

Bristol City Council

Minutes of Place Scrutiny Commission

19th November at 2.00pm



Members Present:-

Councillors Bolton (Chair), Cheney, Hiscott, Pearce, Mead, Thomas and Wright

Councillors Clarke and Mead attended for item 10 on behalf of the Business Change and Resources Scrutiny Commission

Officers in Attendance:-

Johanna Holmes – Policy Adviser (Scrutiny), Ben Robinson (Transport Intelligence Team Manager), Bill Edrich - Commercial Director Energy, Mareike Schmidt - Service Manager Energy, Barra Mac Ruairi – Strategic Director Place, Tian Ze Hao – Finance Business Partner.

1. Apologies for Absence

None received

2. Public Forum

The Commission received and noted the following questions and officer responses:

PQ 01 Christian Martin – RPZ Finance & OLEV Funding

PQ 02 Councillor Negus – Hydrogen Fuel

The Commission received and noted the following statements:

PS 03 Councillor Negus – Place Directorate Communication

PS 04 Greater Bedminster Community Partnership c/o Cllr Bolton – Planning Concerns

PS 05 David Redgewell – Bus Services through South Gloucestershire

PS 06 David Redgewell - Services into the Future

A copy of the questions, answers and statements would be placed in the minutebook (accessed via Democratic Services).

The following comments in relation to the submissions were made:

PS 04 Concerns regarding community infrastructure in relation to planning applications would be discussed amongst the DC leads as it was a problem that affected many wards.



PS 05 Councillors were concerned that competition between individual bus routes could result in reduced services overall. A briefing with Transport officers was requested with a view to inviting bus company representatives to the February meeting of the Commission to discuss the situation.

3. Declarations of Interest

None were received

3. Minutes – Place Scrutiny Commission 10th September 2015

The minutes of the 10th September were agreed as an accurate record.

5. Action Sheet 10th September 2015

The up to date action sheet was noted. All actions had been completed.

6. Whipping

There were none.

7. Chair's Business

There was none.

8. Scrutiny Work Programme & Expert Witnesses 2015/16

The Commission were reminded that

- a. On the 18th December 2015 there would be a joint item on the agenda of the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission meeting to discuss the Housing Inquiry Day outcomes.
- b. On the 4th January at 5pm (specific time to be confirmed) there would be a Budget Scrutiny meeting of Business Change and Resources Scrutiny Commission at which the Place Directorate budgets would be discussed.
- c. At the January 2016 meeting of Place Scrutiny Commission, there would be an item to discuss the lessons learned through Warm Up Bristol.

9. Warm Up Bristol Update

The Commission received a presentation from the Commercial Director Energy (a copy of the presentation is available in the minutebook).

In discussion, the following was noted:

- a. It was hoped that the outstanding work would be completed by the end of March however some types of works were subject to weather constraints.
- b. There had been Mayoral commitment to the completion of work where a deposit had been paid. Bristol City Council was also supporting the local companies involved through the continuation of work.



- c. It was important to ensure clarity on which companies were authorised by Bristol City Council, particularly when they approached residents directly. Information could also be found on the website and residents could phone the Installer Manager if there was any doubt.
- d. There was some concern about the reputational link between Warm Up Bristol and Bristol Energy, however it was encouraging that there continued to be new enquiries. A letter would be sent to all customers to outline relevant timelines. It was unlikely that new commissions would start before January.
- e. At the Scrutiny Commission meeting in January, officers and Members would further explore new commissions and targets for delivery.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) to note the progress on actions to date.**

10. Income Generation (Place Directorate)

The Commission received a presentation from the Strategic Director, Place.

In discussion, the following was noted:

- a. Income in some areas varied hugely dependent on the economic climate, for example in relation to workforce planning for the Development Management teams.
- b. Through duty to Bristol and to the market the Council could not enter and affect a market through state aid, but only through legislation, do something that is of benefit to the City. Profit was therefore sought for purpose and social good.
- c. A cohort of work was considering the centralisation of costs to ensure efficiency relating to internal charging.
- d. The role of the directorate needed to be clear taking into consideration the contracting Local Government and the prominence of business rates in place of the general grant. The income base was required to grow to support service delivery through further contraction.
- e. It would be for the Council as a whole to agree how to allocate any profit from subsidiaries such as Bristol Energy, to invest back to the Council as a whole as spend of public funds.

The specific example of land and property was explored. In discussion, the following was noted:

- f. Within the Bristol boundary 33% of the land property portfolio produced only 80% of potential income due to historical leasing arrangements. A project would target those areas and consider the vacant asset land portfolio. The City is an asset and the role of the Council was to seek the best return on its assets.



- g. Peppercorn rents were of assistance to organisations such as new businesses and this boosted Bristol's reputation of social creativity however they should be time limited and a stepping stone to self-sufficiency. A systematic framework was underway to consider the gap between market rent and peppercorn and how to spread the benefit transparently such as through a grant system.
- h. Identification, prioritization and acceleration of existing development portfolio and plans was suggested with consideration of the role of the Council needed, be it as developer or partner with commercial companies.
- i. Commercialization of physical assets included utilising existing assets effectively such as transforming vacant buildings going into disrepair and perhaps forming partnerships to push the asset further. An existing example was the use of street furniture for digital hubs through relationships built with commercial companies.
- j. Growth of professional services would be resource intensive building knowledge and reputation for long term return.
- k. It was suggested that although the concept of re-evaluation of assets was not new, the organisation was currently more entrepreneurial and its officers increasingly commercially minded. A sustainable business plan would help develop services, grow income and reduce cost.
- l. 'Know Your Place' was a key tool for selling Bristol's rich collection of buildings and culture from tourism spots to the lesser known.
- m. Members discussed the value of use of a balance sheet to plot assets, targets and objectives within a period of time however it was acknowledged that some value would be 'paper only' and would not be realised through sale. Generally out of 3000 leases, approximately 200 derived income and should be considered where effort should be directed.
- n. Directorate transformation and staff contraction had resulted in the loss of experience and knowledge and what remained needed to be retained within resilient systems.
- o. There were no plans to sell any assets to fund service running costs. The directorate would instead grow the portfolio and realise income from elements not yet explored fully.
- q. Officers clarified that external consultants KPMG would provide an overarching diagnostic of all directorates (except Adult Social Services) considering income generation and future efficiencies, highlighting any crosscutting themes on infrastructure. The Property Team within the Council were also doing a piece of work looking at wide spectrum of opportunities for delivery.

It was suggested and agreed that 'property' as a potential income would be considered further in more detail by the Commission as it was likely the biggest return on investment. Members asked officers to clarify; what property assets the organisation had and what it was seeking to do with it. It was agreed that this could return to the meeting in March 2016.

RESOLVED:- .

- (i) to note the progress on actions to date.



11. Case for Culture Inquiry Day Scoping Document

The scoping document was noted.

End 16.10

