

Statements from Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

22nd January 2018

For Cabinet - 23rd January 2018

1. Urgent items for Cabinet

“OSMB was disappointed that an item could be added to the cabinet agenda less than 24 hours before the meeting in such a way that most members and interested parties will not even have the opportunity to read the paper, let alone to scrutinise it.

OSMB has repeatedly asked for the Forward Plan to be made more relevant, and yet here an item that was in the plan has to be brought forward at extremely short notice.

Surely a Forward Plan is only published when there is a reasonable anticipation that the meetings referred to in it will happen. For Scrutiny and Public accountability to happen, there has to be an opportunity for review of documentation, and if appropriate scrutiny of the document.

In this case the only reason the item is deemed urgent is because no one planned for the possible cancellation of a meeting until 2 working days before the meeting tomorrow. OSMB recognises that they do not have enough knowledge or information to comment on the proposals themselves within the papers but they wish to highlight that those that do will not have been aware of them.

Comment from the Chair of OSMB, Cllr Geoff Gollop

“I felt I could not refuse to let this item go at short notice, but I feel it sets a precedent for items bypassing scrutiny in the future. Please will the Mayor give a categorical assurance that he is committed to making the Forward Plan fit for use and that he recognises the importance of ensuring that no decision is excluded from the possibility of it being scrutinised.”

2. Arena

On the 22nd January OSMB received an update report on the Bristol Arena. Members were advised that the outcome of the value for money report and the subsequent decision on the arena project is to be scheduled for the April 2018 Cabinet meeting.

OSMB members have significant concerns that this timing is unlikely to permit for any meaningful scrutiny activity (either OSMB and/or Task and Finish work) and specifically that members in wards adjoining either site and/or on transport routes to either site will not have any opportunity to contribute to the decision making process or bring forward the views of their constituents despite the significant impact of the decision upon their communities.

OSMB Members were keen to highlight that, whilst they strongly feel the need for scrutiny on this item, it is acknowledged that due to the commercial nature of the project this may have to be done in way that respects commercial sensitivity* and also does not further delay decision making.

OSMB members therefore seek assurance from the Mayor that he will work with officers to enable meaningful scrutiny on this item prior to the publication of the Cabinet reports for the April meeting. **

*It was noted that a full review of the exempt procedures process needs to be carried out and this should be informed by the government's Select Committee into Scrutiny and recent guidance from the CfPS.

**It was noted that consideration will need to be given to the Easter Holidays and the possible moving of the cabinet date to later in April.