

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

**NEIGHBOURHOODS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MEETING**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th October 2024 at 1400 hours in
Committee Room 6, Council House, Victoria Square, Birmingham**

Present:

Councillor Shabrana Hussain (Chair)

Councillors Marcus Bernasconi, Kerry Brewer, Marje Bridle, Ray Goodwin, Izzy Knowles, Mary Locke, and Darius Sandhu

Also Present:

Cllr Majid Mahmood, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport

Rita Bacheta, Finance Business Partner (online)

Rob Edmondson, Assistant Director (AD), Waste Management

Martin Jones, Interim Change Lead

Chris Jordan, AD, Neighbourhoods

Sajeela Naseer, Director of Regulation and Enforcement

Lesley Poulton, Head of Service, Community Facilities

Andy Vaughan, Interim Director, Street Scene

Les Williams, Principal Operations Manager

Sarah Fradgley, Overview and Scrutiny Manager

Amanda Simcox, Scrutiny Officer

NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

- 12 The Chair advised that the 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 were confidential or exempt items.

APOLOGIES

- 13 Apologies for non-attendance was received on behalf of Cllr Saima Suleman, Cabinet Member for Digital, Culture, Heritage and Tourism for item 6 on the agenda.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

- 14 Members were reminded they must declare all relevant pecuniary and other registerable interests arising from any business to be discussed at this meeting, and none were declared.

MINUTES

15 **RESOLVED:**

- i) That the minutes for the Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 19 June 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

ACTION TRACKER

16. The Chair advised there were a number of actions to be discharged contained within the action tracker and the Committee agreed these could be discharged.

RESOLVED: -

- i) That the actions from the previous Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings were reviewed and noted.

SAVINGS 2024/25 PROGRESS REPORT

17. The Chair set the context for the item and highlighted the Commissioner's comments for this report. The Committee agreed to concentrate on the Red and Amber rated savings.

During the discussion, the key highlights included:

Red Rated Saving:

Saving 193 – Transformation of Neighbourhood Advice and Information Services (NAIS) and Community Libraries: The Chair advised that the Cabinet Member for Digital, Culture, Heritage and Tourism had given her apologies, and the officers were due to attend at 3pm. The Committee was subsequently informed that the officers could not attend the meeting and members agreed to defer discussion on this saving until the next meeting on 27 November. 2024

Amber Rated Savings:

Saving 24 – Pest Control – New charge for domestic rat treatments: The Director of Regulation and Enforcement explained that they were creating a new operating model for 2025-26. Mitigation for the budget saving would be achieved by offsetting the vacancies within the service and there would be a request to the Transformation Board for this saving to be rated as Green. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport highlighted that tenants in Council properties were entitled to free treatment as this was paid for via the Housing Revenue Account.

Saving 29 – Move to fortnightly residual waste (non-recyclable) collection and amend early starts: The Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport provided information on the roll-out of the move to fortnightly residual waste and assured the Committee that they were on track. He highlighted that an increase in recycling and the cost for disposal of less waste should result in savings.

The AD, Waste Management provided the Committee with further information on the communication and engagement for the introduction of the new containers, and the decommissioning and recommissioning of vehicles. The AD, Waste Management had requested this saving was rated as Amber due to reliance on the supplier's supply chain, and this would be rated Green when he was convinced the council's timetable could be met.

In response to a question regarding procurement, the AD, Waste Management commented that he was not expecting issues with procurement for vehicles and containers and specialised officers had been brought in to ensure delivery.

The AD, Waste Management explained that there was a complex model for gate fees under the waste contract, the gate fee for processing food waste would be less than residual waste, and there were cost implications for recycling contamination. Also, the low rate for recycling paper and card using the inserts had prompted the move to introduce the second container, and the importance of communication was highlighted. In addition, the consultation process for restructuring was ongoing and relationships with the Trade Unions were positive.

Saving 35 – Remove Ranger Patrol and delete vacant posts within the Ranger Service: The Interim Director, Street Scene explained that there was a shortfall of c£50,000 and this slippage would be met through other areas of the service.

Saving 237 – Reduce cost of Questlett Closed Landfill Site: The AD, Waste Management explained that there was c£85,000 slippage and mitigation within the service area had been identified.

Saving 239 - Strategic Review of Fleet: The AD, Waste Management stated that the saving was on track but reliant on vehicle replacement and dependent on the fleet components of the waste transformation.

Saving 72 – Community Facilities – Cease Direct Management: The AD, Neighbourhoods, highlighted that the saving was rated Green, but had an overall Amber rating. The Head of Service provided assurance that they were on track to deliver the saving but acknowledged there were risks regarding 14 buildings. This was due to the buildings being in use and being reliant on due diligence.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport provided information on the applications going through the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) process. The Head of Service provided assurance that there was not a problem with the CAT process and the delay was due to capacity issues within legal services.

In response to the question regarding what happens if the community facilities could not be transferred, the Head of Service responded that Corporate Landlord had designed the process and were in charge of this.

Officers committed to responding offline to the question regarding the Green rated budget saving 32 - Stop all chemical weed spraying, and whether Council contractors continued to use chemical weed spraying.

RESOLVED:

That:

- i) The Committee noted the contents in the appendix to this report and the progress to date with delivering savings for 2024/25.
- ii) The discussion on Saving 193 - Transformation of Neighbourhood Advice and Information Services (NAIS) and Community Libraries be deferred until 27 November 2024 when the Cabinet Member and officer attendance could be arranged.

