

**BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
HELD ON 21<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 2012 AT 9.30 AM**

P Councillor Brain (in the Chair)  
P Councillor Gollop  
P Councillor Hassell  
A Councillor Naysmith  
P Councillor Rayner  
A Councillor Watson  
P Councillor Wright

**RSC  
32.9/12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCES, SUBSTITUTIONS AND  
INTRODUCTIONS**

Apologies were received from Councillors Watson and Naysmith.

**RSC  
33.9/12 PUBLIC FORUM**

None.

**RSC  
34.9/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**RSC  
35.9/12 WHIPPING**

None.

**RSC  
36.9/12 MINUTES - RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 20<sup>TH</sup> JULY  
2012**

**RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting of the  
Resources Scrutiny Commission held  
on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2012 be confirmed as a  
correct record and signed by the Chair.**

## CHAIR'S BUSINESS

### (i) Council Tax

The Chair referred to the resolution made at the last meeting to write to the party leaders to request that they lobby the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government regarding the power to make decisions about single persons Council Tax discount at the local level. One reply had been received from Councillor Green too date and she had asked if it was best for each party lead to write individually or write one joint letter. The Chair felt that one joint letter would carry greater weight and suggested that the party leads agree amongst themselves the most appropriate way forward.

### (ii) Scrutiny Process

The Chair referred to a discussion that had been held at the Council meeting on 18 September about the scrutiny process. A suggestion had been made that scrutiny should focus on particular subjects in more depth rather than a higher number with less meaningful scrutiny. Members were asked to think about this and report back to the Commission with their views.

### (iii) Budget process for 2013/14

The Chair referred to recent correspondence with the Leader of the Council suggesting that in view of the forthcoming mayoral elections a practical approach to setting the budget for 2013/14 could be for the Cabinet to publish as early as possible a list of draft budget options. The options could then be made available for review and comment by both the Resources Scrutiny Commission and the candidates for the role of elected mayor.

The Leader of the Council had responded that it was the incumbent administration's intention to prepare various budget options between now and the Mayoral elections and delay publication of the draft budget, for public consultation, until the elected Mayor had an opportunity to consider the options.

The Strategic Director Corporate Services pointed out that Council was in a unique position for this round of budget scrutiny because of the forthcoming mayoral elections. Meetings would take place

between the Council's Party Group Leaders and the Strategic Leadership Team and following that it was proposed that the Party Group Leaders meet with the Resources Scrutiny Commission Party Leads to discuss further, this could take place in early October.

It was felt that it would not be practical to publish the budget proposals for public consultation until the elected mayor had been appointed and had enough time to consider them. It was acknowledged that this approach might have an impact on how the Resources Scrutiny Commission could scrutinise the budget given that the date for Council to set the 2013/14 budget could not be delayed.

(iv) Mobile Library Service

An information paper regarding the termination of the Mobile Library Service had been circulated to Members of the Commission following a statement that had been submitted to the 20 July 2012 meeting asking for an immediate review and scrutiny of actions taken to terminate the service at the end of March 2012.

The Commission noted that whilst the mobile library service had been terminated re-investment had been made to expand the home delivery service which catered for vulnerable sectors within the community.

The Commission was assured that widespread consultation had taken place which had included public meetings, posters, information leaflets and an online survey. The Commission were informed that little feedback had been received.

The Commission noted the current position.

**RSC  
38.9/12**

**WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13**

A revised work programme was circulated following agreement reached at the Party Leads meeting on 19 September which removed some of the 'to be scheduled' items and scheduled in other items.

The scheduled in items were -

- a) Performance Management Development Scheme (PMDS) - 19 October, 2012;
- b) Business Change Update (*including new financial systems*) - 19 October, 2012;
- c) Neighbourhood Partnerships Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy - 14 December, 2012;
- d) Six monthly economic briefing - 14 December, 2012;
- e) Local Authority Mortgage Scheme - 14 December, 2012;
- f) Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) - 8 February 2013.

The removed items were -

- a) Effective alternatives to the external audit regime;
- b) Housing Revenue Account self financing settlement - financial implications;
- c) Review of central government funding to Councils from April 2013;
- d) New financial systems (*now included in Business Change update*).

**RESOLVED - that the work programme, as revised, be noted.**

**RSC**

**39.9/12**

## **BUS RAPID TRANSIT - FINANCIAL UPDATE**

The Commission considered a report of the Service Director, Finance (agenda item no. 8) giving a financial update on the Bus Rapid Transit scheme. A presentation was also given detailing the itinerary of the project.

