

# Birmingham City Council

## City Council

14 September 2021



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**Subject:** Scrutiny Business Report  
**Report of:** Chairs of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees  
**Report author:** Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

### 1 Executive Summary

1.1 This report sets out the planned work programmes of Overview & Scrutiny Committees for the forthcoming year.

### 2 Recommendations

2.1 That the report be noted.

### 3 The Start of the Year

3.1 In May 2021, the regulations allowing council meetings, including scrutiny meetings, to be held on-line expired and all formal meetings had to be held face to face. These meetings had to be held in line with government guidance, which emphasised the mitigating measures – social distancing for example – that needed to be in place for meetings to take place safely. The guidance also stated that meetings should be held only if essential to do so during the period of the restrictions. Scrutiny chairs therefore looked at other approaches, to ensure that scrutiny's work could continue without taking unnecessary risks.

3.2 This led to some of the June and July meetings being held as informal meetings. A number were nonetheless webcast and papers published on the website, to ensure full transparency. This was a temporary measure to accommodate concerns of members during the period of restrictions and to allow as full participation as possible. Since the ending of those restrictions, scheduled Scrutiny meetings have mostly moved back to formal "in-person" meetings, whilst retaining the flexibility to hold informal meetings and visits in accordance with members' wishes.

## **4 Scrutiny Priorities for 2021/22**

### **Co-ordinating O&S Committee**

- 4.1 Members of the Co-ordinating O&S Committee have continued to scrutinise the portfolios of the Leader and Deputy Leader throughout the last year and this will continue, with particular focus on customer services and the introduction of the revised customer and member enquiries system, digital inclusion and changes to the senior management structure of the council.
- 4.2 Members will also welcome the Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equalities, as he addresses the committee in September, following the amendment to the committee's remit to include equalities and social cohesion.
- 4.3 The main piece of work for the first part of the municipal year will be the scrutiny inquiry into exempt accommodation. The inquiry was started largely in response to the dramatic growth in exempt accommodation properties in the city and the plea from residents in those areas with high concentrations for both greater monitoring and support. It also aims to support the Supported Housing pilot the Council is part of. Following a call for evidence that resulted in over 80 submissions, initial evidence gathering has focused on the views and experiences of residents living in these areas. Later in September 2021, a session will be held with relevant Cabinet Members and officers, to respond to the evidence and key questions. A report with recommendations to support the pilot will then be presented to the Executive.
- 4.4 Members have signalled their intention to undertake a review of the Council's response to the pandemic. This will be a cross-portfolio piece of work, to see what lessons could be learned and to understand the implications for the future. A terms of reference will be discussed by the Committee at a future meeting.

### **Health and Social Care O&S Committee**

- 4.5 The introduction of Integrated Care Systems (ICS) in April 2022 will replace Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) as commissioners of health services and will bring about major changes in how health and care services are planned and delivered. In Birmingham, the transition from the Birmingham and Solihull CCG to the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care System is currently under development. The Joint Birmingham/Solihull Health Scrutiny Committee will be the main body for scrutinising the ICS but the Birmingham Health and Social Care O&S Committee (HOSC) has an important part to play in engaging and commenting on emerging plans that will impact on the people of the city. The Committee recently held informal discussions with CCG and BCC Officers about how Scrutiny can influence the process and ensure full public accountability of the new system. Members also welcomed the integration of West Birmingham within the new system, a step the Committee has pressed to happen for several years.
- 4.6 The Committee will look to scope a review into Weight Management focussing on what support is available for those people living with weight management issues and affording them a platform to voice their own experiences. The intended

outcome of this review will be to form recommendations that complement the ambition of 'Creating a Healthier City'.

- 4.7 Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, planned citizen involvement sessions on Delayed Transfers of Care/Early Intervention Programme and Direct Payments had to be put on-hold but will now take place at the September and November committee meetings.
- 4.8 Concerns have been raised with HOSC members about the limited public access to GP primary care services currently. Initial discussions have been held with CCG officers which have highlighted some significant limitations to the public accountability of GP services, and the Committee will look in greater depth at this issue in the coming months.

### **Resources O&S Committee**

- 4.9 Following the appointment of new Chair Cllr Mohammed Aikhlaq, the Committee will continue with a programme of monthly financial monitoring reports, which includes the quarterly reports which go to Cabinet. This allows members to see each month how the budget is being managed and flag any concerns with Cabinet Members or officers as appropriate, with the option of asking them to attend committee to report on any issues.
- 4.10 Members have also requested monthly updates on the implementation of the Council's new Finance and HR Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, to monitor timescales, risks and costings.
- 4.11 At the end of the last municipal year an inquiry was started to look at procurement and contract management, due mainly to issues which had arisen over the previous couple of years, particularly coming up in requests for call-in Members have agreed to continue with the piece of work this municipal year, with an informal session planned for September.

