

# **BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

## **HOMES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY, 23 NOVEMBER 2023 AT 14:00 HOURS**  
**IN COMMITTEE ROOM 6, COUNCIL HOUSE, VICTORIA SQUARE,**  
**BIRMINGHAM, B1 1BB**

### **A G E N D A**

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

The Chair to advise/meeting to note that this meeting will be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Public-I microsite ([please click this link](#)) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there are confidential or exempt items.

#### **2 APOLOGIES**

To receive any apologies.

#### **3 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Members are reminded they must declare all relevant pecuniary and other registerable interests arising from any business to be discussed at this meeting.

If a disclosable pecuniary interest is declared a Member must not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless they have been granted a dispensation.

If other registerable interests are declared a Member may speak on the matter only if members of the public are allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless they have been granted a dispensation.

If it is a 'sensitive interest', Members do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that they have an interest.

Information on the Local Government Association's Model Councillor Code of Conduct is set out via <http://bit.ly/3WtGQnN>. This includes, at Appendix 1, an interests flowchart which provides a simple guide to declaring interests at meetings.

- 3 - 10**
- 4     **MINUTES**
- To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2023.
- 11 - 12**
- 5     **ACTION TRACKER**
- To note the action tracker.
- 6     **COMMISSIONER'S REVIEW AND COMMENTS ON THE AGENDA**
- To note there were no comments on the agenda from the Commissioner.
- 13 - 18**
- 7     **SCRUTINY OF DELIVERY OF 2023/24 BUDGET SAVINGS**
- To continue to scrutinise delivery of the 2023/24 budget savings.
- 19 - 30**
- 8     **WORK PROGRAMME**
- To consider the Committee's work programme and agree any updates/amendments.
- 9     **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**
- To note the date of the next meeting on Thursday 21 December at 1400 hours in Committee Room 6.
- 10    **REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)**
- To consider any request for call in/councillor call for action/petitions (if received).
- 11    **OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**
- To consider any items of business by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) that in the opinion of the Chair are matters of urgency.
- 12    **AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS**
- Chair to move:-
- 'In an urgent situation between meetings, the Chair jointly with the relevant Chief Officer has authority to act on behalf of the Committee'.

**BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL****HOMES O&S COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING**

**1400 hours on Thursday 19 October 2023, Committee Room 6, Council House**

**Minutes**

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**Present:**

Councillor Mohammed Idrees (Chair)

Councillors: Ziaul Islam, Rinkal Shergill, Penny Wagg and Ken Wood

**Also Present:**

Councillor Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness

Collette Campbell, Acting Strategic Lead, Supported Housing (Exempt)

Andrew Healey, Finance Business Partner, Housing

Stephen Philpott, Director, Housing Solutions and Support Service

Amelia Wiltshire, Overview and Scrutiny Manager

Jayne Bowles, Scrutiny Officer

**1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST**

The Chair advised that this meeting would 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 from Councillors Saqib Khan, Lauren Rainbow and Ron Storer.

**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 the following interests were declared:

Councillor Mohammed Idrees – owns a property which is privately let.

Councillor Ziaul Islam - owns a property which is private let.

Councillor Rinkal Shergill – owns a property which is privately let.

Councillor Ken Wood – owns a property which is privately let.

#### **4. MINUTES**

(See document No. 1)

##### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2023 were agreed.

#### **5. ACTION TRACKER**

(See document No. 2)

##### **RESOLVED:**

That the action tracker was noted.

#### **6. COMMISSIONER'S REVIEW AND COMMENTS ON THE AGENDA**

(See document No. 3)

The Chair informed the Committee that following the arrival of the Commissioners to Birmingham, all reports for Committees are sent to the Commissioners for comments before they are published. For this meeting comments had been received on the Budget Savings and Financial Recovery report and those comments would be picked up as part of that agenda item.

##### **RESOLVED:**

That the report was noted.

#### **7. SCRUTINY OF DELIVERY OF 2023/24 BUDGET SAVINGS AND UPDATE ON COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO SECTION 114 NOTICE AND FINANCIAL RECOVERY PLAN**

(See document No. 4)

Councillor Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, Andrew Healey, Finance Business Partner, Housing, and Stephen Philpott, Director, Housing Solutions and Support Service, were in attendance for this item.

