

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CO-ORDINATING O&S COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING

**1000 hours on Friday, 8th July 2022, Committee Room C, Council House
Extension, 6 Margaret Street, Birmingham, B3 3BG**

Action Notes

Present:

Councillor Albert Bore (Chair)

Councillors: Deidre Alden, Mick Brown, Jack Deakin, Roger Harmer, Mohammed Idrees, Kerry Jenkins, Chaman Lal, Ewan Mackey, Saima Suleman, Alex Yip

Also Present:

Christian Scade, Interim Head of Scrutiny and Committee Services

Fiona Bottrill, Senior Overview and Scrutiny Manager

Amelia Murray, Overview and Scrutiny Manager

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chair advised that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site (www.youtube.com/channel/UCT2kT7ZRPFCXq6_5dnVnYlw) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Cllr. Akhlaq Ahmed

3. APPOINTMENT OF CO-ORDINATING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE DEPUTY CHAIR

The Chair proposed Cllr. Kerry Jenkins as the Deputy Chair of the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This was seconded by Cllr. Lal.

RESOLVED:

Cllr. Kerry Jenkins elected as Deputy Chair for the purposes of substitution for the Chair, if absent for the period ending with Annual Meeting of Council in 2022

4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None declared.

5. ACTION NOTES

RESOLVED:

The action notes of the formal meeting held on 8th April 2022 were agreed.

6. SCRUTINY BUSINESS REPORT

The Chair presented the Scrutiny Business Report and advised that this was brought to Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to City Council on the 12th July. The report provided an overview on the priorities identified by each of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the informal meetings in June and an opportunity for members of the Committee to ask questions or raise any issues.

RESOLVED:

The Scrutiny Business Report was noted.

7. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

The Chair presented the Scrutiny Work Programme 2022/23 report which set out the work programme for the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the inquiry proposals that had been made at the informal meetings held during June.

The Chair referred to Appendix 1 which sets out the work programme for the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee and highlighted the agenda items for the September and October meetings. The Chair reported that the Everyone's Battle, Everyone's Business Action Plan will be brought to the September meeting as the Cabinet Member was not available to attend the July Committee meeting. The September meeting will also receive a report on Customer Services, building on the previous work of the Committee on Complaints. In particular, the Committee will review how this work has been embedded across the council and changed the way the Council delivers services and the outcomes for residents. The Chair has met with the relevant officer to confirm the scope of the report. A third report for this meeting will be on the Council's response to the to the cost-of-living crisis.

The October meeting will consider a report following the Inquiry on Exempt Accommodation focussing on the recommendations that will improve outcomes for residents. The Deputy Leader will attend the meeting to report on her portfolio priorities within the remit of the Committee including Levelling Up and the

Devolution Trail Blazer. It was recognised that the timescales for these areas of work are dependent on central government.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- It was noted that the review of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Procedures agreed at the previous meeting of the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee and has been included in the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme (to be scheduled).
- It was confirmed that the Committee work programmes have been based on the discussions at the informal meeting held in June. Members of the Scrutiny Team then met with the Chairs to further develop the work programmes what will be considered at the July meetings.
- Equalities will be integral to the work of all Scrutiny Committees. The Every One's Battle, Everyone's Business Action Plan will be considered at the September meeting of the Co-ordinating Overview and Committee which will set out the direction of this agenda across the Council. It was noted that other Committees have identified reports that focus on equalities in their work programmes, e.g. the BLACHIR report (Health and Social Care OSC) and Breaking Down the Barriers Report (Economy and Skills OSC).
- Poor communication between officers in different council services impacts on service delivery. The experience of members in following up ward issues is relevant to the customer services report in September e.g. lack of response or poor communication.
- The issue of climate change has not been specifically identified by other Overview and Scrutiny Committees and as a cross cutting issue could fit with the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Chair agreed to consider this proposal and report back to the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

The work programme attached as Appendix 1 was agreed.

The Chair set out the process to develop the proposals for scrutiny inquiries set out in Appendix 2. The role of the Co-ordinating Committee was to consider the proposals and identify the 4 inquiries that will be taken forward. The Chair invited the relevant committee chairs to put forward their proposal

Cllr. Jenkins explained why the Education and Children's Social Care Committee proposed the inquiry of child criminal exploitation (Appendix 2A). This also related to issues of County Lines and knife crime. Young people had become more isolated from services during the pandemic and criminals have exploited this targeting particularly vulnerable groups. The role of schools was identified as important responding to the increased risk for children and young people who have been excluded. It was highlighted that this inquiry would be a multi-agency approach. The

work of members to raise the importance of this issue was commended and it was discussed that recognised that a tight remit would need to be set as the issues are so interconnected there is a risk that a large piece of work becomes unmanageable.

