

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 30 JULY 2015

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY, 30 JULY 2015 AT 1400 HOURS IN COMMITTEE ROOM 6, COUNCIL HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM

PRESENT:-

Councillor Iqbal in the Chair;

Councillors Atwal, Hartley, Jenkins, Spence, Mackey, Pears and Harmer.

ALSO PRESENT:-

Rob James	- Service Director Housing Transformation
Joyce Springer-Amadedon	- Equality & Community Engagement Manager
Rose Kiely	- Group Overview and Scrutiny Manager
Amanda Simcox	- Scrutiny Research and Policy Officer
Marie Reynolds	- Committee Services

NOTICE OF RECORDING

- 1 It was noted that the meeting was being webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site (www.birminghamnewsroom.com) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs. The whole of the meeting would be filmed except where there were confidential or exempt items.

APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE AND CHAIRPERSON

APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE , CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR

- 2 **RESOLVED:-**

- (i) That the resolution of the City Council appointing the Committee and Chair, with membership set out below for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the City Council in May 2016 be noted:-

Labour Group

Councillors Atwal, Cartwright, Hartley, Iqbal (Chair), Jenkins, Phillips, Spence and Williams.

Conservative Group

Councillors Lines, Mackey and Pears.

Liberal Democrat Group

Councillor Harmer

- (ii) that Councillor Jenkins be elected Deputy Chair, for the purpose of substitution for the Chair if absent, for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the Council in 2016.

APOLOGIES

- 3 Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor Harmer for lateness and Councillors Cartwright, Phillips, Williams and Lines for their inability to attend the meeting.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 4 Members were reminded that they must declare all relevant pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests relating to any items of business to be discussed at this meeting. If a pecuniary interest was declared a Member must not speak or take part in that agenda item. Any declarations would be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The following schedule was submitted:-

(See document No 1)

- 5 **RESOLVED:-**

That the Terms of Reference be noted.

DATES OF MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

6 **RESOLVED:-**

- (i) That the Committee meets on the following Thursdays at 1400 hours in the Council House:-

17 September (Room 6)	15 October (Room 2)
19 November (Room 1)	17 December (Room 6)
21 January (Room 6)	18 February (Room 6)
17 March (Room 2)	21 April (Room 6)

NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT AND HOMES – TO INCLUDE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR AND LIFESPAN OF TOWER BLOCKS

Mr Rob James, Service Director Housing Transformation gave a comprehensive presentation of the responsibilities and the officer contact details within the Place Directorate:-

(See document No. 2)

During the presentation Mr James tabled the following information and explained the housing responsibilities and where they were located within the 3 Directorates of the City Council.

(See document No. 3)

As a result of the presentation, in response to questions from members the following were amongst the points made:-

Several concerns were raised by members regarding the roll-out of the Wheeled Bins service and associated issues, which included considerable delays in waste collections whereupon Mr Rob James confirmed that he would discuss directly with Penny Smith, Programme Director.

The Chairman agreed to liaise with Councillor Victoria Quinn, Chair of Economy Skills & Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Committee as believed it was part of their remit.

In response to comments made regarding the changing balance of home ownership declining and the increasing growth of the private rented sector whereby the rules relating to the housing multiple occupancy (HMO's) were not working as well as it was growing, Mr Rob James agreed that the growth in the private rented sector had changed the whole makeup and that was part of the reason why they were looking at a more comprehensive housing offer.

He highlighted that for the City it was not just having to meet additional housing

needs over the next 10 years, but also the mixture of housing that was required and what was to be undertaken by the City Council, in order to ensure the safety and sustainability of tenancies within those sectors. He confirmed that one of the areas that they was looking at specifically, was the private rented sector and although the team was relatively small due to past reductions, they was looking to see whether a review could be undertaken on the statutory licensing on HMO's but also some additional licensing to deal with particular premises that did not qualify as statutory multiple occupancies due to the designs of the buildings.

He added that if the City Council implemented an additional licensing scheme or selected licensing scheme in some areas to specific types of properties for e.g., hostels, then an assessment of the impact of those types of properties on the neighbourhood and community would have to be undertaken. He added that it was something that they were trying to tackle through the consultation and highlighted that members' contributions would be most useful in this instance. He stressed that the City Council wanted to ensure that rogue landlords were penalised whilst continuing to work with the good landlords in order to ensure that people with housing needs entered into the housing sector with some confidence with regard to being housed in properties that they would want to live in.

