

**BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
RESOURCES (BUDGET) SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
HELD ON 14 JANUARY 2013 AT 6 PM**

P Councillor Abraham  
P Councillor Brain  
P Councillor Janke (in the Chair)  
P Councillor Hassell  
P Councillor Naysmith  
P Councillor Watson  
P Councillor Wright

Also in attendance -

George Ferguson - Mayor  
Councillor Gollop - Assistant Mayor  
Councillor Kent  
Councillor Champion-Smith  
Councillor Beynon  
Councillor J Smith  
Councillor Stone  
Councillor Townsend  
Councillor Green  
Councillor Alexander

**RSC**

**72.1/13**

**APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

**RESOLVED - that the appointment of Councillor Janke as Chair of the Resources Scrutiny Commission for the remainder of the 2012/13 municipal year, as determined by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2013, be noted.**

**RC**

**73.1/13**

**CHANGES TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION**

**RESOLVED - that the following persons be appointed to serve on the Resources**

**Scrutiny Commission for the  
remainder of the 2012/13 municipal  
year:-**

**Councillor Abraham  
Councillor Brain  
Councillor Hassell  
Councillor Naysmith  
Councillor Janke  
Councillor Watson  
Councillor Wright**

**RC  
74.1/13 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR**

**RESOLVED - that Councillor Brain be elected Vice-Chair of the Resources Scrutiny Commission for the remainder of the 2012/13 municipal year.**

**RC  
75.1/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCES, SUBSTITUTIONS AND INTRODUCTIONS**

None received.

**RSC  
76.1/13 PUBLIC FORUM**

The Commission received a public forum statement/question in advance of the meeting. (*A copy of the Public Forum submission is held in the Minute Book*). The question within the statement could not be answered by the Commission as it related solely to the Mayor. The question was therefore referred to the Mayor for reply.

**RSC  
77.1/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None made.

**RSC  
78.1/13 WHIPPING**

None.

**RSC**  
**79.1/13**

**MINUTES - RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMISSION 14TH  
DECEMBER 2012**

**RESOLVED -** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Resources Scrutiny Commission held on 14th December, 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

**RSC**  
**80.1/13**

**CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

None.

**RC**  
**81.1/12**

**REVENUE BUDGET 2013/14**

The Commission considered a report of the Service Director, Finance (agenda item no. 10) setting out the Cabinet's proposals for the revenue budget for Children & Young People's Services. and Health and Social Care. In addition a set of directorate generic questions and answers had been circulated with the reports and a series of questions made by the Chair with answers were also circulated (*copies of which are held in the Minute Book*).

The Commission was reminded that in the current austerity period it was important to have regard to the proposed budget reductions of £35m in the context of the total budget of £350m. The budget time line this year was very tight as details from central government finalising details had not been received until 19 December, 2012. Budget reductions would continue up to 2016/17 and would amount in total to approximately £100m. For 2013/14 the budget would come in just under its target by £1.8m.

Members of the Commission asked general questions and the points clarified were as follows -

- a summary of the net revenue budget would be made available to Members on 16 January, 2013 following despatch of the Cabinet papers;
- Corporate savings benefitted the whole Council but would only be clearly identified in the Corporate Services Directorate budget;

- concern was expressed that the continuing budget reductions would at some point affect the provision of statutory services. The Commission was informed that a recent estimate by the Local Government Association suggested that by 2018/19 some local authorities might experience difficulties meeting their statutory obligations;
- it was noted that some statutory services were not specifically prescribed. It was considered important that a framework of specific statutory responsibilities be compiled.  
**Action - Service Director, Finance.**

## 10 (i) Children and Young People's Services

The Strategic Director Children & Young People's Services introduced the budget report emphasising that an overspend in 2012/13 had arisen due to the rising number of children being placed in care. £2m had been put into the budget this year and a further £3m for 2013/14 to ensure that a balanced budget would be achieved. A considerable amount of resource had been made to ensure that placement trajectory would be accurate.

