

## **DISCLAIMER**

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## DRAFT MINUTES

Agenda Item No:06

# Bristol City Council

## Minutes of Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission

Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2014 at 10.00am

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### **Scrutiny Commission Members Present:-**

Councillors Lovell (Chair), Harvey (Vice-Chair), Fodor, Greaves, Hance, Janke, Melias, Shah and Tincknell

**Officers in Attendance:-** Alison Comley – Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods), Di Robinson (Service Director – Neighbourhoods and Communities), Tracey Morgan (Service Director – Environment and Leisure), Mary Ryan (Service Director – Housing Delivery), Sohail Bhatti (Director of Public Health), Katie Bodle (Policy and Project Officer), Richard Ennion (Horticultural Service Manager), Richard Fletcher (Neighbourhood Engagement Manager), Jane Houben (Investment and Grants Manager), Nick Carter (Licensing Manager), Kate Murray (Head of Libraries), Pam Jones (Service Manager – Environment and Leisure Operations), Romaine De Fonseca (Policy Adviser – Scrutiny), Jeremy Livitt (Democratic Services Officer)

**Also In Attendance:** Councillor Gus Hoyt – Assistant Mayor for Neighbourhoods

### **1. Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 1)**

There were no apologies received.

### **2. Membership of the Scrutiny Commission (Agenda Item 2)**

**RESOLVED** - that the membership for the 2014/15 Municipal Year be noted as set out on the front of the Agenda.

### **3. Confirmation of Chair (Agenda Item 3)**

**RESOLVED** - that it is noted that Councillor Jeff Lovell was confirmed as Chair for Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission for 2014/15 municipal year at Full Council on 10 June 2014.

### **4. Election of Vice- Chair (Agenda Item 4)**

**RESOLVED – that Councillor Wayne Harvey be elected as Vice-Chair for Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission for 2014/15 municipal year.**

**5. Public Forum (Agenda Item 5)**

Members received the following statement:

(1) Dawn Dyer – UNISON – Library Redesign

A copy of the statement is held in the Minute Book.

**6. Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 6)**

There were none.

**7. Minutes of the Neighbourhoods and Communities Scrutiny Commission – 10<sup>th</sup> April 2014 (Agenda Item 7)**

**RESOLVED – that the minutes of the above meeting be signed and confirmed as a correct record by the Chair.**

**8. Whipping (Agenda Item 8)**

It was noted that no notice had been given concerning use of the party whip for any item.

**9. Chair's Business (Agenda Item 9)**

The Chair raised the issue of co-option for meetings of the Scrutiny Commission and requested members' views on the suggestion from OSM Board that, in future, Scrutiny Commissions should make greater use of expert witnesses in their work.

Councillors made the following points during the subsequent discussion:

- (1) Some co-optees had been extremely helpful and should be invited back again – in particular groups such as the Disability Equality Forum;
- (2) The use of an on-line reference group should be considered which would set out contacts for certain organisations such as charities and churches as well as a social network to publicise and obtain more members;
- (3) The use of co-optees should not preclude the additional use of expert witnesses if this was considered appropriate in future meetings.

**RESOLVED – that the Chair (Councillor Jeff Lovell) advises the OSM Board of the Commission's view that co-optees should continue to be adopted as required and to propose the development of a social network of contacts as required**

**10. Annual Business Report (Agenda Item 10)**

The Scrutiny Commission received a report confirming the Commission's Terms of Reference, proposing meeting dates for 2014/15 and discussing the Work Programme for 2014/15.

It was noted that the Work Programme had been initiated by the June 2014 workshop and further developed since then. There was also work taking place to tie connected pieces of work across the Scrutiny Commissions. In terms of Inquiry Days, it was noted that an Joint Education and Skills Inquiry day with the People Scrutiny Commission was proposed for February 2015 which might require an additional date.

A copy of the structure of Bristol City Council with detail on the various service areas was circulated to the Scrutiny Commission.

