

Birmingham City Council

City Council

6 February 2024



Subject: Scrutiny Business Report
Report of: Cllr. Sir Albert Bore
Report author: Fiona Bottrill, Senior Overview and Scrutiny Manager,
email: fiona.bottrill@birmingham.gov.uk Tel: 07395
884487

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential : None

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Overview and Scrutiny has responded to the challenges that the Council faces and continues to provide challenge and add value to the Council's governance. Scrutiny Committees will continue to review their work programmes as the Council's Improvement and Recovery Plan develops.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That the report be noted.

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. 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.

3.2 The functions of Overview and Scrutiny Committees are outlined in The City Council's Constitution | Birmingham City Council:

- 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 a contribution to moving the Council forward and achieving key performance targets.

3.3 The report sets out the work undertaken by the 8 Scrutiny Committees below from July 2023 to February 2024:

- Co-ordinating
- Economy and Skills
- Education, Children and Young People
- Finance and Resources
- Health and Adult Social Care
- Homes
- Neighbourhoods
- Sustainability and Transport

3.4 Birmingham City Council also continues to be part of 3 regional scrutiny meetings. These are:

- Birmingham and Sandwell Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Birmingham and Solihull Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- West Midlands Police and Crime Panel

4 Scrutiny Response to Intervention and the Governance Review

4.1 Since the last Scrutiny Business Report the Council has identified further challenges which has resulted in the appointment of Commissioners who have the power to exercise all functions associated with scrutiny of strategic financial decision making in the Authority. The Governance Review presented to Cabinet on 12 December [CMIS > Meetings](#) made a number of recommendations relating to Overview and Scrutiny.

4.2 In response Overview and Scrutiny has:

- Established the Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group. Details of this work are set out in Section 8.8 below.

- Established the Governance Stabilisation Task and Finish Group that will scrutinise the implementation of the recommendations of the Governance Stabilisation Plan.
- During January and February all Overview and Scrutiny Committees will review their work programme to align to the recommendations of the Governance Stabilisation Plan and developing Improvement and Recovery Plan.

5 Co-ordinating OSC

- 5.1 Since the last Scrutiny Business Report, in addition to co-ordinating scrutiny activity relating to responding to the financial challenges the Council faces, Co-ordinating OSC has continued to focus on work concerning customer services, the West Midlands Deeper Devolution Deal, the Cost of Living, the Homes for Ukraine Programme, and the impact of the Elections Act.
- 5.2 In July, the Committee completed work which had been led by the Customer Services Scrutiny Task and Finish Group. In concluding this work, the Committee agreed future monitoring would be undertaken by the relevant service area scrutiny committees to ensure the identified end-to-end customer improvements are implemented. For example, Neighbourhoods OSC will lead on follow up work required with Waste and Bereavement Services. Sustainability and Transport OSC will lead on the p work required across Highway Repairs while Homes OSC will ensure the end-to-end improvements are delivered in relation to Housing Repairs.
- 5.3 July also provided opportunities for pre-decision scrutiny of the West Midlands Deeper Devolution Deal before Cabinet considered this in September. The Committee supported the Levelling-up Zone proposals and the Investment Zone approach and highlighted a number of governance and accountability issues which required further attention.
- 5.4 In July, the Committee also set up a Task and Finish Group to look at the Cost-of-Living Programme. Evidence gathering took place at pace with a session, held in July, looking at the internal processes involved in the delivery of the programme. Sessions in September examined the three core workstreams of Warm Welcome, Food Provision and Information, and Advice and Guidance. These sessions included input from external witnesses and a session to draw findings and recommendations together, which were then reported to the Committee in October ([click here to view the final report](#)).
- 5.5 During the autumn the Committee's work focused on the Council's equal pay liability and financial reports which had been considered by Cabinet. For example, in October the Committee scrutinised delivery of the 2023/24 Budget Savings (relevant to the Committee's terms of reference) and considered the Council's response to the Section 114 Notices and Financial Recovery Plan.
- 5.6 In December, the Committee ensured recommendations, made back in April 2023, were monitored in relation to the Homes for Ukraine programme. This item

included a response, against each of the 17 recommendations, from the Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equality and input from the Chief Executive, who attended the meeting, on management actions arising from the initial scrutiny report,

- 5.7 This item also provided an officer response, and provided opportunities for questions, concerning reports that 1000 asylum seekers would be placed in Birmingham before Christmas.
- 5.8 The Committee concluded its committee agenda for 2023 by hearing from the Council's Returning Officer in relation to the impact of the Elections Act 2022, including the need for voter ID, and what measures might be needed for future elections across Birmingham.

