

**NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE SEPTEMBER 2015**

**PRIORITY REPORT OF CABINET MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT
AND HOMES**

REPORT BY: COUNCILLOR JOHN COTTON

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report sets out my portfolio priorities for 2015/16 and updates Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on recent announcements and future issues.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

I have accountability for:

Council housing management services	Oversight and direction of estate management services and best use of housing stock (across all housing providers). Repairs and maintenance programmes.
Registered Social Landlords	Liaison with the Birmingham Social Housing Partnership on neighbourhood management initiatives and the housing growth agenda.
Private Rented Sector	Licensing and regulation. Private Tenancy Unit activities. Bond and deposit scheme initiatives.

I am advised by the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing on:

Pre-tenancy Services	Assessing housing need, options for vulnerable adults, children and young people and offenders. Temporary accommodation provision. Initiatives for rough sleepers.
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I am advised by the Cabinet Member for Inclusion and Community Safety on provision of accommodation for the victims of domestic violence.

I advise the Cabinet Member for Development, Transport and the Economy on tenure mix in the supply of housing, based on analysis of housing need.

I take advice from the Cabinet Members for Children's Services; Development, Transport and the Economy; Health and Social Care; Sustainability; Skills, Learning and Culture; and Inclusion and Community Safety on the linkages with non-Council services delivered by partners in the Districts.

I will be working with Executive Members for Districts to support their "neighbourhood challenge" role – with the aim of improving the performance of all council services at a local level and promoting partnership working and service integration across the whole public sector on:

Tenant engagement in social housing	Tenant engagement in the management and development of social housing and Housing Liaison Boards.
Neighbourhood Management	Wider council and public sector integration at the local level.
Cleaner Neighbourhoods	Street cleansing, advising the Cabinet Member for Sustainability on neighbourhood issues. Enforcement of legislation relating to litter prevention, fly-posting, placarding, graffiti and fly-tipping.
Pest Control	Provision of the pest control service.
Local Parks and Allotments	Provision, maintenance and usage of local facilities.

3. PRIORITIES

The Executive remains committed to working together for a fair, prosperous and democratic city, with a clear focus on priorities and outcomes.

This includes the opportunity for everyone to live in decent, affordable housing; in clean neighbourhoods and to enjoy good levels of health and life expectancy.

Therefore my portfolio priorities for this year are to:

- Deliver integrated Place-based management, ensuring that neighbourhood services are coordinated and delivered efficiently, reflecting local needs and priorities.
- Develop a comprehensive housing offer, to ensure that all citizens have the opportunity to enjoy affordable, safe and decent accommodation.
- Ensure that the growing private rented sector provides decent, affordable accommodation by making use of our licensing powers and ensuring a stronger partnership through our Social Lettings Agency, Let to Birmingham.

- Work with Districts to ensure they deliver a robust "Neighbourhood Challenge", holding both the council and other service providers to account for the quality and effectiveness of local public services.
- Work with Districts to ensure that our scarce resources are deployed in a manner that helps to improve the local street scene and environment.
- To continue to maintain investment in our existing properties and to build new properties that meet Birmingham's future housing needs.

4. OTHER KEY PROGRAMMES

In addition to the priorities outlined above, there are a number of other key programmes that will be progressed during 2015/16 including:

- A review of housing services to older people, ensuring that we consult on the types of support services and the adequacy of the accommodation we provide.
- A review of tenancy conditions in line with proposed legislation in the current Housing Bill.
- Undertake consultation on the introduction of additional / discretionary licensing schemes within the growing private rented sector.
- Re-Procurement of Council House Repairs and Maintenance and Investment Contracts to commence April 2016.

5. KEY BUDGET ISSUES

I am responsible as the Cabinet Member for the Housing Revenue Account with expenditure of £290m in 2015/16, which is funded by an equivalent amount of income from rents and service charges. These resources are used to repair and maintain existing stock, provide valued estate and tenancy management services and payment of income on outstanding debt. In addition, I am responsible for a capital budget of £100m in 2015/16 for investment in the existing stock and the building of new homes (this totals £310m over the next 3 years from 2015/16 to 2017/18).

In addition I have responsibility for a revenue budget of £1.3m that is utilised for managing the responsibilities of the private sector housing (including HMO Licensing, empty properties and registered providers of housing).

The Housing Revenue Account will be under financial pressure over the next 5 years as a result of:

- the impact of the welfare reforms and introduction of Universal Credit (arrears will increase)
- the liabilities from the equal pay obligations
- price inflation, as the construction industry recovers

- the impact of the new rent reduction policy over the next 4 years, which was recently announced by the Chancellor in his recent Budget Statement.

In particular, it is estimated that the new rent policy will reduce revenue resources in the HRA by an estimated £42m by 2019/20 – this is the cumulative effect by the end of that particular year and is equivalent to almost 14% of total income.

6. RECENT GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

Following the Chancellor's Budget announcement on 8 July this year, the challenge for housing in Birmingham became even greater. We are working with our partners to look at the implications of these policies which will undoubtedly impact on some of the most vulnerable people in our City, in particular the proposed welfare reforms, the extension of Right to Buy to tenants of registered providers and the proposed review of 'lifetime tenancies' raise particular challenges for Birmingham's citizens.

A joint letter from the Chair of BSHP and myself has been sent to the Minister of State for Housing and Planning, outlining our concerns and I will be able to update Members of this committee on our joint work to address some of these issues in my update report on 17 March 2016.

Councillor John Cotton

Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Management and Homes