### **Housing and Neighbourhoods O&S Committee**

- 4.12 As in previous years, members of the Committee are taking a keen interest in Localisation and the intention is for this to be a main focus for the committee during this municipal year, with one of the areas of scrutiny to be around how the Localisation Star Chamber is working and the impact that has.
- 4.13 The Committee will continue to monitor progress with implementation of the recommendations in the O&S report on Reducing Fly-tipping which reported to Full Council in February 2021. Following on from this successful piece of work, the Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Parks has asked the Committee to assist in the development of a Litter Bins Policy. This will look at best practice examples elsewhere in the country with a view to holding one or two informal sessions, leading to proposals for the Cabinet Member to consider.
- 4.14 There are also a number of housing topics programmed for future meetings, including tenant engagement, housing repairs and maintenance including the

capital investment programme, and voids (with members looking at void turnaround times and the standard of properties). Members will also continue with their quarterly monitoring of performance measures within the Housing and Waste services;

- 4.15 This Committee is the statutory Crime and Disorder Committee and as such receives an annual report from the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership, currently scheduled for November.

#### **Commonwealth Games, Culture & Physical Activity O&S Committee**

- 4.16 The Committee will be focusing on how directorates are planning for and contributing to the Commonwealth Games (taking place from 28 July to 8 August 2022) and the Games legacy. To date, officers from the Policy Insight and Prevention Directorate, City Operations Directorate, Housing Directorate and Human Resources Directorate have attended Committee meetings to discuss their plans. Members have also had a workshop to discuss resilience, safety and security, and public health on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2021.
- 4.17 The remaining Directorates are programmed to attend including, at the September committee meeting, senior officers from the Children's Trust, Adult Social Care Directorate, and Education and Skills Directorate. A visit to the Alexander Stadium is also being planned, the second visit of the Committee to the stadium.

#### **Sustainability and Transport O&S Committee**

- 4.18 The Committee's focus this year will be on looking at what the Council is doing to support the implementation of the Climate Change Action Plan agreed in January 2020 as part of the Council's Climate Change Emergency Declaration (agreed by Full Council in 2018). The Committee has been tasked with monitoring what each directorate is doing to keep on track of this commitment and, with the imminent appointment of a lead officer and separate team to take this work forward, the Chair is keen explore this further, with the option to report back to Council in the future.
- 4.19 As lockdown restrictions lift and more people are expected to travel on public transport for work and social purposes, the Committee will be hosting a session in the autumn looking at public confidence in using public transport. This will be an opportunity for transport operators and other stakeholders to map out clearly the provision in place to help people feel safer whilst travelling, as well as explaining the level of service available and address any concerns. The focus on the use of public transport has been a key issue of interest for the committee and is especially important as it benefits the city and residents as a whole through the reduction in traffic and congestion, helps to tackle air pollution and promote cleaner air – something that has been of widespread interest to all those living and working in the city. These key issues are also addressed in the City's Transport Plan due to be finalised later this year and which the committee has been consulted on.

### **Economy & Skills O&S Committee**

- 4.20 The Committee is (at the time of writing) awaiting the appointment a new Chair following Cllr Shabrana Hussain's appointment to Cabinet. Scrutiny Chairs want to thank Cllr Hussain for her work in scrutiny and wish her well in her new role.
- 4.21 The Committee has agreed that it will continue to monitor the economic recovery support work being provided both by the City Council and through its work with partners, to help and support SME's in the city and residents looking for work, training and re-skilling. Members have received updates during the last municipal year and going forward the focus of their attention will be on where the Council can add value and support businesses and individuals with the support they need to help people most affected get back on their feet. Working with partners on this is crucial and further updates are scheduled for the rest of the municipal year, including looking at sectors that have been most affected by the pandemic such as culture, leisure and hospitality.
- 4.22 With the introduction of the Clean Air Zone (CAZ) in June 2021 many businesses and self-employed individuals based in and using the city centre have raised concerns about the impact of the CAZ on their livelihoods. The Committee has received briefings on this and members have agreed that they will undertake a six month assessment to consider the impact of the CAZ on businesses within the area since it became operational and consider if any further measures are required and provide this feedback to the Cabinet Member and officers.

### **Education & Children's Social Care O&S Committee**

- 4.23 Following the appointment of new Chair Cllr Narinder Kaur Kooner, the Committee continued to look at Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). At the June 2021 Committee meeting, Members discussed the joint local area SEND Ofsted and Care Quality Commission judgement with the Interim Director for Education and Skills. Members are keen to add value to the improvement journey and it was agreed that SEND will be the Committee's main area of focus, with officers regularly attending committee meetings to provide detailed updates and information. Also, the Committee may deep dive into certain areas to assist with the improvements and this will be programmed.
- 4.24 Another key area is safeguarding, and the Chair and Chief Executive of the Children's Trust will be attending the September 2021 committee meeting, and the Chair of the Birmingham Safeguarding Children's Partnership will be attending the October 2021 committee meeting.
- 4.25 In addition, young people and mental health / wellbeing was identified as a priority. This could be joint piece of work with the Health and Adults Social Care O&S Committee and this is to be programmed.