6 Economy and Skills OSC

- 6.1 In July, the Committee considered a report on the proposed 'Our Future City Plan' and wider regeneration programmes to understand the benefits being spread across the city. Members provided a response as part of the formal consultation on the plan and also considered further information relating to the process and timescale for the renewal of the Birmingham Development Plan 2031.
- 6.2 The Committee received its first monitoring report on the progress made with the implementation of the Employment and Skills Inquiry recommendations in October; this Inquiry had been agreed by Council in April 2023. A letter to the government is also being prepared in relation to matters raised by young people during the Inquiry with reference to education, careers advice and guidance and employment support.
- 6.3 As part of this inquiry, Members had identified a number of issues that needed further investigation. At the September meeting the Committee considered the role of the Council's Procurement service to increase social value through the Council's contracts. Members were particularly interested in seeing what could be done to increase the opportunities available to young people to gain valuable skills and employment through the contracts that are being let. The Committee was keen to understand where Birmingham could learn from others and how to improve the monitoring of contracts to ensure that they were delivering benefits for residents. Members asked for information on where social value had made an impact on regeneration projects such as Peddimore and Alexander Stadium, as well as an update on the implementation of the Audit Committee's recommendations on the Council's Social Value Procurement mechanism. Members wanted to ensure that the creation of apprenticeships in the future through council contracts were of real value to young people.
- 6.4 Following the report to Cabinet in July that set out the in-year budget gap and the Section 114 Notices issued in September, and as agreed by Co-ordinating OSC, the Committee undertook the first of its sessions looking at what contribution it could make (within the realms of its remit) to the budget savings and recovery

plan following the reality of the financial challenges facing the Council. This has been followed by further scrutiny on the delivery of the 2023/24 budget savings as set out in the Medium-Term Financial Plan following the issuing of the Section 114 notice. Members emphasised the need to expediate immediate savings, and this included the acceleration in sales of commercial property including Council office buildings that had been sold and the saving being realised. However, the Committee was clear that due consideration needs to be given to operational and community assets in order to get best value. It was added that the disposal of local assets needs to be considered carefully due to the benefit for, and impact on, the local community.

- 6.5 In December, the Committee considered the West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Plan; this was presented by the Chief Executive of Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce who had led on its development on behalf of the region. Members were able learn about the plan and its implications for the city, and how the Council could support the recommendations that would support the development and improvement of skills levels in Birmingham.
- 6.6 In January, the Committee began to shape an initial approach for the scrutiny of the asset disposal programme. In its considerations, the Committee was informed by practice from other Local Authorities under intervention, most notably Croydon Borough Council and Slough Borough Council. Initially, the Committee has agreed to review the performance of the programme on a quarterly basis. Before determining any further aspects to its approach, the Committee has requested to consider further information including the assets in scope for this disposal programme and how best value is being achieved.
- 6.7 Economy and Skills Work Programme February - April: the Committee is undertaking a refresh of its work programme in January to ensure it aligns with the recommendation from the Governance Review. Specific areas to consider for March and April will be determined through this refresh.
- 6.8 Outcomes:
- The work of the Scrutiny Committee has contributed to 7 of the Council's Corporate Priorities.
 - The Committee responded to the financial challenges facing the Council and included scrutiny of delivery of 2023/24 savings during its September, October and November meetings.
 - The Chair of the Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee is a member of the Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group that has been established by the Finance and Resources OSC.
 - The Committee has informed the proposed Our Future City Plan.
 - The Committee has reviewed progress on the Employment and Skills Inquiry.

- The Committee has identified an initial approach towards the scrutiny of the asset disposal programme. This approach may be refined following further discussions.