The Cabinet Member passed on apologies from Paul Langford, Strategic Director, City Housing, who was unable to attend the meeting.

The Chair read out the Commissioner's comments and invited Andrew Healey and Stephen Philpott to present the report. In doing so, the following key points were highlighted:

- Appendix 1, the Quarter 1 2023/24 savings update for the entire City Council, showed that savings of £2.5m that were built into the budget last year were considered low risk, so on track with current actions for them to be delivered. Savings of £28.5m were amber risk, so some risk of the current plans not being achieved and £33.5m was considered red risk, so no workable plans or a

significant risk of those plans being derailed with no confirmed mitigations in place.

- Those figures were then built into the forecast to show that there was a problem with the red risk savings.
- Appendix 2 shows a more recent Quarter 2 update for City Housing and those parts of City Operations which fall within the remit of this Committee.
- There was a £0.5m saving against staffing, which was built in on the basis that there is always a level of vacancies due to time taken to recruit people, so against the budgeted establishment there should be some fallout saving. That saving is achieved.
- The £0.6m rated as amber relates to increased income from fees and charges in the directorate. It is considered amber as it is set against rent income and grant income. Rent income was set at a certain level at the beginning of the year and it cannot be assumed that grant income will come through. As income has come in through the year, that saving will be considered as delivered in the next update.
- The £5.5m relating to reducing/eradicating B&B accommodation, essentially half of the budget for Temporary Accommodation, is now considered undeliverable, so black, which is a new category.
- To provide some context, the £5.5m saving target was built on the B&B reduction plan and re-design for Housing Solutions and Support. That process, which had started in 2019, included investment in prevention work and also the Oscott Gardens temporary accommodation homeless centre. However, since then, homeless presentations and the need for temporary accommodation have risen dramatically, partly due to the impact of Covid but also the cost of living crisis.
- A new reduction plan for B&B had been agreed with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the target for reductions had been met in the last five months, however the service is two years behind where it wanted to be to deliver savings and it was accepted that the budget would need to be increased for a while before bringing it down again.

During the discussion, and in response to Members' questions, the main points included:

- Mitigations and further savings to reduce the gap were being explored with the Cabinet Member.
- With regard to staff savings, it was important to have the right level of staffing to deliver services and to look at other ways of doing things, including joining up services. The consideration of applications made under the Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme was also an ongoing process.
- In response to a query about Home Office placements, it was understood that there were around 3,000 people housed by the Home Office in Birmingham and a decision had been made to fast-track decisions on asylum seekers from seven different countries. The understanding was that approximately 975 households in Birmingham would receive fast-track decisions between August and December 2023.
- The majority of those decisions would be positive, meaning that those people would have asylum with recourse to public funds and be eligible for support. It

was believed the majority would be single people and it was likely there would be an upward pressure in supported exempt accommodation.

- In the case of families whose Home Office accommodation comes to an end, they would in all likelihood approach the local authority and in a large proportion of those cases, temporary accommodation would need to be found for those households.
- The current position with regard to rent collections was queried and it was confirmed that there were two elements – HRA rents and temporary accommodation, the former being dealt with through Revenues and Benefits and the latter dealt with within City Housing.
- The City Housing service was working closely with Revenues and Benefits colleagues to look at rent collection levels and it was agreed that figures would be provided to the Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

- That rent collection figures be provided to the Committee.
- That the report be noted.

**8. EXEMPT ACCOMMODATION INQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKING UPDATE**

(See document No. 5)

Councillor Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, and Collette Campbell, Acting Strategic Lead, Supported Housing (Exempt), were in attendance for this item.

The Cabinet Member introduced the report and highlighted the following key points:

- The Council was awarded £3.19m grant funding from the Supported Housing Improvement Programme (SHIP) for the period 2023/25, with the first year 2022/23 being funded by £1.9m from the Corporate Invest 2 Deliver Programme, of which £0.7m would be returned as an underspend.
- The underspend had been due to some problems recruiting to roles due to shortages within the employment market and the short-term nature of roles, as well as the delay in understanding budget spend because of the difficulties with Oracle.
- The SHIP funding will be spent as £1.62m for 2023/24 and £1.57m for 2024/25.
- The multi-disciplinary partnership team work extremely well to improve standards within the sector in terms of property, support and anti-social behaviour. The partnership activities and outcomes to date were listed in Appendix 1 and demonstrate the success of the SHIP in a current area of limited legislation.

