

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

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

1400 hours on Thursday 8 July 2021 (On-line Meeting)

Action Notes

Present:

Councillor Penny Holbrook (Chair)

Councillors Deirdre Alden, Marje Bridle, Roger Harmer, Mahmood Hussain, Mary Locke and Ken Wood

Also Present:

Councillor John O'Shea, Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Parks

Mira Gola, Head of Business Improvement and Support

John Jamieson, Head of Service – Housing Management

Gary Messenger, Head of Service – Housing Options and PRS

Darren Share, Assistant Director, Street Scene

Jayne Bowles, Scrutiny Officer

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny

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 (http://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

Apologies were received from Councillor Mike Sharpe.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

4. ACTION NOTES AND ACTION TRACKER

(See documents 1 and 2)

The Chair gave two updates:

- Localisation session on 17th June – the paper sent out to all directorates regarding the Star Chamber has been provided and was emailed to members on 6th July;
- Informal LAMS data sharing session on 10th May – officers have been contacted regarding the follow-up actions agreed, which will include arranging a training session and further details will be confirmed as soon as possible.

A request was made for the document illustrating the ABCD gradings to be provided before the session. Darren Share confirmed there is a LAMS guidance manual available which includes photographs showing the gradings and he will forward this on for circulation to members.

The action notes and action tracker were noted.

5. PROGRESS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION: REDUCING FLY-TIPPING

(See document 3)

Councillor John O'Shea, Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Parks, and Darren Share, Assistant Director, Street Scene, attended for this item.

The Chair invited Cllr O'Shea to introduce the report and in doing so he made the following points:

- He thanked the committee for the work done on this last year and confirmed that good progress had been made on the recommendations in the report;
- The CCTV is well under way, with procurement in for the new cameras and they are at the moment completing the policy end of that to allow the cameras to be deployed across the city, which will also cover off the Wall of Shame;
- They have launched the 6 Enforcement and Engagement Officers in the worst affected wards of the city – on a cost basis, it had not been possible to roll this out to every ward at this stage, however this will be kept under review with this being used as a pilot to determine how well they work and the impact they have;
- They are proud of the work currently taking place on engagement with local residents with around 5,000 pieces of kit out there now with residents and some 20,000 new blue bags issued across the city;
- The sheer quality of work being done in neighbourhoods by volunteers helping to keep their areas clean can be seen through social media;
- The bulky waste project has hit something of a barrier and so they are trying a different tack by trialling 4 mobile household recycling centres comprising a recycling vehicle, a compactor vehicle and another vehicle to take away items

for re-use. They will be deployed to every single ward across the city, but focussing particular on the wards which need more assistance to help take away their waste. It is felt that this will be available to more people and have a greater impact on the collection of waste from residents than a discounted scheme would;

- There are 4 fly-tipping teams and 4 new deep-clean teams and work is also being done on tackling the issue of black bags by the roadside by increasing the frequency of collection along certain roads in the city, with 8 new crews to increase collection rates;
- There are aspects still to be completed but good progress is being made given the problems they have had and the pandemic.

Darren Share added the following points:

- There is more to do and they are waiting for some extra graffiti vehicles to arrive which will provide additional graffiti crews;
- There are a number of crews out there now collecting black bags and getting on average around 6 tonne a day off the streets;
- They are tracking the effectiveness of each one of these activities and further updates can be scheduled.

In reply to Members' questions and comments, the following responses were given:

- They will want to talk to all local members about what is happening in their wards including the camera deployments, the use of deep-clean teams and the location of the mobile HRCs because although they have very good data to show where the hotspots are, there is always room for the local knowledge and feedback from the community that elected members can provide;
- Darren Share confirmed that he had met with Service Managers regarding the rollout of the new initiatives and local street cleansing managers have been tasked to contact local members before the end of July;
- There are 9 cameras that can be deployed and 10 new ones have been ordered, so that will take us up to a total of 19 cameras that can be moved around the city to use in various locations;
- The cameras do require power and so lampposts are the mainstay for cameras to sit on, however it was noted there is a need to think of an alternative to address fly-tipping in locations where there is no access to power - the example of lay-byes on the A38 was given;
- With regard to the Wall of Shame, there is a report going to Cabinet in July, followed by a brief consultation period over the summer and an implementation report going back to Cabinet in early autumn;
- The groundwork has been done and the media team are putting together images to use on the name and shame videos and putting together sample ideas and are ready to go when they have got the legal authority;
- Enforcement and the use of fines is a broader question and it was suggested the committee might want to involve Cllr Phil Davis as Chair of Licensing and Public Protection in relation to this;