In response to comments and concerns raised by members pertaining to elderly/disabled tenants requiring assistance with their gardens and associated issues which included the questionable strength of housing management, Mr Rob James referred to the rolling out of the Place Managers within every ward of the city which he confirmed was mainly from the Housing portfolio although, there were other areas within the directorate, where there was a point of contact for an officer that could tackle various issues. He highlighted that they were presently looking to re-invent the trainee scheme which would be supported by external funding with corporate colleagues. He further highlighted that the neighbourhood caretakers should also be able to assist in terms of where there were problems, adding however that any specific issues could be raised with him after the meeting.

With regard to tenancy conditions, Mr Rob James agreed that there was a definite need to be able to enforce tenancy conditions in order to address appropriately the tenants that blatantly refused to comply with these conditions. He stated that tenants renting properties did have a responsibility to ensure that they were kept in a tidy order however, where there was a genuine need to assist tenants in their homes, a mechanism needed to be sought.

Following comments relating to community capacity and building action teams to help residents that required additional help, Mr Rob James confirmed that Ifor Jones, Service Director was looking at the area of community engagement and the mobilisation of those communities in order to help.

In response to comments relating to the importance of how residents perceived the City Council and that they should believe the City Council was providing the best for them, Mr Rob James stressed the importance of residents perceptions

whilst highlighting that there were a great deal of challenges ahead. He stated the City Council was a different beast these days which had to be recognised by all and in order to do so, other ways were having to be found of working and engaging with people in the activities the City Council continued to carry out, as well as the activities they no longer continued to undertake.

He highlighted the importance of managing people's expectations relating to what they should expect and in particular with council housing agreed that it was difficult to accommodate everyone and that was why, they were looking at the whole housing package within the city whether it was; the private rented sector, housing associations or Birmingham City Council, there was the need to develop a comprehensive housing offer. He stated that part of that was communicating with people where there was a shortage of housing supply not just in the city, but also nationally and the requirement of developing a strategy to include managing those expectations.

Following comments and concerns relating to the call centre and associated issues, Mr Rob James agreed to discuss the concerns raised by members with Chris Gibbs, Service Director. He confirmed that the service was now managed in-house and a number of issues had since been highlighted for improvement. He confirmed that Chris Gibbs would respond directly to the Chairman as he was not sure if it was the responsibility of the Committee.

The Chairman concluded by thanking Mr Rob James for his presentation.

7

RESOLVED:-

That the presentation and comments be noted.

EQUALITIES, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND COHESIAN

Ms Joyce Springer-Amadedon, Equality and Community Engagement Manager introduced the following presentation which illustrated the amalgamation of three separate council functions now combined as a single service following a service re-design in 2014:-

(See document No. 4)

In response to a question from the Chairman relating to the Trojan Horse theme, Ms Joyce Springer-Amadedon referred to the specific programme of work relating to schools as part of the Government's new prevent duty. She reported that Razia Butt, schools adviser had been appointed whereupon she was based in the office part of the week. She had developed a tool kit for working in schools and the programme of work was being rolled out during this year as well as next year.

It was reported that 20 schools together with their respective head teachers had been approached to take part in a piece of work pertaining to resilience building and support for young people in schools and their families.

Ms Joyce Springer-Amadedon agreed to provide more detailed information at the request of the Chairman.

At this juncture, the Chairman confirmed that Child Poverty would be discussed at the meeting in January 2016.

In response to a question relating to community safety managers, Mr Rob James referred to the 4 co-ordinators that worked across the city and highlighted that Pam Paris covered the area of Sutton Coldfield and subsequently agreed to provide her contact details after the meeting.

In response to further comments relating to the Trojan Horse work in schools, Ms Joyce Springer-Amadedon reiterated that Razia Butt based at Lancaster Circus was undertaking the work.

Ms Joyce Springer-Amadedon agreed to provide to members further information relating to Citispyce.

In response to concerns raised regarding drugs being openly sold on the streets and associated criminal issues that should be addressed with enforcement, Mr Rob James stated that criminal activity should be dealt with by the police, however, if there were any criminal events happening in communities that the City Council could assist the police through anti-social behaviour officers, they would be tackled jointly.

It was reported that the City Council had developed under the new Police and Crime Act, new procedures that the City Council could follow and there was also a new range of powers that could be used in addition to the enforcement powers that were already in place. The City Council had developed a number of processes and procedures with the police and if members had any issues they wished to address, they should be raised at either the local delivery or safer community groups.

Mr Rob James added that if members had any specific issues they would like raised with the police he would ensure that they were passed on whereupon the police could contact them directly to discuss.

In response to comments and questions regarding the work relating to violence extremism, Ms Joyce Springer-Amadedon referred to the tool kit drawn up by Razia Butt, schools adviser which addressed the areas of how to work with parents as well as young people. She stated that it was a triage system with parents, young people, head teachers and teachers of the school all working together. She confirmed that Razia Butt's way of working with young people was quite subtle which included a particular dialogue as well as observing certain situations and asking them how they identified themselves or what they identified with. She spoke to parents and teachers separately and then collectively.