Members made the following comments:

- (1) The Health and Well Being Board did not currently cover fully the issues relating to Public Health in the Scrutiny process. An item on Public Health should be added to the Work Programme. It was noted that approaches to link in the work of health (including the role of Sohail Bhatti – Director of Public Health) to all Scrutiny Commissions were being examined;
- (2) The Healthy Cities Agenda needed to be drawn into the scrutiny process. There was an overlap with Housing and the need to work with residents in the area to improve the management of housing stock in areas such as household bills and addressing fuel poverty;
- (3) Clarification was required that a report on Libraries Redesign would be coming back to a future Scrutiny Commission. It was noted that an item on this issue would be coming back to each Scrutiny Commission.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (1) that the Scrutiny Commission's Terms of Reference be noted;**
- (2) that the following dates be approved with an understanding that there may be an additional date fixed for a Joint Education and Skills Inquiry Day with People Scrutiny Commission (in February 2015):**

**2pm on Monday 27th October 2014**

**10am on Monday 17th November 2014 (possible Inquiry Day)**

**2pm on Monday 8th December 2014**

**10am on Thursday 22nd January 2015 (Likely Waste Inquiry Day)**

**10am on Monday 16th February 2015**

**10am on Monday 16th March 2015**

**10am on 16th April 2015**

- (3) that the Work Programme set out in the report be agreed.**

- 11 Introduction to Neighbourhoods – Presentations from Service Directors (Agenda Item 11)**

The Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods explained that this item would include verbal presentations of approximately 5 Minutes each from each of the Service Directors within the Directorate. She explained that the Community Safety function was shared between the Neighbourhoods and People Directorates. It was noted that there was an opportunity for the Scrutiny process to influence Policy Development – key issues to be informed were Library Review, the Voluntary and Community Sector and Neighbourhood Partnerships.

### Housing Delivery

This service area included:

- (1) responding to tenants needs and any questions they might have;
- (2) Any issues relating to Tenancy Management such as Anti-Social Behaviour and where they are struggling to cope (ie vulnerability);
- (3) Dealing with a current project to upgrade central heating systems for all 23,000 homes across the city
- (4) Dealing with the Housing Management Board (HMB) which consists of members, officers and tenants. In previous years, the HMB had brought an annual report to the Scrutiny Commission;
- (5) The development of new Council homes in the city with Cabinet approval;
- (6) The development of the ELENA programme.

It was noted that it did not include the management of the Waiting List for Council homes (People Directorate's responsibility) and of very complex ASB issues (Safer Bristol's responsibility).

### Public Health

Key areas within this service included:

- (1) Tackling inequalities in health throughout the city and dealing with issues such as premature mortality;
- (2) Responsibility for the managing the CCG budget – totalling £42.5 Million;
- (3) Weighing and measuring kids from Year 6 onwards;
- (4) Commissioning of Sexual Health, including Family Planning;
- (5) Health Improvement – lifestyle and behaviours;
- (6) Health Protection measures, including immunisation and screening;
- (7) Quality of Health Care;

It was noted that statistics showed that the average woman spent 20 years of her life with a chronic illness.

### Neighbourhoods and Communities

This service area covered the following:

- (1) Regulatory Functions – including Trading Standards Tobacco Control, Alcohol) and Licensing (Taxis, Food Premises, Street Traders, Markets, Venues including Sexual Entertainment Venues, Public Protection (Corporate Health), Contaminated Land, Food Safety, Animal Welfare
- (2) Neighbourhood Management
- (3) Neighbourhoods and Health Improvement
- (4) Libraries

The following issues were important in these work areas:

- (a) Neighbourhood Partnerships and Governance – Development Work, Neighbourhood Working, Community Development (building community resilience), Equalities and Community Cohesion Work, Inward Community Investment
- (b) Libraries – the future of the service, proposals for re-design
- (c) Neighbourhood Health Improvement Teams – analysis of disadvantage and high levels of health deprivation – improvement of lifestyles, violence against women and girls, smoking cessation
- (d) Reshaping of Community Voluntary Grant Investment

Partnership working was a key factor in ensuring delivery of these services.

### Environment and Leisure

This service area covered the following areas:

- (1) Environmental Area Management – Parks and Destinations;
- (2) Sports and Play;
- (3) Housing Caretaking Service – link to Grounds Maintenance;
- (4) Commissioning and Contracts – waste collection and disposal including street cleansing;
- (5) Two household waste centres;
- (6) Public Toilets;
- (7) Sports Centres
- (8) Environmental Improvement Team – wildlife, nature and trees
- (9) Traded Services – Cemeteries and Crematoria, Ashton Court Mansion, Catering in Parks, Plant Nursery at Blaise, Landscape Team, Child Play Areas, Allotments

It was noted that the issue of waste would be considered as part of a proposed Waste Inquiry Day and that issues relating to Sports Partnerships would need to be considered when the sports contracts was re-let in 2017.