7 Education and Children and Young People OSC

- 7.1 In July, the Committee received a comprehensive update on the Children and Young People's Travel Service including actions to address overspend and assurances for the September 2023 mobilisation. A young person and his mother shared their positive experience of independent travel training. The Committee also received an update on the SEND tribunals process. The Committee suggested that all elected members would benefit from a greater understanding of these two topics and as a result all-councillor briefings were subsequently delivered as part of the Member Development Programme. The Committee also examined the progress update of the Improving Services for Children and Families Programme. Members discussed the five workstreams and the BRAG status of actions and projects and used this information to identify areas for its work programme.
- 7.2 In September, the Directorate outlined its new performance framework for improving the collection and use of performance data and provided an overview of the Children and Families corporate performance indicators. Recognising the importance of data to inform effective scrutiny, Members requested a data workshop to build knowledge and understanding. This workshop took place in November enabling members to expand their knowledge of the rationale, range and purpose of data collected and how it is used across the portfolio.
- 7.3 From September, the Committee began scrutinising the Q1 and Q2 2023-24 budget savings position and this work intensified following the issuing of the S114 Notices, the announcement of Government intervention and focus on financial recovery. The Committee will continue to review its work programme to ensure its work addresses the challenges the council faces. The Chair is a member of the Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group established to consider the work to address the budget gap and budget proposals for 2024/25.
- 7.4 In October, the Committee conducted a 'deep dive' into hidden children with representatives from the Directorate, City of Birmingham School, Birmingham Education Partnership, and Safeguarding & Children in Care at NHS Birmingham and Solihull. The meeting examined exclusions, suspensions, part-time timetables, elective home education, and absence rates. Members discussed how the Council, schools, Birmingham Children's Trust and health services retain oversight of these children, and the development of data dashboards and improved data collection.
- 7.5 In November, the Committee considered school improvement support for schools in the city and provided feedback on the proposals for developing a new model for the relationship with schools to underpin improvement. Members discussed the rationale for the proposals and the process for completing this work. John

Coughlan CBE, SEND Commissioner attended the meeting and referred to his findings and recommendations published in his two reports to the Secretary of State for Education, and the actions the Council was taking to respond to concerns and deliver improvements. He also explained his expanded role within the Best Value intervention.

7.6 In January, the Committee examined progress made across the five workstreams within the Improving Services for Children and Families Plan and the BRAG ratings of projects and actions.

7.7 The Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) inquiry has concluded its evidence gathering. It has received evidence from a range of stakeholders including Birmingham Childrens Trust; West Midlands Police and community organisations. The report is expected to be presented to City Council on 16 April 2024.

7.8 The Children and Young People's Mental Health Inquiry (a joint Inquiry led by the Health and Adult Social Care O&S Committee) has completed its evidence gathering and reported to City Council on 9 January 2024.

7.9 Outcomes:

- The work of the Scrutiny Committee has contributed to two of the Council's Corporate Priorities.
- The Committee responded to the financial challenges facing the Council and included scrutiny of delivery of 2023/24 savings. The Chair of the Committee was a member of the Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.
- The Committee has developed its focus on performance measurement and data. This scrutiny of data had informed its work programme.
- Member development has also been a key feature this year, including a committee 'data workshop' to build understanding, and suggesting all-councillor briefings on key topics.
- The Committee's deep dive examination into 'Hidden Children' provided assurance of the collaborative work being undertaken by a range of partners to identify and support such children.
- The Committee provided feedback to the proposals for developing a new model for the relationship with schools to underpin improvement.
- The Committee discussed with John Coughlan CBE, SEND Commissioner his findings and recommendations published in his two reports to the Secretary of State for Education, and the actions the Council was taking to respond to concerns and deliver improvements.

