

Birmingham City Council

Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee

13 September 2023



Subject: Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme

Report of: Christian Scade, Head of Scrutiny and Committee Services

Report author: Fiona Bottrill, Senior Overview and Scrutiny Manager
fiona.bottrill@birmingham.gov.uk
07395884487

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposed work programme for the Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2023-24, based on the Committee's meeting in June. Appendix 1 outlines the topics identified, aims and objectives and the preferred method of scrutiny to achieve these objectives.
- 1.2 The report also refers to other topics, which the Committee has identified, for future consideration, and this will be continuously updated during the year.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee:
 - Notes the information set out in Appendix 1 and identifies if any further topics need to be added to the menu of topics for the Committee to explore over the coming year.
 - Agrees, subject to further input from the Chair and Deputy Chair, the issues that the Committee will consider during October – November 2023, the proposed aims and objectives and the preferred method of scrutiny.
 - Identifies, subject to further input from the Chair and Deputy Chair, the issues that the Committee will consider in December 2023, the proposed aims and objectives and the preferred method of scrutiny.
 - Notes, subject to further input from the Chair and Deputy Chair outside of the meeting, its proposed work programme will be submitted to Co-

ordinating O&S to enable work to be planned and co-ordinated throughout the year.

3 Background

3.1 The [statutory guidance for local government overview and scrutiny](#) sets out the role it can play in holding an authority's decision makers to account. This makes it fundamentally important to the successful functioning of local democracy.

3.2 Effective Overview and Scrutiny should:

- Provide constructive 'critical friend' challenge.
- Amplify the voices and concerns of the public.
- Be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role.
- Drive improvements in public services.

3.3 The role and functions of Overview and Scrutiny Committees are outlined in [The City Council's Constitution | Birmingham City Council](#) They will:

- Make reports and/or recommendations to the full Council, the Executive and/or other organisations in connection with the discharge of the functions specified in their terms of reference.
- Consider any matter covered in their terms of reference that may affect or be likely to have an effect on the citizens of Birmingham; relevant to the Council's strategic objectives; relevant to major issues faced by officers in managing a function of the Council; and likely to make contribution to moving the Council forward and achieving key performance targets.

3.4 Effective scrutiny needs to add value. A well planned and timely work programme enables Overview and Scrutiny Committees to be involved at the right time and in the right way, and ensure their involvement is meaningful and can influence the outcome.

3.5 Members often have a number of topics suggested to them and are therefore required to **prioritise** matters for consideration. The Scrutiny Framework sets out the following factors to 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.

Looking Ahead

- 3.6 Overview and Scrutiny Committees will identify a 'menu' of issues (including policy development, policy review, issues of accountability and statutory functions) at the start of the year. Each Committee should then regularly review their 'menu' and decide which issues need to be examined further, and how that work would be undertaken. Scrutiny activities should be thorough and undertaken in a timely manner.

Scrutiny Methods

- 3.7 There are a range of ways to undertake scrutiny. The approach for 2023-24 enables flexible scrutiny and outlines a shift from monthly formal meetings to a combination of approaches. The Committee will choose the most effective scrutiny method to achieve the desired aims and objectives for each topic.
- 3.8 Based on Statutory Guidance published in 2019, different scrutiny methods include (but are not limited to):
- A single item, or items, on a committee agenda – this method fits more closely with the “overview” aspect of the Scrutiny function and provides limited opportunity for effective scrutiny. It is most appropriate for specific issues where the committee wants to maintain a watching brief.
 - A single item meeting, either as the committee or a more limited number of Members. It has the capacity to enhance the previous option by taking evidence from a number of witnesses.
 - A task and finish day - provided that these are properly focused, they ensure Councillors can swiftly reach conclusions and make recommendations and are effective even for complex topics.
 - A task and finish review – this is an enhancement of the previous option being held over four or six meetings spread over a limited number of months.

Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 3.9 The Committee's Terms of Reference is to fulfil the functions of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee as they relate to any policies, services and activities concerning:
- major physical regeneration and infrastructure projects in the city (with Cabinet Member for Housing & Homelessness)
 - promotion of the city and inward investment (with the Cabinet Member for Digital, Culture, Heritage and Tourism)
 - land use and property assets
 - economic growth and jobs
 - skills expansion for key growth sectors along with lifelong learning for post-14 skills and lifelong learning
 - access to employment and delivery of local employment plans
 - economic impact of arts, culture, tourism and sport

3.10 The Committee is chaired by Cllr Akhlaq Ahmed, and its membership comprises Cllrs Bushra Bi, Jon Hunt, Katherine Iroh, Simon Morrall, Richard Parkin, Jamie Tennant, Lisa Trickett.

4 Work Programme 2023-24

4.1 Appendix 1 sets out the topics the Committee will consider over the next few months, and also outlines future items for consideration.

4.2 The Committee may decide to add further items to the work programme during the course of the year. When considering this, the Committee is advised to consider where it can best add value through scrutiny, and how it can prioritise topics for consideration based on the Scrutiny Framework referred to in 3.5.

4.3 The Council's latest Forward Plan: [September 2023 Forward Plan \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com) may assist Members in identifying future topics. The following reports are of particular relevance to this Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

ID Number	Title	Proposed Date of Decision
010426/2022	NEC Masterplan and Property Strategy	Cabinet: 05/09/23
011802/2023	West Midlands Deeper Devolution Deal	Cabinet: 05/09/23
011475/2023	Local development Scheme Update	Cabinet: 17/10/23
011894/2023	Typhoo Factory Redevelopment	Cabinet: 14/11/23
010635/2023	Paradise Phase 3	Cabinet: 12/12/23
011840/2023	Enterprise Zone Programme Management Levy	Cabinet: 12/12/23
010173/2022	Our Future City Plan 2040 – Draft Central Birmingham Framework	Cabinet: 16/01/24
009087/2021	Martineau Galleries Outline Business Case	Cabinet: 13/02/24

4.4 Overview and Scrutiny Chairs are advised to maintain regular engagement with Cabinet Members to enable flexibility to be built into the Overview and Scrutiny work programme, so as to respond to the Council's policy priorities in a timely way.

5 Any Finance Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report.

6 Any Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report.

7 Any Equalities Implications

- 7.1 The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2 The protected characteristics and groups outlined in the Equality Act are Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Marriage and Civil Partnership; Pregnancy and Maternity; Race; Religion and Belief; Sex, and Sexual Orientation.
- 7.3 The Committee should ensure that it addresses these duties by considering them during work programme development, the scoping of work, evidence gathering and making recommendations. This should include considering how policy issues impact on different groups within the community, particularly those that share a relevant protected characteristic; whether the impact on particular groups is fair and proportionate; whether there is equality of access to services and fair representation of all groups within Birmingham; and whether any positive opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and/or good relations between people are being realised.
- 7.4 The Committee should ensure that equalities comments, and any recommendations, are based on evidence. This should include demographic and service level data and evidence of residents/service-users views gathered through consultation.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1: Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023-24 - September

9 Background Papers

- 9.1 [Birmingham City Council Constitution](#)
- 9.2 Birmingham City Council Overview and Scrutiny Framework April 2021