

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

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

1400 hours on Thursday 11 November 2021

Main Hall, Birmingham & Midland Institute

Action Notes

Present:

Councillor Marje Bridle (Chair)

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

Also Present:

Councillor John Cotton, Chair, Birmingham Community Safety Partnership/Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equalities

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

Chief Superintendent Steve Graham, Vice Chair, Birmingham Community Safety Partnership/NPU Commander, Birmingham West (on-line)

Paul McKeown, Trident Reach

Pamela Powis, Senior Service Manager, Safer Places

Stephen Philpott, Acting Head of Housing Solutions and Support

Darren Share, Assistant Director, Street Scene

David Watson, Trident Reach

Jayne Bowles, Scrutiny Officer

Christian Scade, Interim Head of Scrutiny

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) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Penny Holbrook and Mike Sharpe.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

4. ACTION NOTES AND ACTION TRACKER

(See documents 1 and 2)

The following points were raised regarding outstanding actions:

- The Job Description for the Enforcement and Engagement Officer role and “day in the life paper” to be sent to Members;
- The additional performance monitoring information that had been requested to be included in the next report to committee.

RESOLVED:

- The action notes of the meeting held on 14 October 2021 were agreed;
- The action tracker was noted.

5. BIRMINGHAM COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021

(See document 3)

Councillor John Cotton, Chair of the Birmingham Community Safety Partnership (BCSP)/Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, Community Safety and Equalities, and Pamela Powis, Senior Service Manager, Safer Places, were in attendance for this item. Chief Superintendent Steve Graham, Vice Chair of the BCSP/NPU Commander, Birmingham West attended the meeting remotely on Teams.

Councillor Cotton introduced the report and highlighted the key points. In addition, the following points were made:

- Apologies had been submitted by Waqar Ahmed, Assistant Director, Community Safety and Resilience, who was unable to attend due to Covid;
- Councillor Cotton wanted to put on record his thanks to all the partners who had contributed to the work of the Partnership, stressing that although the council hosts, it is a joint endeavour with partners and the importance of that partnership comes through in the report;
- The annual report presented 12 months ago reflected the unique circumstances of the pandemic. This year has been slightly more business as usual and they have been able to deliver a number of projects and interventions, although it has been a period of transition, making some year to year statistical comparisons more difficult;
- There have been some challenges as we emerge from the pandemic;
- There is a lot more to do but there is a shared commitment across all partners to keep people in the city safe.

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

- In response to concerns expressed regarding Police presence and the need to be more proactive, particularly in light of recent incidents in the gay village, Members were told that the Police do try not to be entirely reactionary and there is a neighbourhood team working around Hurst Street and with the venues;
- With regard to the recent incidents, they did not just put a response in place, it was an enhanced response – a “police station” has been established for anyone to discuss concerns with police officers and PCSOs;
- Sometimes bad things do happen but they then try to deliver a first class service for victims;
- Sometimes they get things wrong and they would like to see more officers in the area, but there are many demands;
- They want to make sure they have sustainable plans to deal with all issues in the community, eg tackling hate crime;
- They have some long term solutions, eg to stop car cruising, but cannot promise an increase in the number of officers;
- There will be a report presented to Cabinet shortly regarding the renewal of CCTV provision and one of the challenges laid out to officers is potential spots around the gay village where they might be able to put additional cameras;
- In response to a question about mobile CCTV cameras and how they are deployed, it was explained that there has to be evidence to support the need for a camera in a specific location and then consultation with residents on that road. If agreed, then a re-deployable camera can be issued. However, it was noted there are only 11 for the city and if all 11 were out and there was an urgent demand they would have to re-assess. There is a community safety operational group, which takes a city-wide approach with partners, and would make that decision;
- With regard to the supported housing pilot, whilst this is welcomed there were concerns that the report makes it all sound fine when that is far from the case;
- Members were told there is no complacency around the scale of the problem, which is a national scandal, and there is a change needed in the regulatory framework;
- Where there is evidence to “name and shame” poor providers, this is being done, and reference was made to the recent closure order, which had been publicised;
- The scale of the issue of modern day slavery was noted, with an alarming 60 cases a month being recorded and Members feared that is the tip of the iceberg;
- The Youth Endowment Fund, particularly how it is used, was queried. This is Government funding which the council had to bid for and is based very much on Police evidence. There is also some broader work being done around youth engagement;
- There was a discussion about the Local Partnership Delivery Groups (LPDGs) and the importance of local councillors who are not members being notified

when meetings are taking place and having access to agendas and minutes so they can raise issues;

- It was also suggested that it would be a good idea to have substitute members in place;
- In terms of the geography of the LPDGs, although it would be good to go back to smaller areas, in reality there are only 6 officers at their disposal and so the city has been divided as best they can with the resources available;
- However, they are looking at place-based pilots in Lozells and Sparkbrook to see if they can address a smaller area;
- It was noted that the issue of travellers in the city was not mentioned in the report and Members were told that this sits within Regulation and Enforcement and that an engagement partnership was being set up with the traveller community to address some of these issues;
- With regard to measuring the additional value of the BCSP, at the moment the performance information in the quarterly reports to Cabinet is being re-visited and they are looking at all Police data and data held within the internal CSP team to get some baselines and targets around issues.

RESOLVED:-

- The report was noted.

