



Agenda Item No: 4

Bristol City Council

Minutes of Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission

17th August 2015

Councillors: Denyer, Fodor, Harvey, Hickman, Kirk (substitute for Tincknell), Lovell, G Morris, Milestone and Negus

Officers in Attendance:-

Jeremy Livitt - Democratic Services Officer, Alison Comley - Strategic Director Neighbourhoods, Lucy Fleming – Scrutiny Co-ordinator, Di Robinson, Service Director – Neighbourhoods and Communities and Merlin Jones – Project Manager

19. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies were received from Councillor Emma Tincknell (substituted for by Councillor Gill Kirk).

20. Public Forum

Questions, together with answers from the Chair, were made available at the meeting and noted by Scrutiny Commission Members.

Supplementary Questions/Comments were made as follows:

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Question 1 – Councillor Gill Kirk – Library Digital Inclusion Fund – Answer provided

Question 2 – Councillor Gill Kirk – Eastville Library – Councillor Kirk asked what other measures will be put in place to address the needs of Eastville Community.

Action: Di Robinson to provide a response

Question 3 – Steve Crawshaw – Library Service – No supplementary question was asked.

The following statements were submitted to the meeting:

S1. Steve Crawshaw – UNISON – Libraries for the Future – Revised Proposals. This was noted.

S2. Mary and Malcolm Neave – Libraries for the Future – Revised Proposals. This was noted

S3. Councillor Gill Kirk – Proposed Closure of Eastville Library. This was noted

S4. David Redgewell, Ian Beckey and Jenny Raggett (South West Transport Network and Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance) – Library Service Proposed Reduced Hours of Opening. This was noted

S5. Susan and Adrian Fry – Libraries Proposal. This was noted

S6. Vickie Hirst – Library Service. This was noted.

S7. David Moore – Libraries for the Future – Revised Proposals. This was noted.

S8. Professor AW Preece – Libraries for the Future – Revised Proposals. This was noted.

S9. Charles Thompson – Libraries for the Future – Revised Proposals. This was noted.

S10. Paul Mugford – Libraries for the Future – Revised Proposals. This was noted.

S11. Rosanne Carwardine – Libraries for the Future – Revised Proposals. This was noted.

S12. Councillor Clare Champion-Smith and Councillor Glenise Morgan – Libraries for the Future – Revised Proposals. This was noted.

S13. Jill Kempshall – Libraries for the Future – Revised Proposals. This was noted.

S14. Sheila Preece – Libraries for the Future – Revised Proposals. This was noted.

S15. Friends of Bristol Central Library (Jill Richardson) – Revised Library Proposals.

S16. Councillor Charlie Bolton – Salvage/Re-use in developments. This was noted.

S17 (Late). Councillor Tim Leaman – Lawrence Weston Library.

21. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

22. Minutes of Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission Annual meeting – 17th July 2015

Resolved – that the minutes of the above meeting be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to altering the word “Morris” to “Means” and the word “Rod” to “Road” at the top of Page 2.

Action: Jeremy Livitt

23. Action Sheet – 26th April 2015

Resolved – that the Action Sheet be noted.

24. Whipping

There was no whipping for this meeting.

25. Chair’s Business

There was no business from the Chair.

26. Libraries for the Future: Revised Proposals

The Chair opened discussion for this item and explained that the intention was to formulate a response which would go forward as a statement from the Scrutiny Commission to Cabinet.

The following comments were made from members of the Scrutiny Commission, together with responses from officers as appropriate:

- (1) Rather than agreeing to close Eastville Library prior to working out the detail of an alternative location, a review for library provision for the whole of Lockleaze was required to establish a community hub in Eastville. Since the proposed change was so significant, the Neighbourhood Partnerships should be involved in the process;
- (2) Whilst it was noted that in the report it indicated that there would be some provision following the proposed closure, it was noted that, if approved, there would be a gap in the full service between the closure and any new service opening. It was noted that the proposal was for the new provision to be in place by 2016 at the latest. It was noted that in point 7.2.2 in the report officers have stated that some provision will be in place before the closure of

the Eastville library building. Officers acknowledged that there are some concerns because they are not yet in a position to be specific as to what will be provided where.