The Acting Strategic Lead for Supported Housing referred to the tracking of the recommendations and made the following additional points:

- When the partnership was created in 2020, there were around 20,000 units in the city and that had now increased to just over 25,000, which equated to just under 9,000 properties.

- It was thought it would not be possible to inspect every property before the end of the term of this project in 2025, but in those that had been inspected there had been a noticeable improvement where standards had previously been poor.
- Some really good relationships had been established, particularly with the five main providers in the city, which had helped with the overall success of the partnership.
- The Council was a key stakeholder in ongoing consultation with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in relation to the Supported Housing Regulatory Oversight Act and that Act would introduce a licensing scheme.
- It was thought through that Act councils would be able to better manage and control standards.
- The Council, with the assistance of Birmingham Voluntary Service Council, had awarded 16 providers or managing agents with the Quality Standard Award and another 19 were awaiting assessments.
- A preferred provider list had been created, which was one of the recommendations of the partnership, and the Probation Service had also adopted a protocol as of July where they have stated they will only support cases going into supported accommodation where there is a local connection to Birmingham and where the provider had signed up to the Quality Standard.
- The Council has a right to buy restricted covenant policy which sets out the framework for the management of properties sold under the right to buy scheme where the accommodation was previously designated as a single private dwelling.
- Flats were also part of the policy but as they usually have a lease, there is not a covenant, however there is a restriction that that particular property would be used for a private residence.
- There was also scope within that policy to look at commercial properties leased or disposed of and adopt a protocol in respect of that provision.

During the discussion, and in response to Members' questions, the following were among the main points:

- The Committee welcomed the report and the good example of where cross-party pressure had resulted in Government funding.
- There were concerns raised regarding the underspend and handing funding back, however it was clarified that the underspend related to the Invest 2 Deliver programme and not the SHIP grant funding and the reasons for the underspend, as outlined by the Cabinet Member, were reiterated.
- The need to keep on top of inspections was emphasised and it was queried whether the Council ensures tenants know who they could contact regarding sub-standard properties.
- The Committee was informed that when multi-agency inspections are carried out notification letters are sent to providers and managing agents.
- Tenants were not always present during inspections, but where possible they do try to speak to tenants without the providers being present and social workers lead on that.
- Information is also left with tenants after inspections, so they know who to contact if there are any problems.

- There is a gateway process for new providers with an automatic inspection to look at all aspects of provision and feedback to the Benefit Service.

The Committee agreed with the Cabinet Member's assessments for each of the outstanding recommendations.

The standard reporting cycle of six months was discussed, however the Committee agreed that due to the current financial situation more regular updates would be scheduled, with the next one in three months' time.

**RESOLVED:**

- That the Cabinet Member's assessments for each of the outstanding recommendations were agreed.
- That the next tracking report would be scheduled for three months' time.
- That the report be noted.

**9. WORK PROGRAMME**

(See document No. 6)

It was agreed that the November and December meetings would be split into two parts, the first being a formal session to continue scrutiny of the in-year budget savings and recovery plan and the second part being informal for training for the Regulatory Compliance sessions and evidence-gathering for the Homes Standards Task and Finish inquiry. It was noted that additional sessions might also need to be provided to cover this.

**RESOLVED:**

That the work programme was agreed.

**10. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee noted the date of the next meeting on Thursday 23 November 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:**

That in an urgent situation between meetings, the Chair jointly with the relevant Chief Officer, has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

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The meeting ended at 1458 hours.



