

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES SCRUTINY
COMMISSION HELD ON FRIDAY 19TH JULY 2013 AT 9.30 AM**

- P Councillor Mark Brain
- P Councillor Sean Emmett
- P Councillor Gary Hopkins (in the Chair)
- P Councillor Mahmadur Khan
- P Councillor Doug Naysmith
- P Councillor Alastair Watson
- P Councillor Mark Weston
- P Councillor Mark Wright

RSC

RSC

**19.7/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCES, SUBSTITUTIONS AND
INTRODUCTIONS**

No apologies were received.

RSC

20.7/13 PUBLIC FORUM

None received.

RSC

21.7/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None was declared.

RSC

22.7/13 WHIPPING

None was declared.

RSC

**23.7/13 MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 21
JUNE, 2013**

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Resources Scrutiny Commission held on 21 June, 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters arising –

RPS - Councillor Brain emphasised the need to have regard to the Corporate Strategy so that it could be determined whether the budget was aligned with the scheme. This was particularly important given the zero based budget approach;

Timing of agenda – The Chair emphasised the difficulties experienced at the last meeting with the timings for agenda items and stressed the need to improve on this.

**RSC
24.7/13**

CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Chair referred to the Resources Scrutiny Commission's statement, submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 27 June, 2013, regarding the proposed Residents Parking Scheme. He expressed concern that he had not been allowed to fully present the statement at the meeting. Councillor Watson suggested that a comment from the Resources Scrutiny Commission be sent to the Mayor expressing its regret about not being able to fully present the Commission's views. Councillor Weston felt that this incident had wider implications for the Scrutiny function and that it might be preferable for a statement about this to come from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on behalf of all scrutiny commissions.

The Chair and members of the Commission agreed with this approach and the Chair said he would also discuss this with the City Director as this incident would affect the relationship between the executive and scrutiny functions. The Chair agreed to draft a letter and circulate to the Members of the Commission for comment.

Action : Councillor Hopkins to draft letter of response regarding the above and circulate to members for comment.

**RSC
25.7/13**

WORK PROGRAMME

The Commission considered a report of the Service Manager, Democratic Services (Agenda Item No. 7) setting out the Work Programme for 2013/14.

During discussion about the items for the September, 2013 meeting it was confirmed that –

- results of appeals, in relation to deregulated tenancies, had not been received at the current time;
- the 'bedroom tax' would form part of the Welfare Reform – Financial Impact report;
- the 'bedroom tax' Working Group would be reporting too the Mayor in September, 2013.

RESOLVED –

That the updated Work Programme for 2013-14 be noted.

**RSC
26.7/13**

TREE BRISTOL PIPS PROJECT

The Commission considered a report of the Service Director Environment and Leisure (agenda item 8) outlining the proposed project to deliver a tree-based education programme involving all 36,000 primary school aged children in Bristol, with each child being involved in the planting of trees.

The Commission received a paper containing questions put by the Chair with associated answers (*held on the Minute Book as part of the public record*). A further set of supplementary questions, from the Chair, were also circulated and answers to these were brought out during the subsequent debate.

During discussion of this item the following key points were highlighted or confirmed –

- funding for the proposed scheme was £760k over three years of which £432k would be from the current budget and £328k from under spend in the previous year's budget. Corporate sponsorship would also be sought;
- sources of funding included tree donations, asset recovery, developer levy payments and grants;
- the project would not impact on existing trees in Bristol;

- the project was linked to schools to enable all children to become involved and focus would be on planting trees in appropriate locations;
- neighbourhood partnerships and the wider community would be engaged and encouraged to participate in the project;
- the '300 metre proximity rule' would help to ensure that as many schools as possible could get involved;
- the Open Spaces Strategy would ensure that valued community open spaces would not be affected by the Project;
- the Project would need to link with any Neighbourhood Partnership 'Park Plans' to ensure there was no potential loss of open space;
- the allocation for tree planting was based on a one kilometre square for each Neighbourhood Partnership area from which a tree planting map identified the most favourable opportunities. Members asked to have the map circulated to them;
- Members felt that, as far as possible, the Council should ensure that trees were not planted in a space which might be scheduled for future development.

Action : Richard Ennion, Horticulture Service Manager to circulate Tree Planting Map to Members of the Commission.

- the map would also assist with correlating tree planting with areas of social deprivation and formed the basis for more detailed consultation with Neighbourhood Partnership and the wider community;
- information about the Project was on the Council's web site and Members asked that a hyper link to the map be provided to enable ease of access for members of the public interested in the Project;

Action : Richard Ennion, Horticulture Service Manager to provide hyper link to the map on the Council's web site.

- Confirmed that there was no ongoing provision for tree maintenance beyond three years however it was considered that a significant volunteer base would be fully engaged by this time, other schemes had successfully utilised community volunteer involvement;

- It was envisaged that business sponsorship would finance costs relating to the transport of children from schools to the more remote tree planting sites where this was necessary.

RESOLVED –

That the Tree Bristol Pips Project be supported.

**RSC
27.7/13**

TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT – 2012/13

The Commission considered a report from the Service Director, Finance (agenda item 9) regarding the Council's annual treasury management performance report for 2012/13.

