



Agenda Item no. 4

Bristol City Council Minutes of Business Change and Resources Scrutiny Commission

Monday 28 September 2015 at 9.30 am

Members Present:-

Councillor Lovell Councillor Mead Councillor Windows Councillor Hopkins (sub)
Councillor Brain Councillor Weston Councillor Malnick

Apologies:-

Councillor Rylatt, Councillor Kent

Also in attendance:- Councillor Gollop (Deputy Mayor)

Key officers in attendance:-

Max Wide - Strategic Director, Business Change
Patsy Mellor - Service Director (Integrated Customer Service)
Paul Arrigoni - Service Director (Business Change and ICT)
Peter Gillett - Service Director (Finance)
Richard Billingham - Service Director (Human Resources)
Patricia Greer - Service Director (Policy, Strategy and Communications)
Mark Wakefield - Service Manager (Performance)
Kay Russell - Service Manager (Strategic Planning)
Sarah Wilson - DLT Operations Manager
Lucy Fleming - Policy Co-ordinator (Scrutiny)
Louise deCordova - Democratic Services

18. Apologies for Absence, substitutions and introductions (agenda item no.1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Rylatt and Councillor Kent.
Councillor Hopkins substituted for Councillor Kent.

19. Public forum (agenda item no.2)

The following statement was received by the Commission and is held as a public record in the Minute Book (accessed by contacting Democratic Services).

Subject: Benefits Processes

Statement – Ruth Ravell

In discussion, the following was noted:

- a. The statement broadly raised concerns about the length of time housing benefit claims were taking to process and resolve.
- b. There may be a case for interim assessment or payment where delays were anticipated
- c. Concern raised that landlords may be averse to accepting new housing benefit claimants due to the perception of a lengthy wait for payments.
- d. Concern raised that the statement had contained information of a personal nature. Members agreed that public bodies such as Scrutiny were not the best forum for individual complaints, which should be redirected through the Council's complaints system. Officers confirmed that Members could contact them direct with matters concerning individual constituents.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) to note the contents of the statement.**
- (ii) Cllr Mead to respond direct to the statement author/constituent.**
- (iii) Benefits Processing to be added to the Business Change and Resource Scrutiny work programme in November 2015.**

20. Declarations of interest (agenda item no.3)

None declared.

21. Minutes – 20 July 2015 (agenda item no.4)

The Minutes of the Business Change Resources Scrutiny Commission meeting on 20 July were agreed as a correct record, subject to i) an amendment under item 4. the word Hawksberry to be replaced with Hawkspring and ii) clarification of the wording under item 13.g. of the Minutes regarding Universal Credit and Welfare Reform. Officer Patsy Mellor to confirm wording with Democratic Services.

Democratic Services were asked to clarify within the meeting minutes and online how the public access the Minute Book.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) To agree the Minutes subject to amendments identified**

(ii) Democratic Services to clarify process for public access to the Minute Book.

22. Action Sheet (Agenda item no.5)

Progress was noted on actions agreed at the meeting 20 July. In discussion, the following was noted:

Bristol Waste Company

- Clarification to be sought from Bristol Waste Company colleagues on the cost of fly tipping to Bristol

South Bristol Recycling Centre and Bristol East Pool

- An update requested from colleagues in Neighbourhoods on the current status of each scheme.

Henbury Loop and Park & Ride

- An update requested from colleagues in Place on the current status of the scheme

Under Occupancy Charge

- Wording had been clarified with Members and Officers and could now be republished

In addition:

- Officers to take action to request responses from relevant departments or colleagues, where the subject matter lay outside of the formal remit of Business Change.
- The Business Change and Resources Scrutiny Commission to maintain a watching brief on capital schemes as far as the budget planning implications

RESOLVED:-

- (i) to note the progress on actions to date.**
- (ii) Officers to action requests to relevant departments or colleagues, where the subject matter lay outside of the formal remit of Business Change.**
- (iii) Commission to write to Neighbourhoods and Place Scrutiny Commissions to request a watching brief on capital schemes as far as their budget planning implications.**

23. Whipping (agenda item no.6)

None reported.

24. Chair's business (agenda item no.7)

None declared.

25. Scrutiny Work Programme (agenda item no.8)

The commission noted the updates to the work programme for the year.

