

Birmingham City Council

Report to City Council

3 December 2024



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| Title: | MOTIONS FOR DEBATE FROM INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS |
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| Authorised by: | Marie Rosenthal, Interim City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer Legal and Governance (Council Management) |
| Is this a Key Decision? | Not Applicable |
| If this is a Key Decision, is this decision listed on the Forward Plan? | Not Applicable |
| Reason(s) why not included on the Forward Plan: | Not Applicable |
| Is this a Late Report? | No |
| Reason(s) why Late: | Not Applicable |
| Is this decision eligible for 'call in?' | Not Applicable |
| If not eligible, please provide reason(s): | Not Applicable |
| Wards: | Not Applicable |

Does this report contain exempt or confidential information?

No

Has this decision been included on the Notification of Intention to consider Matters in Private?

Not Applicable

Reasons why not included on the Notification:

Not Applicable

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 To consider the following Motions of which notice has been given in accordance with Council Procedure Rules (section B4.4 G of the Constitution).

2 NOTICES OF MOTION

A. Councillors Robert Alden and Darius Sandhu have given notice of the following Notice of Motion:-

“Council notes that

- Much of Birmingham’s public realm is plagued by ‘Street Scars’, where utility companies leave tarmac streaks through paving slabs and other important parts of the street scene
- Fines set out in legislation around Street Scars have been unchanged since 1991, where the fine for failing to implement a permanent reinstatement was set at £2,500
- The work done by Create Streets in analysing the root of these problems and outlining potential policy solutions, are being put into practice by other local authorities such as the London Borough of Southwark and Surrey County Council
- Taking proper care of the public realm is integral to the social and economic vitality of Birmingham and its district centres
- Despite spending tens of millions on high-profile public realm schemes in recent years, including Centenary Square and Victoria Square, evidence of street scarring is already apparent in many of these which has not be repaired within the statutory 6 month timeframe
- The Council began designing and consulting on its roadworks permit scheme in late 2016 and introduced it in 2021. When a permit scheme has been in operation for 12 months, the council can use powers under s74A of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991, to introduce a Lane Rental Scheme which gives additional powers and tools to minimise disruption and improve the quality of roadworks. Whilst calls have been made for this to be implemented in Birmingham, no visible progress has been made on carrying out the necessary actions

Council believes that:

- The £2500 fine limit fine for failing to implement a permanent reinstatement, set more than 30 years ago, is woefully inadequate and a deterrent against street scarring

- More needs to be done both nationally and locally to protect the public realm from street scarring
- Lane rental schemes can encourage works on highways to be completed to the required standard first time, and with permanent high-quality reinstatements to reduce the need to return to the site

Council resolves to:

Write to Government to ask for updated legislation and regulation that includes:

- Increasing the fines that councils can impose to a level that serves as an effective deterrent and indexing this to inflation to ensure it remains so going forward
- A clearer definition of 'permanent reinstatement' that includes 'like for like' as defined by local authorities, rather than at the discretion of the company carry out the repairs
- Decreasing the time that permanent reinstatement has to be completed from 6 to 3 months
- Extending the considerate constructors scheme to street repairs and include very prompt like-for-like replacement

Ask the Executive to:

- Bring forward proposals for a Lane Rental Scheme to manage roadworks by March 2025
- Review other measures to promote high-quality reinstatement, including looking at other local authorities and working with Create Streets to ensure that adequate policies are in place such as clear street design codes covering the materials that should be used in different areas.
- Improve reporting processes for residents and council staff to highlight street repairs where permanent reinstatement has not been completed within the statutory timescales

B. Councillors Morriam Jan and Izzy Knowles have given notice of the following Notice of Motion:-

“Council notes that:

In the year 2022/23, 41% of Birmingham children were in relative poverty – over double the national average.

The rise in child poverty in Birmingham has been exacerbated by local and national factors, however certain pressures are more prevalent in Birmingham versus other areas of the country. These include housing shortages, larger families and poorer health outcomes.

The effects have been exacerbated by the council's recent financial problems have resulted in a 10% council tax increase, a further 10% rise planned, and a significant reduction in services. The impact is felt most by the poorest families.

The effects of poverty in childhood set a blueprint for that child's life. These effects impact health, wellbeing and outcomes.

The recent Birmingham Live report on child poverty set out practical moves that could reduce child poverty. Birmingham City Council, as the main provider of local services, can and should take a lead role in this.

It is incumbent on this council, even during times of significant financial strain, to do what it can to alleviate poverty and the causes of poverty.

With current restrictions in mind, this motion intends to be fully implementable, and focuses on three core improvements:

- Lobbying the government and other local politicians to bring about meaningful financial changes.
- Improving access to information so that families can more easily receive information on benefits and support.
- Exploring opportunities with third parties and partner organisations.

This council therefore resolves to:

- Agree an official position that the two-child benefit cap is disadvantageous to families, and disproportionately so in Birmingham where we have a much higher-than-average number of large families. 23.4% of families have more than 2 children in Birmingham versus the national average of 15%.
- Lobby WMCA Mayor Richard Parker to keep his pre-election pledge to request funding for free school meals for 66,000 West Midlands children, who are currently in poverty but not eligible for free school meals. School meals provide a vital source of nourishment for children, especially those in poverty. Schools provide an environment where children can eat at a table with cutlery: something that a growing number of children in poverty and/ or temporary accommodation, cannot experience outside of schools.

- Investigate the opportunity to recruit a child poverty commissioner who focuses on removing the obstacles that perpetuate child poverty. The commissioner will have full access to all corridors of power and will advise the council independently on practical ways to reduce child poverty.
- Prioritise families with school age children who must take up temporary accommodation, to ensure that the child remains within commuting distance of school, defined as one bus route or within walking distance, and ensure those families are receiving the maximum support available to them.

Develop user friendly and intuitive webpages, which can easily be used and viewed on mobile phones, to:

Promote the city's youth service offering. Allow the youth club offer to be viewed by geography, by need e.g. SEND, or by age bracket. Include links to community and partner organisations that offer youth clubs and add contact information so that new services can be included easily.

- A fact-file of each establishment and club to be included with photos and videos, age restrictions, accessibility, membership and ongoing costs, facilities and contact information.
- Promote the city's offer for care experienced children and care leavers and ensure that it is easy to find and use.
- Promote financial and practical support for families and people who are struggling, so that all support is in a space that is easy to find and use. Include links to local foodbanks, uniform banks and financial support."

3 IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS

Finance

3.1 There are none arising from this report.

Legal

3.2 There are none arising from this report.

Equalities

3.3 There are none arising from this report.

APPENDICES

None.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.