

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Extraordinary Overview and Scrutiny Management Board



13 March 2017 at 5pm

DISCLAIMER

The attached Minutes are DRAFT. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information and statements and decisions recorded in them, their status will remain that of a draft until such time as they are confirmed as a correct record at the subsequent meeting

Members Present;

Charlie Bolton, Tom Brook, Geoff Gollop, Gill Kirk (in part), Councillor Mhairi Threlfall (in part), Gary Hopkins, Anthony Negus, Olly Mead, Graham Morris, Steve Pearce, Brenda Massey and Clive Stevens (for Jude English)

Officers in Attendance;

Anna Klonowski, Chief Executive; Denise Murray, Service Director – Finance; Nancy Rollason, Service Manager – Legal; Andrea Dell, Service Manager, Democratic Engagement; Lucy Fleming Scrutiny Co-ordinator; Alex MinShull, Sustainable City and Climate Change Service Manager; Robert Swift, Project Manager; James Snelgrove, Business Process Analyst; Hannah Sturman, Deputy Head of Mayor's Office.

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed all Members to the meeting and explained the evacuation procedure in the event of an emergency.

2. Apologies for Absence;

Apologies for absence were noted from Councillor English. Councillor Stevens substituted.

3. Declarations of Interest;

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes and Action Sheets of the Previous Meetings;



8 December 2016;
12 January 2017;
19 January 2017;

The minutes were approved as a correct record. The updated action sheets were noted.

RESOLVED; that the minutes be approved.

5. Chair's Business

The Chair advised that the order of the agenda would be amended to accommodate guest speakers, with items 12 and 13 being taken after item 6.

The Board noted that Councillor Steve Pearce would take the Chair for items 14 and 16 (external reviews of Green Capital and the Council's overspend for 16/17) due to Councillor Gollop's previous role on the Executive.

6. Public Forum

No public forum items were received.

7. P8 and P9 Finance Updates;

Councillor Gill Kirk left the meeting.

The Director of Finance introduced the report highlighting that the forecasted overspend had reduced from £17m in Period 7 to £11m in Period 9. Whilst the downward trend was welcomed, officers were working to secure additional savings and a spending freeze was still in place.

Members went on to comment on the report and ask for additional information in a number of areas. The following is a summary of the discussion;

- The changes to the Council Tax base had not resulted in additional funding in 17/18 for the Council since there was a one-year lag on calculations.
- The report included a number of references to one off savings, which related to the spending freeze that had been imposed in order to deliver a balanced budget.
- The Government's Spring Budget had indicated that there would be additional funding available for Social Care. Whilst this would be 'new' money, the actual amount had not been confirmed. It should also be viewed in the context that funding could be taken away from the Council in other areas.
- Fees charged by the Planning department could be reviewed in order to raise additional income, but monies would be ring fenced to specific areas and could not be added to the



General Fund.

- The advice around financial planning for severe winters was to assume typical conditions and to use reserves to deal with any extremes.
- When the budget for 17/18 had been set by Full Council, additional funding had been allocated to provide learning and development opportunities for Members and colleagues.

It was agreed that additional information would be provided to clarify details around longstanding social care debts (more than 120 days) owed to the Council by residents, including the type, nature and trend.

RESOLVED; that the report be noted.

8. Process for Dealing with Exempt Materials

Members were advised that the procedure for dealing with exempt materials would be amended to enable the relevant Chair (s) of Scrutiny to be consulted before the Monitoring Officer made a final decision on whether material could be released into the public domain. The Board welcomed the revised arrangements.

RESOLVED; that the revised procedure be noted.

9. Mayor's Forward Plan

The Board were advised that the Forward Plan was in the process of being updated so that it showed more decisions in advance. The work around the Decision Pathway (see below) would be instrumental in driving this forward. Members supported the initiative since advance notice of forthcoming Key Decisions would enable Scrutiny to plan its work programme more effectively.

RESOLVED; That the update be noted

10. Scrutiny Work Programme

The updated Work Programme was noted.

RESOLVED; that the revised Work Programme be noted.

11. Decision Pathway

Members were advised that the Mayor had introduced a new Decision Pathway, which set a framework for the route in which new initiatives (known as 'ideas') would be considered and adopted. The overriding principle of the Decision Pathway was to put elected Members at the heart of decision-making and ensure there were more opportunities for Councillors to engage at an early stage.



The Board welcomed the new Decision Pathway, particularly the Mayor's desire to enable Scrutiny to play a more active role in policy development. It was suggested that a dedicated email address be set up to enable suggestions or new ideas to be submitted to the Mayor for progression. Members agreed that effective communication was important to ensure that people were aware of the Pathway and that feedback was provided regarding how ideas were progressing.

RESOLVED; that the revised Decision Pathway be noted.

13. Scrutiny Structures and New Ways of Working

Members discussed the proposals for a Hothouse to consider the future structure of Scrutiny and potential new ways of working. They received a presentation setting out the key principles of a Hothouse, which is appended to these minutes. They were also advised that The Local Government Association had agreed to work with the City Council on the Scrutiny redesign and had nominated Helen Rankin, Adviser, Leadership and Localism to assist with this work.

Members and officers went on to consider the proposals. The ensuing discussion can be summarised as follows;

- The Hothouse approach was a successful method for resolving complex issues in a short space of time, with participants having full ownership of the outcomes. The event would take place in early April, and the date would be confirmed as soon as possible (provisional date of 5th April).
- The Chief Executive confirmed that the Scrutiny team would be learning the Hothouse technique so they could roll it out for other work streams, and this could be extended to Members as well in the future if they desired.
- It was agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, Party Group Leaders and representation from the Mayor and Cabinet be invited to attend the Hothouse event.
- The Board requested that all Members and the Senior Leadership Team be invited to attend the last half hour of the Hothouse event to hear the outcomes.
- Following the Hothouse, a report of the conclusions would be presented to the annual meeting of Full Council (23rd May 17) for endorsement.
- The Board agreed that a warm up event would take place on Monday 20th March to enable Members to spend two hours identifying the key issues they wished to address at the Hothouse.

Councillor Negus left the meeting. There was a five-minute comfort break.

Councillor Steve Pearce took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

RESOLVED; A Hothouse event will take place in early April and the findings will be reported to Full Council on 23rd May 2017.



12. Independent Review of Bristol 2015 – European Green Capital

Following a short introduction, Members commented on the reports provided. The following is a summary of the discussion;

- The Independent Review of Bristol 2015 was overwhelmingly positive.
- It was important to note the success of Bristol 2015, but also to learn from any areas where things could have been done differently. Examples included ensuring programmes were driven by the needs of the whole city and considering arrangements around information sharing.

RESOLVED; that the report be noted.

13. Independent Review of Bristol City Council's Financial Deficit in 2016/17

The Chief Executive briefly introduced the report, advising that an action plan would be prepared in response to the recommendations and shared with the Cabinet in due course.

RESOLVED; That the report be noted.

13. Date of next meeting.

This was noted as 24th April 2017

The Meeting ended at 8.10pm

CHAIR _____

Appendix A – Scrutiny Hothouse Presentation

