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Bristol City Council

**Minutes of a Meeting of the
Resources Scrutiny Commission
held on 11th April 2014 at 9.30 am**

P Councillor Hopkins (in the Chair)
P Councillor Brain
P Councillor Emmett
A Councillor Khan
P Councillor Naysmith
P Councillor Watson
P Councillor Weston
P Councillor Wright

RSC

140.4/14 Apologies for absence and substitutions

Apologies were received from Councillor Khan and Councillor Gollop, Deputy Mayor.

RSC

141.4/14 Public forum

A written statement was received from Councillor Gollop with regard to the budget process, copy held in the Minute Book.

RSC

142.4/14 Declarations of interest

None declared.

RSC

143.4/14 Whipping

None declared.

RSC

144.4/14 Minutes – Resources Scrutiny Commission – 28th February 2014

Resolved – that the Minutes of the meeting of the Resources Scrutiny Commission held on 28th February, 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**RSC
145.4/14 Chair's Business**

None reported.

**RSC
146.4/14 Work Programme**

The Commission felt that, due to its high level of expenditure, the Arena Project should be scrutinised at the earliest opportunity. It was agreed that this item be included on the agenda for the Resources Scrutiny Commission Annual General Meeting with an invitation for Sustainable Development & Transport Scrutiny Commission members to attend for that item.

Resolved – that, subject to the above, the Work Programme be noted.

**RSC
147.4/14 The impact of actual and predicted population growth on financial resources and service planning**

The Committee received a presentation from the Service Director, Policy, Strategy and Communications (agenda item no. 8) setting out the impact of actual and predicted population growth on financial resources and service planning.

The Commission were advised of the key issues –

- Population increase was not as high as projected by the Office for National Statistics following the 2011 National Census which gave more accurate figures;
- Changing age structure, more births and a lower rate of deaths meant that children were a growing sector of the population;
- Population growth trends were uneven across the City with Lawrence Hill, Ashley and Cabot Wards accounting for 39% of the overall growth;
- Increasing diversity, there were wide variations of BME numbers in the City with Lawrence Hill at 55% and

Whitchurch 4%. The overall average BME figure for the City was 16%;

- The working age population had grown which was a benefit to the City, compared with other cities, primarily due to its diversity of employment opportunities;
- Central government funding would continue to fall over future years and this would have a large impact on council services, it was important, therefore, that solutions were found to the predicted rise in demand for services due to the increasing population.

Resolved – that the presentation be noted.

RSC

148.4/14 Review of budget scrutiny process

The Committee received a presentation from the Service Director, Finance (agenda item no. 9) reviewing the budget scrutiny process.

The Commission was advised of the key issues –

- The Council's Corporate Plan was the initial point for the whole budget process followed by budget preparation and publication of the Budget Book which would set out full details of the total budget;
- The budget preparation process would include all scrutiny commissions with a clear opportunity for them to intervene at any step to scrutinise a particular aspect of the proposed budget;
- Budget assumptions would be more informed and should be available early on in the process, around July. It would be for the Scrutiny Commissions to decide, at that point, what and when they might wish to look at more closely;
- Accounts would be ready by September so a favourable time to scrutinise the draft budget could be October;
- Information on the Council's reserves would be available after Easter this year;
- Members were advised that there would be a model for the budget process and would be provided with this when it was finalised. The model would include details of key dates for scrutiny intervention along with details of key officers at both Strategic Director and Service Director level.

Resolved – that the presentation be noted.

RSC

149.4/14 Highway Structures

The Committee received a report of the Strategic Director, Place (agenda item no. 10) relating to outstanding repairs to highway bridges and structures and was presented by Mark Sperduty, Area Manager, Highways and Traffic Management.

The Area Manager emphasised that the Structures listed in the Appendix to the report were not in a dangerous condition. They were closely monitored and all necessary measures had been taken to mitigate any risk to the public, however it was important to note that these were temporary measures.

Arising from a question the Commission was informed that where ownership of a structure was unclear the Council would carry out repair work that was necessary however there was a significant legal and financial risk that this could leave the Council being responsible for long term maintenance of the structure in question.

Regarding final completion of the works to a more permanent status the Commission was informed that this was readily achievable subject to appropriate levels of funding.

Having regard to the risks to the Council and the funding required to minimise the risk, it was felt that the report should be referred to Cabinet for further consideration.

Resolved –

- (1) that the current level of temporary measures protecting the public from structures that required maintenance be noted;**
- (2) that it be noted that active planning was being carried out to establish the extent, cost and programme of structural repairs required across the City through the Transport Asset Management Plan;**
- (3) that having regard to the risks to the Council and the level of funding required to minimise the risk on a permanent basis, the report be referred to Cabinet for further consideration.**

(The meeting ended at 11.30 am)

CHAIR