8 Finance and Resources OSC

8.1 The Finance and Resources OSC work programme has focussed on some of the key challenges that the Council faces.

- 8.2 Oracle: The role of the Committee has been included in the governance of the Oracle stabilisation and the Committee agreed that this should be a standing item on the Committee's agenda. Reports on the stabilisation of Oracle have been considered at the Committee meetings in July, September and November. Members were updated on the strategic risks and programme finances, and were provided with a definition of customisation and timescales for optimisation.
- 8.3 Job Equity and Equal Pay: At the July committee meeting a report was considered on the background to the council's equal pay liability and the financial liability. At the September meeting further information was provided on the background to the equal pay liability and also on the timescales for job evaluation and pay equity. A further report was considered at the November committee meeting that provided information on the status report on the Permanent Pay Equity Programme, Project and Internal Governance Controls, Job Information, recruitment of analysts, and preparation for evaluation of jobs.
- 8.4 Council Management of risk: The Committee considered the Council's risk management processes including the strategic risk register, budget risks and savings risks.
- 8.5 Budget Recovery Plan, MTFP and Financial Position Update: At the September committee meetings members received an update from the Interim Director of Finance (S151Officer) on the Budget Recovery Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan. At the December Committee meeting members received a budget update report from Interim Director of Finance (S151Officer)
- 8.6 Scrutiny of delivery of savings and the Council's response to the Section 114 Notice: At the November committee meeting members considered the Council's response to the Section 114 Notice and the delivery of savings by services within the Committee's terms of reference.
- 8.7 Planned Procurement Activities Reports: The Committee has continued to consider the Planned Procurement Activities Report as a standing item.
- 8.8 Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group: At the November meeting of the Finance and Resources OSC the Committee agreed the terms of reference for the Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group. The Task and Finish Group met 7 times between November and January to consider the savings proposals and the development of the 2024/25 and 2025/26 budget. The report and recommendations from this Task and Finish Group will be considered by the Finance and Resources OSC at its meeting on 24 January and the agreed recommendations will be included in the budget report to Cabinet and to City Council. The Executive will provide a response to the recommendations.
- 8.9 Outcomes:
- Scrutiny of the Council's procurement activities.
 - The Committee has carried out its role within the governance arrangements for Oracle.

- Updating members on the issues relating to Equal Pay and the implementation of the Pay Equity Scheme.
- The Committee scrutinised the delivery of 2023/24 savings during September, October and November meetings.
- The work of the Scrutiny Committee underpins the delivery of the Council's priorities.

9 Health and Adult Social Care OSC

- 9.1 Work Programme July – November: At the July committee meeting the Health and Adult OSC considered the preparation for the pilot CQC inspection of BCC Adult Social Care that took place during August. The Committee made 3 recommendations and were keen to be involved in the inspection process. The HASC Chair met with CQC Inspectors as part of the BCC pilot inspection and in November the Chair was interviewed as part of the CQC pilot inspection of the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board.
- 9.2 In July, the Committee also considered the governance arrangements for the Integrated Care System and focussed on the role of the Place Board. The Committee made 3 recommendations to the Chief Executive of the Integrated Care Board (ICB).
- 9.3 At the September meeting the Committee considered the draft ICB Primary Care Enabling Strategy which aimed to ensure a system-wide focus and response to improve patient satisfaction and address workload issues for primary care. Members were also informed that the GP provider support unit has been created.
- 9.4 Following the report to Cabinet in July that set out the in-year budget gap and the Section 114 Notices issued in September, and as agreed by Co-ordinating OSC, the committee received reports on the delivery of savings that had been agreed as part of the 2023/24 Budget at the September, October and November meetings. At the September meeting the Committee received a report on the delivery of savings at the end of Quarter 1. The subsequent update to the October meeting reported on delivery of savings to the end of Q2 and assurance was given that agreed Adult Social Care savings would be delivered. Additional information was requested regarding the Adult Transformation Programme and was reported to the November Committee meeting. Members were informed that while some savings in the Adult Transformation Programme were high risk it was anticipated that other savings would offset this cost by year end.
- 9.5 The Committee meeting in October also received a report from the ICB on access to Community Dental services. Members considered health equity in dental services, the shortage of NHS dentists and difficulties patients experience in registering with an NHS dental practice, public health oral health needs and that national dental contract reform is under consideration. At the same meeting the Committee also received an update on the implementation of Consultation on the Sports and Physical Exercise Activity Strategies. This was also part of the

Committee's work to monitor the implementation of the recommendations from the Scrutiny Inquiry into the Legacy of the Commonwealth Games.

