

## BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

# ECONOMY AND SKILLS O&S COMMITTEE

1000 hours on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2022, Committee Room C, Council House Extension,  
Margaret Street - Actions

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### **Present:**

Councillor Saima Suleman (Chair)

Councillors Raqeeb Aziz, Nicky Brennan, Katherine Iroh, Izzy Knowles, Simon Morrall, Richard Parkin and Jamie Tennant.

### **Also Present:**

Mark Gamble, East Birmingham Development Manager

Simon Delahunty-Forrest, Assistant Director, Development

Fiona Bottrill, Senior Overview and Scrutiny Manager

Baseema Begum, Scrutiny Officer

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### **1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST**

The Chairman advised the meeting to note that members of the press/public may record and take photographs.

### **2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND COMMITTEE**

The appointment of the Committee was noted. The Chair highlighted an error in the membership in that it should read Cllr Raqeeb Aziz instead of Cllr Mohammed Azim. A misspelling of Cllr Iroh's first name was also noted.

### **3. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR**

Cllr Iroh was elected as Deputy Chair for the current municipal year.

### **4. APOLOGIES**

None.

### **5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

## **6. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Noted.

## **7. ACTION NOTES**

The action notes of the last formal meeting of the Committee held on 2nd March 2022 were agreed.

## **8. EAST BIRMINGHAM INCLUSIVE GROWTH STRATEGY – UPDATE**

(see Item No. 8)

Mark Gamble, East Birmingham Development Manager outlined the key points in his presentation and during discussion with Members the following points were made: -

- The strategy is a 20-year programme designed to link positive change to help and benefit local people by creating better life chances and improving people's health, wellbeing, happiness, homes and transport for the area.
- There is a strong concentration of need and huge opportunities in the area and that is why it has been selected. Unemployment for example has not recovered post-Covid in the same way as other parts of the country and the figure here is still quite high.
- Some of the opportunities and developments in the city that can be taken advantage of includes HS2 stations, Digbeth and the Eastside of the city centre.
- Within the East Birmingham area itself Bordesley Park, Tyseley Environmental Enterprise District Park and the Washwood Heath HS2 Depot are key areas of regeneration with various activity ongoing.
- A key challenge with some of these opportunities is enabling young people to access them and the same applies to educational settings as East Birmingham is a very young area. To overcome this a proposed metro route has been identified to enable better transport connections and this has been identified through the Council's various policies and strategies. The Council is also working with partners to deliver improved public transport such as buses and trains so that people are better connected to jobs, education and opportunities.
- The proposed East Birmingham to Solihull metro area is being led by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and is a medium to long-term project with involvement from Birmingham and Solihull Councils. A corridor transport study has been commissioned which will feed into the East Birmingham to Solihull (EBNS) Corridor Strategy and Action Plan Report detailing short to medium-term options for transport enhancements in the EBNS Corridor. Options will answer the special needs of the corridor over the next ten

- years, in advance of, and complementary to, a longer-term Metro solution.
- There are a number of initiatives looking at supporting local people with jobs and opportunities such as the NHS 'I Can' scheme that identifies barriers to employment. This initiative will look to get at least 100 local people into jobs. Other initiatives include an employability coach based at the Dolphin Centre in Ward End which will see the creation of an inclusive Youth Hub, integrating Jobcentre Plus services with the local East Birmingham Community Anchor Network (that includes large organisations such as the Council, NHS, Police, Universities and others). This is aimed at engaging young people after a period of not being in employment and education into healthcare and other key employment sectors. There is a need to increase the scale of this as there are many big employers in the private sector. SME's in the area can also be included in this.
  - The employability coach based at Ward End Park House is a pilot to see how it will work. If there is a good response, then future business cases can be supported to secure funding for more in the future.
  - A feasibility study has been carried out to identify the housing need. The aspiration is to provide at least 10,000 affordable homes. Details on social housing are to be determined and work is taking place with housing providers through the East Birmingham Board to pull together a plan. Homes England is working with the City Council to explore opportunities to accelerate the delivery of affordable housing.
  - Housing retrofit is a large and key area of work and the Council is working with South and City College on this. The resource is in place and it is now a case of determining and meeting demand.
  - The River Cole Valley is a green corridor that runs through the heart of the area and plays a significant role in improving health and wellbeing and putting into practice the Council's City of Nature ambition.
  - The need for green spaces and infrastructure in developments is recognised and conversations are being held to ensure that these considerations are included, and discussions are taking place with Birmingham Open Spaces Forum and Friends of Parks to reach as many people as possible.
  - The WMCA are looking at options to expand the West Midlands Cycle hire scheme in the future and currently there are no immediate plans for a further rollout.
  - Mediation is starting with Birmingham Wheels and the timeline for finding an alternative site is within 12 months. Redevelopment of the site formerly occupied by the organisation is currently underway.
  - Proposals for an alternative swimming facility in the Small Heath area are being looked at following the closure of Small Heath Wellbeing Centre post-Covid. No plans for future use of the centre have been made.
  - Senior representation on the East Birmingham board includes Councillors and representatives from the NHS and Children's Trust.
  - Recruitment is underway for the Programme team as the strategy has moved into the delivery phases with some projects now live.

