

**BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

**HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOODS O&S COMMITTEE –**

**PUBLIC MEETING**

**1400 hours on Thursday 17 February 2022**

**Committee Room C, Council House Extension, Margaret Street**

**Action Notes**

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**Present:**

Councillor Kate Booth (Chair)

Councillors Deirdre Alden, Marje Bridle, Roger Harmer, Mahmood Hussain, Mary Locke, Mike Sharpe and Ken Wood

**Also Present:**

Councillor Shabrana Hussain, Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods (Online)

Councillor John O'Shea, Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Parks (Online)

Councillor Phil Davis, Chair of Licensing & Public Protection (Online)

Julie Griffin, Managing Director of City Housing (Online)

John Jamieson, Assistant Director of City Housing (Online)

Martyn Smith, Operational Manager (ECU Lead) (Online)

Jayne Bowles, Scrutiny Officer

Christian Scade, Interim Head of Scrutiny & Committee Services

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**1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST**

The Chair advised that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's meeting You Tube site ([www.youtube.com/channel/UCT2kT7ZRPFCXq6\\_5dnVnYlw](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCT2kT7ZRPFCXq6_5dnVnYlw)) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

**2. APOLOGIES**

None.

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

None.

### **4. ACTION NOTES AND ACTION TRACKER**

(See document Nos 1, 2 and 3)

#### **RESOLVED:**

The action notes of the meeting held on 11 November 2021 were agreed, the action notes of the informal meeting held on 27 January 2022 were noted and the action tracker was noted.

### **5. PROGRESS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION: REDUCING FLY-TIPPING**

(See document No 4)

Councillor John O'Shea, Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Parks, Martyn Smith, Operational Manager (ECU Lead), and Councillor Phil Davis, Chair of Licensing & Public Protection were in attendance for this item.

The following point was highlighted:

- Progress had been made on CCTV and on approving additional sites and installing cameras. Approval for some sites had to be obtained in court as they were for sensitive locations.

In the discussion which followed, and in response to Members' questions, the following were among the main points raised:

- Members requested details of the six sites and whether they were geographically spread out. The Cabinet Member and officer explained that they are under court authorisation for covert surveillance and as such are not able to identify them. The next six sites to be installed are based on intelligence they have received about hot spots and there will not be covert surveillance going forward. The officer agreed to circulate ward locations to committee.
- The Grimewatch website is in process but Members requested instructions about what residents need to do to catch fly tippers and ensure they can be dealt with effectively.
- Other issues raised included how they are measuring the impact of community protection officers/neighbourhood enforcement officers and whether they are meeting with local councillors regularly to make best use of resources.
- Members were assured that they will be involved when production of the video gets underway and that officers have been taken off duties for a few weeks to do Covid marshall work but should be returning and have been requested to engage with local Members.
- The issue of covert surveillance was explained and clarified that most of our CCTV sites will be overt to deter people and going forward will mainly be

that. There are some circumstances where they are not legally able to do that and have to apply to court. Birmingham is different to Barking & Dagenham because of new legislation coming in since they started their operation.

- Members felt that the burden of proof puts people off reporting fly tipping. An example was stated of a photo taken of car fly tipping but the reporter was told they would have to be a witness in court. A second example was when personal information including an address was found in fly tipping. It was questioned whether the Council could consider writing to people as a shot across the bows if not enough evidence was available to take them to court.
- Officers confirmed that writing to alleged offenders is part of what they do when they discover that proof. If it is a vehicle then they assess on a case by case basis to see if it is an isolated incident. Sometimes they contact the owner to ask who was driving at a point in time or to request an explanation of what they were doing even if there is no witness.
- It was agreed that officers would share the standard template letter sent to offenders and that a system be set up to log incidents.
- With reference to waste carriers, the Environment Agency issues them with licenses and work needs to be done to reinforce and regulate waste carriers once they have a licence.
- A debate took place on the use of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) and the council's enforcement policy. The Chair of Licensing and Public Protection undertook to discuss this with his Committee.
- In consideration of discharging the recommendations outstanding in the report, Members requested the location of cameras under R01 to be confident they are spread across the city and for R03 the Chair of Licensing and Public Protection stated that the mechanism is in place and Members want to see it in use. It was resolved to bring these two recommendations to the next meeting as a short agenda item to clarify those two points as Members will not accept both are rated as 2 – achieved (late) until they have received those reassurances.

**RESOLVED:-**

- Ward locations for the CCTV cameras to be circulated to committee Members.
- Officers to share the standard template letter sent to offenders and Members requested that a system be set up to log incidents.
- The Chair of Licensing and Public Protection undertook to discuss FPNs for fly tipping with his Committee.
- R01 and R03 is to be brought back to the next committee meeting as a short agenda item.

