

**BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
RESOURCES (BUDGET) SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
HELD ON 16 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  
A Councillor Wright

Also in attendance -

Councillor Cook (Assistant Mayor)  
Councillor Gollop (Assistant Mayor)  
Councillor Hoyt  
Councillor Leaman  
Councillor Martin  
Councillor Poultney

**RC**

**84.1/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCES, SUBSTITUTIONS AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Apologies were received from Councillor Wright and George Ferguson (Mayor). Councillor Morgan substituted for Councillor Wright.

**RSC**

**85.1/13 PUBLIC FORUM**

The Commission received public forum statements in advance of the meeting. (*A copy of the Public Forum submissions are held in the Minute Book*).

**RSC**

**86.1/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**RSC**  
**87.1/13**

## **WHIPPING**

None.

**RSC**  
**88.1/13**

## **CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

None.

**RC**  
**89.1/12**

## **REVENUE BUDGET 2013/14**

The Commission considered a report of the Service Director, Finance (agenda item no. 6) setting out the Cabinet's proposals for the revenue budget for Neighbourhoods and City Development. In addition a set of directorate generic questions with answers had been circulated prior to the meeting (*copies of which are held in the Minute Book*).

### **Neighbourhoods & City Development**

The Interim Strategic Director Neighbourhoods and City Development introduced the budget report. It was confirmed that the proposals for 2013/14 sought to save c.£6.5m. The proposed budget for 2013/14 amounted to c.£111m.

With regard to Transport budget issues Members were concerned that the lack of specific officer representation might affect their ability to pursue detailed scrutiny so it was agreed that the Transport aspect of the budget be deferred for consideration until the next meeting on 21 January, 2013.

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

- allotments would lose financial subsidy and costs would be recovered by increasing charges to the allotment holders with the goal of achieving financial self sufficiency. Following a further question about the figures relating to achieving self sufficiency, the Interim Strategic Director Neighbourhoods and City Development agreed to confirm these after the meeting;

**Action : Interim Strategic Director Neighbourhoods and City Development**

- funding for sports training and advisory services would be reduced to make a saving of £250,000. Concern was expressed that this proposal went against current trends of encouraging exercise and sport activities in the spirit of the Olympic Legacy. The Commission were reminded that this saving was a proposal and further consideration would be given to make sure that the principle of pro-actively supporting sport development would not be lost. ;
- car park charges would be increased at Ashton Court and introduced at Blaise Castle and Oldbury Court to bring in an extra £110,000 pa. Concern was expressed that this proposal could lead to users parking on the public highway which might lead to the income level proposed not being achieved. The Commission were advised that models had been used to try and predict parking patterns and that the target proposed should be achieved;
- 'clean and green' proposed budget reduction, figures in report not clear so these would be looked at and confirmed as soon as possible;

**Action : Interim Strategic Director Neighbourhoods and City Development**

- museum service staff reductions related to front of house function and not to the Museum Development officer;
- adult learning service, concern expressed that the poorest members of the community (i.e. those entitled to concessionary rate of 50% of the full charge) would be worst affected and also that demand could drop to a point where service provision became uneconomic. However, as a result of the concern expressed the Interim Strategic Director Neighbourhoods and City Development agreed to look at the possibility of revising method of charging to reduce the impact of the proposal on the poorest members of the community ;
- proposed reduction of Neighbourhood Management was considered to be counter productive as it was felt that this was an area that should be strengthened. Commission asked for the Terms of Reference relating to the Neighbourhoods review, to be circulated;

**Action : Interim Strategic Director Neighbourhoods and City Development**

- reduction proposals for Geographical Information System (GIS) were regretted but attempts to commercialise the service had not been successful. Core technical skills would however remain;

- supporting people in the community considered essential and needed greater emphasis, with information provided well in advance to allow for more detailed monitoring;
- at this point in the meeting concern was expressed about some of the designations used to describe proposed changes. Members asked that in future a more accurate and clear description of the service, how much it costs and amount proposed to be saved be given;
- Members were concerned about the level of information supplied and that paper copies of EQIA's had not been supplied to the meeting. The Service Director (Finance) agreed to supply more information to individual Members on request. Savings would be shown against each line of the budget in the papers for the Council's budget meeting on 26 February, 2013. Members were advised that the Neighbourhoods and City Development Directorate was very large and covered a wide range of services so an overview had been given to try to limit the volume of information. Also the Commission were reminded that there would be other opportunities to scrutinise the budget throughout the financial year;
- police community support officer posts (PCSO's), concern expressed about the proposed reduction of 32 posts. Noted that the Mayor had intimated that this would be re-considered. One possibility was a wider function being given to PCSO's to increase value for money. In the meantime one extra year of funding was being considered to allow more time to look at the possibility of widening the PCSO remit;
- homelessness numbers had increased but was relatively small and the £1m reserve fund had not been needed to date, however this meant that bed & breakfast accommodation was no longer at zero. Duration time of families in B&B accommodation was kept as short as possible;
- homeless prevention fund, high risk associated with this;
- concern expressed about proposed budget reduction for empty properties service as could be counter productive. The Mayor's cross party group was expected to review this proposal.

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

**RSC**

**90.1/13**

**WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13**

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

**RSC**

**91.1/13**

**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 21st January, 2013 at 6 pm.

**CHAIR**

(The meeting ended at 8.05 pm)