



Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report of the Head of Scrutiny Services

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To enable the Committee to set the overall direction of Scrutiny work for the year ahead and plan its work programme.

2 The Role of Scrutiny

- The City Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees:
Provide "critical friend" challenge to executive policy-makers and decision-makers;
Enables the voice and concerns of the public and its communities to be heard;
Is carried out by 'independent minded members' who lead and own the scrutiny process;
Drives improvement in public services.
- The functions and remits of the scrutiny committees are set out in the Constitution and are attached in Appendix 1.
- The role of a scrutiny member is not formally defined; however the responsibility includes:
 - To personally contribute time and effort to both the development and the carrying out of the scrutiny work programme by attending and contributing to committee meetings and inquiries or task & finish groups including hearing evidence, considering conclusions and making recommendations in a final report;
 - To be fair and open, not take a party political stance and not make party political points;
 - To be independent minded and to not pre-judge issues coming to scrutiny nor use the meeting to promote narrow or parochial interests;
 - To challenge the evidence by asking probing questions where necessary in order to get the information needed without being confrontational and to actively seek ideas and opinions;
 - To attend relevant training as appropriate.
- It is for individual Scrutiny members to declare any interests or conflicts of interest as under the Constitution.
- To support members, scrutiny training sessions will be set up in late June/early July.



3 The Committee's Remit

3.1 The Economy & Skills Committee's remit is to "fulfil the functions of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee as they relate to any policies, services and activities concerning strategic economy; skills and apprenticeships; land and property; inward investment; land use planning; business improvement districts and the Local Enterprise Partnership".

3.2 The Committee's remit falls mainly within three Cabinet portfolios. In summary these include:

Leader	Deputy Leader	Cllr Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture
Promotion of the city and Inward Investment Council land use and property assets Major projects Business Improvement Districts Economic growth and jobs Land Use Planning	Impact and implications of Brexit	Employment Opportunities

3.3 Transparency, equalities and improvement will be cross-cutting themes for all O&S Committees.

3.4 Changes in the make-up of Cabinet portfolios and O&S Committees were confirmed at the City Council's AGM on 22nd May. A full summary of O&S Committee remits mapped against Cabinet portfolios is available from the Scrutiny Office on request.

4 Work programming

4.1 Effective work programming is the bedrock of an effective Scrutiny function. Done well, it can help lay the foundation for targeted, incisive and timely work on issues of local importance where Scrutiny can add real value. Done badly, Scrutiny can end up wasting time and resources on issues where the impact of any work is likely to be minimal.

4.2 Each Scrutiny Committee work programme is determined by the members of that committee. The work programme is discussed at the start of each year; and is updated throughout the year. Whilst Scrutiny Committees are independent from the Executive, there are benefits in aligning priorities, particularly when resources are scarce. The following section outlines some key areas for the forthcoming year.



Prioritisation

- 4.3 Members often have a number of topics suggested to them and are therefore required to prioritise matters for consideration. The following factors could be considered:
- *Public interest*: concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen;
 - *Ability to change*: priority should be given to issues that the Committee can realistically influence;
 - *Performance*: priority should be given to areas in which the Council and Partners are not performing well;
 - *Extent*: priority should be given to issues that are relevant to all or a large part of the city;
 - *Replication*: work programme must take account of what else is happening to avoid duplication.

Reports to City Council

- 4.4 There is clearly an expectation on O&S Committees that there are regular reports to City Council meetings. Therefore, it is proposed that each O&S Committee presents a report to City Council this municipal year. Most of the Scrutiny reports that have been presented at the City Council meeting in the past have been inquiry reports. However, the Scrutiny Inquiry into the City Council Meeting, conducted by the Corporate Resources O&S Committee in April 2016, suggested that there were other ways for scrutiny to engage with the City Council meeting.
- 4.5 It was proposed that two new forms of report to City Council, in addition to inquiry reports, to widen the scrutiny offer to City Council:
- **Debate reports**: short reports summarising work undertaken in Committee (or on visits); not necessarily with recommendations but with a motion or suggested actions; this could include more contentious issues, or where policy is not yet resolved, and act as a way of prompting wider policy debate in the chamber;
 - **Proposal**: short reports introducing potential inquiry work for scrutiny to get early member input into direction, key questions and potential witnesses; the debate would inform the terms of reference and form part of the evidence base for the inquiry, rather than getting that wider member input at the end of the process.
- 4.6 It is suggested that the Co-ordinating O&S Committee agrees a programme of reports to City Council at its July meeting.

5 Priorities for the coming Year

- 5.1 In setting the work programme for the year, members may wish to consider the 2018 Council Plan key priorities/ Corporate Delivery Plan (see relevant extracts from appendix 1: Corporate Delivery Plan in particular p.69, 'Jobs & Skills – A great city to succeed in').



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5.2 Other areas that members may wish to consider include:

- Development of a new Council **Property Strategy**. Currently being drafted it is overseen by the City Council's Property and Asset Board. The strategy will include community assets, major projects and regeneration, investment properties, and operational assets.
- The **Community Infrastructure Levy** (approved by City Council in September 2015). The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge on new buildings in England and Wales. It has been put in place to ensure that certain types of new development contribute to the City infrastructure. This infrastructure will support the growth aspirations for Birmingham as outlined in the Birmingham Development Plan which includes proposals for over 100,000 new jobs.
- Members may also wish to explore what is being done to support growth in local centres and town centres and in particular **Enterprise Zones** (Advanced Manufacturing Hub in Aston, Longbridge ITEC Park, Tyseley Environmental Enterprise District, Life Sciences Campus Selly Oak/Edgbaston and The Food Hub, Witton).
- **Closing the Skills Gap** – including skills programmes focussed on getting young people currently not in employment, education or training upskilled and into work and targeting low skilled workers through the GBSLEP Growth Hub website (www.gbslepgrowthhub.co.uk/step-forward).

5.3 Other priorities for consideration include:

- Members may wish to consider the role of partners such as the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) and the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) in securing investment proposals for the city as laid out in the Government's devolution deal.
- Update on the Delivery of the Birmingham Development Plan
- Review of the City Centre Master Plan
- The work of 'Brexit Advisory Group' (B.A.G) formed in July 2016. The group has been formed to consider issues impacting the West Midlands region.
- Big City Plan

5.4 Previously the Economy, Skills & Transport Committee has received quarterly monitoring reports on City Council led* Skills Programmes.

5.5 Other tracking and continuing work from the previous year includes:

- The Economy, Skills and Transport Committee received regular briefings on the work on the East Birmingham & North Solihull Regeneration Strategy and Urban Centres Framework.
- Birmingham Smithfield Masterplan consultation. The consultation has now ended and is being finalised during the summer. The Committee may therefore wish to receive an update in the autumn on the next steps for future development and investment in the area.



- Maximising Jobs & Skills Opportunities in the City was a report presented to City Council in February 2017.

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