- 9.6 The November Committee meeting also considered reports on Urgent Care Treatment Centres and a report on Quality from the ICB. The Quality report provided the Committee with information to decide which services or parts of the NHS system should be reported to future meetings. The following issues were identified: maternity and neo-natal improvement plans, Urgent and Emergency Care, mental health and leadership and cultural issues.
- 9.7 It was agreed at the start of the year that the Committee would receive reports on services commissioned by BCC when contracts are reviewed or to be re-tendered. The contract for Sexual Health Services went out to tender in the autumn and feedback from the Committee was provided to inform this process based on the discussion from the report received in February 2023.
- 9.8 The Chair of the Health and Adult Social Care OSC is a member of the Task and Finish Group that has been established by the Finance and Resources OSC to consider work to address the budget gap in 2023/24 and the budget proposals for 24/25. Q2 Performance Monitoring for Adult Social Care, Birmingham Safeguarding Adult Board Annual Report 2022/23 and an update on implementation and impact of the Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health Inequalities Review (BLACHIR)
- 9.9 Work Programme in January - February: The Scrutiny Inquiry report on children and young people's mental health was considered at City Council on 9 January and the 5 recommendations to the Executive were agreed.
- 9.10 During January members of the Committee visited the Warren Farm Urgent Treatment Centre. At the January committee meeting members considered the Birmingham Adult Safeguarding Board Annual Report, an update on implementation and impact of the Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health Inequalities Review (BLACHIR), the Scrutiny Inquiry report on children and young people's mental health to consider the recommendations to the NHS and an update on the Warren Farm Urgent Treatment Centre from the ICB.
- 9.11 The Committee will hold an informal meeting in February to review the work programme following the recommendations in the Governance Stabilisation Plan. The updated Health Scrutiny regulations are due to be published by the end of January and this informal meeting will also be an opportunity to review this.
- 9.12 Outcomes:
- The work of the Scrutiny Committee has contributed to 8 of the Council's Corporate Priorities.
 - The Committee responded to the financial challenges facing the Council and included scrutiny of delivery of 2023/24 savings during September, October and November meetings.

- The Chair of the Health and Adult Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee is a member of the Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group that has been established by the Finance and Resources OSC.
- Contribution to CQC Pilot Inspections of BCC Adult Social Care and Birmingham and also Solihull Integrated Care Board.
- The Committee has submitted comments to inform the procurement of Sexual Health Services and has received responses from the Director of Adult Social Care and the ICB to 6 recommendations made at Committee meetings.
- The Committee has made 25 recommendations as part of the Inquiry into children and young people's mental health, 5 recommendations to BCC Executive have been accepted and 20 to the Integrated Care Board to be considered at the Committee meeting in January.
- Assurance provided on the quality and leadership in Birmingham Adult Social Care services following the CQC pilot inspection which rated the service as Good.
- The Chair of the Committee met with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care to discuss the Committee's work programme.
- The Chair of the Committee was a member of the Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.

10 Homes OSC Work Programme July – January:

- 10.1 Following the Regulatory Notice issued by the Regulator of Social Housing against the Council in May 2023 the Committee has considered how it can play a more substantive role in providing oversight, scrutiny and productive challenge to the City Housing directorate whilst moving towards compliance.
- 10.2 In September 2023, the Committee reviewed the progress made by the directorate in addressing the Regulator's concerns. These concerns principally focused on a breach of two Consumer Standards: Home Standard and Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard. The Committee also considered the arrangements put in place by the directorate to prepare for the new proactive inspection regime.
- 10.3 As a result, the Committee agreed to introduce landlord compliance sessions on a quarterly basis. The first of these single themed meetings will take place in January 2024. In November 2023, the Committee undertook training to help them to prepare for this first session. This training was provided by Campbell Tickell, an external provider working with City Housing and with extensive experience of working with the Regulator.
- 10.4 In light of the progress outlined, together with the Council's wider financial challenges, the Committee has reconsidered its inquiry on improving council housing standards. The Committee was committed to delivering recommendations which would add value. It was reassured that the inquiry could take a narrower focus, and it has now agreed to focus specifically on improving standards of voids. Evidence gathering for this inquiry has now commenced and will conclude in April 2024. A report to City Council is anticipated later in the year.