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

- legal costs in 2012/13 had risen due to the Council initiating care proceedings to protect vulnerable children, figures relating to the legal budget would be made available to Members;  
**Action – Strategic Director CYPS**
- changes to services commissioned through Children's Centres would potentially result in the longer term a reduced level of service in some parts of the city although all children and families eligible for support would be able to access support. However, it was noted that budget savings proposals for 13/14 would not have a materially negative impact on front line delivery of support from Children's Centres. It was further noted that some service provision is co-located in primary schools;
- concern was expressed about the need to ensure the protection of vulnerable children. It was proposed to focus future provision on more vulnerable children, wherever they lived. There are currently thirty children centres in the city and it is necessary to look at the most efficient way of targeting support to meet the needs of children and families;

- the trading with schools programme had made significant progress however actual financial performance would not be definitively known until the new unit was fully in operation at the beginning of the new financial year;
- although 50% of schools had become academies the local authority still had a range of critical roles to execute in relation to education in the city. A number of these would continue to exist even if all schools became academies e.g. SEN provision;
- redundancy costs were charged to corporate budgets so would not be a direct financial cost on the CYPS Directorate;
- the Mayor was asked if further funding could be sought from central government however it was considered that the Council could not plead a special case and that the best approach would be to work jointly with the core cities to achieve the best outcome. It was felt important that there is a clear a vision for children's services and that the Mayor should continue to influence for to mitigate reductions in service provision;
- demographic changes as revealed in the 2011 Census would need to be given full regard;
- regarding early intervention - there was a risk that focussing on the most vulnerable children could eventually lead to an increase in cases as a result of not resolving less serious cases in good time adding to cost pressures in the future. Sophisticated modelling would be used to better target children at risk and resources would continue to be provided to support children at lower risk, based on need;
- school funding frameworks are in the process of major change and due to the complexity of these changes, the Strategic Director CYPS offered to provide a written briefing to enable Members to obtain a better understanding of how it works;

**Action – Strategic Director CYPS**

- there was a consensus that a monitoring framework would need to be put in place to improve information about changes in CYPS, to anticipate potential problems and to measure the impact of budget reductions on the CYPS service. Scrutiny would play an active part in this area.

**Action – Strategic Director CYPS**

**RESOLVED - that the report be noted and that appropriate comments made form part of the submission to Cabinet on 24th January, 2013.**

## **10 (ii) Health and Social Care**

The Interim Strategic Director gave a summary of the budget proposals for 2013/14. A saving of £6.9m would be made from a total budget of £125m, had been added to the base budget for demographic pressures with an additional £1m being held in the corporate contingency.

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

- community meals prices would not be raised above inflation and a saving of £250k was proposed by removing part of the current subsidy and extending the range and numbers of customers, with a view to becoming a self-funding service. Evidence had been gathered that suggested that this was a realistic proposition. It was recognised that this service played a vital role as a welfare function;
- with regard to the care management savings, the focus was on reducing management posts rather than practitioners;
- the implementation of the Day Opportunities and Residential Care for Older People decision would proceed as per the indicative time scales. The Executive and Scrutiny would be alerted if these changed;
- issues of incorrect billing were raised and how this was being addressed. H&SC and STS were working together closely to resolve this but a major part of the problem was the current billing system. A temporary solution was being put in place in February by the software company and longer term a new care management system, which interfaced with the corporate accounting system, would ensure that clients were billed accurately on time.

**RESOLVED - that the report be noted and that appropriate comments made form part of the submission to Cabinet on 24th January, 2013.**

**RSC  
82.1/13**

**WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13**

**RESOLVED - that the work programme 2012/13 be noted.**

**RSC**

**83.1/13**

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Noted that the next meeting of the Resources Scrutiny Commission would be a budget scrutiny meeting and would be held on 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2013 at 6 pm.

**CHAIR**

(The meeting ended at 8.05 pm)