

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

NEIGHBOURHOODS O&S COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING

1400 hours on Wednesday, 4 October 2023, Committee Room 6, Council House

Minutes

Present:

Councillor Ray Goodwin (Acting Chair)

Councillors: Deirdre Alden, Gurdial Singh Atwal, Marcus Bernasconi, Kerry Brewer, Marje Bridle, and Izzy Knowles

Also Present:

Cllr Majid Mahmood, Cabinet Member, Environment

Waqar Ahmed, AD, Community Safety and Resilience (online)

Sarah Fradgley, Overview and Scrutiny Manager

Ekbal Hussain, Interim Business Partner (online)

Sajeela Naseer, Director, Regulation and Enforcement

Paul Pritchard, Operations Manager (online)

Mohammed Sajid, Interim Head, Financial Strategy

Darren Share, Director, Street Scene

Carl Thomlinson, Interim AD, Finance Business Partnering (online)

Amanda Simcox, Scrutiny Officer

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

Cllr Ray Goodwin informed the Committee that he will be chairing the meeting on behalf of the Chair – Cllr Shabrana Hussain, who was unable to attend due to ill-health.

The Acting Chair advised that this meeting will be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Public-I microsite and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there are confidential or exempt items.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received on behalf of Cllr Shabrana Hussain.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded they must declare all relevant pecuniary and other registerable interests arising from any business to be discussed at this meeting, and Cllr Majid Mahmood declared he was a subscriber to the Council's green waste service.

4. MINUTES

(See document No. 1)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the committee meeting held on 6 September 2023 were agreed.

5. ACTION TRACKER

(See document No. 2)

Outstanding actions for waste:

Cllr Marje Bridle queried the fly tipping enforcement recommendations agreed by the Committee and Sarah Fradgley confirmed that these were set out on page 122 and would be addressed in two parts - the report being discussed today, and a separate Member workshop to be arranged on the Land Audit Management System.

Cllr Marcus Bernasconi commented on the action he raised in relation to the level of missed garden waste collections and the scale of income being lost through the refund process. The Cabinet Member highlighted that there were 55 properties with three or more missed consecutive collections who were entitled to a refund.

RESOLVED:

That the action tracker was noted.

6. CLEANER STREETS TRACKING

(See document No. 4)

The Committee agreed for item 7 – Cleaner Streets Tracking to be brought forward due to the late arrival of the officer for item 6 – Scrutiny of Delivery of 2023/24 Budget Savings and Update on the Council’s Response to S114 Notice and Financial Recovery Plan.

Cllr Majid Mahmood, Cabinet Member, Environment, and Darren Share, Director, Street Scene were in attendance for this item.

The Cabinet Member provided an update on the recommendations as set out in the report and highlighted recruitment and clearance of private alleyways were on hold and subject to the Spend Control Board, the Directorate continued to promote prosecutions for fly tipping, and he urged Members to contact him if they have issues in their area. He advised the meeting of his intention to raise the importance of prevention initiatives with the Commissioners.

During the discussion and in response to queries raised by Members, the main points included:

- In response to the query regarding task and finish relating to street cleaning, the Cabinet Member stated that advice had been provided by the Monitoring Officer that it would not be appropriate to discuss this matter due to on-going litigation. A Member felt the Committee should consider the issue and go into private session if necessary. However, the Acting Chair advised that the issue was beyond the remit of the Committee.
- Keep Britain Tidy was helping with the draft litter prevention strategy, and the Cabinet Member undertook to present a draft to the Committee before the end of the year for comment and feedback.
- The Cabinet Member was working on transferring the Housing function to Street Scene to bring all environmental operations under one service. This is subject to the Spend Control Board.
- The Cabinet Member was thanked for the recent meeting with litter pickers, and he hopes he will be in a position to continue to support these going forward which is subject to the Spend Control Board.
- There were seven graffiti crews, four were part of the council and three were external contractors. The Cabinet Member was collaborating with colleagues to stop tagging in the first place.
- The Council is responsible for fly tipping in public and orphan alleyways. The challenge is private alleyways, although the Council does have a duty for these under pest control legislation. The cleaning of these would need to go to the Spend Control Board.