- 10.5 Following the report to Cabinet in July that set out the in-year budget gap and the Section 114 Notices issued in September, and as agreed by Co-ordinating OSC, the committee received reports on the delivery of savings that has been agreed as part of the 2023/24 Budget at the September, October and November meetings. At the September meeting the Committee received a report on the delivery of savings at the end of Quarter 1. In October, the Committee considered specifically the savings identified as undeliverable. The Committee was advised how a large portion of these savings had been built on the B&B reduction plan and re-design for Housing Solutions and Support. However, as a result of the combined impact of the pandemic and cost of living crisis, homeless presentations and demand for Temporary Accommodation has increased significantly, and a new reduction plan has been agreed with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. In November, the Committee questioned the impact of the financial challenges on the proposed investment programme and sought reassurances about rent collections.
- 10.6 In October, the Committee also received a progress report on the Exempt Accommodation Inquiry recommendations. The Committee agreed with the assessment by the Cabinet Member of how individual recommendations had progressed. A further progress report has been requested for Spring 2024.
- 10.7 Homes Work Programme February - April: the Committee is undertaking a refresh of its work programme to ensure it aligns with the recommendation from the Governance Review. Specific areas to consider for March and April will be determined through this refresh. In April, the Committee will be carrying out its second landlord compliance session. The Committee will also be continuing to progress and conclude its evidence gathering for its inquiry on improving standards around voids.
- 10.8 Outcomes:
- The work of the Scrutiny Committee has contributed to 4 of the Council's Corporate Priorities.
 - The Committee has agreed to introduce single themed Committees focused on landlord compliance on a quarterly basis. The Committee has undertaken training to prepare for this.
 - The Committee responded to the financial challenges facing the Council and included scrutiny of delivery of 2023/24 savings during September, October and November meetings.
 - The Chair of the Homes Overview and Scrutiny Committee is a member of the Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group that has been established by the Finance and Resources OSC.
 - The Committee has reviewed progress on the Exempt Accommodation Inquiry.

11 Neighbourhoods OSC

- 11.1 Street Scene: In July and October, the committee examined approaches taken to reduce fly tipping across the city and sought to understand enforcement powers and the impact of initiatives, such as Grime Watch. Discussions led to the committee recommending the Directorate undertake additional analysis into fly tipping to inform the development of a fly tipping prevention plan in consultation with the Committee. A further recommendation sought to increase the data provided to the committee and ward councillors from the Land Audit Management System. The Committee also examined progress made on the Cleaner Streets Scrutiny Inquiry recommendations with the Cabinet Member for Environment
- 11.2 In January, using the new flexible approach to scrutiny, a committee 'waste workshop' was held, providing a demonstration of 'in cab' technology, and detailed discussions about the use of data and analytics, and how communication with Ward Councillors on street scene and waste issues could be further developed.
- 11.3 Crime and Disorder: Neighbourhoods OSC is the designated Crime and Disorder Committee. As part of discharging these duties, in July it considered the outcomes of the review into the structure of the community safety Local Partnership Delivery Groups which had led to a revised operating model and rebranding to Local Community Safety Partnerships. The committee sought reassurance of ward councillor engagement with the partnerships for the Committee to review. In December, the Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities presented the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership annual report, and the Committee approved the report.
- 11.4 In August, Neighbourhoods and Education, Children and Young People OSC members held a hybrid meeting to discuss and contribute to the development of the Annual Youth Justice Plan before it was presented to City Council.
- 11.5 In November, the Committee provided comments on the Draft Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2024+ as part of the consultation process and asked for regular updates on its implementation.
- 11.6 Budget Savings: From September the Committee began scrutinising the Q1 and Q2 2023-24 budget savings position and this work intensified following the issuing of the S114 Notices, the announcement of Government intervention and focus on financial recovery. The Chair of the Neighbourhoods OSC is a member of the Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group established to consider the work to address the budget gap and budget proposals for 2024/25. The Committee has made suggestions for additional savings, and sought further clarifications about risk ratings for achieving savings targets and project descriptions. The committee requested an audit trail of the decision-making processes for cross-departmental projects that did not realise planned savings and received confirmation the lessons learnt would be brought forward when establishing clear accountabilities for savings in future cross directorate projects.