- Relevant statistics and information from the work happening as part of the East Birmingham Project can be shared with the committee's Inquiry into Employment and Skills as required.

**RESOLVED:** -

1. The report was noted.
2. Mark Gamble to provide further information on affordable and social housing when this information is available and has been presented to the East Birmingham Board.
3. Doug Lee to provide further information to Cllr Morrall in relation to the Birmingham Wheels site.
4. Future update to be added to the work programme.

**9. OUR FUTURE CITY PLAN: SHAPING OUR CITY TOGETHER**

(see Item No. 9)

Simon Delahunty-Forrest, Assistant Director, Development made the following points as part of his presentation: -

- This document has been put together to help shape a framework to meet some of the key challenges in providing housing and jobs for the young and diverse growing population over the next 20 years.
- There are 2 key areas for consideration in shaping the city's future: -
  - *Route to Zero and transition to meet the low carbon target for the city by 2030.* This needs to be put in place to deliver for the city's communities ensuring that it is inclusive in approach for all. Technology will play a big part of this.
  - *Diversity has to be inclusive going forward.* The Council must look outward and replicate what's working well in the city centre to other parts of the city. A key aspect of this is providing more green spaces and putting in more pocket parks where possible and practical.
- Ensure that various parts of the city are celebrated for what happens there such as festivals and the eating offer.
- Creating 15-minute neighbourhoods with local centres going forward and creating the digital and physical infrastructure needed to allow this to happen if it is not already there.
- Working with partners including educational institutions to ensure that young people who come to the city to study make the city their home to live and work.
- Having a city centre park as part of the health and wellbeing agenda is something that has been highlighted and would make the city centre more of a destination outside of shopping. The Council would work with partners to deliver this.
- Other ideas and items of interest raised include the city hosting a film studio and work is ongoing with Homes England to create more homes to support new businesses opening in the city.

- There is a need to be more creative with our assets and build on those that are already here.

In discussion with Members the following points were made: -

- It is imperative that the city's workforce is matched up to future jobs and as highlighted in the previous item there is a need to tackle the high unemployment rate. Many industries are struggling to recruit staff and there is a need and opportunity for people to upskill and fill the gaps.
- Decision making must involve all communities and those that are hard to reach. Residents currently feel that decisions are made without their engagement or consultation.
- Work that has gone into improving the accessibility to the city centre especially around the Paradise area and New Street has been positive. However, there are many empty units and space that is not being utilised on the key corridor of New Street.
- Concern was shown that commercial and creative industries especially in the Digbeth and Jewellery Quarter areas are suffering economically as night-time venues are seeing fewer people visit. There are also more residential buildings being built and fewer commercial buildings available and this is having an impact on businesses with visitors choosing to go elsewhere. It was acknowledged that the nightlife was important for those that live in the area and work in these industries.
- Ensuring that people can access the city centre and surrounding areas via green infrastructure as some areas such as the A38, Jewellery Quarter and Colmore Row are not particularly accessible or easy to navigate if cycling for example. It was confirmed that interventions are being planned to tackle this and safety is paramount through a wider framework on streets and lighting levels across the city. Incidentally interventions such as improved street lighting levels were introduced when financial help from the government was received during the Covid-19 pandemic. Alternative and sustainable ways of travel are key drivers within this framework and other Council policies including walking and cycling.
- It was confirmed that about 19,000 affordable homes are expected to be built out of a total of 89,000 homes being constructed however it is anticipated that this number may shift. Although it was acknowledged that this number seemed quite low it was hoped that the Council's assets could be used in a savvier way to mitigate this.
- Focus of the work still seems to be city centre focussed and there is a need to regenerate and develop other areas of the city.
- It was clarified that working groups have been set up such as with partners to understand the needs and requirements of institutions and landowners. This includes sharing their strategies and plans with the Council. The Council is engaging and inviting people to tell us their needs.