Ms Joyce Springer-Amadedon stated that although violent extremism was not a

huge issue it was a significant issue for Birmingham, as it was one of the areas that the Home Office considered to be key in the development of radical extremism and radicalisation of young people. In terms of work, it was understood that the team worked very carefully with schools, young people and families in tackling some of the issues leading to violence extremism.

At this juncture, the Chairman highlighted that there would be a Prevent Update in October 2015.

In response to members' comments relating to the Big Lottery and providing links and support to local organisations and concerns relating to the potential loss of the Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's), Ms Joyce Springer-Amadedon referred to how the departments of the City Council had massively reduced due to budget cuts over recent years. The financial impact on the City Council was that it was having to work differently more innovatively and effectively with partners and communities, adding that the message to communities was that the City Council was now a different beast with it being a much smaller organisation and that it would continue to reduce over the next several years.

Mr Rob James stated that part of the work the police were undertaking was re-inventing their service in order to determine the future operating model for 2020. They were embarking upon a new operating model on how they were going to police within the West Midlands in the future, and part of that, would include what could be achieved around Neighbourhood Policing and the PCSO's. He advised that the Police and Crime Commissioner would most likely update members accordingly.

He confirmed that the work Joyce and her team undertook with the Police and Crime Board was to determine what the priorities were for the future, which took place every couple of years. The information received to determine the priorities was from various sources which included; scientific evidence, information from the local dimension and crime statistics. He added that it was a large piece of work determining these priorities and it was how they were then tackled that needed to be done differently.

Ms Joyce Springer-Amadedon reported that they had recently met with the Big Lottery and confirmed that the Big Lottery had in the recent past started to organise meetings with District Committees and that her department had agreed to support them in this area of work. She highlighted that the Big Lottery were keen for members' involvement. However, due to the work being undertaken by Ifor Jones relating to the Community Governance, the Big Lottery had agreed to wait until the work had been completed before they continued to meet at District Committees.

Ms Joyce Springer-Amadedon stated that with regard to the wider funding issue, she had met with them at the same time and confirmed that they were looking to invite other funders that had had problems in the past with communities in Birmingham in being successful in acquiring funding. In this instance, she referred to the engagement sessions they were looking to have

with them, and subsequently highlighted that there was a great deal to undertake over the next few months with regard to the various areas of work that included improving on the standard of applications that were to be submitted for funding.

Several further points were submitted from members relating to the Big Lottery adopting a more pro-active approach in supporting good projects by being more willing and accepting that some of the funding not only went towards supporting the projects, but also towards the internal capacity of the organisation if necessary, and it was therefore suggested that there needed to be a slightly different approach with the incorporation of more robust discussions.

Ms Joyce Springer-Amadedon confirmed that she would discuss the issues highlighted by members with the Big Lottery especially the specific areas in how they support organisations. She stated that she had had a conversation with the Chief Executive of Birmingham Settlement who had encountered difficulties in placing a significant bid resulting in the bid going back and forth a number of times, which she highlighted, did not bode well for the smaller less experienced organisations placing bids. She advised that the next meeting with the Big Lottery would be taking place in 6 weeks and members were invited to come along.

The Chairman concluded by thanking Mr Rob James and Joyce Springer-Amadedon for attending the meeting and presenting.

8 RESOLVED:-

That the presentation and comments be noted.

WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

The following paper was received:-

(See document No. 5)

The Chairman drew members' attention to the fact that the Work Programme had been amended since the last meeting. He advised that the "Twenty is Plenty" would be discussed at the Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

It was highlighted by Councillor Jenkins the need to identify an appropriate place for an update of the work relating to Equalities and Social Inclusion and the Prevention Strategy and other areas that were part of the Committee's remit.

The Chairman referred to the Neighbourhood Challenge and encouraged members to email their ideas and comments directly to him, Rose Kiely or Amanda Simcox.

At this juncture, Rose Kiely referred to the Neighbourhood Challenge highlighting that the plan was for a larger piece of work to be undertaken in February 2016 by the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee, relating to the Districts and Wards and how they were going to operate. It was therefore suggested, that it would be logical for the Committee to specifically look at what was happening with the Neighbourhood Challenge strand which by then, the Committee would have a better understanding of how it was working with the idea of writing up the findings, and then combining the two pieces of work resulting in a report being submitted to City Council in April 2016.

9 **RESOLVED:-**

That the Work Programme be noted.

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

- 10 The Chairman advised that there had been no requests for call in/councillor call for action/petitions received.
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OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

- 11 No other urgent business was raised.
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AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

12 **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 1530 hours.

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CHAIRMAN