6. BEGGING

(See document 4)

Councillor Cotton introduced the report, with Stephen Philpott, Acting Head of Housing Solutions and Support, and Paul McKeown and David Watson from Trident Reach, also in attendance.

The following points were highlighted:

- This is a major concern for residents, and also potentially dangerous for the people involved, and requires a response based on enforcement where necessary. However, the hand of support and friendship is offered first and there are strengthened partnership mechanisms to deal with these issues;
- There is additional funding for two new Intervention Officers;
- The Change into Action campaign has been re-launched, accompanied by targeted work on traffic light begging;
- There has been some success as regards getting people to engage with support services, but they will enforce when they have to;
- There is some reform needed, particularly the Vagrancy Act;
- Work with partners will continue and any further work by this committee would be welcomed to help develop a coherent response on these issues.

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

- Members welcomed the report and a view was expressed that anecdotally it seems modern slavery is a significant driver and cause of this problem and if that is the case we need to be getting to the gangs who are responsible;

- It was felt that the reason it goes on is that people hand money over and more needs to be done to promote alternative giving;
- Consideration should also be given to how local councillors can help to get that message out effectively and there are posters and further information which can be sent out to all councillors;
- There is a Modern Slavery Co-ordinator, grant funded, who does an awful lot of work with West Midlands Police and the Regional Organised Crime Unit and whilst the Police are aware of certain organisations, they are also aware that there are families who use begging as a business and this was prevalent in the Romanian community;
- Streetlink is really good in terms of going out and engaging with people and offering support and alongside that there has to be enforcement action;
- It was pointed out that a minority of beggars are rough sleeping and the majority are getting benefits;
- Members expressed their thanks for all the work that is being done.

RESOLVED:-

- The report was noted.

7. PROGRESS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION: REDUCING FLY-TIPPING

(See document 5)

Councillor John O'Shea, Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Parks, and Darren Share, Assistant Director, Street Scene, attended for this item.

The Chair began by highlighting the need for regular updates to make sure everything is progressing and then invited the Cabinet Member to introduce the report and in doing so Councillor O'Shea confirmed that they were moving forward in all major aspects of the report, which demonstrates the importance of scrutiny work and he hoped for something similar this year with the work the committee is doing on litter bins.

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

- Members agreed the Mobile Household Recycling Centres (MHRCs) were working well but asked that officers understand the importance of working with local members to identify locations;
- It was agreed that local councillors should be consulted and that locations should be selected which are easy for both crews and residents to get to;
- The importance of giving people as much notice as possible was stressed and the timeliness of getting leaflets out was raised. Members were told that getting maps printed had delayed information going out. They are now working to get that information more quickly to get leaflets, map and location details out at the same time;
- It was agreed that a point needs to be reached where three weeks' notice is given and with regard to scheduling, the initial announcement had been one

visit to each ward each year, however they don't think any ward will only get one a year, there should be more than that;

- They do need to review the times, however councillors have indicated that early starts are welcomed;
- They have seen a downturn in fly-tipping but warned that it is normal to see a downturn at this time of year and if the MHRCs are working it is not thought the impact will be seen until spring next year;
- It was acknowledged that there might be some trade waste going in there but the aim is to take waste off the streets of the city and that does at least mean it is not being dumped;
- Reinforcements to the Enforcement Team will mean they can catch more of those people who are not getting rid of their rubbish correctly;
- The timeliness
- With regard to the "Wall of Shame/Grimewatch", two cameras have already been deployed in two very different locations and are capturing images;
- There is no date as yet for the first video but the last bit of legal work has now been completed, with external advice on policy having been sought from QC;
- In response to a question about how to book slots at Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) over the 'phone, Members were told that people are being encouraged to book online if they can and it is possible to book a slot on someone else's behalf if they have their details;
- Perry Barr HRC is closed for the next year or so and it is useful to be able to direct people to locations with spare capacity;
- They haven't run into any problems with sites running out of spaces – they did come close on bank holiday weekends but there was still capacity;
- Reference was made to the recommendation in the report to look at free bulky collections for disabled/vulnerable people where MHRCs won't make much of a difference unless they are parked outside their houses;
- Members were told that this had been looked at but would be a struggle financially and had therefore been considered unachievable due to the impact on the budget;
- There is some work being done with Keep Britain Tidy around putting stickers on fly-tipping to say it is under investigation, which was welcomed as this does mean local residents can see it is being acted on;
- With regard to the effectiveness of the new Enforcement and Engagement Officers, Members were told that it was too early to report back on their effectiveness and that a longer term view would be needed;
- With regard to Recommendation 3 regarding the use of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs), Members did not agree with the tracking assessment of "1" (Achieved Fully) as more work needs to be done and the assessment should therefore be "3" (Not Achieved, Progress Made);
- Councillor O'Shea responded that the review had been completed and suggested inviting the Chair of the Licensing and Public Protection Committee (LPPC) to address the issue of FPNs;
- Members agreed that the Chair of LPPC should be invited to a future meeting and that perhaps the discussion could be widened to include littering FPNs as well.

RESOLVED:

- Chair of Licensing and Public Protection Committee to be invited to a future meeting;
- The report was noted.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

(See document 6)

It was agreed that an informal session would be arranged to discuss the work programme in more detail.

RESOLVED:

- Informal session to be arranged;
- The work programme was noted.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Noted.

10. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)

None.

11. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

12. 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.

The meeting ended at 1603 hours.