The Chair thanked Simon for the presentation and a future update will be programmed.

**RESOLVED:** -

1. The report was noted.
2. Simon Delahunty-Forrest to provide Cllr Morrall with expected number of housing in the Digbeth area.
3. A further update to be added to the work programme.

## **10. WORK PROGRAMME**

(see Item No.10)

Cllr Suleman confirmed that the Co-Ordinating O&S Committee had agreed a brief outline of the Committee's proposed inquiry into Employment and Skills as a key piece of work highlighted by members at the informal meeting in June. The Chair outlined that it was important that the Inquiry kept a narrower focus on key areas where a difference can be made with good and achievable recommendations.

Fiona Bottrill, Senior Overview & Scrutiny Manager then outlined the next steps for the Inquiry to take shape. This includes scoping the key lines of enquiry and outcomes and will be based on priorities highlighted by members. It is anticipated that a draft Terms of Reference will be in place to be discussed at the September meeting.

Members then highlighted key areas that they would like covered as part of the Inquiry: -

- Ensuring that young disenfranchised people are being made aware of these opportunities through specific targeted outreach and marketing.
- Focus on equalities particularly young women and girls.
- There is a shortage of young people and those entering the construction industry and the city does lack skills in these areas. Also, important to note how many young people are taking up further study in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) courses.
- Important to invite those that the inquiry is focussing on for example young people to evidence gathering sessions to understand their experiences, barriers and what they would recommend/work for them.
- A Council's inclusion strategy has not yet been formed. It is worth noting that the Education & Children's Social Care O&S Committee are doing some work in this area and the findings from this inquiry needs to feed into this.
- Further details and statistics required on identifying adults without skills and qualifications.
- What more can the Council do to support careers programmes in schools to support young people better ensuring information on a host of careers and skills are being shared.
- Careers Service should also focus on highly specialised jobs requiring particular skills such as those required for HS2 and taking a short, medium- and long-term view. Currently there are several sources of funding however the application time can be time-consuming so it would be helpful if the Council could help with streamlining this.

Fiona Bottrill confirmed that future meetings during the autumn could be used as evidence gathering sessions as listed in the Committee's work programme. However,

there are options in how evidence is gathered with the possibility for a Task and Finish Group to be set up to ensure that certain issues are picked up and frees up space at Committee meetings for other items as appropriate.

**RESOLVED:** -

1. The report was noted.
2. Discussion to take place with Simon Delahunty-Forrest on timescales for an update on the work taking place in relation to the night-time economy as a key area of interest for the committee. An update will be scheduled onto the work programme accordingly.
3. Further to a discussion at the Co-Ordinating O&S Committee it was agreed that the Commonwealth Games, Culture & Physical Activity O&S Committee would lead work on the legacy of the Games and this committee can be invited to attend relevant meeting(s).
4. The Co-Ordinating O&S Committee also confirmed that due to a change of Committee remit the monitoring of recommendations made as part of the Council-Owned Assets Inquiry report would be taken forward by the Resources O&S Committee.
5. Fiona Bottrill to meet with the Chair and Deputy Chair to scope a Terms of Reference to be discussed at the September meeting.

**11. PROPOSED DATES OF MEETINGS 2022/23**

Agreed.

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

None.

**13. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

**14. AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS**

Agreed.

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The meeting ended at 12:10 hours