**HOMES O&S COMMITTEE  
ACTION TRACKER 2023/24**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Notes</b>
19 October 2023	Scrutiny of Delivery of 2023/24 Budget Savings and Update on Council's Response to Section 114 Notice and Financial Recovery Plan	HRA and Temporary Accommodation rent collection figures to be provided to the Committee.	
	Exempt Accommodation Inquiry Recommendations Tracking Update	Next tracking report to be scheduled for three months' time.	
21 September 2023	Financial Challenges – Scrutiny Contribution to the Budget Savings and Recovery Plan	Scrutiny of Delivery of 2023/24 Budget Savings to be a standing item on the Committee's agenda.	Work Programme updated.
	Regulatory Compliance	Committee agreed to engage in quarterly meetings specifically on the subject of Landlord Compliance.	Work Programme updated.
20 July 2023	Work Programme	Task & Finish Group to re-visit the Voids Terms of Reference	Task & Finish group established. Outline Terms of Reference for an inquiry on Improving Standards of Council Homes agreed at the September meeting.

**HOMES O&S COMMITTEE  
ACTION TRACKER 2023/24**

Date	Agenda Item	Action	Notes
		<p>Scrutiny Officers to seek clarification on the following matters raised on behalf of Cllr Wood:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Backlog of inspections</li> <li>• Contractor Performance</li> </ul>	<p>Backlog of inspections to be picked up as part of the Regulatory Compliance agenda item at the September meeting.</p> <p>The quarterly HLB performance reports will be shared with committee members – the Q1 2023/24 report was emailed on 13<sup>th</sup> September.</p>
22 June 2023	Developing the Homes O&S Committee's Work Programme 2023/24	City Housing management structure chart and responsibilities to be shared with Members.	Emailed to Members on 27 <sup>th</sup> June.

# Birmingham City Council

## Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23 November 2023



**Subject:** Scrutiny of Delivery of 2023/24 Budget Savings

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

**Report author:** Amelia Wiltshire, Overview and Scrutiny Manager  
 amelia.wiltshire@birmingham.gov.uk  
 07825 979253

### 1 Purpose

- 1.1 It was agreed at Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 September 2023 that all O&S Committees will continue to scrutinise the delivery of existing 2023/24 savings.
- 1.2 Appendix 1 sets out the red, amber, green (RAG) rated savings for 2023/24 by Committee progress on delivery of savings at Quarter 2.
- 1.3 This information (set out in 1.1 and 1.2) was initially presented to the Committee on 19 October 2023.
- 1.4 The purpose of this report is to continue to enable members to scrutinise the delivery of savings:
  - What was the rationale for each of the identified savings' areas?
  - What progress has been made towards achieving the medium-risk and high-risk savings?
  - What alternatives are being considered for savings classified as Potential Write Off at Quarter 2?
- 1.5 Members are asked to note that a Task and Finish Group has been established by Co-ordinating OSC and led by Finance and Resources OSC. It will look at budget and savings across the council in further detail.

### 2 Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Notes the information set out in the appendices and the updates provided by officers in relation to in year savings including those issues set out in 1.4 above.

- 2.2 Identifies future issues regarding delivery of 2023/24 savings within the remit of the Committee's terms of reference (outlined in the [Council's Constitution, Part B, section 11.5](#)) and agrees any comments.

### **3 Any Finance Implications**

- 3.1 Following the review of the savings, if these are deemed deliverable then this will help reduce the budget gap from 2023/24 onwards. If these are deemed unachievable then alternative saving ideas/options will need to be put forward to reduce the council's budget gap from 2023/24 onwards.

### **4 Any Legal Implications**

- 4.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report, however the Task and Finish Group led by Finance and Resources may require legal advice and support on specific issues as its work progresses.

### **5 Any Equalities Implications**

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 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; Whether any positive opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and/or good relations between people are being realised.
- 5.4 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.

## **6 Appendices**

### **6.1 Appendix 1: Update on Delivery of 2023/24 Savings During Q2 O&S Committee**

## **Appendix 1: Homes OS Committee - 23/24 Savings Position as at Q2**

### **Summary**

This report updates Homes OSC on the progress in delivering the 23/24 savings agreed in the MTFS 2023/26 that fall under this committee portfolio.

An extensive review process has been undertaken between Q1 and Q2 and the position reported below is as at Q2 (End of September 23).

### **Background**

There are three specific areas of savings in 23/24 totalling £6.594m that fall under the committee portfolio and these are listed below on page 2.

