

Birmingham City Council

Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee

6 March 2024



Subject: Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme

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1 Purpose

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposed work programme for the Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2023-24. Following the findings and recommendations from the independent Governance Review of the Council, and specifically recommendation 5, the Committee has reframed its work programme to be aligned to the Council's improvement and recovery priorities. Appendix 1 outlines the topics identified, aims and objectives as well as the preferred method of scrutiny to achieve these objectives.
- 1.2 Appendix 1 also provides information on other topics, which had previously been identified by the Committee for future consideration.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee:
 - Notes the information set out in Appendix 1 and identifies if any further topics need to be added aligned to the Council's improvement and recovery priorities.
 - Agrees, subject to further input from the Chair and Deputy Chair, the issues that the Committee will consider in April 2024, the proposed aims and objectives and the preferred method of scrutiny.
 - Notes, subject to further input from the Chair and Deputy Chair outside of the meeting, its proposed work programme will be submitted to Co-

ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee to enable work to be planned and co-ordinated throughout the year.

3 Background

3.1 The [statutory guidance for local government overview and scrutiny](#) sets out the role it can play in holding an authority's decision makers to account. This makes it fundamentally important to the successful functioning of local democracy.

3.2 Effective Overview and Scrutiny should:

- Provide constructive 'critical friend' challenge.
- Amplify the voices and concerns of the public.
- Be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role.
- Drive improvements in public services.

3.3 The role and functions of Overview and Scrutiny Committees are outlined in [The City Council's Constitution | Birmingham City Council](#) They will:

- Make reports and/or recommendations to the full Council, the Executive and/or other organisations in connection with the discharge of the functions specified in their terms of reference.
- Consider any matter covered in their terms of reference that may affect or be likely to have an effect on the citizens of Birmingham; relevant to the Council's strategic objectives; relevant to major issues faced by officers in managing a function of the Council; and likely to make contribution to moving the Council forward and achieving key performance targets.

3.4 Effective scrutiny needs to add value. A well planned and timely work programme enables Overview and Scrutiny Committees to be involved at the right time and in the right way, and ensure their involvement is meaningful and can influence the outcome.

3.5 Members often have a number of topics suggested to them and are therefore required to **prioritise** matters for consideration. The Scrutiny Framework sets out the following factors to be considered:

- Public interest: concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen.
- Ability to change: priority should be given to issues that the Committee can realistically influence.
- Performance: priority should be given to areas in which the Council and Partners are not performing well.
- Extent: priority should be given to issues that are relevant to all or a large part of the city.
- Replication: work programme must take account of what else is happening to avoid duplication.

Looking Ahead

- 3.6 Since June 2023, Overview and Scrutiny Committees have identified a 'menu' of issues (including policy development, policy review, issues of accountability and statutory functions). Each Committee has then regularly reviewed their 'menu' and decided which issues needed to be examined further, and how that work would be undertaken.

Scrutiny Methods

- 3.7 There are a range of ways to undertake scrutiny. The approach for 2023-24 enables flexible scrutiny and outlines a shift from monthly formal meetings to a combination of approaches. The Committee will choose the most effective scrutiny method to achieve the desired aims and objectives for each topic.
- 3.8 Scrutiny activities should be thorough and undertaken in a timely manner.
- 3.9 Based on Statutory Guidance published in 2019, different scrutiny methods include (but are not limited to):
- A single item, or items, on a committee agenda – this method fits more closely with the “overview” aspect of the Scrutiny function and provides limited opportunity for effective scrutiny. It is most appropriate for specific issues where the committee wants to maintain a watching brief.
 - A single item meeting, either as the committee or a more limited number of Members. It has the capacity to enhance the previous option by taking evidence from a number of witnesses.
 - A task and finish day - provided that these are properly focused, they ensure Councillors can swiftly reach conclusions and make recommendations and are effective even for complex topics.
 - A task and finish review – this is an enhancement of the previous option being held over four or six meetings spread over a limited number of months.

Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 3.10 The Committee's Terms of Reference is to fulfil the functions of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee as they relate to any policies, services and activities concerning:
- major physical regeneration and infrastructure projects in the city (with Cabinet Member for Housing & Homelessness)
 - promotion of the city and inward investment (with the Cabinet Member for Digital, Culture, Heritage and Tourism)
 - land use and property assets
 - economic growth and jobs
 - skills expansion for key growth sectors along with lifelong learning for post-14 skills and lifelong learning
 - access to employment and delivery of local employment plans
 - economic impact of arts, culture, tourism and sport

3.11 The Committee is chaired by Councillor Akhlaq Ahmed, and its membership comprises Councillors Bushra Bi, Jon Hunt, Katherine Iroh, Simon Morrall, Richard Parkin, Jamie Tennant and Lisa Trickett.

4 The Governance Review – Reframing the Work Programme 2023-24

4.1 The Co-ordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 December 2023 acknowledged the recommendations in the Governance Review of Birmingham City Council agreed by Cabinet on 12 December 2023. Recommendation 5 stated the need to reframe scrutiny work programmes on the Council's improvement and recovery priorities, and that alignment of work programmes should focus on:

- a) Having an active part in the 2024/25 budget development process.
- b) The safe and effective delivery of key services supporting vulnerable people.
- c) Critical performance issues emerging "by exception".
- d) Equality and equity issues arising from the development of the 24/25 Budget, the Emergency Budget (to be identified by exception), and other priority scrutiny activity relating to the Budget.
- e) Culture, behaviour change and organisational development.

4.2 On 10 January 2024, the Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee met informally to consider the developing Improvement and Recovery Plan and the findings and recommendations of the Governance Review. The Committee reconsidered its work programme for January - April and reframed it to ensure it aligns with the issues set out above.

4.3 Following this informal session, the Committee has had further informal briefings in February 2024 on:

- the proposed budget for 23-24 and specifically how the Place, Prosperity and Sustainability Directorate is mobilising to deliver these services; and
- informing a new performance management framework.

4.4 Appendix 1 sets out the current agreed work programme from March onwards.

4.5 The Committee may decide to add further items to the work programme during the remainder of the year. When considering this, the Committee is advised to consider where it can best add value through scrutiny aligning to the Council's priorities and improvement journey, and how it can prioritise topics for consideration based on the Scrutiny Framework referred to in paragraph 3.5 above.

4.6 The Council's latest [Forward Plan February 2024](#) may assist Members in identifying future topics. The following reports are of particular relevance to this Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

| Reference | Title | Portfolio | Proposed Date of Decision |
|------------------|---|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 012489/2024 | Response to Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group Report | Leader | 27 Feb 24 |
| 011780/2023 | Sale of the Brasshouse, 50 Sheepcote Street, Birmingham B16 8AJ | Leader | 29 Feb 24 |
| 012506/2024 | Proposed Sale of Property Assets – Standing Item | Leader | 29 Feb 24 |
| 012505/2024 | Proposed Sale of Surplus Freehold Property Assets by Public Auction – Standing Item | Leader | 01 Mar 24 |
| 012048/2024 | Higher Level Skills Match Plus (HLSM+) Project Full Business Case and Investment Report | Deputy Leader | 19 Mar 24 |
| 012342/2024 | West Midlands Investment Zone | Deputy Leader | 19 Mar 24 |
| 012520/2024 | Improvement and Recovery Plan | Deputy Leader | 19 Mar 24 |
| 011840/2023 | Enterprise Zone Programme Management Levy | Leader | 19 Mar 24 |
| 012592/2024 | Section 151 Officer Update on the Financial Position of the Council – March 2024 | Leader | 19 Mar 24 |
| 012487/2024 | Sale of Moilliett Street Park | Finance and Resources | 28 Mar 24 |
| 009483/2022 | Disposal of Surplus Properties | Leader | 28 Mar 24 |
| 012121/2024 | Perry Barr Residential Scheme - Disposal of Plots 2, 3, 4 & 5 | Leader | 28 Mar 24 |
| 012358/2024 | Proposed Sale of Surplus Freehold Property Assets by Public Auction | Leader | 28 Mar 24 |
| 012432/2024 | Revision of terms of Head Lease for 10 Gough Street, Birmingham | Leader | 28 Mar 24 |
| 012550/2024 | Disposal of Council Owned Land at Bordesley Park | Leader | 28 Mar 24 |
| 011225/2023 | Knowledge Quarter – Woodcock Street | Leader | 28 Mar 24 |
| 007686/2020 | Historic Environment Supplementary Planning Document | Leader | 23 Apr 24 |
| 012094/2024 | Highbury Hall and Grounds Refurbishment and Renovation Project | Leader | 23 Apr 24 |
| 012248/2024 | UKSPF Annual Progress Update 2024 | Leader | 23 Apr 24 |
| 012260/2024 | NEC Masterplan and Property Strategy | Leader | 08 May 24 |
| 010173/2022 | Our Future City Plan 2040 – Draft Central Birmingham Framework | Leader | 14 May 24 |
| 012296/2024 | Birmingham Local Plan – Preferred Options Consultation | Leader | 14 May 24 |

