

Birmingham City Council

Report to City Council

16 September 2025



Title:	SCRUTINY BUSINESS REPORT
Lead Member:	Councillor Sir Albert Bore
Relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee:	Not Applicable
Has this report been shared with the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair?	Not Applicable
Report Author:	Fiona Bottrill, Senior Overview and Scrutiny Manager Legal and Governance fiona.bottrill@birmingham.gov.uk
Authorised by:	Rob Connelly, Deputy Monitoring Officer
Is this a Key Decision?	Not Applicable
Reason(s) why not included on the Forward Plan and confirm who has authorised it to be considered:	Not Applicable
Is this a Late Report?	No
Reason(s) why Late and confirm who has authorised it to be considered:	Not Applicable
Is this decision eligible for 'call in'?	Not Applicable
If 'call-in' has been dis-applied, please provide reason(s) and confirm who has authorised:	Not Applicable
Wards:	Not Applicable
Does this report contain exempt or confidential information?	No

Has this decision been included on the Notification of Intention to consider Matters in Private? Not Applicable

Reasons why not included on the Notification and confirm who has authorised it to be considered: Not Applicable

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update City Council on the work of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and how this contributes to the Council's improvement journey and delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan. This includes the work of the seven Overview and Scrutiny Committees, two Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel since April 2025 and identifying the priorities for 2025/26 that include:

- Developing an Executive / Scrutiny Protocol
- Improving monitoring implementation of Scrutiny recommendations and outcomes
- Implementation of the Scrutiny Information Hub to provide timely information on performance, delivery and risk to inform Scrutiny Committee work programmes
- Ensuring work of Overview and Scrutiny Committees adds value through a balanced work programme including policy development, pre-decision scrutiny, Call-In, and scrutiny of policy implementation.

1.2 It has been 25 years since the introduction of local government scrutiny. This report reflects on some of the issues that Scrutiny in Birmingham has addressed during this time and how the development of the Executive / Scrutiny Protocol will support the role of Overview and Scrutiny going forward.

2 COMMISSIONERS' REVIEW

2.1 Commissioners have no observations in relation to this report.

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 That City Council note the report.

4 KEY INFORMATION

Context

4.1 During 2024/25, work was undertaken to deliver the Overview and Scrutiny Development Plan. An update report was provided to Corporate and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 May 2025 which confirmed the following priorities for scrutiny:

- Issues relating to Improvement and Recovery Plan Priorities (this is now included in the Corporate Plan 2025-2028)
- Statutory scrutiny functions relating to external organisations e.g. Health Scrutiny, Crime and Disorder Scrutiny, Scrutiny of Education matters. Scrutiny of key strategic partners, plans and strategies e.g. Birmingham Children's Trust, Youth Justice Plan, West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Annual Report.

- Issues identified by O&S Committee Information Working Groups based on corporate risk, performance and delivery information.
- Pre-Decision Scrutiny of the budget and Executive decisions and policy development.
- Safe and effective key services for vulnerable people including Annual Reports of Children and Adult Safeguarding Partnerships.
- Monitoring the implementation of Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendations.
- Issues agreed with the Executive where Scrutiny can add value by undertaking task and finish group work.
- Issues referred to Scrutiny for consideration under the Audit / Scrutiny Memorandum of Understanding.
- Issues referred by City Council.

Scrutiny Highlights 2000 - 2025

- 4.2 July this year marked 25 years since the Local Government Act 2000 gained Royal Assent bringing in the Leader / Cabinet system and the requirement for overview and scrutiny. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny will be marking this significant event later in the year and it is an opportunity to reflect on the work of overview and scrutiny during this period. The case studies below set out work carried out in Birmingham that has been recognised nationally highlighting the award winning inquiries and where work has informed national policy and legislation:
- 4.3 The Children and Education OSC undertook its [Scrutiny Review: Education on Relationships and Sexual Health](#) in 2009. The original idea for the review came from the young people who were members of the scrutiny committee. They felt that young people did not always receive the highest quality Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) within their schools, and they wanted to see how this could be improved.
- 4.4 This piece of work gained national recognition for involving young people, other groups including the faith communities, young parents and the voluntary sector by winning the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) Good Scrutiny Award for 'Community Engagement'. The award judges strongly felt that the involvement of young people in the planning and delivery of the project was a key factor in its success. In addition, a leaflet was developed that shared the findings of the review and this is available [here](#).
- 4.5 The Health & Social Care OSC's [Living Life to the Full With Dementia Scrutiny Inquiry](#) won the Good Scrutiny Awards in 2015 for 'Involvement'. This Inquiry was undertaken at the suggestion of the Service Director for Health and Wellbeing, and the impact includes: working towards making Birmingham a dementia-friendly city beginning at the district level by ensuring the public services reflect the needs of people with dementia, expenditure on dementia service being reprioritised towards early assessment and interventions, Birmingham GPs would identify vulnerable patients and make referrals to the West Midlands Fire Service

for their homes to receive a fire safety check, and increased information and awareness about dementia within the community.