Each area has been risk rated to indicate the current level of confidence in achieving each savings target either in-year during 23/24 or over the longer term MTFS period 2023/26. Page 3 of this appendix explains the risk rating criteria.

### **Quarter 2 Position**

Of the £6.594m total £0.502m is green, £0.592m is Amber and £5.500m is Black for 23/24.

The £0.592m due from additional fees & charges income is currently rated Amber denoting Medium Risk due to the lack of monitoring information available through Oracle. However, increases to fees & charges agreed by full Council have been implemented and there is some confidence that most if not all of the target will be achieved in year. Performance against income targets will be monitored throughout the year to ensure the full savings targets are achieved before the risk rating is changed.

The £5.500m rated Black and will not be realised this year relates to savings from Reducing/ Eradicating expenditure on B&B Accommodation. Reasons for this is included below on page 2.

### List of 23/24 Savings Projects & RAG status as at Q2

Directorate	OSC Portfolio	Summary Description	Delivery Risk In-Year  2023/24 (Saving) £'000	Delivery Risk Over MTFS  (Saving) £'000
City Housing	Homes OSC	3% Turnover factor (Vacancy management)	(502)	(502)
City Housing	Homes OSC	Fees & Charges 5%	(592)	(592)
City Housing	Homes OSC	Reducing / Eradicating B&B Accommodation	(5,500)	(5,500)

### Narrative for 23/24 in-year Non-Delivery

#### Homes OSC

Dir	Summary Description	2023/24 (Saving) £'000	Explanation
City Housing	Reducing / Eradicating B&B Accommodation	(5,500)	Deferred to 2024/25, reinstated the £5.4m back in the 23/24 budget. Since target set, following pandemic and 45% increase in homeless assessments over 3 years and increasing evictions from PRS and additional demands from Home Office decisions/placements into Birmingham. Opening of Oscott Gardens and circa 50% prevention outcomes, stabilised but didn't reduce numbers in B&B. Currently met B&B reduction target (agreed with DLUHC for April - August 2023, with target of 0 over 6 weeks with dependents in B&B by July 2024. Costs across TA provision have risen, rent and service charge setting for 2024-25 will seek to reflect some of this.

### Caveats:

- Many targets fit into multiple O&S portfolio, such as Fees & Charges, vacancy factor, thus for simplicity we have allocated to the O&S Committee where most of the target is more likely to fall.
- Some services also fall into more than one O&S portfolio – we have allocated the full target for these to the committee of higher alignment rather than split amounts.
- The total savings that need to be delivered in the 23/24 financial year may increase. Finance is currently working to close the 22/23 financial year accounts – this includes final assessment of savings delivery for the last financial year. Any further undelivered savings in 22/23 will need to be brought forward and found in 23/24 thereby increasing the overall target for 23/24.

### Criteria for determining the RAG status of savings

Assessment Criteria	Delivered	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk	Potential Write-Off
<b>Savings RAG</b>	Saving or income realised and evidence provided that costs have been reduced or income increased.	Saving or income detail documented and robust plan in place to deliver agreed targets, showing when and who is responsible. - and / or - Saving / income will be delivered within agreed timeframes.	Saving or income lacks some clarity and / or not detailed at an adequately granular level, or at risk, <b>but agreed plan in place to resolve and being actively managed.</b> - and / or - Some risk of not delivering saving within agreed timeframe, leading to cost of slippage.	Limited confidence in agreed saving / income being delivered - and / or - Saving / income unclear and / or not specified at adequate granular level. - and / or - Inadequate plan / no plan agreed. - and / or - <i>Saving not yet agreed by Directorate / Service Manager</i> - and / or - Major risk of not delivering saving / income within agreed timeframe, leading to cost of slippage.	Agreed saving cannot be delivered. - and / or - Alternative saving options to be identified. - and / or - CLT should consider writing off the agreed saving.
Headcount Example	Officer has departed, budget has been reduced and posts have been deleted from the approved establishment.	Timescales and the specific posts to be vacated / deleted have been agreed.	Budget Manager has confirmed that posts (to agreed value and timing) will be vacated and deleted from budget.	Headcount saving proposed, but no clarity RE timescales/ posts.	Headcount reduction is considered unachievable.