- The Chair suggested that Cllr Davis be contacted in order to have a conversation about the public protection role and potentially be invited to a future meeting;
- It is too early to say whether the Enforcement and Engagement Officers can be extended and there is certainly not enough in this year's budget to increase to one per ward, however this is something they might be able to explore in future years;
- A request was made to see the job description for the Enforcement and Engagement Officers and it was agreed this would be provided to committee members, along with the "day in the life" paper which has also been produced;
- It was pointed out that in addition to the 6 Enforcement and Engagement Officers, they have also increased the permanent Waste Enforcement Team;
- Members queried who decides on the location for the mobile HRCs, how people are notified and how far in advance, and what happens if residents are unable to carry items to the vehicles;
- They are learning throughout the process but the idea is to identify locations where they can capture a large amount of people within walking distance and easily accessible and they are working with elected members and colleagues in Housing to do this;
- As issues arise, they can then revise how they are deployed and there will be enough crew to help people carry items to the vehicles;
- Members were told that this is a new initiative, nowhere else in the UK is currently doing this and they have had approaches from other local authorities (Sheffield, Manchester and Telford) who want to learn from what we are doing;
- Concerns were raised regarding the capacity of the mobile HRCs as in reality groups of residents will clear alleyways and the vehicles might not be able to deal with the volume;
- It was pointed out that the mobile HRCs are about getting rid of household waste and in instances where an alleyway has been cleared, this will be dealt with by the fly-tipping crews;
- It was suggested that the Chair pick this issue up with Cllr O'Shea and Darren outside of the meeting;
- The committee will want to keep this under review to monitor how it goes and what the impact is;
- With regard to the deep-clean crews, the importance of providing feedback to local members was stressed and Members were told the intention is that the deep-clean crews work in conjunction with ward crews and officers will make sure that feedback is provided;
- There are an additional 10 sack crews tackling roads where sacks come out from flats above shops and data sharing is important to get the most out of these additional crews;
- A query was raised regarding litter picks and the difficulty in navigating the website to access the form and whether there was a phone number that can be used for notifying where there has been a change in location for leaving the bags or regarding the contents of those bags;

- Members were told there is an email address that can be used if navigating the website is a problem – cleanergreenerstreets@birmingham.gov.uk – and it was recognised that they need to keep reviewing the website and take any issues to the web team;
- The usefulness of having a phone number was a valid point, however this would be difficult in terms of staffing and operating;
- The ‘Love Your Streets’ team work with residents but they cannot be everywhere and so are supported by depots and crews;
- Members’ thanks to be passed on to the Lifford team for the work done recently following students leaving properties in Selly Oak in particular and Cllr O’Shea told members they would be happy to liaise with universities and landlords about what else can be done. It was suggested that they should also talk to letting agents;
- There is also a letter going out from Cllrs O’Shea, Cotton and Thompson to landlords across the city reminding them about how they need to behave and that if they are being regulated as HMOs we have powers to deal with them should they not be supporting residents to get rid of waste safely and properly;
- They will seek to prosecute fly-tipping where there is evidence to support a prosecution – there needs to be a personal statement or camera footage – and they are prosecuting people;
- A concern was raised by one member that in some instances information is passed on but there is no feedback given and an undertaking was given that this would be looked into, however the issue is that even if there is a letter with an address on in a fly-tipped bag, they need to find out who put that bag on the street;
- Private land is a problem as we have no duty as a council and will only remove rubbish if there is a risk to health, but there are other routes, eg planning laws and notices that can be issued;
- Members queried whether they can still maintain their relationships with local officers and expect responses from them and the Chair confirmed that the Deputy Leader had stated that members are encouraged to use the new customer services system for routine enquiries but that they can go direct to officers where an issue needs to be escalated or there are specialist enquiries;
- At the moment, the committee is tracking the implementation of the recommendations and it was agreed that further reports would be scheduled, with the next one in September or October when data should be starting to come through to show whether the initiatives are working and the impact they are having.