- 4.6 The Education and Vulnerable Children OSC's [We Need to Get it Right Health Check in Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation \(CSE\) Scrutiny Inquiry](#) won the Good Scrutiny Awards in 2015 for 'Raising the Profile'. The impact includes the Inquiry succeeding in raising awareness of CSE with both practitioners and communities, putting forward a wide range of recommendations across the Council, Community and other key partners to improve training and resources concerning CSE, an agreement was obtained by partners to be named as 'responsible parties' regarding the issues, a DVD and resource pack for schools was launched, and the CSE strategy was redrafted.
- 4.7 The [Exempt Accommodation Scrutiny Inquiry](#) reported to City Council in December 2021 and was an important piece of work that raised the profile of the issue in the city and nationally. The report informed the evidence that was presented to the Government's national inquiry on exempt accommodation and subsequently the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 received royal assent in August 2023. The Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee has continued to monitor the implementation of the inquiry recommendations to understand the ongoing impact of this work.

Developing an Executive Scrutiny Protocol

- 4.8 In order to continue to develop Overview and Scrutiny at the Council it was agreed at the Governance Board held in June 2025 that an Executive / Scrutiny Protocol will be developed that will reset the Council's political and organisational culture, ensuring a 'parity of esteem' between the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny. The protocol will contribute to demonstrating how the Council is delivering the Improvement and Recovery Priority to 'foster a better performing organisation with stronger governance'. The draft protocol will be considered by the Governance Board in September and will go to Corporate and Finance OSC on 26 September and to Cabinet for endorsement. The Protocol will then go to the Governance Board to consider the wider governance arrangements.

Demonstrating Outcomes: Corporate Plan Priorities 2025

- 4.9 The Council's Corporate Plan 2025-2028 was agreed at Cabinet on 3 June 2025. In planning the work programmes Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) have considered how they can contribute to the delivery of the Corporate Priorities as set out below:

Growth and Prosperity: Birmingham is a vibrant and inclusive City

- 4.10 The Economy, Skills and Culture OSC carried out pre-decision scrutiny on the Cultural Compact Strategy 2025-35 and made nine recommendations that were considered as part of the Cabinet report on 24 June 2025. The Committee's recommendations included use of Section 106 and Community Infrastructure

Levy in supporting future arts and cultural activities, engagement with the City's education sector to deliver more arts and culture in support of its educational aims and recommending a joined up approach with the Council's asset disposal programme and under-utilisation of the Council's cultural assets.

Knowledge and Opportunity: Birmingham is a City where every person can learn and develop the skills they need to thrive

- 4.11 The Education, Children and Young People's OSC held a workshop to consider school attainment and improvement on 14 May 2025. The Committee explored how it could add value and how local ward councillors could assist as part of their role of being community leaders.

Safety and sustainability: Birmingham is a safe, clean and green place to live

- 4.12 The Homes OSC continues to consider the progress on Regulatory Compliance including compliance with the Consumer Standards, the reporting provided to the Regulator of Social Housing and the position on Disrepair and Litigation.
- 4.13 The Education, Children and Young People OSC held a pre-decision workshop on 23 July 2025 with the Health and Adult Social Care OSC and commented on the draft youth strategy and consultation plans.
- 4.14 The Education, Children and Young People OSC on 8 August 2025 considered the call-in request for the Cabinet decision made on 22 July 2025 for the Youth Service Redesign – Estate.
- 4.15 The Neighbourhoods OSC received a report on the Review of Parks and Green spaces at the Committee meeting on 14 May 2025. The report included delivery of savings, the new operating model, strategic governance, finance, capital projects, service improvement project update and the Nursery Reduction Programme.
- 4.16 The Neighbourhoods OSC visited the City Operations Hub on 14 May 2025 to see the CCTV operation control room, learn about the transformation plans, and discuss how the Committee and Ward Members can help shape this transformation.
- 4.17 The Neighbourhoods OSC received a short statement from the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport at the meeting on 16 July 2025 on the Leader's statement regarding the Waste Service industrial action and future arrangements for scrutiny involvement in the Waste Transformation Programme.
- 4.18 The Neighbourhoods OSC held a training session on 18 June 2025 to ensure the Committee will fulfil its role as the designated Crime and Disorder Committee to scrutinise the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and ensure it fulfils its statutory duties.
- 4.19 The Neighbourhoods OSC considered a Request for Call-In at the Committee meeting on 2 June on the Cabinet decision taken on 13 May 2025 on the

Outcome from Informal Consultations on Proposed Parking Charges in Parks and Proposal to Progress Formal Traffic Regulation Orders (Off Street Parking Places Orders). The decision was not referred to Cabinet for reconsideration and the Committee agreed a letter should be sent to the Cabinet Member setting out the points raised by the Committee so that these could be taken into consideration in the implementation of the decision. The issues identified included: improved consultation on service re-designs, assurance regarding the Equality Impact Assessment as the project progresses and requested information on the phasing of parking charges.