# Birmingham City Council

## Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23 November 2023



**Subject:** Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme

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

**Report author:** Amelia Wiltshire, Overview and Scrutiny Manager  
[amelia.wiltshire@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:amelia.wiltshire@birmingham.gov.uk)  
 07825 979253

### 1 Purpose

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposed work programme for the Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2023-24, based on the Committee's meeting to date. 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 in December 2023 and January 2024, 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.

### ***Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee***

The Committee's Terms of Reference is to fulfil its functions as they relate to any policies, services and activities concerning:

- Council Housing management services, repairs and maintenance programmes.
- Best use of housing stock across all housing providers.
- Neighbourhood management initiatives and the housing growth agenda (Birmingham Social Housing Partnership).
- Private rented sector, licensing and regulation.
- Tenancy engagement in the management and development of social housing and Housing Liaison Boards.

- Exempt accommodation.
- Housing Options for vulnerable adults, children, young people and offenders.
- Temporary accommodation provision.
- Homelessness and rough sleeping.
- Supply of homes to meet housing need.

3.9 The Committee is chaired by Cllr Mohammed Idrees, and its membership comprises Cllrs Ziaul Islam, Saqib Khan, Lauren Rainbow, Rinkal Shergill, Ron Storer, Penny Wagg and Ken Wood.

#### **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](#) 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
010770/2023	Housing Revenue Account Business Plan	12 Dec 23
011496/2023	Building Birmingham: Procurement Strategy for Housing Developments for Various Sites	12 Dec 23
010625/2023	Bromford Housing Development, Open Space Improvement, Procurement Strategy and revised FBC	16 Jan 24
011849/2023	Housing Repairs and Maintenance Contract Extension	16 Jan 24
012053/2024	City Housing Compensation Policy	13 Feb 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.
- 4.5 The work programme, as set out in Appendix 1, also cross references the work of the Committee with the Council's Corporate Priorities 2022-26. During the period June – April 2023, the work of this Committee will contribute to 4 Corporate Priorities.

## **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: Work Programme 2023-24 – November

## **9 Background Papers**

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

## Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023/24

Month	Item/Topic	Aims and Objectives	Scrutiny Method	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer	Other Witnesses	Additional Information and Outcome*
July	Voids – Improving Standards  <b>Corporate Priority: 11</b>	To be confirmed by Task and Finish Group	Task and Finish Group meetings	Director, Housing Management – Stephen Gabriel		<p>The Housing and Neighbourhoods O&amp;S Committee in 2022-23 agreed to review Voids – Improving Standards. A <a href="#">Terms of Reference</a> was approved in February 2023, and the <a href="#">Council's City Housing service presented</a> in March 2023. Committee members also took part in visits to City Housing void properties. The intention had been to continue into 2023-24.</p> <p>As there is now a dedicated Homes O&amp;S Committee for 2023-24, the scope of these Terms of Reference will be reviewed at the first Task and Finish Group meeting.</p>
September	Social Housing Regulation Bill  <b>Corporate Priority: 11</b>	<p>Provide information on what the Social Housing Regulation Bill means for the Council's City Housing service.</p> <p>Understand how City Housing will achieve compliance with the Social Housing Regulation Bill, and preparation for inspection from the Regulator for Social Housing in April 2024</p>	<p>Committee meeting - single item: 21 September 2023, 2pm.</p> <p>Venue: Room 6, Council House</p>	Head of Service, Strategic Enabling – Naomi Morris		<p>This Bill intends to deliver the reforms outlined in <a href="#">the Social Housing White Paper</a> and address the concerns following the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017. It will introduce a stronger and more proactive regulatory regime to improve standards and accountability for landlords for the services they provide.</p>

Month	Item/Topic	Aims and Objectives	Scrutiny Method	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer	Other Witnesses	Additional Information and Outcome*
		Consider how Member insight can inform and drive improved services	<b>Deadline for Papers: 12 September 2023</b>			The agenda item will also outline progress toward inspections following the Regulatory Notice in May 2023.  <b>Outcome:</b> Approved quarterly compliance meetings
September	Housing Ombudsman – Paragraph 49  <b>Corporate Priority: 11</b>	Outline the background to, and the key recommendations from, the Housing Ombudsman special report on Birmingham City Council  Provide information on the progress made towards delivering on the recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman, Paragraph 49 report.  Consider how Member insight can inform and drive improved services	Committee meeting - single item: 21 September 2023, 2pm.  Venue: Room 6, Council House  <b>Deadline for Papers: 12 September 2023</b>	Head of Service, Strategic Enabling – Naomi Morris		In January, the Housing Ombudsman published a <a href="#">special report</a> on Birmingham City Council. The report made recommendations relating to repair handling; complaint handling; record keeping and compensation policy.  <b>Outcome:</b> Approved quarterly compliance meetings
September	Scrutiny Contribution to Budget Savings and Recovery Plan	For the Committee to consider a report on current and future Budget Savings and Recovery Plans and implications for Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Committee meeting - single item: 21 September 2023, 2pm.  Venue: Room 6, Council House	Cllr Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness	Paul Langford, Strategic Director, City Housing	It was agreed at Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July that all Scrutiny Committees will consider the implications of the Medium-Term Financial Plan at the September Committee meetings.

Month	Item/Topic	Aims and Objectives	Scrutiny Method	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer	Other Witnesses	Additional Information and Outcome*
			<b>Deadline for Papers: 12 September 2023</b>			
October	Exempt Accommodation  <b>Corporate Priority: 9, 10 and 11</b>	Provide update on progress of outstanding recommendations from Exempt Accommodation inquiry.  Consider the impact of the recommendations from the Inquiry	Committee meeting - single item: 19 October 2023, 2pm.  Venue: Room 6, Council House  <b>Deadline for Papers: 10 October 2023</b>	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, Cllr Jayne Francis  Assistant Director, Housing Strategy and Enabling – Guy Chaundy		<a href="#">Exempt Accommodation Inquiry, 2021</a>  <a href="#">Latest update to Co-ordinating O&amp;S Committee</a> (March 2023)
October	Scrutiny of Delivery of 2023/24 Budget Savings and Update on Council's Response to Section 114 Notice and Financial Recovery Plan	Continue to scrutinise the existing 2023/24 savings.  Consider the implications of recent events on the Committee's work programme.	Committee meeting – standing item: 19 October 2023, 2pm  Venue: Room 6, Council House  <b>Deadline for Papers: 10 October 2023</b>	Interim Strategic Director, City Housing - Paul Langford	TBC	Co-ordinating O&S Committee on 15.09.23 agreed that all committees should have a standing item on the delivery of existing savings for 2023/24 particular to the remit of the Committee.
November	Scrutiny of Delivery of 2023/24 Budget Savings and	Continue to scrutinise the existing 2023/24 savings.	Committee meeting – standing item: 23 November 2023, 2pm	Strategic Director, City Housing - Paul Langford		

Month	Item/Topic	Aims and Objectives	Scrutiny Method	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer	Other Witnesses	Additional Information and Outcome*
	Update on Council's Response to Section 114 Notice and Financial Recovery Plan	Consider the implications of recent events on the Committee's work programme.	Venue: Room 6, Council House  <b>Deadline for Papers: 9 November 2023</b>			
November	Regulatory Compliance  <b>Corporate Priority: 11 and 12</b>	Provide Committee members with skills and knowledge to prepare for, and engage with, the first Regulatory Compliance session in January.	Other – Training session	Head of Strategic Enabling – Naomi Morris		This is a training session to be delivered by Campbell Tickell as part of their existing work with Birmingham City Council. This session will not be livestreamed.
December		To be confirmed				
January	Regulatory Compliance  <b>Corporate Priority: 11 and 12</b>	Provide oversight, scrutiny and productive challenge to City Housing while moving towards compliance with the requirements under the Social Housing Regulation Bill and the recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman special report.	Committee meeting – single theme: 25 January 2023, 2pm  Venue: Room 6, Council House  Deadline for Papers: 16 January 2023	Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, Cllr Jayne Francis  Interim Strategic Director, City Housing – Paul Langford		Following agreement in September 2023 to hold quarterly landlord compliance meetings, the cycle of meetings will commence in January 2023. This will enable Members of the Committee to receive bespoke training in advance of this first session.
February		To be confirmed				
March		To be confirmed				
April	Regulatory Compliance	Provide oversight, scrutiny and productive challenge to City Housing while moving towards	Committee meeting – single	Cabinet Member for Housing and		Following agreement in September 2023 to hold quarterly landlord compliance meetings, the cycle of