- Capital Assets work to be replaced with Income Generation discussion. Members to note Income Generation report to Place Scrutiny Commission
- Benefits Process review to be scheduled for November meeting
- A second Budget Review meeting to be scheduled post the Chancellors budget mid-December.

RESOLVED:-

(i) To note the updates to the Scrutiny Work Programme

26. Phoenix Court Citizen Service Point – Service Offer Report
(agenda item no.9)

The Commission received a report from Patsy Mellor, Service Director, Citizen Services. In discussion, the following was noted:

- a. Work was being done to analyse how the reduced opening hours at Phoenix Court Citizen Service Point (CSP) impacted Temple Street CSP.
- b. There was no anticipated impact on staff numbers due to the transitioning of services from Phoenix Court to Temple Street.
- c. Members were invited to visit the customer service point at Temple Street to see how it works.

RESOLVED:-

(i) To note the Phoenix Court Service Point Report and maintain a monitoring brief

27. Social Value Policy and Partnership Toolkit Report (agenda item no.10)

In discussion, the following was noted:

- a. Suggested that increased emphasis be placed on the importance of meaningful local engagement around local plans and priorities, at neighbourhood forum level and with service users themselves.
- b. Noted that citywide procurement was not always consistent with local planning needs, however there were instances where citywide contracts had potential for this to work well. For example, Youth Links where provision could be tailored to local need.
- c. The procurement target of 25% local SMES, was commended as was the recognised importance of procurement and commissioning teams working closely together. Acknowledged that smaller contract sizes, enabled smaller organisations to tender for them.
- d. Noted that the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) are collating national examples of the impacts and benefits of progressive procurement policy. Members noted that knowledge gained from the recent CLES workshop had already been incorporated within the policy and toolkit. Information from the workshop to be shared with members. Agreed that the policy and toolkit should be a living document able to flex as new developments and good practice emerges nationally.
- e. Concern that the language contained in key objectives needed to be more robust and that organisations be asked to 'demonstrate' social value in their submissions
- f. Concern that the style and tone of the policy and toolkit should be consistently engaging and user friendly throughout, before going to consultation, with the final versions to be publicised as widely as possible through all available means.
- g. Members asked for a timetable for staff training to be included in the final Toolkit before it goes to Cabinet
- h. Concern raised that proposed evaluation appeared to focus on awards of contracts to SMEs, important that other impacts should not be ignored such as the impact on local job creation or the impact on the environment. Suggested that evaluation could be more meaningful if a live case study approach is taken, to demonstrate how the new policy and toolkit made a difference to the outcomes.
- i. Suggested that regular legal reviews and maintenance of a legal risk register could support the monitoring of the emerging legal picture with reference to social value procurement.
- j. Agreed that the Commission to be consulted upon revisions to the policy and toolkit periodically post implementation.

- k. There was a desire from the Commission for Bristol to aim for the top quartile of organisations to take a pioneering and leadership role on this type of procurement, whilst being fully conversant with the potential impacts as this work is progressed; and in addition to balancing local need appropriately with the needs of tax payers.
- l. Noted that it was important for officers to be aware that small local organisations invest significant resources in responding to tenders, and any procurement exercise that ended prematurely may have a negative impact on the perception of the tendering process and may discourage the organisations from applying for future opportunities.
- m. Cllr Malnick thanked officer's for their commitment to delivery of thorough social value procurement policy and toolkit within short timescales.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the Commission agrees the draft policy and toolkit subject to the above suggestions being incorporated**
- (ii) That information from the CLES workshop be circulated to Members**

28. Universal Credit and Welfare Reform (agenda item no.11)

The Commission noted the presentation slides and received a verbal update from Patsy Mellor. In discussion, the following was noted:

- a. Universal Credit (UC) would not be rolled out for families and couples until 2017
- b. UC for childless/single people would continue as planned in April 2016, currently affecting 750 people. Members requested a geographical mapping of those affected.
- c. The team were working internally with health, housing and homelessness teams and externally with organisations such as VOSCUR to ensure those at risk were claiming all entitlements and identify where further targeted work is needed
- d. An article in Housing News had been circulated to 30,000 council tenants. Copy to be circulated to Members with a copy of the communications plan in order understand the impact on a ward by ward basis.
- e. An additional briefing was requested for elected members and party group meetings
- f. Members asked that families be notified earlier in the communications planning to give them time to plan for the impacts of the changes as early as possible