IRP PRIORITY PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT – JULY DATA

18. The Chair set the context for the item and highlighted the Commissioner’s comments.

In response to the question regarding the replacement programme for the street cleansing and grounds maintenance vehicles not having a capital budget allocation - potentially £13m capital (page 91), and rated Red, the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport confirmed that there was the budget for the procurement of the refuse collection, recycling vehicles, and food waste collection vehicles agreed at Cabinet in July 2024. However, there was not a capital budget allocated for the street cleansing and grounds maintenance vehicles, and these were subject to a business case going to the Capital Board. The Interim Director, Street Scene commented that an annualised programme for replacement vehicles was required and was also subject to budget discussions.

RESOLVED:

That:

- i) The Committee noted the contents of the appendix to the report relevant to the Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s terms of reference (Waste Transformation and Fleet Transformation) and the progress to date for the IRP Priority Programmes.
- ii) The Committee noted the Commissioners’ concerns regarding the unfunded elements of the IRP Priority Programme for the street cleansing and grounds maintenance vehicles.

STREET MANAGEMENT

19. The Cabinet Member set the context and highlighted that they wanted to provide a localised service, whereby every Member would be able to influence the service. He was keen to work with the Committee. However, a timeline for this could not yet be given as the first priority was to deliver the weekly food waste collections and fortnightly residual waste collections. However, there would be a local model and an integrated enforcement hub in place.

The Interim Director, Street Scene confirmed that adopting a more locally designed service was the aim. The Interim Change Lead, Principal Operations Manager, and other Officers would assist with making this aim a reality. However, the wider financial situation would have an impact.

During the discussion, the key highlights included:

- The Cabinet Member provided information on the work Veolia did with schools, officers worked closely with the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), and officers were exploring having a reward scheme for people reporting fly-tipping similar to other local authorities. Also, officers were working on the information in relation to the weekly food waste collections being included with the council tax bills to residents. In addition, he agreed with the principle of early intervention, but commented that pragmatism had to be applied due to the budget constraints.
- In response to the request for leaves to be cleared regularly to stop blocked drains and flooding, the Cabinet Member agreed there needed to be a mechanism in place, but there was no contingency in place if staff were off sick or on annual leave. The Principal Operations Manager commented that there was no funding for clearing leaf fall, so this needed to be triaged, and they focused on the hot spots. Officers were exploring having a holistic approach and this would be part of the street management redesign.
- The Cabinet Member highlighted they were exploring making better use of the Mobile Household Recycling Centres (MHWCs) and recycling green/garden waste.
- The Cabinet Member undertook to discuss with officers whether leaves could be collected a different colour bag so it could be recycled rather than incinerated.
- Officers would be working towards each ward being served by one depot.
- In response to an issue highlighted, the Cabinet Member agreed that there needed to be a move from silo working so officers took ownership to resolve street management issues. However, they needed to be mindful of capacity within the service. The Interim Director, Street Scene highlighted this was about culture change and values, and included having a connection to locality, caring about the area, working with partners and connected to local ward councillors.
- The Committee was keen to keep oversight of the street management improvements discussed in the report and scheduled a further update report on progress in April 2025.
- It was agreed that there would be a report at the next committee meeting to explain to Members how enforcement in relation to waste had changed and information to be provided on the commencement of the enforcement phase of

the licensing scheme. It was noted that some of this transformation was subject to consultation with trade unions.

RESOLVED:

That:

- i) The Committee noted the challenges facing street management and offered comments on the proposed improvement steps.
- ii) The Cabinet Member be asked to consider the Committee's feedback as part of this improvement planning process.
- iii) An update report setting out progress made in relation to street management improvements be scheduled for 2 April 2025.
- iv) There would be a report at the next committee meeting to explain to members how enforcement in relation to waste had changed and information to be provided on the commencement of the enforcement phase of the licensing scheme. It was noted that some of this transformation was subject to consultation with trade unions.

WORK PROGRAMME

20. The Committee discussed their work programme and agreed:

27th November 2024 Committee Meeting:

- Budget Saving 193 – Transformation of NAIS and Community Libraries (due to not being covered at today's meeting).
- Review of parks.
- Enforcement of waste and environment phase of the Licensing scheme.

8th January 2025 Committee Meeting:

- Transformation of Neighbourhood Advice and Information Services and Community libraries – to meet the revised Cabinet timetable.
- Delivery of Savings.
- IRP Transformation Programme (Second cycle progress data report) (Waste Transformation and Fleet Transformation).
- Deep dive into the Implementation for Waste Transformation.

In response to a question regarding Commissioners attending an Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting, the Chair advised that Commissioners were due to attend a Corporate and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

RESOLVED:

That:

- i) The Committee noted the work programme, set out in Appendix A, and identified amendments required.
- ii) The Committee agreed, subject to further input from the Chair and Deputy Chair outside of the meeting, its proposed work programme will be submitted to

Corporate and Finance Overview and Scrutiny Committee to enable work to be planned and coordinated throughout the year.

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

- 21 In response to the concern raised regarding the request for call in for City Centre Public Space Protection Orders being rejected, the Overview and Scrutiny Manager clarified the process set out in the constitution.

OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

- 22 None.

DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

- 23 **RESOLVED:-**

- i) That the next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, 27th November 2024 at 1400 hours in Committee Room 2.

The meeting ended at 1603 hours

Chair's signature: