

# Bristol City Council

## Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

25 July 2017 at 6.00 pm



### 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

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### Members Present:-

#### Councillors:

Geoffrey Gollop

John Goulandris (for Graham Morris)

Martin Foder (for Jude English)

Councillor Kirk leaving at 730 substituted by Councillor Harriet Bradley

Anthony Negus

Anna Keen

Tom Brook

Charlie Bolton

Donald Alexander

### Councillors who raised questions from the floor:

Helen Holland

Asher Craig

Jo Sergeant

Nicola Beech

Olly Mead

### Officers in Attendance:-

Alison Comley (for Anna Klonowski),

Andrea Dell, Service Manager

Nancy Rollason, Deputy Monitoring Officer

Denise Murray, Service Director - Finance

## 1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information



The emergency evacuation procedure was noted. The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.

## **2. Apologies for absence.**

These were received from Councillors Morris and English. Councillor Kirk will leave at 7.30pm.

## **3. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **4. Minutes of Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

Minutes not yet available.

## **5. Chair's Business.**

None.

## **6. Public Forum**

None.

## **7. Medium Term Financial Plan.**

The report was presented to Members by the Service Director, Finance.

The report aims to introduce a new approach to strategic direction. It provides a guide to strategic goals and sets a plan for the future.

The plan will look at the current financial position, refresh the budget gap (a £42m gap persists after the identification of £62m savings).

Also included are:

- Evidence available and summarised data, for funding and changes since February.
- Information about economic trends both nationally and locally.
- Risks, opportunities and threats.
- Factors which must be considered to ensure resilience.
- Principles which must guide prudent expenditure, investment and efficiency savings and grow income and transform services.

The officer noted that an uncertain climate continues and that the figures presented in the financial plan do not make allowances for future issues outside the control of the council.



During the discussion which followed the following points were made:

- The plan will be applied to different areas of the budget to ensure the council is spending prudently, and with flexibility in our contracts. The aim will be to maintain a financially balanced position each year, to deliver on the budget that's been set.
- In relation to investments the council will look at new investments. Prioritisation metrics will be used to determine expenditure; this should drive efficiencies as the council looks at budgets in these new ways.
- It is intended to review peppercorn rents and to provide a suite of options to the Executive. The intention is to give flexibility and transparency to review these rents and provide more clarity about where subsidies are effectively being given to organisations.
- With regard to capital programme procurement, going forward the council should take account of maintenance when making investments. Frequently capital programme spending and the revenue budget do not align; in the future a whole life cycle approach will be used. This will enable fully informed decisions to be made about the running costs of an asset as well as the capital cost.
- Asset base work will be essential to help decisions move forward. Subject to endorsement by Cabinet, it is hoped that Bristol City Council will make a programmed approach through work in the autumn. There are models available to help provide a full picture of the costs of various assets (such as highways, school buildings etc.) and these will be used to provide better information and may in due course change the approach to the management and maintenance of assets. The objective will be to save unnecessary expense to revenue budgets. Assets are not only one-off physical resources. The council is expected to think creatively, and consider how to deliver a commercial return and improve core service delivery. The aim will be to develop a comprehensive asset base, then reduce the idle assets and make them work harder for the council. Members will be provided with a rich and comprehensive database of information on which to make decisions. Disposal of assets can be considered when appropriate.
- Social value will also be considered through the social value policy which will be incorporated into the financial plan.
- Savings and benefits may accrue to different budget holders. At present the savings and benefits are not aligned to functions in recognition that a whole system approach is necessary. A silo approach is unhelpful. More detailed work will be taking place to ensure an organisation-wide approach is taken.
- It is expected that Bristol City Council will engage with the West of England Mayor where appropriate and it will be necessary to work in partnership with other bodies (such as neighbouring local authorities) too.
- Council debt is expected to double, along with interest. Interest rates quoted in the plan are based on current rates. The Council has borrowed in advance following an offer for a reduced rate. Generally, if interest rates go up then the budget gap will increase. A strong analysis of the financial situation, encompassing all aspects of the wealth of the Council is essential.
- This is an important piece of work which has been carried out alongside the normal business of the council. It is a positive step and will prompt a vital wider strategy debate.
- The transformation capacity fund had £5m allocated, and a proportion of that will be used to facilitate this work-stream for up to 3 years. Additional resources to deliver these changes are essential. Current staff will be supplemented by others to deliver the work-stream as necessary.