- g. Members suggested that the use of community newsletters and local events may be another avenue for circulating information effectively. Text to be provided to councillors for distribution through their networks and information to be shared with Neighbourhood Partnership Coordinators.
- h. Members were encouraged by the officer's plans to knock on doors of hard to reach families.
- i. Confirmed that housing benefit was not paid to under 21s except in certain circumstances, awaiting exempt guidance to be finalised by government. Confirmed that this affected very few claims. Members to be updated when this was known.
- j. Officers to share detail of unclaimed benefits by geography (ward)
- k. Officers to provide a briefing session to members on the impact of the 1% social housing budget reduction.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the presentation and the points raised be noted, and a rolling update be provided as details emerge throughout the year.**
- (ii) that there should be a general members briefing on this subject and information should be cascaded through Neighbourhood Partnerships and Neighbourhood Forums for maximum impact and early community engagement.**
- (iii) That mapping of the impact of the current changes be shared on a ward by ward basis.**
- (iv) That the Housing News article be circulated to all Councillors with additional text for Members and Neighbourhood Coordinators to distribute through their local networks.**

29. Quarter 1 Finance Report (agenda item no.12)

The Commission received a report from the Service Director Finance in respect of the Quarter 1 Finance report.

In discussion, the following was noted:

- a. Members raised concern that overspends were already predicted at Quarter 1
- b. There was recognition that work was underway in directorates to manage and mitigate the predicted variances and that the Council was able to utilise existing resources, to support this work
- c. Members asked for a breakdown of the *Other Budgets* figure £4.8m referred to under Table 1: General Fund Revenue Budgets

- d. Noted that the Corporate risk register indicated confidence in funding the shortfall, although cautiousness required to ensure improvements continue to be made
- e. Further details were requested reference the £1m variance in Table 2 under Housing Solutions and Crime Reduction
- f. Neighbourhoods and Environment and Leisure Project Team income targets subject to departmental review of fees and charges.
- g. Business Change – variance caused by unanticipated increase in take-up of licencing software across the organisation
- h. Spending pressures circa 11% within People Directorate concerning. Increase due to higher number of more complex cases than planned for. More work being done into how we work with providers at planning stages.

RESOLVED:

- (i) the presentation and the points made be noted and a rolling update be provided as details emerge throughout the year.**

30. Quarter 1 Performance Report (agenda item no.13)

The commission noted the report - In discussion, the following points were raised:

- a. Ref. BU227 – % Corporate Freedom of Information requests responded to within 20 working days.
 - Recent figures indicate an improvement to 86%.
 - A targeted resource being implemented to ensure quality of responses, utilising feedback from requesters.
 - Additional work being carried out to produce a searchable library of frequently asked questions online.
- b. BCP182 – Number of working days lost due to sickness absence
 - Confirmed long term sickness of a small number of staff has a disproportionate impact on days lost figures. Targeted case review work, supporting individuals and managers to be triggered at 4 weeks absence.
 - Inconsistencies found in causes of stress related sickness reported to managers and those reported through the Employee Assistance Programme helpline. Targeted training planned for managers around mental health matters to help mitigate this.
- c. BU138 – HR advice centre calls answered in service level standard
 - Team of 4 advisors have been replaced by 2 apprentices – standards steadily improving. To be replaced by customer satisfaction indicator as a more useful measure of performance.

- d. BU129 – Productive hours worked within Legal Services (%)
 - Name to change from productive hours to chargeable hours.
 - Chargeable hours target currently 20% for each member of the team (lower than private sector).
 - Aim to progressively increase targets by actively seeking external customers such as the Fire Authority and BANES.

- e. BCP183 – Overall satisfaction with Council Services
 - Difficult to benchmark against other cities as definitions vary considerably. Satisfaction not used as a measure in many cities.
 - Concern raised over the reduction of questions in the Quality of Life survey and the impact of loss of trends and comparative data over time, for example crime reported to the police.
 - Found that satisfaction with individual services tended to increase as satisfaction with the Council as a whole continues to fall.

- f. BU171 - % procurement spend with Bristol 'Small and Medium sized Enterprises' (SME's)
 - A corporate finance system upgrade (ABW) due early in the next calendar year, will enable ability to extract further detail regarding local and SME spend

- g. Core city data to be added to performance indicators where meaningful.

RESOLVED:

- (i) the report be noted and amendments to future reports be actioned**

Date of Next Meeting: 19 October 2015

(Meeting ended at 12.05 pm)

CHAIR