- The Mobile Household Recycling Centres (MHRCs) are affectively “tip trucks” and green waste presented is incinerated rather than recycled. Future plans for MHRCs are subject to the Spend Control Board.
- Members stressed the importance of communication with Ward Councillors and residents to build trust in services and help Councillors respond to constituents. The Cabinet Member advised that ward contacts for street cleaning and waste collections were being collated and would be shared to all Councillors in the next few weeks.
- Street cleaning schedules were moving to an electronic system, which could be published on the website. It was agreed that in the interim the paper schedules would be shared with all Members.
- The meeting was advised that work continued on improving the information provided to residents and ward councillors about missed/dropped collections.

RESOLVED:

That:

- The update provided on the progress towards implementing the Cleaner Streets scrutiny inquiry recommendations be noted.
- The street cleaning schedules to be shared with all Councillors.
- The wards contacts for street cleaning and waste collection to be provided to all Councillors.
- The Cabinet Member present the draft litter prevention strategy to the Committee before the end of the year for comment and feedback.

7. SCRUTINY OF DELIVERY OF 2023/24 BUDGET SAVINGS AND UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL’S RESPONSE TO THE S114 NOTICE AND FINANCIAL RECOVERY PLAN

(See document No. 3)

Cllr Majid Mahmood, Cabinet Member, Environment, Waqar Ahmed, AD, Community Safety and Resilience (online), Ekbal Hussain, Interim Business Partner (online), Sajeela Naseer, Director, Regulation and Enforcement, Paul Pritchard, Operations Manager (online), Mohammed Sajid, Interim Head, Financial Strategy, Darren Share, Director, Street Scene, and Carl Thomlinson, Interim AD, Finance Business Partnering (online) were in attendance for this item.

Mohammed Sajid gave his apologies for lateness. He presented the report and highlighted this is a continuation of the report brought last month to the Committee, which was overtaken by the events of the S114 report that was discussed, and it was

agreed at Co-ordinating O&S Committee that the in-year savings would be scrutinised by all Committees. He referred the Committee to Appendix 2 which was circulated this morning due to them wanting to share the latest information. On the first table there are a number of savings under the Committee's remit that are rated undeliverable (black) or high risk (red), and on the second table an explanation for why is provided.

During the discussion and in response to queries raised by Members, the main points included:

Information on Savings.

The Committee was informed that the potential write-offs (black rating) would not be achieved this financial year, and alternative savings had to be looked at to meet the saving target.

A question was raised about the savings for Pest Control. Mohammed Sajid explained there was a proforma behind each saving providing further details. However, the tracker showed this saving was unlikely to be achieved this year.

The Committee requested that in future the relevant officers attend the meeting to talk about the individual savings. Mohammed Sajid undertook to take this back to the authors and request that the pro-forma for each saving was shared with the Committee.

Sarah Fradgley provided a summary of research undertaken into the scrutiny function within local authorities subject to a S114 notice or government intervention. She highlighted that scrutiny committees had refocused work programmes on to budget savings, recovery, and improvement plans, so moving forward this is likely to be a theme for Birmingham scrutiny. Research had found scrutiny had played an important role in the improvement process. Member training was a key component and also support provided from CfGS and CIPFA.

The point was made that for the Committee to fulfil its role, it was vital it be provided with full information, and if necessary, go into private session to discuss any exempt information.

The Acting Chair requested a fully developed presentation on the cost savings be provided to future meeting and Mohammed Sajid agreed to take this back to the Directorate, and the Acting Chair undertook to discuss this with the Chair.

Green Waste, Pods, and Bins

Responding to questions as to whether the cost of green waste would increase and calls for service improvements, the Cabinet Member highlighted that no decisions had been made in relation to costs at this stage, and in-line with all budget decisions this decision will be made at a City Council meeting. He advised there had been an increase in Green Waste Service subscribers this year and significant resources put into the service

including funding for additional recycling and replacement bins. He considered the low number of properties entitled to a refund reflected a positive service.

It was questioned whether the delays for pods and replacement bins had negative financial implications and the Cabinet Member responded that the Council receives an income from paper and cardboard, provided the detail regarding the issues with the pods and bins, and advised there should not be a reduction in income.