- Management of change processes will happen with redeployment based on skills. HR will look at skill sets and matching people to roles to successfully move staff, providing support and training where necessary. This is already happening.
- There is a need to develop a more commercial approach to the use of existing resources. The council should consider how to measure value and entrepreneurialism, beyond monetary figures. A cross-cutting approach looking at opportunities will help with these new areas of work. It will be necessary to upskill existing teams in terms of the market.
- The procurement team will need to think about market segmentation and analysis to look at opportunities and drivers and bring information back to the service.
- It was acknowledged that culture change in the Council will take time.
- Other Smart City approaches have been examined. There are some quick wins which can be made to help pay for longer-term strategies. Opportunities may arise from the operations centre, Bristol Energy, infrastructure projects, the universities, and other areas. The Council should look to link areas of work for the benefit of citizens and the Council.
- There is a need to think creatively, take risks and be analytical about how to help the people we need to support and target.

In concluding the discussion the Chair asked for thanks to be conveyed to the team.

## 8. Scrutiny Work Programme 17-18

The agenda item was introduced by the Service Manager – Scrutiny, and the Chair. During this item and throughout the meeting the following key points were made:

- There is recognition that Scrutiny has not always worked very well in the past.
- OSM lead members for each work area will be discussed and confirmed. Once agreed, they will be shared to all Councillors, to give Councillors the opportunity to contribute where they have a particular interest or expertise in a specific work area.
- There will be monthly OSM meetings.
- The work programme priorities may change in response to legislation or a local requirement. At each OSM and OSM Planning meeting the work list will be reviewed. Items for Scrutiny will be brought forward by Members through OSM; OSM will determine whether to use a Task and Finish Group or a Commission. The Group or Commission will always report back via OSM. OSM will co-ordinate the all Scrutiny work programme activity. If there was an urgent Scrutiny matter then OSM would be able pull a working group together quickly if necessary.
- A view was expressed that the new ways of working will not work as there will always be items which need to be reviewed as well as new subject areas and that there should be provision for both and that work of Scrutiny is too big to be covered by the members of OSMB without further involvement of many other councillors.
- There was concern from some members that those on Scrutiny committees have lost their roles. The new way of working may be interesting and more effective, but there's a danger that we have created a group of people who decide what everyone else does. This should be monitored through-out the trial process.



- The Majority of OSMB members endorsed the view that Task and Finish Groups should be the process for the future (subject to how they work in reality). The new working groups will help OSM get away from long agendas with short updates from Scrutiny Commissions. This should enable be more detailed Scrutiny and debate.
- The vision is to avoid the conscription of Members and instead have the benefit of willing volunteers with interest in the work area.
- There will be regular communications with members to reflect work and to raise new issues.
- All Scrutiny meetings are captured on webcast. It is proposed that a dedicated webpage for Scrutiny will be developed which will give links to appropriate detailed reports, webcasts and webpages. It is important that the tagging of the subjects on the Scrutiny web page help councillors spot overlapping areas.
- Members felt it will be necessary to consider the overall workload of Scrutiny officers. It may be possible to consider matters and make progress without officers always being present. Scrutiny officers should be used as a resource for powerful pieces of work.
- Officers confirmed that there are 2.6 FTE Scrutiny officers as previously, however in the future there will be no Democratic Services Officer clerking at the same time. Democratic Services Officers focus is to be on regulatory meetings. The intention will be to capture action notes by the Scrutiny team. It was noted that working groups are not always minuted at present, so there is no significant change.
- Some members felt it would be preferred that all working groups are cross party to make them more representative and that this will make the outcomes more powerful. The Chair confirmed that places on the work groups will not be rationed. If 20 people want to be on one group then priorities may need to be reappraised. Councillors have a diverse range of interests and expertise which can deliver Scrutiny in a range of groups. If a particular work-stream draws attention from a great many councillors then it may be necessary to reconsider the working methods of the group e.g. breaking the work up into different elements or through breakout groups rather than a single committee. If a particular work-stream is populated disproportionately with councillors from one party then other parties will be informed in case they wish to ensure they are represented.
- It was acknowledged that there will be a limit on the number of viable work-streams which can be conducted at one time in the new model. Some members did highlight that this needs to be monitored and evaluated to ensure that key items are not missed.
- There was recognition that it is a changed system and some members felt that councillors must prove it can work.
- The chair clarified that all reports will be made to OSMB, and anything that requires a significant decision would come to OSMB, or a special public meeting could be held as necessary.
- It was noted by all that Scrutiny should not be driven by the executive and that it has a role in scrutinising the work of all members of Cabinet and the Mayor.
- **Members of OSMB voted 7:1 in moving forward with the new ways of working. It was concluded that directorate commission meetings would not be held during the trial of the new ways of working. It was noted that the constitution has not changed and the provision for directorate scrutiny commissions still remains.**



