

**BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

**COORDINATING O&S COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING**

**1030 hours on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2023, Committee Rooms 3 and 4,**

**Council House, Victoria Square, B1 1BB**

**Action Notes**

**Present:**

Councillor Sir Albert Bore (Chair)

Councillors: Jack Deakin, Mick Brown, Ewan Mackey, Kerry Jenkins, Saima Suleman, Alex Yip, Roger Harmer and Ian Ward (Leader)

**Also Present:**

Guy Chaundy, Assistant Director, Housing Strategy and Enabling Services

Pam Powis, Senior Service Manager, Safer Places Neighbourhood

Rishi Shori, Assistant Director, Strategic Partnership Affairs & Corporate Leadership

Amelia Wiltshire, Overview and Scrutiny Manager

Adewale Fashade, Interim Scrutiny Officer.

**1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST**

The Chair advised the meeting to note that this meeting will not be streamed live due to clash with another meeting being webcasted live, but it will be recorded for subsequent broadcast via the Council's meeting You Tube site ([www.youtube.com/channel/UCT2kT7ZRPFCXg6\\_5dnVnYlw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCT2kT7ZRPFCXg6_5dnVnYlw)). Also, members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there are confidential or exempt items.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies received from Cllr Deirdre Alden, Cllr Chaman Lal, Cllr. Akhlaq Ahmed and Cllr Mohammed Idrees.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Yip declared a disclosable pecuniary interest for agenda item 6 – Exempt Accommodation Inquiry Report.

**4. ACTION NOTES – 21 FEBRUARY 2023**

Amendments to the Action Notes of the meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> February were agreed and also noted for Actions tracker. These are:

- To ask scrutiny chairs to take back to their own committees how Domestic Abuse (DA) is relevant to their own Overview and Scrutiny Committees, consider how they can have an involvement and feed back to Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Consider training for Councillors on DA awareness.
- Regularly look at Temporary accommodation numbers of families (households and individuals) as part of our ongoing review.

**RESOLVED:**

That the action notes of the formal meeting held on 21 February 2023 include the above amendments to be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**5. CO-ORDINATING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ACTION TRACKER**

**RESOLVED:**

- That the Action Tracker be noted

**6. EXEMPT ACCOMODATION INQUIRY UPDATE REPORT**

Cllr Alex Yip left the room for this agenda item. Cllr. Suleman declared another registerable interest during the discussion and left the room.

Guy Chaundy, Assistant Director Housing Strategy and Enabling Services presented his update on the implementation of the recommendations of the Exempt Accommodation (EA) Scrutiny inquiry. There were updates on Scrutiny recommendations, the inspection outcomes, Draft Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Bill and Full Council - motions update.

Key points highlighted are:

- Cllr Sir Albert Bore highlighted an error on Appendix 2. The date provided for the latest update is incorrect. Guy Chaundy agreed this will be addressed.
- There was identification of resources to inspect 20,000 units. The 8.5-year inspection cycle remains based on current resource levels/sector size.
- There is a single clear route for citizens (tenants and residents) to raise concerns and have them resolved. Agreed complaints route is through [PRS@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:PRS@birmingham.gov.uk) mailbox
- Option of local coordination groups and a charter for local areas where EA concentration is high to be explored. Resident engagement strategy is being developed with input from the city-wide residents group

- 885 inspections have been carried out since April 2022.
- Commissioned provision is managed contractually. For non-commissioned provision, collating providers and managing agents most frequently being referred to by Housing Support & Solutions Hubs, to prioritise Quality Standards accreditation and ensure appropriate rehousing options and prevention, and finalise a 'preferred provider list'.
- A Supported Housing Strategy now agreed at Cabinet. A 5-year delivery plan is in development (strongly dependent on national reforms).
- A Birmingham SEA Quality Standards & Charter of Rights has been established. Charter of Rights co-designed with 50 residents in Birmingham by Spring Housing & BCC to improve the rights of people living in Supported Exempt Accommodation.
- Regulations are in place to support the Housing Benefit process.
- Planning Enforcement have updated on the Recommendation R05a previously; this has been completed. Planning Enforcement are continuing to work on reporting Planning Committee to all Members remains on-going.
- On working with regional partners and other LAs, the Council is now working with other local authorities now joining the National Supported Housing Improvement Programme, as well as ongoing engagement with core cities.
- In terms of lobbying for change, the project team is regularly engaging DLUHC on the reforms needed. The implementation of new regulations is currently estimated to be Summer 2024.
- The Draft Supported Housing Bill will include a range of measures intended to regulate Supported Housing. This includes introduction of a licensing scheme (subject to consultation), powers to make regulations enabling information relating to licensing to be shared and establishing a National Advisory Panel.
- Further lobbying is required on issues such as greater powers for community safety enforcement and means testing of citizens funding their own support in some cases. Birmingham remains one of the only areas highlighting and addressing the community safety impact.
- In relation to updates on Full Council Motions, the covenant policy is being worked through. The Standards Committee are looking at issues of declaration of interest and commissioning a model code of conduct which will consider the motion on exempt, and finalising terms of reference for the Independent Inquiry.