## **12 Pets In Flats (Agenda Item 12 (a))**

The Commission received a report noting the progress in tackling issues caused by pets in council flatted accommodation.

Members noted the following:

- (1) Under the previous arrangements, the policy of not allowing pets in flats had proved unenforceable and there had been increasing tenant dissatisfaction since then – mainly in respect of dogs
- (2) A new policy was being piloted which educated tenants of the needs of responsible pet ownership and enter into an agreement;
- (3) Following consultation with tenants in 3 blocks, a pilot scheme was being introduced for them to have Aspiring Dog Free Status. All dogs in these blocks had been micro-chipped (15 in two blocks, 1 in a third) to ensure it could be enforced;
- (4) Pets in Easton – tenants had concerns about dogs from a cultural perspective – there was a high density of flats in Barton Hill. It was noted that there had been an event In Easton Primary School organised through the Dogs Trust as part of this initiative. In addition, a lot of work was taking place with dog wardens, Neighbourhood Enforcement Officers (through the establishment of Dog Action Days) and the Police;
- (5) Any difficulties caused by dog excrement in flats (particularly in lifts) were a breach of tenancy (ie ASB). Whilst Housing Officers were charged with enforcing this, this was not always easy to do when the perpetrators could not be identified;
- (6) Whilst there were some issues relating to certain breeds of aggressive dogs, the main concern for this policy was dogs in general
- (7) If the scheme proved successful, the next process, following an analysis of the existing pilot scheme, would be a decision on what the next phase of blocks would be to extend it;
- (8) The Tenants Satisfaction Group had been kept informed of the scheme – there had been far less objections from tenants concerning this issue since the introduction of the pilot;

**Resolved – that the progress made in tackling the issues caused by pets in council flatted accommodation be noted.**

### **13 Tree Pips (Agenda Item 12(b))**

The Scrutiny Commission received a report on the above project which had involved all Primary Schools in Bristol and resulted in the planting of trees in school grounds. It was noted that one officer involved in this project had been on long-term sick leave since March 2014. Members were advised that the project was carrying out the required work but not on the scale required. There was a comprehensive resource of education material which was available as part of this project. It was confirmed that £700,000 had been provided for this project.

In response to Councillor's questions, officers made the following comments:

Following this statement and the comments from officers, members raised the following concerns:

- (1) The need for appropriate spaces to plant trees to meet the requirements of the project was proving very challenging. However, the project could still be delivered. Whilst 30% of canopy cover was the current target, a partnership had been formed with the Woodland Trust to identify sites – if necessary, woodland and hedgerows could be used. It was noted that 6000 trees would be planted during the winter period.
- (2) Schools that were chosen were generally those within the immediate vicinity of the site to which they were closest located;
- (3) Schools would also be involved in a broad range of educational activities and, therefore, in delivering a better product and quality;
- (4) Small saplings were being planted as appropriate

**Resolved – that the report be noted.**

#### **14 Developing the Grounds Maintenance Specification with Neighbourhoods (Agenda Item 13)**

The Commission received a report outlining progress on mobilisation of the Neighbourhood Grounds Maintenance Service for February 2015.

Officers made the following points and also in response to Members questions:

- (1) Following a Cabinet decision made on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015, the current arrangements for this service would end on January 2015 and would be replaced with a new in-house service;;
- (2) Routine Grounds Maintenance would continue with a new baseline service to be delivered and neighbourhoods adjusting to meet local pressures and needs;
- (3) Consultation with Neighbourhoods would be taking place in 2014 to establish how they wanted the service to work as a means of informing its delivery – it would include services such as shrub maintenance, nuisance pruning and a response and repair team;
- (4) Consultation would also be made on a new enquiries database which would enable cost comparison between different features and mapping to establish the differing levels of management of the service across the city;
- (5) Engagement would be taking place across the city with Neighbourhood Partnerships as to how this service would be delivered;
- (6) It was noted that there was no requirement to ensure every change was in place by January 2015 – merely enough to launch the process;
- (7) It was acknowledged that every Neighbourhood Partnership would have its own approach – also it was noted that consultation within Neighbourhoods should not be limited to an item on a