11.7 Outcomes:

- The work of the Scrutiny Committee has contributed to 4 of the Council's Corporate Priorities.
- The Committee responded to the financial challenges facing the Council and included scrutiny of delivery of 2023/24 savings during September, October and November meetings.
- The Chair of the Neighbourhoods OSC is a member of the Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group established to consider the work to address the budget gap and budget proposals for 2024/25
- The Committee has fulfilled its duties at the Council's Crime and Disorder Committee, contributing to the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership Annual Report, the Domestic Abuse Prevention Strategy 2024+ and the Annual Youth Justice Plan.

12 Sustainability and Transport OSC

- 12.1 The Committee has been kept informed and updated on the developments for the procurement of a new Highways Management and Monitoring PFI contract with regular briefings for Members. This has included feedback to the Sponsorship Board to inform the report that was presented to Cabinet for consideration in September. Members considered a report in December which provided an update on the Government's decision on the Outline Business Case (OBC) setting out the Council's proposals for the revised Highways Maintenance PFI arrangement. This followed the formal notification that the existing PFI funding commitment would be withdrawn.
- 12.2 A key piece of work of the committee this year has been an Inquiry into Active Travel, and which has considered the key question 'How can Birmingham deliver Active Travel schemes quicker and make city roads safer for all users?'. Evidence gathering for this inquiry has now concluded. This has included site visits to look at schemes in the city in Selly Oak, Edgbaston and the City Centre, as well as sessions with stakeholders, council service areas and other local authorities. A report of the findings and recommendations is due to be agreed by the Committee in Spring 2024.
- 12.3 Following the report to Cabinet in July that set out the in-year budget gap and the Section 114 Notices issued in September, and as agreed by Co-ordinating OSC, the committee received reports on the delivery of savings that had been agreed as part of the 2023/24 Budget at its September meeting. For the savings related to this Committee, Members were assured regarding the progress of savings to achieve their targets in 2023-24. Members received information to reiterate that a significant proportion of the funding for transport projects within the capital programme are externally funded and ringfenced.

- 12.4 In December, the Committee considered a report on the progress made to date on the Clean Air Strategy, the new regional Air Quality Framework and future steps. Members focused on how to maximise this investment and make efficiency savings by better co-ordination between relevant council services in local areas.
- 12.5 Sustainability and Transport Work Programme February - April: the Committee is undertaking a refresh of its work programme in January to ensure it aligns with the recommendation from the Governance Review. Specific areas to consider for March and April will be determined through this refresh.
- 12.6 Outcomes:
- The work of the Scrutiny Committee has contributed to 5 of the Council's Corporate Priorities.
 - The Committee responded to the financial challenges facing the Council and included scrutiny of delivery of 2023/24 savings during its September meeting.
 - The Chair of the Sustainability and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee is a member of the Budget Scrutiny Task and Finish Group that has been established by the Finance and Resources OSC.
 - The Committee informed the outline business case to Government for the Highways PFI scheme.
 - The Committee made suggestions on how services could better work together and maximise investment through the Air Quality Schemes

13 Birmingham and Sandwell Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Joint HOSC)

- 13.1 At the September committee meeting the Birmingham and Sandwell Joint HOSC has continued to receive updates on the development of the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital. Members considered the services that would be delivered at the hospital and existing sites, patients and public engagement, pathways to employment and transport.
- 13.2 Members considered a report on Patient Experience at the Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust. Members considered the need to ensure the patient experience programme met the needs of the diverse community and continued to work with carers and patient groups.
- 13.3 The committee received a report on changes to day surgery at the Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust and ongoing communication with patients.

Outcomes:

- Update on the development of the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital and engagement with the public.
- Update on Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust patient experience programme.

- Update on changes to day surgery at the Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust.

