

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CO-ORDINATING O&S COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING

1000 hours on Friday 16th April 2021, On-line meeting

Action Notes

Present:

Councillor Carl Rice (Chair)

Councillors: Deirdre Alden, Albert Bore, Debbie Clancy, Liz Clements, Roger Harmer, Penny Holbrook, Shabrana Hussain, Mariam Khan, Ewan Mackey and Rob Pocock.

Also Present:

Councillor Brigid Jones, Deputy Leader

Peter Bishop, Director of Digital & Customer services

Wendy Griffiths, Assistant Director, Customer Services and Business Support

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chair advised that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site (www.civico.net/birmingham) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

2. APOLOGIES

None received.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None declared.

4. ACTION NOTES

(See document No 1)

RESOLVED:

The action notes from the meeting held on 12th March 2021 were agreed.

5. PROGRESS REPORT ON CUSTOMER SERVICES INQUIRY

(See document No 2)

Cllr Brigid Jones, Deputy Leader, introduced the report and thanked the Committee for undertaking the work. This is an area where a lot of improvement work is going on. Most of the actions are in progress, including a review of the complaints process. The work has included a lot of work with members and other “behind-the-scenes” work to join up services to ensure processes are in place. Some of the work has become part of wider undertakings of the council and so is taking a little longer.

Wendy Griffiths, Assistant Director, Customer Services and Business Support, talked through each of the recommendations and the response thus far. She emphasised that engagement in developing the process is key, it is not just about writing the document. With regards to recommendation 5, as part of the customer programme there is a strand on culture and behaviour, which will make standards expected clear, regardless of role.

Discussion followed and Members made the following points and queries:

- Thought needs to be given to how we get performance data to members, and Cllr Rice proposed this could be included in the Executive Business Report presented to Full Council.
- The content of the customer services strategy was clarified: it will include clear design principles for how the Council will engage with customers, setting out how they can contact the council and ensure they leave feeling they have had a positive experience. It will be a user-friendly, live document and embedded across the organisation.
- The prioritised services in relation to the customer journey include housing repairs which is an area of concern. The areas chosen were areas of high volume and high numbers of complaints, to test that the new ways of working can be got right in difficult areas.
- Information about issues will be on the website, but there will also be reports to Councillors by ward, and then the Council will be able to see where there are common complaints (e.g. where the same street is being missed on waste collections). Members asked to be prompted where there was a problem on a particular street or area – some members wanted an email, others thought there were other options (e.g. a One Drive page). The technology – “slab-in-the-cab” – will be implemented to facilitate this.
- It would be helpful if members were able to see a final draft operating model of the customer enquiries and complaints process. It would also be helpful to have a timetable for future actions. It was confirmed that there would be user testing before going live.
- Members reported still not receiving timely responses to enquiries.

The Deputy Leader noted that this short session had shown, amongst a small group of members, the different views of how members think they should be engaged. It is clear that it will not be possible to please everyone, and there will be a point where a decision will have to be made on what options to use, to move forward.

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services, confirmed that a future progress report is provisionally scheduled for the July meeting of the Committee. Another informal meeting will be set up to look at the draft operating model.

6. PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO O&S COMMITTEE REMITS

(See documents No 3)

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services, presented proposals for revision of the Scrutiny Committee remits in the Constitution which had previously been discussed and agreed with a cross-party working group of members:

- To amend the remit of the Resources O&S Committee to include “Council land use and property assets” (under the Leader’s portfolio) to reflect that Committee’s oversight of all internal resources.
- To amend the remit of the Co-ordinating O&S Committee to include “Social Cohesion and Inclusion” and “Equalities” (under the Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equalities’ portfolio) to reflect the cross-cutting nature of that requirement, but also to recognise the large remit of the Housing and Neighbourhoods O&S Committee and free up that committee to focus on the other big issues it covers.

An addendum had been circulated to members the previous day, proposing another amendment, to amend the terms of reference of the Education & Children's Social Care O&S Committee to insert a reference to “children and young people’s health and wellbeing” as this area is not currently set out in any O&S Committee remit.

Members were supportive of the changes and it was:

RESOLVED

That Members recommend to Council Business Management Committee that the following changes to O&S Committee remits be made:

1. That the remit of the Resources O&S Committee be amended as follows:
*To fulfil the functions of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee as they relate to any policies, services and activities concerning finance (including strategic finance, budget setting and financial monitoring); revenues and benefits; treasury management; **Council land use and property assets**, human resources; contracting, commissioning and commercialisation*
2. That the remit of the Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee be amended as follows:
*To fulfil the functions of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee as they relate to any policies, services and activities concerning strategic economy; skills and apprenticeships; **land and property**; inward investment; land use planning; business improvement districts and the Local Enterprise Partnership.*
3. That the remit of the Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee be amended as follows:

*To plan and co-ordinate the work of all the Overview & Scrutiny Committees. To fulfil the functions of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee as they relate to any policies, services and activities concerning governance (including transparency, regional working and partnerships): citizens (including communications and public engagement); performance; customer services; **social cohesion; equalities and emergency planning.***

4. That the remit of the Housing and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee be amended as follows:

To fulfil the functions of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee as they relate to any policies, services and activities concerning housing; ~~social cohesion~~; waste management; neighbourhood management; parks and allotments localisation; bereavement services and community safety.

5. That the remit of the Education & Children's Social Care O&S Committee be amended as follows:

*To fulfil the functions of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee as they relate to any policies, services and activities concerning schools and education, the Children's Trust, vulnerable children, corporate parenting, **children and young people's health and wellbeing** and other child social care and safeguarding functions of the council.*

7. WORK PROGRAMME

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services, noted that this was the last meeting of the municipal year and advised members that there were two pieces that go forward into the new municipal year: the inquiry into exempt accommodation agenda and the work on broadband coverage across the city.

Cllr Rice asked that the dates for meeting with resident groups be circulated to members.

8. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

9. AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS

RESOLVED:

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

The meeting ended at 1107 hours.