Health, Equity and Inclusion: Birmingham is a place where everyone can live, work and age well

- 4.20 The Neighbourhoods OSC received a report on 14 May 2025 on the Implementation plan for the delivery of the Early Intervention and Prevention Transformation of Libraries and Neighbourhood and Advice and Information Services including an update on the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee as part of the pre-decision scrutiny of the Cabinet decision. A further update was provided on the draft engagement plan at an informal meeting on 16 July 2025, in line with the recommendations made by the Committee in February 2025.
- 4.21 The Birmingham and Sandwell Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered reports from the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board (ICB) at the meeting on 16 July 2025 on Performance and Finance, the ICB Model Update in line with the NHS 10 year plan and also an update report on Birmingham & Solihull ICB's Urgent Treatment Care Review.
- 4.22 The Health and Adult Social Care OSC carried out pre-decision scrutiny on Care Centres at an informal meeting on 31 July 2025. The Committee agreed 10 recommendations that will be considered as part of the Cabinet report.

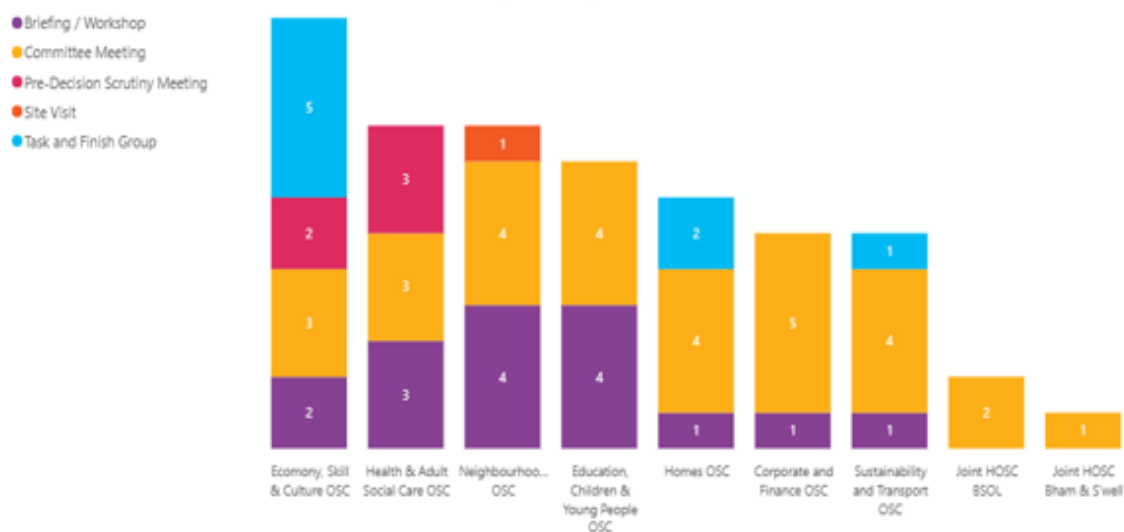
Connected Birmingham: Birmingham is a well-connected City

- 4.23 The Sustainability and Transport OSC considered reports on the HS2 Transport Delivery Programme and the Transport for West Midlands Schemes: Camphill Line Stations in South Birmingham, Metro in Birmingham, Sprint and Cross City Bus Programme at the meeting on 17 April 2025.
- 4.24 The West Midlands Mayoral Commissioners for Active Travel and Road Safety and the West Midlands Police attended the committee meeting on 15 May 2025 to provide an update on their work to inform the future work of the Committee on Road Safety and Active Travel. Update reports on the Road Safety and Active Travel Inquiries were reported to the committee meetings in June and July 2025.

Improvement and Recovery: Birmingham City Council is financially sustainable and operates effectively as a smaller, leaner and more efficient Council.