14 Birmingham and Solihull Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Joint HOSC)

- 14.1 At the July meeting of the Birmingham and Solihull Joint HOSC members received an update from Professor Mike Bewick and the ICB provided an update on the independent reviews of University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Trust into patient safety, the Well Led Review by NHS England and the Culture Review. During this item the Committee received a deputation from a family member of a patient who had experienced issues relating to the reviews. During the discussion with the Chief Executive of the Trust members were informed of arrangements to strengthen the Trust Board, staff engagement, investment in the Solihull Urgent Treatment Centre and workforce training, recruitment and sickness rates and patient confidence in the services.
- 14.2 The Committee also received an update on the roles and responsibilities of the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the Place Committee. The standing item on Performance against Finance and Recovery Plans was also considered at the July and October Joint HOSC meetings, including finance challenges, waiting times and challenges surrounding industrial action.
- 14.3 At the October committee meeting Members received reports on the CQC report and Section 29a Warning Notice in relation to maternity services at Heartlands Hospital and the Integrated Care System's approach to managing flow and escalation during the Winter.

Outcomes:

- Updates on the independent reviews into University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Trust.
- Update on the CQC report on maternity services at Heartlands Hospital and the Neo-natal and maternity service improvement plan signed off by the UHB Trust Board and ICB Board.
- The ICB approach to managing Winter pressures including discharge from hospital and support for patients with mental health needs.

15 West Midlands Police and Crime Panel

- 15.1 The regional scrutiny body of the West Midland authorities has a dual role to 'support and challenge' the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner. It is administered by Birmingham Scrutiny Office through a ringfenced Home Office grant.
- 15.2 In July, the Panel conducted a Confirmation Hearing for the new Chief Finance Officer for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The Panel has a key

role in the appointment process of senior positions required to question the preferred candidate to assess their suitability.

15.3 In September, the Panel examined the delivery of Police and Crime Plan objectives to improve road safety and sought assurance from the Police and Crime Commissioner on the outcomes of his partnership work with Local Authorities, and how he was holding the Chief Constable to account on action undertaken by West Midlands Police.

15.4 The Panel also welcomed a public question at the meeting about the scrutiny of the Police and Crime Plan objective to maintain Police Community Support Officer numbers and efforts to maintain the wellbeing of PCSOs where capacity was stretched.

15.5 In November, the Panel scrutinised progress of Police and Crime Plan objectives by reviewing the Commissioner's Annual Report.

15.6 In December and January, the Panel reacted to the publication of the HMICFRS notice of concern and PEEL inspection report of West Midlands Police and sought assurance from the Police and Crime Commissioner on actions to address the findings and his oversight of improvements.

15.7 In January, the Panel scrutinised the Commissioner's police and crime plan commitments to tackle drugs, including the diversionary and prevention work to address the underlying causes of substance misuse that is a key driver of acquisitive crime.

15.8 Members participated in an 'Budget Workshop' to build their understanding of police finance to inform their review of the Police and Crime Commissioner's precept proposals in February.

15.9 Outcomes

- The Panel has fulfilled statutory tasks it is required to undertake, including a Confirmation Hearing for a senior appointment and review of the Commissioner's Annual Report. Members are preparing for its review of the Policing Precept in February.
- The Panel has examined key strategic policing, crime and community safety topics of public interest and including Road Safety, Tackling Drugs and the HMICFRS PEEL Inspection of West Midlands Police, where members have scrutinised the Commissioner on behalf of West Midlands communities.

16 Legal Implications

16.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

17 Financial Implications

17.1 There are no procurement or financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

18 Public Sector Equality Duty

18.1 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.

18.2 All Overview and Scrutiny Committees ensure they address these duties by considering them during work programme development, and specifically the scoping of work, evidence gathering and making recommendations. This has included 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; Whether any positive opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and/or good relations between people are being realised.

18.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Committees 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.

19 Other Implications

19.1 The work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees contributes towards:

- The Birmingham City Council Corporate Plan 2022-2026, its Grand Challenges and Strategic Priorities and Outcomes.
- The Governance Stabilisation Action Plan

20 Background Papers

20.1 Council Constitution, May 2023.

20.2 Birmingham City Council's Overview and Scrutiny Framework, July 202

20.3 Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme Reports July 2023 – January 2024.

21 Appendices

21.1 None