

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5 (iii)

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
RESOURCES (BUDGET) SCRUTINY COMMISSION
HELD ON 9TH JANUARY 2012 AT 6 PM**

P Councillor Brain (in the Chair)
P Councillor Eddy
P Councillor Hassell
P Councillor Naysmith
P Councillor Rayner
P Councillor Weston
P Councillor Wright

Also in attendance :

Councillor Emmett – Assistant Executive Member
Councillor Gary Hopkins – Executive Member
Councillor Kent – Executive Member
Councillor Negus- Executive Member
Councillor Poultney - Executive Member
Councillor Rogers - Executive Member

**RC
67.1/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCES, SUBSTITUTIONS AND
INTRODUCTIONS**

Apologies were received from Councillor Janke, Leader of the Council.

**RC
68.1/12 PUBLIC FORUM**

None.

**RC
69.1/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**RC
70.1/12 WHIPPING**

None.

**RC
71.1/12 CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

The Chair referred to the next meeting of the Resources Scrutiny Commission meeting on the 11 January scheduled to scrutinise the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Capital Programme.

As the papers relating to the Capital Programme had not been received at the appropriate time the Chair felt that there was insufficient time to properly consider this item on the 11 January. He suggested that this item be deferred until the meeting on 24 January. The meeting on the 11th would go ahead as scheduled to consider the HRA. Members of the Commission agreed to do this. The Work Programme to be amended accordingly.

The Chair also suggested to add to the Work Programme an item about financial report presentation for consideration after May 2012. This was agreed. The Work Programme to be amended accordingly.

**RC
72.1/12 REVENUE BUDGET 2012/13**

The Commission considered a report of the Service Director, Finance (agenda item no. 5) setting out the Cabinet's proposals for the revenue budget for Health & Social Care and Neighbourhoods & City Development.

5 (i) Health & Social Care

The Strategic Director Health & Social Care introduced the budget report outlining the proposals for the service with regard to Care Management, Care Services and Strategic Planning and Commissioning. It was emphasised that many of the budget proposals were awaiting the outcome of public consultation however it was not anticipated that there would

be any significant changes to future spending assumptions.

Members of the Commission then proceeded to scrutinise the budget report and in answer to the questions raised the following issues were clarified -

- as services moved toward personalised care there was clear evidence that associated costs would fall when compared with residential care;
- less residential care would ultimately lead to closure of one or possibly more care homes however which one's and when had yet to be decided;
- it was anticipated that residential care costs would continue to fall as the move toward personalised care progressed. National trends supported this contention;
- apparent large savings with regard to Re-commissioning of Supporting People Services was a result of shared budget arrangements with the Neighbourhoods Directorate;
- service delivery model for community meals referred to investment to enable people to remain in their own homes for longer;
- streamlining of care management proposals was a process to ensure that staff resources were deployed in the most appropriate way and to minimise redundancy costs;
- review of high cost care packages had made, and would continue to make, significant savings particularly by targeting the highest cost elements where a larger proportion of savings could be made;
- it was confirmed that the proposed budget reductions would not affect eligibility criteria regarding access to services;
- large under spends in some salary budget headings related to a change of functions as service provision continued to evolve;
- increased community based living opportunities would reduce costs and could work for other client groups;
- day care centres were being reviewed in a similar way to residential care centres having regard to increasing trends toward personalised care. It was recognised that this could potentially lead to closures of day care centres. This issue would be considered by Cabinet in March 2012;
- concern was expressed that a relatively small reduction in the demand for day care centres might affect the

financial viability of the overall service for the majority who still wanted to attend a day care centre. It was suggested that in this instance day care centres could be operated in different ways to reduce costs such as opening less often or merging centres;

- it was considered very important that day care centres should be pro-actively marketed to ensure that personalised care users were aware of the facilities that were available to them.

RESOLVED - that the report be noted and that comments made form part of the submission to Cabinet on 26th January 2012.

5 (ii) Neighbourhoods & City Development

The Strategic Director Neighbourhoods & City Development confirmed that this year's budget was on target and that there had been heavy scrutiny of next year's budget in order to achieve the required savings. The only exception was with regard to the development control function which had already undergone significant budget reductions following the economic downturn and the corresponding receipt of fewer planning applications.

Members of the Commission then proceeded to scrutinise the budget report and in answer to the questions raised the following issues were clarified -

- in examining the base budget for 2012/13 there was an apparent increase in the budget, this was due to money from Health & Social Care being transferred to the Neighbourhoods & City Development directorate. Other budget heads relating to central charges, such as ICT, human resources and finance support, were now also shown under Neighbourhoods & City Development budget headings;
- there had been some increases in expenditure and these related to the 'Jubilee Pool' and 'Healthplex' projects;
- diversion of staff resources from 'low level complaints' referred to what were effectively inquiries for more information. It was anticipated that recent improvements to the Council's web site and other electronic forms of access would reduce this;
- a car park charge for Ashton Court to raise more income would not result in increased spending;
- a cut to public toilets spending would not result in any closures as

the savings would be made by more efficient use of staff resources;

- budget reductions for the food safety advice business were proposed as it had been found that the private sector could provide this more cost effectively without increasing the risk to the public;
- reductions in the pest control service were proposed because it could be provided more cost effectively by the private sector. Larger issues such a rat and sea gull infestation would continue to be provided by the Council;
- reserves had been used to fund family intervention services because it was anticipated that funding from central government would be received in the near future and it was decided not to stop spending in this area pending receipt of that funding;
- the proposed increase in licensing fees for Houses in Multiple Occupation was aimed at improving housing conditions in this sector and had been agreed with landlords in advance. It was not anticipated that this would have an impact on the availability of HMO's;
- income shortfall from an aborted catering contract for museums and galleries would be resolved when the existing contract expired in approximately six months time.

RESOLVED - that the report be noted and that comments made form part of the submission to Cabinet on 26th January 2012.

RC

73.1/12 WORK PROGRAMME

The Commission considered a report of the Service Director, Strategy and Performance (agenda item no. 6) setting out the Work Programme for 2011/12.

RESOLVED - that the Work Programme for 2011/12 be noted.

RC

74.1/12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED - that the next meeting of the Resources (Budget) Scrutiny Commission be held on 11th January, 2012 at 6 pm.

(The meeting ended at 8.10 pm)

CHAIR