The report was noted and:

- Enforcement and Engagement Officer job description and “day in the life” paper to be sent to members;
- Cllr Phil Davis, Chair of Licensing and Public Protection, to be contacted re public protection role and potentially be invited to a future meeting;
- Further reports to be scheduled with the next one in September or October;

6. DEVELOPING A LITTER BINS POLICY – DISCUSSION

Cllr O'Shea asked for O&S input to developing a policy across the city on litter bins – where we use them, what size of bins and how we collect from them.

It is a fairly wide-ranging brief - we have around 14,000 street bins across the city plus bins in parks and the request is for the committee to have a look at what other local authorities do about where they put them, how often they empty them, how they monitor them and the size of bins they use, to see whether we are doing the right thing or can we do better.

Members agreed this is a piece of work they would be interested in doing and the Chair suggested this could be done over a couple of informal sessions, with scrutiny officers having a look nationally to identify other local authorities to talk to, and a formal report to then be brought to committee.

Darren Share advised that there is some guidance which he can send to members. It was also pointed out that a few years ago each of the wards had conversations with officers and maps were drawn up showing where bins were located.

7. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

(See document 4)

Mira Gola, Head of Business Improvement and Support, Darren Share, Assistant Director, Street Scene, John Jamieson, Head of Service – Housing Management, and Gary Messenger, Head of Service – Housing Options and PRS, attended for this item.

Mira presented the report and highlighted the following points:

- The data in the report is as at Month 2 (May) and looks a little different this time to reflect the new City Housing and City Operations directorates;
- The opportunity has been taken to review how the performance information is presented and there is now a Contents page and a Summary page;
- The summary page gives an “at a glance” view of the BRAG ratings for each of the KPIs;
- There is also a diagrammatic presentation of the BRAG rating as well;
- There is also an exceptions report for any measures that are rated red, blue or amber.

In the course of the discussion, and in response to Members' questions, the following were amongst the main points raised:

- Whilst the changes to the report were welcomed, there were concerns that it is now July and the figures being looked at in this report are for April, with snapshots of May but not across the whole report;
- Members were told that the performance reporting is in line with the corporate reporting timetable and this is the latest approved and signed-off report, however service areas can provide more up-to-date information if required;
- John Jamieson gave Members the May figures for Emergency (98.3%, Routine Repairs (96.3%) and Right to Repair (92.8%), which are all above target)

- With regard to responsive repairs, a breakdown was requested of performance by contractor and it was agreed that going forward this would be provided in the commentary;
- The City HLB report contains useful information, for example contractor performance by area, and it was suggested that some of that could be brought to committee;
- With regard to the housing waiting list, we have a stock of around 60,000 houses, with over half of those being for smaller families and a lot of applicants looking for larger properties;
- There are around 18,000 applicants on the waiting list and a breakdown was requested showing the number waiting for each type of property, including modified properties and, if possible, the number already in council housing but looking for a larger property due to over-crowding);
- The housing teams do talk to people who are under-occupying with a view to down-sizing but it was stressed this is totally based on consent;
- An update was requested on the fleet and waste vehicle replacement and Members were told all 74 vehicles have been delivered. Phase 2 will bring more in next year and the third phase will be the year after;
- A query was raised regarding performance information for grass cutting in parks and open spaces and whether that could be included in the performance reports;
- Darren Share told Members they do hold that information, which is reviewed on a monthly basis, and they did have a performance measure on grounds maintenance ;
- Cllr O'Shea advised that this had been included in the report that went to the last Cabinet meeting and from memory the figure was around 88%;
- It was pointed out the measures in the reports presented to committee relate to housing and waste, but grounds maintenance/grass-cutting could be included in future reports

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their attendance at the meeting.

The report was noted and:

- Housing repairs – performance by contractor to be included in the commentary in future reports;
- Housing waiting list – breakdown to be provided of the number of applicants waiting for each type of property;
- Performance measure on grounds maintenance/grass cutting to be included in future reports.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

(See document 5)

The work programme was discussed and the following points were raised:

- There are still some items to be programmed and Members will be kept informed of progress with scheduling these;

- Cllr Wood requested that the Voids item scheduled for September be deferred as he is unable to attend that meeting and wants to be able to take part;
- He also suggested that as part of that work a visit could be arranged to view two or three void properties, with the Chair adding that perhaps Members could visit a void property and a property ready to be re-let, and that this could potentially be arranged during August.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Noted.

10. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

The meeting ended at 1607 hours.