



Agenda item 4

Minutes

Bristol City Council Minutes of the Place Scrutiny Commission Thursday 8 January 2015 at 11.00 a.m.

Members present:

Councillor Hiscott (in the Chair), Councillor Bolton, Councillor Jackson, Councillor Negus, Councillor Pearce, Councillor Windows

Councillor Fodor (Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission member) attended for the discussion regarding the response to the Mayoral Homes Commission report (agenda item 10).

Officers in attendance:

Barra Mac Ruairi, Strategic Director - Place
Alistair Reid, Service Director – Economy
Tim Southall, Housing Development Manager
Ed Plowden, Sustainable Transport Service Manager and Programme Manager for Local Sustainable Transport Fund
Andrea Dell, Service Manager - Policy & Scrutiny
Johanna Holmes, Policy Adviser - Scrutiny
Shahzia Daya, Service Manager - Legal Services
Ian Hird, Principal Democratic Services Officer

66. Apologies for absence, substitutions and introductions (agenda item 1)

Apologies were received from Councillor Martin and Councillor Khan.

67. Declarations of interest (agenda item 2)

Cllr Bolton declared an interest in relation to agenda item 11 (Local Sustainable Transport Fund update) relating to his employment by Life Cycle local cycling charity.

68. Public forum
(agenda item 3)

It was noted that no public forum items had been received for this meeting.

69. Minutes - Place Scrutiny Commission - 5 December 2014
(agenda item 4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the commission held on 5 December 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

As a point of information (raised by Cllr Negus in relation to minute no. 63 – air quality update), the commission noted that a recent article had been published in the Sunday Times around the potential scrapping of toxic air monitors. The article had indicated that Britain's air polluting monitoring network could be dismantled under government plans to remove the obligation on councils to produce detailed reports on local air quality. The intention of the proposal, released by DEFRA before Christmas, was aimed at reducing the regulatory burden, although environmental groups and the Labour party had accused the government of seeking to hide details of poor air quality in many cities.

Also in relation to minute no. 63, it was noted that the Policy Adviser – Scrutiny would check the latest position in relation to the preparation of the expected report on dust pollution control in Avonmouth.

70. Action sheet – Place Scrutiny Commission
(agenda item 5)

The commission noted and reviewed the action sheet relating to the 5 December meeting.

Summary of main points raised / noted:

- a. Air quality: the timing of the next update report would be discussed at the next agenda planning meeting involving the Chair and the scrutiny leads for this commission.
- b. Action arising from commission meeting held on 17 November (in response to a public forum statement around ensuring appropriate access for disabled people at rail stations): it was noted that the Chair had advised that he would be sending follow-up letters shortly, as agreed by the commission.
- c. Cabinet report on Avonmouth and Portbury docks freehold sale: It was noted that the Strategic Director- Place and Service Director – Property were finalising an engagement plan ahead of the submission of this report

to the Cabinet. As part of the plan, it was proposed that the Place Scrutiny Commission would be given an opportunity to scrutinise the proposals.

RESOLVED:

That the action sheet update and the above information be noted.

71. Work programme 2014/15

(agenda item 6)

The commission considered the latest update of the work programme.

Summary of main points raised / noted:

- a. Members expressed concern about the practicality, in terms of ensuring appropriate levels of councillor attendance, of holding a (second) waste inquiry day on 16 March and a public transport inquiry day on 18 March, especially given that a Full Council was scheduled for 17 March. Following discussion, members agreed that in their view, one of these inquiry days should be rescheduled to an alternative date – their preference was that the waste inquiry day should be moved.
- b. Following discussion on a point raised by Councillor Negus, it was agreed that an opportunity to scrutinise the Council's property function should be built into the 2015/16 work programme. It was also suggested that a review of consolidated freight transport (especially in terms of deliveries to supermarkets) across the city should be included in the future work programme
- c. Noting that the relevant service manager had only just been appointed, it was agreed that it would be appropriate to defer (to a later meeting) the item (currently scheduled for the 5 February meeting of the commission) on reviewing arrangements for Blaise Castle museum, Red Lodge, the Georgian House and Roman Villa. It was noted that a short term plan was in place regarding the opening of these facilities in 2015.
- d. It was agreed that a meeting of the commission should take place (as originally scheduled) on 5 March, and that updates on the energy service and air quality should be scheduled for that meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the latest update of the work programme, and the above comments be noted, and that officers progress and implement the adjustments identified above.