Cllr. Suleman explained the proposal made by the Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee on skills funding and current / future employment opportunities (Appendix 2B). Birmingham's rate of unemployment has been persistently high and performs poorly when compared to other areas. Members want to ensure that the skills offer in Birmingham is meeting the needs of employers and would look at specific sectors e.g. construction. It was discussed that many construction roles are currently filled from workers outside Birmingham. There is an equality aspect to this work and the inquiry would consider the role of women in the construction industry. The Chair responded that employers' needs are not currently being met and that the rate of unemployment in the city is 3 times the national average. He highlighted the issue of funding for skills courses that are currently funded through European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) and European Social Fund (ESF) but will end once delivery is completed. Other points members made included:

- How people know what training and careers are available including alternatives to university.
- How does training help to break the cycle of unemployment and poverty and which organisations are responsible for scrutinising the effectiveness of training providers.
- Understanding the impact of programmes aiming to reduce unemployment – does this benefit the individuals and communities in Birmingham who require the greatest support rather than attracting a work force from outside the city.

Cllr. Brown set out the 3 proposals that the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee put forward. Appendix 2C was proposal for a joint inquiry with the Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the health and wellbeing legacy of the Commonwealth Games. He set out that benefits are broader than physical activity and include mental wellbeing, reducing social isolation and the longer-term impact of depression and dementia. Cllr Deakin highlighted that this linked with work the Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity Overview and Scrutiny Committee has identified regarding the digital asset map including cultural and physical activity assets.

Appendix 2D set out the proposal for a joint inquiry with the Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee on children and young people's mental health. It was recognised that the pandemic has had a huge impact on young people's mental health and the inquiry would identify where needs are and are not being met.

Appendix 2 F set out the proposal for the inquiry on why dementia is different for women. Research shows that women are disproportionately affected by dementia and the role of carers for people with dementia who suffer from anxiety and social isolation.

Cllr Idress presented the proposal from the Housing and Neighbourhood Overview and Scrutiny Committee on street cleansing. This is the issue that results in most complaints to the Council. The inquiry would include work with Housing Associations and social landlords to understand their work with tenants to ensure they carry out their responsibilities. The inquiry would also include work with estate agents that manage properties for landlords and understand best practice, learning from Keep Britain Tidy. It was clarified that this build on the discussions that the Committee had during the previous year about litter bins and this work could follow on from the proposed inquiry.

The Chair asked members to decide up to 4 inquiries to go forward. It was confirmed that there is capacity in the Scrutiny Team to support 4 inquiries at any one time. During the discussion the following points were made:

- Domestic abuse has not been identified as an issue for an inquiry and with one in three women experiencing domestic abuse and that nine out of ten cases do not go to trial this is an issue that should be considered. It was recognised that this would not be considered as an inquiry proposal but could be included in the work programme for the relevant Committee, potentially the Housing and Neighbourhood Overview and Scrutiny Committee as the committee with responsibility for scrutiny of the Community Safety Partnership or Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a cross cutting issue affecting children and families.
- The proposal for the Street Cleansing Inquiry overlaps with the work on Customer Services that will be undertaken by the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Street Cleansing Inquiry also links with localisation supporting local member and residents to work together to address issues e.g. litter picking and how this is valued.
- While 4 inquiries will be decided at this meeting, the inquiries not selected could be considered once capacity is available when inquiries are completed.

The Chair explained he wanted an open process to decide the 4 inquiries and asked for suggestions.

Cllr. Dakin proposed the following inquiries Child Exploitation (Appendix 2A) Commonwealth Games Legacy (Appendix 2C) Economy and Skills (Appendix 2B) and Dementia (Appendix 2E)

Members discussed the Cleaner Streets proposal further as an issue that is important to residents but that it will be included in the Customer Services work undertaken by the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Members also discussed the capacity in the Scrutiny Team and that when resources had been greater each Overview and Scrutiny Committee could choose its own inquiry without needing to put forward proposals to the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was confirmed that currently there are 8 officers supporting Overview and Scrutiny including 1 Manager for O&S and Committee Services, 2 Scrutiny Managers and 5 officers, however some of these work part time. Full details of the scrutiny team can be shared with the Committee. It was recognised that the

decision about the number of inquiries has to be based on the resources currently available and any proposal about additional resources could be put to City Council.

Cllr Yip proposed an amendment to the inquiries proposed by Cllr. Dakin to replace the inquiry on Dementia with the inquiry on children and young people's mental health.

This amended proposal was supported by the members of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

The inquiries to be undertaken were agreed as:

Commonwealth Games Health and Wellbeing Legacy: To be led by the Commonwealth Games, Culture and Physical Activity Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a joint inquiry with the Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Children and Young People's Mental Health: To be led by the Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a joint inquiry with the Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Skills and Employment: Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Child Exploitation: Education and Children's Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

There is no requirement for political balance on the inquiry task and finish groups. It was agreed that inquiry task and finish group membership will aim to be inclusive across political groups.

Recommendations 3.5 and 3.6 to be considered by the Chair following the meeting in consultation with officers

8. WORK PROGRAMMES DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that next meeting of the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be 9th September at 10.0am

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN / COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/ PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)

None.

10. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None

11. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

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 11.49 hours.