- (3) The issue of reduced library hours needed to be carefully considered. In the long term, a shortened hours' service could threaten the viability of the service itself and could cause services to "wither on the vine". It was noted that the core and local offers were being used as a means of meeting the wider needs of communities as appropriate;
- (4) The importance of reaching people who don't normally use the service but could be potential new users was part of the new approach. The development of partnerships would be a crucial element of this;
- (5) Issues of accessibility for the public (ie public transport) were crucial in this process for the relocation of Eastville Library services;
- (6) It was noted that the words "to a level" in Paragraph 7.1.2 of the report should read " by a level";
- (7) Concerns were expressed that reducing the hours may make the service less resilient. In the case of Stockwood Library, this had closed three times recently due to a lack of staff. It was noted that the rota arrangements for a library service were already extremely complex and part of the work that officers were doing was to see how this could be simplified and made stronger;
- (8) Whilst the overall approach adopted in the report was a very good solution, there remained a concern over the dearth of community facilities in parts of the city. Nevertheless, there remained a fantastic opportunity for the service;
- (9) The importance of community facilities was raised. For example, Eastville Library was now being used as a location for councillor surgeries as well as some other use, such as meetings of the Community Land Trust. There was a concern that the closure of this library could result in this being lost. It was also noted that out of hours community use at this library amounted to approximately 300 hours in 30 months;
- (10) There remained a concern that the principal reason for most libraries not closing was due to the forthcoming elections in May 2016. It was noted that this was and would continue to be a key political issue;
- (11) It was important to ensure that those libraries with smaller footfalls should receive the most support in order to increase their current offers;
- (12) Whilst two of the libraries named for the pilot study (Henbury and Stockwood) were listed, it was noted that the other two had not yet been identified;
- (13) Concerns were raised regarding the use of swipe card/automated access, specifically around the safety of women in an unstaffed setting. There was a serious equalities issue here as to how the public could be kept safe in such situations. This issue has been raised within the EQIA, and is in part why the automated access will be piloted initially, to check that these concerns can be minimised or removed.
- (14) A concern was expressed as to whether or not officers had taken into account the needs of those with English as a second language or low levels of literacy within these proposals;
- (15) A suggestion was raised as to where new volunteers in the service were likely to come from ie would they all be ex library staff? Officers explained that the purpose of the volunteer programme would be to bring in new people to the service as volunteers, from diverse backgrounds with different interests

- and skills to share with the service. If ex-library staff wanted to volunteer, they would of course be most welcome.
- (16) Concern was expressed that there seemed little justification in the report for the selection of the figure of 25% reduction in hours, rather than 30% reduction. Officers had noted concerns expressed by members at the previous Scrutiny Commission concerning the need to minimise cuts as much as possible and had therefore chosen the minimum percentage reduction to enable the service to be maintained at a level at which we can still have a strong base across the service in which to build our future provision.
- (17) The question was raised as to staff involvement in these proposals. Officers clarified that staff has been involved in all the Cabinet report. Once a formal decision is made regarding the future service, the managing change process will begin to take staff through the major changes to the service and the impact on their specific roles;
- (18) If the 25% reduction was adopted, this would be a big challenge for all parties. It would involve a new approach with partnerships in the community, Neighbourhood Partnerships, local tradespeople etc. There would be a very short time to bring in Local Management of Libraries. Officers noted that change would not all happen at once but would be developed over time, taking account of new and emerging opportunities as they arise. It was confirmed that the minimum 20 hour core offer would operate as a baseline below which no library would drop;
- (19) It was raised that a comment made regarding Redland Library had not been included in the report of the consultation meeting at the Cabot Clifton Clifton East Neighbourhood Partnership. This was an oversight.
Action: Di Robinson to ensure that this is picked up by officers
- (20) It was suggested that to support the local decision making regarding which hours/days residents wanted their library to be open, it would be helpful to measure the numbers of people coming into the library. However, it was acknowledged that the term “usage” needed to be carefully defined. For example, a large number of people at Redland Library used this facility but did not take out books.
- (21) It was noted that during the second round of consultation, the numbers of comments from those people who were not discussing the seven libraries identified as being at risk, had dropped significantly. It was noted that this second phase of consultation had been very confusing for some members of the public. Officers clarified that the findings from both Stage 1 and Stage 2 have informed these proposals, and all comments will form part of the discussions regarding the local offers in the future.;
- (22) In addition to staff opening hours, there were other key issues to consider ie the potential for extended hours (ie job clubs in the early evening) and digital inclusion;
- (23) It was noted that Avonmouth Library would gain as a result of these proposals. There needed to be negotiations with the Neighbourhood Partnership and engagement with the Polish community who were putting together a community plan to ensure this was reflected in the local offer;
- (24) There was a view the 25% opening hours reduction should not be rigidly applied in all circumstances. There needed to be flexibility to take opportunities as they arose. Officers confirmed that they would always consider all opportunities that came forward. However, in acknowledgement