72. Whipping

(agenda item 7)

None reported.

73. Chair's business
(agenda item 8)

None reported.

74. Key decisions
(agenda item 9)

The commission considered the latest update, setting out details of key decisions scheduled to be taken by the Mayor at Cabinet.

Summary of main points raised / noted:

- a. Item on digital advertising: In response to a question, the Strategic Director – Place clarified that this proposal was focused on the establishment of digital advertising at two specific sites, namely Bond Street and Temple Way underpass. The City Design team had been fully consulted on the proposals.
- b. Cllr Pearce reiterated his view (as expressed at other meetings) that there needed to be a closer alignment and “read across” between the Forward Plan and the 3 year Medium Term Financial Strategy.

RESOLVED:

That the update and the above comments be noted.

75. Response to Mayoral Homes Commission report
(agenda item 10)

The commission considered a report reviewing the findings and recommendations of the Mayoral Homes Commission report, and seeking the Place Scrutiny Commission's comments and response to the report.

It was noted that officers were generally supportive of recommendations 1-7, 9-17a&b, and 18-20. It was also noted that officers were not supportive of:

- Recommendation 8 (prioritise delivery of more homes in the short term and more affordable homes over the longer term) because this recommendation was considered contrary to the Council's core strategy and the Affordable Housing Delivery Framework and counter-productive to the objective of increasing the supply of affordable housing.
- Recommendation 17c (around reviewing the policy of housing stock retention) as the Council did not consider that it was in its strategic interests to pursue any large scale housing stock transfer and did not consider that there would be support from the Council's tenants for a stock transfer.

In discussion, the commission was generally supportive of the officer response and the proposed actions as set out in the report. Set out below is a summary of the other main points raised / noted by the commission in determining their response:

- a. With regard to recommendation 8 (affordable housing development), Councillor Negus suggested that, given the changing overall economic situation and recovery of the housing market, it would be essential for the Council to take a more robust position and secure increased developer contributions in relation to affordable housing development.
- b. With regard to recommendations 17 b (active asset management) & 17c (review of stock transfer policy), Cllr Negus suggested that whilst recognising that large scale housing stock transfer did not form part of the Council's agenda, it would be important to look at opportunities to redevelop the poorest quality council housing sites with a view to securing improved standards of housing at such locations. He suggested that the Council should be as ambitious as possible in pursuing this objective but without seeking to change its landlord status. It was noted that there had been previous examples of particular areas being the subject of more comprehensive redevelopment, e.g. in upper Horfield and Barton Hill.
- c. With regard to the proposed future work relating to recommendation 16 (review of land and property assets for potential housing development), Councillor Jackson stated that the results of the previous citywide consultation over parks and green spaces must be fully taken into account.
- d. With regard to recommendation 10 (compulsory purchase orders), Cllr Pearce suggested that, whilst noting the complexities involved, the Council would, in appropriate circumstances, need to demonstrate its preparedness to use compulsory purchase.
- e. The Chair stressed the particular importance of recommendation 11 (creating a "results, not process" culture) and ensuring there was genuine pace and urgency in developing a more entrepreneurial approach to the delivery of homes. It was agreed that an update report should be scheduled into the commission's 2015/16 work programme to allow an opportunity for members to specifically track progress in taking forward key actions. Cllr Negus stressed the importance of ensuring an ambitious approach generally, maximising the opportunities in relation to the Council's estate, but also ensuring co-operation with private developers and looking to develop joint ventures.
- f. With regard to recommendation 7 (developing and nurturing an alternative homes sector), Cllr Fodor noted that 2 relatively large scale projects (a former school site in Southmead for 130 homes, and up to 750 homes as part of Hengrove phase 2) would involve developers being encouraged to consider housing providers such as custom build facilitators. He suggested that it would also be important to encourage the development of smaller scale schemes, including "grass roots" home build options. It