- Neighbourhood Partnership Agenda but would require more widespread community consultation. It was further acknowledged that there was a £500,000 saving to be built into this service
- (8) A diverse approach was required – involvement of Neighbourhood Partnerships might not be the main form of communication in all parts of the city. A virtual Grounds Maintenance Forum and work with bodies such as Bristol In Bloom would be important. The level of interest between different groups might vary between communities;
  - (9) There may be scope in some areas for Grounds Maintenance staff to carry out caretaking tasks;
  - (10) Councillors were encouraged to provide officers with details of any areas within their communities that gave an appearance of neglect so that these could be addressed (ie overgrown grass, hedges etc.) including appropriate analysis of any land-owning issues

**Resolved – that progress be noted.**

## **15 A Changed Approach to VCS Grant Investment (Agenda Item 14)**

Members received a presentation on the above during which the following main points were made:

- (1) The context and drivers for change;
- (2) What has been learned and the resulting actions
- (3) A development of a strategic approach;
- (4) Details of 2014/15 Grants Spend by City priorities - £7.62 Million but not the contract expenditure which is separate (£80 Million);
- (5) 2014/15 funding aligned by city priorities and themes;
- (6) Possible Grant Funding Objectives for a Cross-Council Grant Approach;
- (7) The aim and requirements for the new approach;
- (8) The requirements of the Scrutiny Commission.

In response to members' questions, officers made the following points:

- (1) Discussions were taking place concerning the implications for investment on buildings and Discretionary Rate Relief – further detail would be brought back to the Scrutiny Commission at a later date;
- (2) There remained a commitment to protecting grant investment to the city;
- (3) It was acknowledged that the issue of scale would be important to demonstrate how small pieces of funding could have a big impact on beneficiaries;
- (4) It was important to target funding to communities most in need, some of whom may not be aware of the process for applying for grants

- (5) Consideration will be given to producing a prospectus for the process of allocating grant funding – any such document would also need to be accessible to those who did not have immediate access to the Internet (ie provide equality of access to everyone);
- (6) A 3 year grants process was in operation at the request of the sector with a Service Level Agreement (SLA) – however, any decisions on limiting funding for individual groups needed to be carefully considered and reflected in any prospectus.

**Resolved – that the presentation and comments made be noted.**

## **16 Review of Statement of Licensing Policy (Agenda Item 15)**

The Commission considered a report outlining the Commission's view on how to take forward the review of the Council's statutory Statement of Licensing Policy following the demise of the Licensing Policy Scrutiny Board.

Officers explained that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had previously appointed the Licensing Policy Scrutiny Board to provide assistance to full Council in meeting its obligation in keeping its Statement of Licensing Policy under review. Following constitutional changes, this Board was not being retained and this needed to be reviewed by the appropriate Scrutiny body (the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission).

It was noted that there were 7 or 8 key issues that would need to be considered – ie Minimum Price Alcohol, Restrictions on Alcohol and Cumulative Impact Areas. It was noted that Sexual Entertainment Venues were not within this remit.

The Scrutiny Commission agreed to the creation of a Working Group comprising each of the party political groups and with the following Councillors putting their name forward: Councillor Shah (Labour), Melias (Conservative), Hance (Liberal Democrat) and Fodor (Green).

**Resolved – that a separate Working Group is set up to consider the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy following the abolition of the Licensing Policy Scrutiny Board comprising the following Councillors from each of the party political groups as follows: Councillor Shah, Melias, Hance and Fodor**

## **17 Re-design of the Library Service – Introductory Presentation and Discussion (Agenda Item 16)**

Members received a presentation from officers which outlined the following issues:

- (1) The Context for Change

- (2) Details of the Current Service
- (3) Details of how the total expenditure of library provision was distributed and funding arrangements, such as Big Lottery Funding (Junction 3);
- (4) Relative Size and Scale of each Library by Issue and renewals including the Electronic Library;
- (5) The changing nature of Library Provision in terms of the buildings (estate), staff, ICT and expansion beyond the core service;
- (6) Details of the libraries estate in the city
- (7) Details of the different groups by gender and age who use the service;
- (8) Future need to redesign the service involving a full consultation process;
- (9) Key issues to consider ie the need to retain a core universal service, a sustainable network, the aim to ensure geographic access for all residents within a 1.5 Mile radius, the different needs of different communities, responsive opening hours, a complementary digital 24 hour service, innovative ideas to enhance the service and a flexible and creative Library Management System
- (10) Different areas to be considered in designing proposals – ie budgets, staffing, buildings, access, models of delivery and Joint Offers
- (11) The role of Scrutiny throughout the process.