Members then presented the scoping approach they had developed working in small groups for the subjects defined previously as being of fundamental significance and relevance to the Executive and Senior Management of the Council. A discussion of each subject followed the introduction.

**a) Air Quality and Pollution**

- It has been decided to approach this broad topic, which touches on a range of issues (such as public health, planning, transport, and congestion) via two working groups: Congestion Taskforce and a Clean Air Zone working group.
- The aim will be to ensure better public engagement and conduct a holistic examination of the issue.
- Various aspects need to be examined for air quality e.g. freight consolidation, wood burning stoves, diesel engines, etc.
- The working groups will have a role in co-ordinating all the work which is on-going in various areas of the council to ensure that Members all know what is happening.

**b) Council Assets**

- This is a longer-term piece of work potentially best suited to a Scrutiny Commission. It is expected that reports will be presented and the work will move forward over a period of time.
- With regard to council buildings, it's important that their use is reconsidered at Ward level if the council decides that it no longer has a use for them.
- Some categories of asset will need more urgent attention than others, such as libraries.

**c) Children's Centres**

- Headteachers who manage children's centres have already met with Exec Councillors and it has been noted that there is a Family steering group. Breakfast clubs and holiday hunger should be added into the scope.
- Work is needed on the financial models.
- Headteachers will be available again in the autumn when further progress will be made on this work area.
- Children's centres may link to libraries and retaining resources. Many work areas overlap and link with each other.

**d) Council Commissioning and Contracts**

- This is a broad topic. Scrutiny will work to ensure that the best value and best social value is obtained from the Council's commissioning.
- Areas of good practice and areas of development will be identified.
- It was noted that Adult social care and Children's social care are very significant areas of commissioning.
- It was felt that the best format would be a working group meeting regularly with officers and appropriate Executive Members.





- Innovation Partnerships must be included. A change in EU contracting laws means that a case may be made for working with specific partners without having to go to the open market through tendering.
- Commissioning of services for people is different to the commissioning of service contracts for buildings. Different councillors may be interested, and this group may split in due course.
- The People Directorate in Bristol City Council is significantly bigger than many local authorities in its own right. A split of the workload can be determined which allows the involvement of members with special interests. Different work-streams will be inevitable.

#### **e) Cribbs Patchway New Neighbourhood**

- The new development in Cribbs / Patchway will have a significant impact on North Bristol Wards. It is effectively a new small town on the edge of Bristol.
- A working group is the practical way to develop this work-stream. The group should meet sporadically with bursts of activity when appropriate.
- Issues which will need to be considered include: schools building, doctor's surgeries and traffic, the aim will be to ensure minimal negative impact on the Bristol wards.
- It will be important to learn from the working group which previously existed between South Gloucestershire Councillors and Officers, and to work from there (to avoid duplication of previous work). To establish and maintain a positive working relationship with South Gloucestershire Council and obtain positive outcomes, it is important to scope this work correctly. This is a sensitive area. Bristol City Council has no authority over South Gloucestershire Council, however it is hoped that by understanding more about the new development it will be possible to mitigate the impact for Bristol residents as much as possible. It is important to consider traffic flows, mitigation and plans for expenditure on traffic schemes.
- Members felt that there needed to be increased information sharing from officers on this topic
- It is important to consider bus routes at an early stage before travel plans of new residents are established.
- Proactive work to reduce congestion in this area is important; otherwise the knock-on effect will lead to congestion in other areas too.
- There was consideration of whether this was the best way to have oversight of the development. It is important to make progress, but the Scrutiny process should not impede action. It is not acceptable to wait a further six months for information.
- Cross-party working in those wards most directly impacted is essential. There has been very little progress so far and there is frustration among many local councillors.