would also be important, especially in the context of Bristol's year as European Green Capital, to encourage innovative schemes, such as the SNUG homes initiative, which had received a Green Capital strategic grant.

- g. With regard to the original report of the Mayoral Homes Commission report, Cllr Pearce suggested that members should note and flag the fact that paragraphs 3.6.24 and 3.6.25 of the original report contained incorrect information about the issue of potential investment from institutions / pension funds. It would be important for these matters to be clarified.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted, and that the above comments form this commission's response to the Mayoral Homes Commission report; and that an update report be scheduled into the commission's 2015/16 work programme to enable members to track and review progress.

76. Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) update
(agenda item 11)

The commission considered a report providing an update on projects delivered as part of the LSTF from 2012, and the outcomes delivered.

Members generally welcomed the progress achieved in relation to the use of the LSTF. A summary of main points raised / noted in discussion is set out below:

- a. In relation to cycle routes, Cllr Jackson advised that he had received comments from many people in south Bristol (e.g. in Filwood ward) about the need to develop a safe cycling route between south Bristol and the city centre. In response, officers advised that this was being considered in the context of the next stage of the development of the cycle network.
- b. In response to a question from Cllr Bolton, officers clarified that a proposal for any new bus service / route must be accompanied by a robust business plan; it would be important to demonstrate that new routes could be sustainable into the future. In further discussion on bus services, Cllr Negus stressed the need to ensure that there was an ongoing strategic-level conversation between the Council and First senior management around improving the city's bus services for the long term.
- c. Cllr Negus suggested that it was important to be alive to and "open-minded" about new ideas around transport movement and management, such as the "shared space" approach promoted by the urban design and movement specialist, Ben Hamilton-Baillie. It was noted that Bristol's year as European Green Capital was likely to open up some opportunities for experimentation in this area.

- d. In relation to encouraging cycling, it was suggested that it was important to try to increase the proportion of women and children who regularly cycled – for example, experience from Europe showed that cycling behaviour improved in overall terms where there was greater cycling participation from women and children. It was noted that safe cycling routes and workplace shower/changing facilities were important factors in encouraging increased take-up of cycling as a transport mode.
- e. Cllr Pearce stressed the importance of continuing to encourage / develop the use of technology to assist public transport users – e.g. Apps which could be downloaded to smart phones, and real time information at bus stops.
- f. The Chair raised an issue about whether more could be done in terms of services offered by coaches / local coach networks. It was noted that this was a deregulated market; it was possible that there may be a market around coach companies possibly delivering services accessible from “hub” stops in rural areas.
- g. Cllr Pearce suggested that officers should explore with the local universities the potential for a PhD post-graduate study(ies) being utilised as a means for work being undertaken on modelling the city’s future transport needs, including survey work around the transport needs of people living in and around Bristol.
- h. An issue was raised querying the benefits of introducing “built-out” bus stops. The Chair suggested that, in her view, in some parts of the city such as the Horfield area, “built out” bus stops were increasing traffic congestion and pollution locally and had a negative impact on traffic flows. In response, officers pointed out that “built out” bus stops were installed only after a clear evidence base had been established. In the longer term, it was anticipated that the introduction of smart ticketing would reduce significantly the amount of time that buses needed to take when stopping to pick up passengers. It was also noted that there would be opportunities for local consultation in the context of the bus shelter replacement programme.

RESOLVED:

That the report and the above information / comments be noted.