Month	Item/Topic	Aims and Objectives	Scrutiny Method	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer	Other Witnesses	Additional Information and Outcome*
	<b>Corporate Priority:</b> 11 and 12	compliance with the requirements under the Social Housing Regulation Bill and the recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman special report.	theme: 18 April 2023, 2pm  Venue: Room 6, Council House  Deadline for Papers: 9 April 2023	Homelessness, Cllr Jayne Francis  Interim Strategic Director, City Housing – Paul Langford		meetings will commence in January 2023. This will be the second time that this item will take place.

\*Outcome: This will be populated once the item/topic has been completed. It will highlight the added value and impact.

### Menu of Options for Future Consideration

The following items had been identified as potential topics for future consideration. This approach enables the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to remain flexible and respond in a timely manner to emerging issues.

This is a live work programme work programme. New items may be added, or items removed during the course of the year. Proposed aims and objectives as well as scrutiny methodology may also be subject to change.

Item/ Topic	Proposed Aims and Objectives	Proposed Scrutiny Method	Additional Information
Affordable Housing	This will be confirmed following further discussions by the O&S Committee	This will be confirmed following further discussions by the O&S Committee	This will be confirmed following further discussions by the O&S Committee. However, there is a proposal for a single agenda item discussion at Committee. This will provide the Committee with a more detailed understanding of the strategy for Affordable Housing, with a view to identify areas for scrutiny to explore, if appropriate.

Item/ Topic	Proposed Aims and Objectives	Proposed Scrutiny Method	Additional Information
Customer Services – Housing Repairs	To be confirmed following July's Co-ordinating O&S Committee. Currently: Monitor the progress and impact of the recommendations from the Customers Services O&S programme	To be confirmed	Co-ordinating O&S Committee convened Task and Finish groups to identify, and monitor progress of, recommendations to improve customer services in 4 areas including Housing Repairs.  A final Task and Finish group took place on 14 June 2023, and a report presented to Co-ordinating O&S in July. It was agreed that Homes O&S Committee takes forward this work for Housing Repairs in the future.
Tenant Engagement	This will be confirmed following further discussions by the O&S Committee.	This will be confirmed following further discussions by the O&S Committee	This will be confirmed following further discussions by the O&S Committee.

### Scrutiny Method Options:

Committee meeting - single item

Committee meeting - single theme

Task and Finish Group (outline number of meetings)

On location

Other - (describe)

### Corporate Priorities, Performance and Outcomes

#### Corporate Priorities 2022 – 26:

1 Support inclusive economic growth

11 Increase affordable, safe, green housing

- |                                                              |                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 Tackle unemployment                                        | 12 Tackle homelessness                                            |
| 3 Attract inward investment and infrastructure               | 13 Tackle health inequalities                                     |
| 4 Maximise the benefits of the Commonwealth Games            | 14 Encourage and enable physical activity and healthy living      |
| 5 Tackle poverty and inequalities                            | 15 Champion mental health                                         |
| 6 Empower citizens and enable citizen voice                  | 16 Improve outcomes for adults with disabilities and older people |
| 7 Promote and champion diversity, civic pride and culture    | 17 Improve street cleanliness                                     |
| 8 Support and enable all children and young people to thrive | 18 Improve air quality                                            |
| 9 Make the city safer                                        | 19 Continue on the Route to Zero                                  |
| 10 Protect and safeguard vulnerable citizens                 | 20 Be a City of Nature                                            |
|                                                              | 21 Delivering a Bold Best in Class Council                        |

Information on the Corporate Priorities, Performance and City Outcomes was reported to the Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee OSC in June 2023:  
[Decision Details: Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023/24 \(15.00 - 15.45\) \(cmis.uk.com\)](#)