- of the budgetary pressures faced by the service, the approach taken was an equitable and straightforward one that drew a line in the “savings” sand;
- (25) There was an acknowledgement that the newer resources being deployed as part of these proposals should initially be focussed on those areas where people experience more challenges and have less access to opportunities. (Note 1.4 Cabinet report).
 - (26) Whilst some Councillors remained concerned about the proposed opening hours reduction of 25% across the service, others felt that this was the fairest way of dealing with the difficult situation faced by the service. It was also noted that the service needed to be able to take advantage of extra offers and future growth;
 - (27) In relation to the Capital Fund, members expressed the view that officers should be aware of where spending was most needed.
 - (28) A concern was expressed at the impact of the proposed Eastville library closure on adjacent areas of South Gloucestershire (ie Cheswick Village) and the need for any future proposal to serve both communities in South Gloucestershire and Bristol. Whilst it was acknowledged that it was important for Bristol to remain self-sufficient in library provision, there needed to be discussion between partners in relation to local offers;
 - (29) A report would be required at some point concerning how work would take place with Neighbourhood Partnerships and community groups to stimulate local collaborative working;
 - (30) There was a discussion regarding the Capital Investment Fund. Officers will bring back regular reports on the progress of both the local offer development and the Capital Investment spend. It was also noted that broadband upgrade was already ordered and that the hardware upgrade was also in train.

Action: Alison Comley/Di Robinson/Lucy Fleming/Romayne De Fonseca – to ensure regular update reports are brought back

The Chair thanked all parties for a very helpful and constructive contributions and thanked officers for their support in this process.

Resolved –

- (1) that a Minute Extract for this item goes forward to Cabinet on Tuesday 1st September 2015;**
- (2) that it is noted that the Chair will prepare a statement on this issue in consultation with the Scrutiny Commission which will go forward to Cabinet on Tuesday 1st September 2015.**

Action: (1) – Jeremy Livitt, (2) Lucy Fleming to co-ordinate

27 Waste Inquiry Days – Verbal Update

The Chair referred to 2 documents which had been e-mailed to all Scrutiny Commission Members in advance of this meeting:

- (1) Waste Strategy Sub-Meeting – 30th July 2015 Action Points

This summarised the action taken by scrutiny leads on taking forward the waste agenda.

(2) Waste and Enforcement Action Plan

This is work in progress which pulls together the action from the 2 Inquiry days into a single action plan. This will be added to as work progresses.

The following points were made during the discussion:

- (1) Resource had been secured from the policy team to take forward the refresh of the waste study. A scoping document would be brought to the next meeting
- (2) Work ongoing as to the appropriate time for scrutiny to consider the performance of Bristol Waste Company
- (3) The issue of waste in HMOs and Flats was a big issue and needed to be addressed including within the City Council's own stock;
- (4) An App needed to be created to report fly tipping of waste and other waste issues. Such a mechanism would make the reporting of such issues easier for members of the public. It was noted that, at the 2nd Waste Public Inquiry Day, the issue had been raised of the possibility of modifying the App to report waste concerns for other members of the public. This also needed to be considered;
- (5) The issue of re-use offered the opportunity to set up a co-operative solution. It was noted that there had been discussions with the Salvage Network on this issue to ensure individuals were in place to re-direct members of the public accordingly and avoid them being placed in a skip.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

28 Work Programme

The Work Programme was noted for future meetings of the Scrutiny Commission in 2015/16. Members were advised that the report for submission in September 2015 concerning Traded Services would consider ways of improving the service.

29 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 10am on Monday 14th September 2015 in a Committee Room, Brunel House, St George's Road, Bristol.

CHAIR

The meeting finished at 12.35pm