## 6. TENANT ENGAGEMENT REVIEW

(See document No 5)

Councillor Shabrana Hussain, Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods, Julie Griffin, Managing Director of City Housing and John Jamieson, Head of Housing Management were in attendance for this item.

The following points were highlighted:

- In August 2021 the Council commissioned external national tenant engagement experts 'TPAS' to review current tenant engagement. The review was completed in November 2021 and recommendations were made to ensure tenants have a very strong voice in all decisions made.
- It cross references with wider ongoing housing work. TPAS acknowledges that formal resident involvement is well in place in the city and locally-driven - Housing Liaison Boards (HLBs) with mixed tenure and overarching City HLB with scrutiny from the council. There are numerous approaches to formal and informal resident engagement and involvement.
- There are seven key areas:
  - Governance and transparency to continue promoting engagement and framework to clarify role for residents.
  - Scrutiny and improving links tenants have with service and delivery.
  - Business and strategy is about the ability of residents to monitor and review the engagement strategy.
  - Complaints and having a robust approach to complaints and monitoring, learning from complaints to improve the service.
  - Information and communication to ensure timely information and they will review the website so it is more relevant and helpful for all tenants and residents.
  - Resources for engagement and they will be developing further recognition and reward for tenants and volunteers and their training needs.
  - Community and wider engagement – they already acknowledged it's locally-driven but are exploring how they can improve policy and investment opportunities.
- Key findings from the review indicate the building blocks are there in terms of engagement but identifies opportunities to do more on tenant engagement and build on trust already in place.
- The aim is to ensure there is wide diversity in the overarching tenants' voice. This leads to increased levels of satisfaction and reduction of complaints.
- The Social Housing Regulator – there is the tenant involvement and empowerment standard the Council will need to meet. Ensuring that customer service choices and complaints are appropriate to the diverse needs of tenants. Scrutinise performance and make recommendations for improvements. Understanding and responding to diverse needs of tenants in terms of equality and support needs. Much is already in place.
- Next steps are to ensure they are dealing with compliance issues with an action plan. Wider tenant engagement will produce a draft strategy to engage with tenants to ensure tenant involvement actually improves services

and they can influence decision-making and ensure involvement will contribute to and help increase value for money.

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

- Members' local experiences led to concerns that shortcomings in tenant engagement might be due to timing of HLB meetings and invitation to engagement. Officers gave assurance that they are giving guidance on good practice to local boards to address this and allow people to participate more fully.
- A local example was given of a HLB meeting in the evening and yet they still experienced the same issues so perhaps timing isn't the issue. A Member raised an issue about an HLB in their ward where the representation illustrated a total lack of diversity with no one representing a local estate which makes up almost half of the ward. Additionally, Members flagged concerns that there are no numbers attached to this consultation and would like some measures to assess against.
- Officers highlighted that they also recognise many tenants out there who want to have a voice but not be part of a formal HLB. They are currently working through statistics and part of the recommendations is that they undertake this work so they can understand their tenants.
- It was felt there is nothing new and not already known in this report which is disappointing and the majority of tenants are not represented. Some Members felt that if we make our tenants feel welcome then they will start to engage.
- Officers reassured Members that tenants own the service and by baselining different services and discussing with CHLB how tenants can help with the root and branch review, it will provide significant scrutiny of us as a landlord.
- However, Members still felt there was no indication of how we are intending to improve tenant engagement in the report. While it is understood a new action plan is needed, it would be useful to have a timescale of what might happen and when. It is a question around the purpose of HLBs. People are not given information to enable them to act as scrutineers of the housing service they are paying for. Committee would like to see major change to get our tenants involved and see something radical come out of this. We should be continually striving to do better.
- Members asked which other local authorities have been looked at for good practice. Also, the Council does not currently have that level of engagement at HLBs and needs something strong so tenants can hold us to account on delivery and investment.

**RESOLVED:-**

- Information on good practice elsewhere in the UK to be shared with the committee.
- The action plan and RAG rating to come back to Committee early in the new municipal year.
- The report was noted.

## **7. WORK PROGRAMME**

(See document No 6)

- As the April meeting has been cancelled, the last meeting of this municipal year will be on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022.
- On the Fly tipping report, the points raised in this meeting on discharging recommendations 01 and 03 are to come back to the next meeting.
- There is an outstanding action on a briefing on the review of the housing allocation report.
- The 10th March 2022 committee meeting will be chaired by Cllr Marje Bridle due to the unavailability of Cllr Kate Booth.
- The Committee will scope out an inquiry on Voids in early April 2022.

### **RESOLVED:**

- The work programme was noted.

## **8. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

Noted.

## **9. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)**

None.

## **10. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

## **11. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS**

### **RESOLVED:**

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

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The meeting ended at 15:45 hours.