different allocation of staff. The council has started work on the Empty Property Standard with a new standard for contracts for 2024. This will be benchmarked against Registered Social Landlords and the cost implications. The visiting schedule to properties includes households before they move out. This will be a more visible, proactive and risk-based approach. The turnaround time for voids in Birmingham is 51 days which compares favourably with other areas, and the average is 69 days. The discussion moving forward is the financial implications of improving the standard of the property against the time it takes to turn it round.

There is an increase in housing demand but not an increase in housing supply: The Council currently receives on average 536 housing applications per week and information on the website and communication with applicants is clear about waiting times and that there are almost 23,000 households on the register. Applicants are informed of the likelihood that they will be allocated a property. Applicants are sent information about other things they are encouraged to do as the Council cannot meet the need that is coming through. Applicants get feedback on where they are in the banding if they are accepted on the housing register.

Standard of housing repairs, customer satisfaction and national bench marking: Members provided positive feedback on the housing repair service. If a customer has had a housing repair and calls the contact centre within 28 days this is raised separately on the system and there is a 10% audit to identify issues the customer may not have reported. There is no contractual impact, but this is managed through the service improvement meetings. There is the intention to send out customer satisfaction surveys and a customer satisfaction KPI is included in the contract. This is reported via a PDA, but a paper copy can be requested. This has a high response rate and is reported monthly. There is an option to refuse to provide feedback. There is a telephone survey to audit feedback. Audits are carried out on 10-20% of contracted work and 100% of voids.

RESOLVED: -

- Information on national Key Performance Indicators on recycling to be shared with the Committee including previous years' performance.
- Outcome of regulatory activity to be included in commentary in future performance reports to the Housing and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Information on ASB KPIs to be reported to the Committee.
- The City Operations and City Housing Performance Monitoring reports were noted.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

(See document No. 6)

The Chair reported that the inquiry on street cleansing had not been selected for 2022/23. The Deputy Chair proposed that the issues could be considered through reports brought to future committee meetings including comparator areas and examples of best practice. This could be achieved through using one-hour sessions at 4 Committee Meetings. This could result in a policy development note or report to Cabinet.

It was noted that there is capacity to undertake 4 inquiries at any one time so a further inquiry proposal could be put forward later in the year.

The issue of the number of households in temporary accommodation was raised as an issue for a future inquiry including comparisons with other authorities and how to minimise the number of households in temporary accommodation.

RESOLVED:

- The work on street cleansing will be undertaken though work of Committee Meetings.
- The work programme was noted and to be updated to include work on street cleansing.

10. DATES OF MEETINGS 2022/23

RESOLVED:

The dates of the meetings for 2022/23 were noted.

The committee approved Thursdays at 1400 hours for any additional meetings required to consider "Requests for Call In".

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

None.

12. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

13. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

RESOLVED:

That in an urgent situation between meetings the Chair, jointly with the relevant Chief Officer, has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

The meeting ended at 15:53 hours.