Arising from subsequent debate and questions put, the following points were made or clarified -

- the contributing councils would bear the full financial risks of the schemes and any cost overrun would be borne them and not the DfT whose contributions were fixed;
- significant work had been undertaken to ensure that the scheme had achieved a robust level of cost validation which enabled a greater certainty of risk evaluation;
- the scheme would give good value for money for the City Council as its share of the cost amounted to 42%;
- queries raised by protesters of the scheme had been successfully countered at a recent public inquiry;

- modelling of the scheme was robust and continuously updated to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the scheme as it evolved, although cycling and walking were not included;
- emissions from public transport vehicles had been considered and assurances were given that provision to mitigate pollution would be even greater by the time the scheme was in operation;
- cycle provision needed more consideration due to the physical limitations of some of the road network and further work would be undertaken with cycling groups to find ways to resolve any outstanding issues;
- the proportion of construction costs would be approximately 50% and most spend would require a 'lump sum' approach to fix the financial risk more precisely;
- to mitigate the risk of cost overrun a 15% contingency had been built into the scheme;
- any contingency money not used would require a 50% payback to the DfT on completion of a particular section of the scheme;
- development of the scheme would 'front end' the larger structures to help improve cash flow;
- the business community would be expected to make a contribution toward build costs as they would directly benefit from the improved transport infrastructure and it was anticipated the Local Enterprise Partnership might help to facilitate this;
- most of the contracts for the scheme would be awarded to businesses with a proven track record of experience with large projects however it was expected that they would sub contract some of the work to smaller local businesses.

**RESOLVED - that the Financial Update on the Bus Rapid Transit Scheme Bids be noted.**

**RSC**

**40.9/12**

## **BRISTOL AND WEST OF ENGLAND CITY DEAL**

The Commission considered a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate Services (agenda item no. 9) providing a summary of the main issues associated with the City Deal and outlining the implications for the communities of Bristol. The report also set out the processes being put in place by the four West of England local authorities and the Local Enterprise Partnership to conclude the final details of the deal with the Government.

Arising from subsequent debate it was clarified that the local authorities could retain the income generated by the Deal from business rates. It was also confirmed that progress of the scheme

would be closely monitored although the details of how this was to be achieved were yet to be finalised as there was a concern that such measures might have a detrimental effect on the economic benefits the scheme sought to achieve.

Arising from a question from the public gallery, relating to how skills funding would be provided, the Strategic Director Corporate Services agreed to provide a written answer as soon as possible after the meeting.

**RESOLVED - that the implications of the Bristol and West of England City Deal be noted.**

**RSC**

**41.9/12**

**CORPORATE OUTCOME PERFORMANCE QUARTER 1, 2012/13**

Due to time constraints the Commission agreed to defer this report until its meeting of 19 October, 2012.

**RSC**

**42.9/12**

**ENERGY PROCUREMENT FOR BUILDINGS AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Commission considered a report of the Director of City Development and Neighbourhoods (agenda item no. 11) setting out details of the energy procurements for buildings and infrastructure.

Arising from subsequent debate and questions put, the following points were made or clarified -

- the biomass volume was 500,000 tonnes a lot of which was sourced from Bristol's own arboricultural wood supplies however the Commission were informed that a large proportion of this was poorer quality wood chip and so was sold to partially supplement the cost of higher grade wood chip that needed for the Council's wood burning boilers;
- there was potential for sales growth if the Council's services were marketed to councils or other public organisations;
- the street lighting contract differed from other metered contracts as it was unmetered and instead utilised a calculation method.

**RESOLVED - (1) that joint working be continued with neighbouring authorities to**

**produce a joint procurement framework for electricity and gas;**

- (2) that the development of wood fuel supplies be continued so that Bristol was ready to increase the use of locally sourced biomass fuel.**

**RSC  
43.9/12**

## **ENERGY AND CARBON REDUCTION IN BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL BUILDINGS**

The Commission considered a report of the Director of City Development and Neighbourhoods (agenda item no. 12) which outlined the progress being made regarding energy and carbon reduction in Bristol City Council buildings.

Arising from subsequent debate and questions put, the following points were made or clarified -

- the energy use of the Council was 1.9% of the total energy used by the whole of the city of Bristol;
- the Council was aiming to save a further 800 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum through the Council's revolving fund;
- it was anticipated that Bristol could play a lead role in the UK for energy and carbon reduction and this might be facilitated by increased capital investment derived from the ELENA project;
- noted that academy schools were still classed by the government to be the Council's responsibility for carbon purposes. It was hoped that in the future these indicators would be separated out;
- replacing fluorescent lights with LED lighting would ultimately bring large savings once market conditions were more favourable;
- training of staff to be more energy efficient had been considered however it was found that return on investment, although theoretically feasible, was difficult to quantify as people who were trained ultimately leave and the process had to start again. It was considered that tackling 'hot spots' of poorer practice might give better returns;
- investment in wind turbines was progressing and had been helped significantly by the pending closure of Filton Airfield which had raised objections to the proposals. Tenders for the development had been made and it was anticipated that the bid

would be finalised in the next two months with delivery in six to nine months;

- domestic carbon emissions, from local authority housing, were not included as part of the Council's emissions as there was no access to energy bills of individual homes. It was known that approximately 40% of total emissions came from local authority housing but the Council could only control 8% of the total which was primarily communal areas of council housing. It was reported that emissions from domestic sources could however be influenced by energy saving initiatives such as building insulation, solar photovoltaic and double glazing.

**RESOLVED - that the progress in meeting energy and carbon reduction targets in Bristol City Council buildings be noted.**

**RSC**

**44.9/12**

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**RESOLVED - that the next meeting of the Resources Scrutiny Commission be held on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2012 at 9.30 a.m.**

(The meeting ended at 1 pm)

CHAIR