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| 012554/2024 | Enterprise Zone Assurance Governance Framework | Leader | 14 May 24 |
| 010635/2023 | Paradise Phase 3 | Leader | 25 Jun 24 |

- 4.7 Overview and Scrutiny Chairs are advised to maintain regular engagement with Cabinet Members to enable flexibility to be built into the Overview and Scrutiny work programme, so as to respond to the Council's policy priorities in a timely way.

5 Any Finance Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report.

6 Any Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations set out in this report.

7 Any Equalities Implications

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 The Committee 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; and whether any positive opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and/or good relations between people are being realised.
- 7.4 The Committee 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.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1: Work Programme 2023-24 - March

9 Background Papers

9.1 [Birmingham City Council Constitution](#)

9.2 Birmingham City Council Overview and Scrutiny Framework April 2021

Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023 / 24

| Month | Item/Topic Link with Corporate Priorities | Aims and Objectives | Scrutiny Method | Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer | Other Witnesses | Additional Information and Outcome* |
|-------|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| March | <p>Our Future City Plan 2040 – Draft Central Birmingham Framework 2040 (TBC)</p> <p>CGFS Independent Governance Review recommendation 5: Equality and equity issues arising from the development of the 24/25 budget; the Emergency budget (to be identified by exception) and other priority scrutiny activity relating to the budget.</p> | To outline the current position of the Framework, including a response to the feedback from the O&S Committee during the consultation. | <p>Committee meeting – single item.</p> <p>Deadline for reports: 27 February 2024</p> | Paul Kitson, Strategic Director, Place, Prosperity and Sustainability | <p>James Betjeman, Head of Curzon and Enterprise Zone Development</p> <p>Timothy Brown, Principal Development Planning Officer – City Centre Team</p> | Report due to be presented to Cabinet on 14 May 2024. |
| April | <p>Asset Disposal Programme</p> <p>CGFS Independent Governance Review recommendation 5: Equality and equity issues arising from the development of the 24/25 budget; the Emergency budget (to be identified by exception) and other priority</p> | Review the progress of the Asset Disposal Programme | <p>Committee Meeting single item.</p> <p>Deadline for reports: 9 April 2024</p> <p>Venue: Council House,</p> | Paul Kitson, Strategic Director, Place, Prosperity and Sustainability | <p>Philip Nell, Director Property & Investment</p> <p>Kathryn James, Assistant Director of Investment and Valuation</p> | This will be the first report and will continue to be reported to the Committee quarterly thereafter. The next report will be scheduled in July. |

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| | scrutiny activity relating to the budget. | | Committee Room 2 | | | |
| April | <p>Budget Challenge and Financial Recovery</p> <p>CGFS Independent Governance Review recommendation 5: Equality and equity issues arising from the development of the 24/25 budget; the Emergency budget (to be identified by exception) and other priority scrutiny activity relating to the budget.</p> | <p>Track the progress on savings made to date.</p> <p>Consider the impact of savings on policy and service delivery.</p> <p>Consider how relevant services are mobilising to delivery budget savings for 24-25 and agree how the Committee will monitor these savings.</p> | <p>Committee Meeting single item.</p> <p>Deadline for reports: 27 February 2024</p> <p>Venue: Council House, Committee Room 2</p> | TBC | TBC | <p>This will be specific to the remit of this Committee.</p> <p>This will be a standard agenda across all Overview and Scrutiny Committees.</p> |

*Outcome: This will be populated once the item/topic has been completed. It will identify the added value and impact.

Menu of Issues for Consideration

The following items had been identified as potential topics for future consideration. This approach enables the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to remain flexible and respond in a timely manner to emerging issues.