Officers also pointed out the following:

- (12) Any change in this service will be highly sensitive;
- (13) The Medium Term Financial Plan included for April 2016 a reduction of £1.1 Million in the service which is required to be made;
- (14) The debate should avoid being simply about finance as the service would need to be redesigned regardless of any financial pressures from the current model which is based on a 20<sup>th</sup> Century model of provision and is part of a national debate on libraries that is currently taking place;
- (15) There were key issues to consider such as WIFI, provision of toilets in libraries to meet the changing needs of customers;
- (16) There are no community led libraries in Bristol;
- (17) Bristol City Council was linked to Libraries West, the regional library body;
- (18) There is a growing web service and greater use of e books;
- (19) Most residents of the city live within 1 mile of a library;
- (20) Active borrowers includes 14 % of the population;
- (21) The redesign of the service will include discussion with other partners and considering activities not always normally associated with libraries such as dance and poetry readings;
- (22) Addressing inequalities in the city is a key issue;

- (23) An initial Cabinet report is scheduled for 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014, followed by public consultation and a final proposal to Cabinet on a future model in March 2015;

Members made the following comments:

- (24) Birmingham City Council was leading the way in Library provision and could provide a useful model during this process;
- (25) Although the redesign could help to address service provision in an imaginative way, it should be remembered that one of the principal driver for this change was the required cuts in the service;
- (26) The consultation needs to be extremely widespread including community organisations, schools, colleges and a wide age range of people. It also needs to address how consultation will take place with Councillors and Neighbourhood Partnerships, issues relating to staff (pay levels and gender balance), users (cross referencing on gender, age and ethnicity) and to ensure it includes those groups who don't normally use the service;
- (27) The six month timescale is extremely challenging;
- (28) Any move towards a community-led approach for libraries runs the risk of creating a two tier system across the city;
- (29) Access for children at both Primary and Secondary school level is important – every child should have access to a good library facility. It was noted that there was very significant usage by children in some parts of the city- children between 0 and 10 were the highest user group;
- (30) People living in isolation is another important group to consider in this process – the importance of getting books to people who were unable to leave their homes should be considered;
- (31) It was noted that there was currently no member of BME staff working in Junction 3 – officers explained that this was an important challenge. It was explained that a significant amount of ESOL work was being carried out in this area. The possibility of community workers being based in these locations was also being considered

Officers confirmed that, as part of the redesign of the service, a befriending service was being proposed to be delivered by a voluntary group.

At the end of the discussion, the Strategic Director thanked members for their input into the process.

## **18 (a) Inquiry Day – Waste**

Officers explained that this Inquiry day would consider issues relating to waste disposal technology. In response to a members question, it was acknowledged that work on the reduction, re-use and recycling of material at an earlier stage was not included in the discussion since

this was already covered by the 2009 Waste Strategy. However, since the technology in respect of waste disposal had significantly changed since then (whilst the technology for earlier parts of the process had not) and Government targets in this area had changed, this needed to be re-examined.

**Resolved - that the proposed review arrangements for both Inquiry days be approved, with additional time to be built into the Waste Inquiry Day to consider issues relating to the provision of a context and of clarity as to why the Inquiry is not considering issues relating to reduction, reuse and recycling of materials and is focusing on disposal.**

**19 (b) Inquiry Day – Byelaws**

Members noted that it had been agreed to have an Inquiry Day later in the Municipal Year to consider issues relating to best practice and legislation in this area.

**20 Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that (as agreed in Minute Number 10 above) the next meeting would be held at 2pm on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2014 in a Committee Room, City Hall.

The meeting ended at 1.25pm

**CHAIR**