***ACTION: Alison Comley to approach Planning to ask for officer input re Transport issues in the north Bristol wards in relation to the new neighbourhood.***

- It is of concern if S106 money is diverted entirely to Highways Officers. A more holistic view of congestion should be taken; it would not be good if all funds were directed to speed traffic through congested A-roads where there are also business and retail areas, routes to school and pedestrian hubs. Other options such as improved public transport should be considered.



- This will be prioritised in a constructive way and there will be work to determine how to take it forward.

#### **f) Fire Safety in High Rise Residential Buildings**

- A helpful meeting has taken place, and there is evidence of a comprehensive approach to addressing people's concerns. Members felt this has been reassuring.
- There will be further issues to address when the government review is published. Councillors are interested and now await the detailed report. They are ready to engage when it is useful to do so. Timing is important.
- It was agreed that the topic **will be deferred** for the time being but be retained as a priority topic.

#### **g) Libraries**

- There is much raw data which needs preparation. It is important to monitor the information which comes back from the consultation and then develop the results of the exercise.
- Some members felt that a Scrutiny commission or a Select Committee would not be helpful given the urgent timescales involved. This work area should be progressed through a task and finish group who need to act quickly. It was raised that Neighbourhoods Scrutiny has conducted work on this previously.
- If recommendations are to be considered for cabinet in January, then members must press on to make constructive suggestions.
- A previous very thorough consultation took place in 2014/2015. Many people responded to a two stage consultation. It was noted that material is not included in current consultation. An early concern is that the Council should not lose sight of the good ideas developed two to three years ago which could inform cabinet decisions.
- It will be necessary to work around the current consultation, and to work with some urgency through a working group.

#### **h) Medium Term Financial Plan**

- This is an important work-stream and it is essential that there is cross-party involvement.

#### **i) Parks and Green Spaces**

- The scoping suggested is for i) Scrutiny of what's under development ii) how can we help develop future plans. It is proposed that this be executed by a working group.
- The Executive would welcome the engagement of councillors with the challenges that need to be resolved.
- There is a consultation on parks planned for the near future, and this group will have the opportunity to feed into the development of the consultation.

#### **j) Tackling increasing demand for Social Services – Adults**

- Social services is a huge part of the council budget. This is a good time to scrutinise how the three-tier model is working.





- It is also important to consider discharges from Southmead and the Bristol Royal Infirmary and how that process is working. Discharges involve both bed-blocking and rehabilitation services.
- Pressures on social care come from the market and from service demand.
- Adult and Children's social services both have significant budgetary implications. Both Cabinet members were present at the scoping meetings. It was felt that involvement of the Executive Members is crucial.
- Much work has been completed in this area already, so it is important to build on that and avoid duplication. The working group should look at what is in place and determine whether it is effective.
- There is an important role for lay people to prompt specialists to look at issues in a different way.
- A small task and finish group might work best, using people from across all parties who have good knowledge and experience the council can learn more and make good progress.
- The Chair suggested that it would better to have half a dozen task and finish groups which start, work and then finish than one huge group.
- There was agreement that all the comments above also applied to item k).

#### **k) Tackling Increasing Demand in Social Services – Children.**

- Agreed to address children's work in the same way as Adult demand for social services.

#### **l) Children's Council**

- This will be discussed in more detail in the autumn as it is not the best time of year to contact the youth council.
- It is important to support the youth council's work and pledges.
- It is hoped that the youth council will be involved in task and finish groups in some way.

### **9 Your Neighbourhood Consultation**

This item was in response to a request from Members to scrutinise the overarching Your Neighbourhood Consultation. Specific elements of the consultation had been examined by Neighbourhoods (Libraries) and People (Community Links) Scrutiny Commissions. OSMB members were specifically asked to consider if they wished to make a referral to Cabinet on the overarching consultation (noting that Neighbourhoods was also making a referral) and if so to agree to content of that referral.

Cllr Asher Craig, Deputy Mayor with responsibility for Communities (Public Health, Public Transport, Libraries, Parks) has been asked to attend this meeting.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- It was noted that some ward members have made a lot of effort to involve citizens and encouraged them to make a response to the consultation.
- The community links element of the consultation was felt more acceptable and members felt this should have been applied to the other elements of the consultation.