RESOLVED:

That:

- The Quarter 1 2023/24 savings set out in Appendix 1 was noted.
- The update for Q2 / Q3 in Appendix 2 was received and the Committee requested:
 - The pro-forma for each saving to be provided.
 - Relevant officers provide fully developed presentations to future committee meetings.
 - Relevant officers attend future committee meetings to provide the details of the savings and respond to Members questions.

8. FLY TIPPING ENFORCEMENT

(See document No. 5)

Cllr Majid Mahmood, Cabinet Member, Environment, Darren Share, Director, Street Scene, and Paul Pritchard, Operations Manager (online) were in attendance for this item.

The Cabinet Member took the Committee through the paper and during the discussion and in response to queries raised by Members, the main points included:

- There was an error on page 107 of the papers and the camera was in North Edgbaston and not Edgbaston.
- There is a triage process in place for the distribution of CCTV due to the demand.
- Appendix C Fly Tipping and Court Fines 2019-2023 (page 111 in the papers) was discussed, and Paul Pritchard highlighted they were issuing more Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) and less court fines.
- The impact of Grime Watch was discussed, and the Cabinet Member responded that it deterred people because perpetrators would be broadcast. He requested Councillors share details via their social media channels. Paul Pritchard concurred that information generated did lead to prosecutions.
- The meeting discussed the challenges addressing fly tipping on private land, areas around clothing banks and from properties above shops.

- The Cabinet Member agreed that Members could provide him with specific incidents of fly tipping.
- Sajeela Naseer suggested she could provide more information about selective licensing for private landlords and the positive effect on reducing fly tipping.
- A Member felt that fines were effective and gave an example of a business being fined and establishing a new suitable commercial waste contract.
- It was requested that the point of contact to report business and trade waste on the public highway and fly tipping on private land be shared with Ward Councillors. The Cabinet Member advised that work was in progress to address trade waste bins found on the highway.
- Paul Pritchard reassured the meeting that action was taken when a contact address was found in fly tipped rubbish and he agreed to forward a copy of the standard letter that is sent.
- Reference was made to the two recommendations made by the Committee relating to fly tipping that sought to challenge service improvement, save money, and understand the impact of the measures. A request was made for the recommendations to be addressed in a future report, with the aim of having a fly tipping prevention strategy. The Cabinet Member agreed to report back to a future meeting, and Darren Share will arrange a separate demonstration / workshop.

RESOLVED:

That:

- The report was noted.
- Sajeela Naseer to provide a report when appropriate on selective licensing and the positive effect on reducing fly tipping.
- Paul Pritchard to provide the standard letter sent when addresses were found in fly tipping to the Committee.
- Cabinet Member to provide all Councillors with the point of contact to report business and trade waste on the public highway and fly tipping on private land.
- A future report and separate demonstration / workshop to be arranged to address the fly tipping recommendations made by the Committee as set out in the work programme.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

(See document No. 6)

The Committee discussed the work programme and:

- A request was made for the localisation item to be discussed at the December committee meeting, and this was agreed.
- When the finance item comes back in November the Committee need to understand the impact of the S114 notice on services, with relevant officers to provide fully developed presentations and attend to answer Members questions. The Acting Chair undertook to discuss this with the Chair.
- The Cabinet Member confirmed he will be discussing with Commissioners the importance of MHRCs and prevention measures to fulfil statutory obligations.
- Cllr Izzy Knowles highlighted the Bee Friendly Brum initiative and the Petition – Ban Use of Pesticides, which was presented to the Cabinet Member and discussed by the previous Committee in September 2022. The Committee agreed for an update on this be added to the work programme.

RESOLVED:

That the information set out on the work programme in Appendix 1 was noted and subject to further input from the Chair and Deputy Chair:

- The Bee Friendly Brum initiative (Petition – Ban Use of Pesticides) be added to the menu of topics for the Committee to explore over the coming year.
- The Localisation item be moved to the December agenda.
- The Cabinet Member to present the draft litter prevention strategy to the Committee for comment and feedback (as discussed under the Cleaner Streets Item).
- The work programme be submitted to Co-Ordinating O&S Committee to enable work to be planned and co-ordinated throughout the year.

10. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted that the next formal meeting will be held on 1 November 2023 at 1400 hours in Committee Room 6.

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

None.

12. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

13. AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS

RESOLVED:

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 16.10 hours.