This is a live work programme work programme. New items may be added, or items removed during the course of the year. Proposed aims and objectives as well as scrutiny methodology may also be subject to change.

| Item/ Topic | Proposed Aims and Objectives | Proposed Scrutiny Method | Additional Information |
|-------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
|-------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|

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| Local Enterprise Zones and Business Rates Maximisation | Consider how Birmingham can maximise the income opportunities through these zones to drive wider economic benefits for the city. | Committee meeting – single agenda item | This fits under Independent Governance Review recommendation 5: Equality and equity issues arising from the development of the 24/25 budget; the Emergency budget (to be identified by exception) and other priority scrutiny activity relating to the budget. |
| All items below were identified by the Economy and Skills O&S Committee before the Independent Governance Review was published in December 2023, and its subsequent and related review of its work programme. The below items are included to be considered in light of the Governance Review as part of the work programme planning for 2023-24. | | | |
| Young People and Skills | <p>To understand the views of young people to inform the work of the Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>To report back on the implementation of the recommendations of the Employment and Skills Scrutiny Inquiry.</p> | Informal meeting – date/ time to be confirmed | <p>This session will involve members of the Youth City Board. Members of this board had contributed to the Scrutiny Inquiry.</p> <p>Members of the Education and CYP OSC could be invited to attend.</p> |
| Employers | To understand how Birmingham City Council can support local businesses. | Link with existing meeting / event | During the evidence gathering for the Employment and Skills Inquiry, there had been an intention to hear evidence from the business sector. This had not been possible. As part of its conclusions, therefore, the inquiry report had indicated that it would be useful to still meet with business. This could have a wider focus than youth employment. |
| CWG Employment Legacy | Aims and Objectives to be determined. | To be determined. | Neighbourhoods O&S Committee has Commonwealth Games Legacy Framework as part of its remit. All other Committees will consider specific areas of Games legacy as relevant to their Terms of Reference. |

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| Night-time economy | Aims and Objectives to be determined. | To be determined. | Following consideration of the Birmingham Development Plan to consider the issues experienced by communities as a result of the night- time economy and how these can be managed / mitigated in future developments. |
| East Birmingham Inclusive Growth Strategy | To update on the implementation of the East Birmingham Growth Strategy. | Committee meeting – single item | This will follow on from the most recent presentation to the Committee on 26 April 2023 . The Committee had requested 6 monthly updates. It is anticipated that the next update will be available in March/April. |
| Scrutiny of Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) | To scrutinise the integration of the LEP functions into Birmingham City Council including administration of the legacy funds and Enterprise Zone. | Committee Meeting - single item | The LEP Scrutiny function no longer exists and there is an expectation that individual local authority arrangements will scrutinise the LEP Integration. Link to Cabinet report 27 June on LEP Integration into Birmingham City Council: Document.ashx (cmis.uk.com) |
| Monitoring Recommendations of the Employment and Skills Scrutiny Inquiry | Track progress on recommendations of the Employment and Skills Scrutiny Inquiry | Committee Meeting - single item | Recommendations were agreed at Council in April 2023. This is part of the standard inquiry tracking programme. It will be the second time the inquiry reports to Committee. |

Scrutiny Method Options:

Committee meeting - single item

Committee meeting - single theme

Task and Finish Group (outline number of meetings)

On location

Other - (describe)

Corporate Priorities, Performance and Outcomes

Corporate Priorities 2022 – 26:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Support inclusive economic growth | 11 Increase affordable, safe, green housing |
| 2 Tackle unemployment | 12 Tackle homelessness |
| 3 Attract inward investment and infrastructure | 13 Tackle health inequalities |
| 4 Maximise the benefits of the Commonwealth Games | 14 Encourage and enable physical activity and healthy living |
| 5 Tackle poverty and inequalities | 15 Champion mental health |
| 6 Empower citizens and enable citizen voice | 16 Improve outcomes for adults with disabilities and older people |
| 7 Promote and champion diversity, civic pride and culture | 17 Improve street cleanliness |
| 8 Support and enable all children and young people to thrive | 18 Improve air quality |
| 9 Make the city safer | 19 Continue on the Route to Zero |
| 10 Protect and safeguard vulnerable citizens | 20 Be a City of Nature |
| | 21 Delivering a Bold Best in Class Council |

Information on the Corporate Priorities, Performance and City Outcomes was reported to the Economy and Skills OSC in June 23: [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com)