- 4.25 During March and April each OSC received reports on the delivery of savings and IRP programmes within the Committees Terms of reference.
- 4.26 The Lead Commissioner attended the Corporate and Finance OSC meeting on 29 April 2025 to discuss the Commissioners' Second Report to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.
- 4.27 The Corporate and Finance OSC considered the request for Call-In of the Planned Procurement Activities Report to Cabinet Report on the Professional Services Residential Property Acquisition Programme (PAP) Phase 2 at the committee meeting on 19 May 2025. The decision was referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration on the basis that there was a substantial lack of clarity, material inaccuracy or insufficient information provided in the report to allow the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to hold the Executive to account and/or add value to the work of the Council. The report was reconsidered by Cabinet on 24 June 2025 providing a response setting out the information requested, and Cabinet approved the decision to proceed.
- 4.28 Corporate and Finance OSC at the committee meeting on 2 May 2025 agreed that each Overview and Scrutiny Committee will establish an Information Working Group to consider the performance, delivery and risk information that is relevant to the Committee's terms of reference to inform the Committee's work programme.
- 4.29 Economy and Skills OSC received an update report at the meeting on 7 May 2025 on the Corporate Landlord Programme, including community facing assets that have been recommended as surplus and approved for disposal, having responded to community interest and opportunity to transfer on standard terms to appropriate community Groups.
- 4.30 The Economy and Skills OSC reported to City Council on 8 July 2025 on the scrutiny inquiry on Attracting and Retaining a Younger Workforce. The Inquiry made 11 recommendations, and the committee will receive a report on the implementation of the recommendations in October 2025.
- 4.31 The Corporate and Finance OSC considered the Financial Outturn 2024/25, Capital Governance, the 2026/27 General Fund Medium Terms Financial Plan Refresh Update to Cabinet at Quarter 1 of the 2025/26 Financial Year, and the Quarter One Financial Monitoring Report – General Fund budget, Housing Revenue Account Budget, Dedicated Schools Grant Budget and the Capital Programme on 25 July. These reports will support the committee's continued work on the development of the Medium Term Financial Plan and the 2026/27 Budget proposals.
- 4.32 Between April and September 2025, the Overview and Scrutiny Committees held 61 meetings. The charts below illustrate the range of methods that OSCs have used to undertake their work:

Chart 1: Scrutiny Method by Overview and Scrutiny Committee
April – September 2025



From: Scrutiny Dashboard developed with City Observatory (Information correct as of 19 March 2025)

Note: Where a committee carried out pre-decision scrutiny at a committee meeting or a task finish group meeting this has been shown as a 'pre-decision scrutiny meeting'.

Scrutiny Information Hub

- 4.33 Following the work of the Scrutiny Information Task and Finish Group during 2024/25 a SharePoint site has been developed to enable scrutiny members to access information on the Council's performance, delivery and risk. From September this will allow scrutiny members access to a more regular, appropriate, and timely set of information to inform their work programmes. Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee has established an Information Working Group that will meet during September, and then quarterly, to consider this information and identify areas that require deeper investigation. These Working Group meetings are in addition to the meetings shown in Chart 1 above.

Monitoring Outcomes of Scrutiny Recommendations

- 4.34 There are robust systems in place to monitor the recommendations of Scrutiny Inquiries. However, it has been recognised that the systems to monitor the recommendations from pre-decision scrutiny and Task and Finish Groups are not as well developed. Work has taken place to pull together all the Scrutiny recommendations since April 2023 and agree arrangements to report on their implementation.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee and West Midland Police and Crime Panel Work Programmes

- 4.35 The work programme for the OSCs and the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel from April - September 2025 are included as Appendix A.

5 MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Ward Councillor(s)

- 5.1 Not Applicable

Overview and Scrutiny

- 5.2 Not applicable

Other

- 5.3 Not Applicable

6 IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS

Finance and Best Value

- 6.1 There are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations in this report. Overview and Scrutiny Committees will continue to scrutinise the delivery of savings as a key element of the Council's financial recovery through the Scrutiny Information Hub.

Legal

- 6.2 There are no legal implications resulting from the recommendations in this report. The work of the O&S Committees meets the Council's statutory duties regarding local government and health scrutiny as set out in the Statutory Guidance: [Overview and scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) and Health Scrutiny Regulations: [Local authority health scrutiny - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Equalities

- 6.3 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.

- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 Overview and Scrutiny 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.
- 6.6 Overview and Scrutiny 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.

Procurement

- 6.7 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

People Services

- 6.8 There are no staffing implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Climate Change, Nature and Net Zero

- 6.9 Overview and Scrutiny Committees will consider climate change, nature and Net Zero issues relevant to the work programme items.

Corporate Parenting

- 6.10 Overview and Scrutiny Committees will consider corporate parenting responsibilities and opportunities relevant to the work programme.

Other

- 6.11 There are no other implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

7 APPENDICES

- 7.1 Appendix A - the work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel from April - September 2025.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 None