- The way questions are laid out is felt by some members to be too prescriptive.
- Officers advised that it is possible to make lots of comments or enter “*None of the above*”, to ensure that a response is not counted as supporting one of the closure options. One member expressed the view that this could lead to some residents to vote for options which preserve their library and then it may be claimed that there’s a mandate to close a number of libraries. People therefore may not feel inclined to engage, which is not at all desirable.
- Members expressed concern about the support for members to engage with communities and encourage responses to consultations and that this ran counter to the views of the Executive who have been encouraging citizens to communicate with councillors but the support to councillors has been removed at the same time; this is unhelpful.
- Members highlighted that there was no reference to the previous libraries consultation which had received a good response. Experts from the Carnegie Trust, the House of Commons inquiry into libraries, community practitioners, librarians and others made contributions, but it is felt by some members that this has been ignored in this recent consultation exercise.
- One member highlighted that many people volunteered to help to keep their library open at that time, and these offers were not followed up at all.
- It was felt by some members that communication has been a problem with this consultation.
- It was noted that if people respond online they have more space to respond which may disadvantage those not online. One member, from the public gallery, provided feedback from a charity supporting individuals with learning difficulties that stated that the consultation was difficult for their clients to engage with. It was agreed that this feedback be shared with the consultation team.

The Strategic Director Neighbourhoods made the following points:

- The current consultation is trying to cover several areas at the same time. That has not been done before. It was an attempt to consult in a more sophisticated way; the objective was to try to examine the overall impact on a geographical area.
- The team have worked to make the response options as simple as possible. Contributions from councillors indicate that this has not been entirely successful, but there has been an attempt to do something different.
- There is a sincere attempt to be clear with people. Giving upfront options helps pull proposals together. Having attended all consultation meetings, there has been a good turn out, so many are contributing via face to face conversations as well as in writing or online.
- She reiterated that none of the original libraries consultation work is lost.

The Executive Member made the following points:

- The Cabinet Member outlined that there is a statutory duty to consult and there is also real dialogue necessary on a case by case basis, particularly where the library is one of a number of services / users in a particular building.
- Savings must be made.
- There have been many well-attended public meetings.



- People have criticised the consultation and the proposals but have also debated and discussed the options.
- Invitations for further presentations have also been received from various interest groups.
- A number of alternative options and proposals have been made which will be considered. Feedback received so far has mainly been focused on bricks and mortar issues.
- Some interesting contributions have been made, for example the university has shown some interest and other community groups are interested in developing community hubs. It is not possible to keep all parties fully informed of all contributions at all times
- At the end of the process the final version will be presented to the public, it will be a combination of statutory and community-led services.
- The Chief Exec of CILIP has praised the consultation, specifically the fact that the consultation is not trying to pretend that the changes are transformation of services; there is honesty that the changes are driven by finance. CILIP have offered to provide support to officers when the council starts framing the final outcomes.

Further comments were made as follows:

- The Executive welcomes further alternatives.
- The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that the consultation is a legal process. Therefore options and alternative options must be set out so that people can make intelligent comment; this is different to an engagement process which may develop other suggestions.
- It was noted that the consultation is open until 5 September 2017. All options and responses will be reviewed. If as a result of the responses the options change, then there may not be time to consult again.
- OSMB concluded that as Neighbourhoods Scrutiny were submitting a statement to Cabinet that OSMB would not do so.
- Some members felt that it is positive that there are many options coming in to the consultation and that the Executive has an open mind. Members were keen that OSMB play a proactive role in that process.
- Members felt a range of variations and solutions for different areas would appear to be the most likely outcome. Although many would like to keep all 27 libraries open it was noted that this is not likely.
- One member highlighted that the Head of Libraries has been clear that there is a limited budget with constrained options, if a library continues but is not operated by the Council's Library Services, then it will not be a library as we currently know it: supported by the Council and connected to Libraries West.

The Chair thanked all those present for attending this long meeting where a number of serious matters had been discussed. Thanks were given to the Executive Member for attending the meeting.

Meeting Closed at 9:32pm

## **8. Date of Next Meeting.**



**31<sup>st</sup> August 2017**

Meeting ended at 9.32pm.

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_