In response to questions from committee members, the following were among the main points raised:

- There needs to be a balance between quality of provision of exempt accommodation and process of managing the service itself.
- In relation to housing providers not signing up to the Quality Standards, there is not much the council can do. However, this can prompt an inspection when council is aware of housing benefit claims.
- The community safety aspects of the inspection are vital to ensure protection of tenants and supporting them in cases.

- On the Charter of Rights, 11 providers have completed assessment. We are expecting those who have not completed an assessment will do so.
- Evidence of fraud will be referred to the DWP. The Council currently doesn't get any feedback on referrals to DWP. This will be raised with them to ensure feedback is received on cases referred to them.
- In relation to an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA's), a specific EIA is not usually completed for Scrutiny reports, although they are completed for all Cabinet Reports. This may be something to consider for the future.
- The service is currently engaged with the top 5 key providers on the accreditation process. The Committee will be updated on the list of those going through the accreditation process.
- On planning, the Committee was informed that in the new Bill, the Council will be able to include exemption regarding the required number of decisions on HMOs.
- In relation to protection of tenants' rights and recourse for Landlords if these are flouted, Landlords sign on the Charter of Rights as part of the accreditation process. Where problems are identified, these will be included in our inspections.
- We will work in identifying where there are high level issues and complaints in specific areas.
- Local groups are free to approach the council, and we can work with them as part of resident engagement on exempt accommodation issues.

## **RESOLVED**

(i). The report was noted.

(ii). Relevant status for each recommendation in the report agreed and confirmed.

## **7. CABINET MEMBER PORTFOLIO PRIORITIES – LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, CLLR. IAN WARD:**

The Leader provided the Committee with an overview of current priorities and issues relating to the Leader's responsibilities covered by the Committee, specifically in relation to West Midlands Combined Authority as well as other Policy and Partnerships. Key points highlighted were:

- The Trailblazer Devolution Deal (TDD): The West Midlands and Greater Manchester were identified as places for new devolution deals in the Levelling Up White Paper in February 2022. The Leader pointed out that this is a start and, in his view, more powers are needed and should be devolved from Whitehall to the regions.
- The Devolution Deal includes Levelling Up Zones – based on our work to develop the East Birmingham North Solihull partnership with proposals for

fiscal flexibilities and the alignment of infrastructure investment with public service improvements.

- Business is essential for the Local Authority, so a 100% business rates renewed on annual basis for up to 10 years, as part of the Devolution Deal
- Secured Department for Transport (DFT) funding for Very Light Rail, a new concept currently being developed in Coventry. Tests are being carried out whether this can operate on metro lines
- Under the Commonwealth Games Legacy Fund, BCC has received 25% of funds from the underspend from the Combined Authority. We are considering how this will be spent. One of the initiatives we are considering is the European Athletics Championships which Birmingham has secured rights to host in 2026.
- In relation to our work with core cities in particular, the UK Urban Futures Commission has been set up and will develop a practical action plan for cities and city-leaders to maximise the potential of the UK's city regions. There is a UK Urban Futures conference coming up in summer, which we are hoping is coming to Birmingham.
- The Commission for Climate investment involves not just core cities, but also key cities, London Councils and the County Councils Network, so most of local government is engaged with this initiative. There is also some international work that is ongoing.
- A Levelling-up Birmingham All-Party Parliamentary Group was launched last June (2022), co-chaired by Preet Gail MP and Gary Shambrook MP. Next meeting of the APPG will take place in May 2023 and will focus on Cost of Living and the Our Future City Plan policy framework for the city.

In response to questions and discussions, the main points raised were:

- In response to the comments that this is a good deal for the City, the Leader acknowledged that this is a significant deal and gave credit to the officers who worked in securing the deal. However, the leader reiterated that in his view, this deal falls short of being a 'trailblazer'. However, it is deal worth having and one that can be built on.
- In response to a question on the Very Light Rail project, the vision remains to connect the city centre to the HS2 route. Currently being tested out and projected costs will be evaluated within this.
- In relation to the Devolution deal and scrutinising WMCA decisions, there is going to be a quarterly engagement with the West Midlands MPs. There is also a requirement for the Mayor and portfolio holders to report to parliamentary select committees in the House of Commons as part of the deal, and Combined Scrutiny Committees.

## **8. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23**

Key updates from the various Overview and Scrutiny Committees were provided:

- The Homes for Ukraine update including terms of reference will be brought to the next meeting in April.
- Commonwealth Games and Physical Activity Inquiry – satisfactory progress and recommendations put forward, and some amendments to these recommendations following discussions with the Executive.
- Economic and Skills Inquiry – all recommendations accepted from Executive. These should be ready for April.
- Education & Children Social Care OSC – The Birmingham Safeguarding partnership will not be attending the next meeting as their report will not be ready by then. The Committee will hear from the Children's Trust with an update on the Ofsted report and around the children and Young Families Directorate improvement plans.
- Health and Social Care OSC – Immunisation inquiry report to be submitted at next meeting in April. The ICB/UHB report will be going to the next joint HOSC.

#### **RESOLVED**

- Work Programme for Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2022/23 was noted.
- That the work programmes updates for the other Overview and Scrutiny Committees be noted.

#### **9. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)**

There were no requests for Call-in for Co-ordinating OSC.

#### **10. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business.

#### **11. 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.

## **12. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that next meeting of the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be 14<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at 10.30am

The meeting ended at 11.57pm