During discussion of this item the following key points were highlighted or confirmed –

- The net debt per head of population was one of the lowest values of any of the core cities. This was primarily due to lower spending than planned, had the targets been met the debt would have been higher;
- Housing Revenue Account borrowing rates were the same as general rates however there was only one charge and the HRA equalisation repayment to central government meant that future borrowing would be cheaper;
- Slippage was allowed for but accuracy could not always be guaranteed;
- Ethical investments were not directly relevant as the Council was not allowed to invest for profit, only on profile;
- Councillor Naysmith asked where finance had been derived regarding the Avonmouth roundabout. Confirmed that South Gloucestershire Council funded from business rate growth.

RESOLVED –

That the Treasury Management Annual report for 2012/13 be noted.

**RSC
28.7/13**

CAPITAL OUTTURN REPORT 2012/13

The Commission considered a report from the Service Director, Finance (agenda item 10) regarding the Council's capital

investment programme financial outturn for 2012/13. The Commission's attention was drawn to the £69m slippage in relation to the original budget and the b£34m slippage from the January, 2013 forecast.

During discussion of this item the following key points were highlighted or confirmed –

- Concern was expressed about the slippage particularly with regard to the level of trust from central government if the Council did not spend the money as planned;
- The Chair expressed particular concern about the schools capital budget not being spent and asked for a detailed report about this to be submitted to the next meeting on 20 September;

Action : Service Director, Finance to provide a report about slippage of capital spending in respect of schools.

- The Chair reaffirmed his concern and cited the need for greater governance to control capital slippage in general;
- The HRA under spend of £40m was due to companies not tendering for work due to the relatively low profit associated with repair works;
- Members felt that the Commissioning procedures might be discouraging smaller businesses from tendering for work and that might also contribute to the slippage;
- Councillor Weston expressed serious concern about the 42% slippage in the Capital Programme and this was supported by the Commission;
- The Chair asked that an e-mail be sent round to all Members of the Commission as a matter of urgency detailing work that has not been done and the reasons behind it.

Action : Service Director, Finance to e-mail Resources Scrutiny Commission members detailing work that has not been done due to the slippage and the reasons behind it.

RESOLVED –

That, subject to the comments made, the Capital Outturn for 2012/13 be noted.

29.7/13 FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE OUTTURN – 2012/13

The Commission considered a report from the Service Director, Finance (agenda item 11) regarding the financial and performance outturn for 2012/13. The Commissions attention was drawn to the £3.1m under spend as compared to a £1.8m forecast in January, 2013.

During discussion of this item some Members suggested that under spent money could be used to help raise the profile of the Council or for schemes that had already been approved but had not yet commenced.

With specific regard to Strategic Outcome 6 (Productivity of Council staff) Councillor Wright expressed concern about the slippage of both sickness absence and PMDS compliance. The Service Director, Finance stated that Richard Billingham, Service Director, Human Resources had expressed confidence that this situation would improve with the new Employee Assistance Programme which had been introduced to provide support for individual employees experiencing issues that might be affecting their mental and physical health and wellbeing.

The Strategic Director Organisation & Development explained that the primary focus was on long term sickness absence and short term musculoskeletal conditions. The Chair pointed out that with the significant challenges the Council was now facing it was likely that sickness absence rates would increase and asked for up to date figures.

Action : Richard Billingham, Service Director, Human Resources to provide up to date sickness absence figures to the Resources Scrutiny Commission.

Councillor Wright reiterated his concern about the PMDS 14.2 % shortfall and asked for a more detailed explanation about the non-compliance.

Action : Richard Billingham, Service Director, Human Resources to provide a more detailed explanation about the 14.2% non-compliance relating to PMDS.

RESOLVED –

That, subject to the comments made and actions asked for, the 2012/13 financial and performance outturn report be noted.

RSC

30.7/13

REVENUE MONITORING REPORT 2013/14

The Commission considered a report from the Service Director, Finance (agenda item 12) regarding the first revenue monitoring report for 2013/14.

Councillor Brain asked why the £200k saving in management & support functions, following the merger of Children and Young People's Services & Health and Social Care, would not be realised. The Service Director, Finance said that Craig Bolt Service Director Resource Planning & Performance CYPS would be asked to provide a written answer about this for Commission Members.

Action : Service Director Resource Planning & Performance CYPS to provide a written explanation why the £200k saving in management & support functions was not made, to the Commission Members.

RESOLVED –

That the first revenue monitoring report for 2013/14 report be noted.

RSC

31.7/13

CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMME MONITORING REPORT 2013/14

The Commission considered a report from the Service Director, Finance (agenda item 13) regarding the first capital programme monitoring report for 2013/14.

RESOLVED –

That the first capital programme monitoring report for 2013/14 report be noted.

RSC

32.7/13

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 14/15 – 16/17

The Commission considered a report from the Service Director, Finance (agenda item 14) setting out the planning and prioritisation principles for the Council's medium term financial strategy.

The Chair welcomed the report but queried why the information he had asked for what was not included in the report relating to spending on statutory versus non-statutory services, the processes that would be followed and the dates for implementation.

The Service Director, Finance explained that the Strategy was still being developed so specific detail was not available at the current time. The Chair emphasised the importance of letting the Commission have the detail at the earliest opportunity, prior to the next meeting on 20 September. The Service Director, Finance acknowledged this.

Action : Service Director, Finance to give detailed report to the Commission members at the earliest opportunity prior to the next meeting on 20 September.

RESOLVED –

That, subject to the action point asked for, the planning and prioritisation principles for the Council's medium term financial strategy be noted.

**RSC
33.7/13**

CHANGING BRISTOL PORTFOLIO - UPDATE

The Commission considered a report from the Service Director, Business Change & ICT (agenda item 15) regarding the continuing progress being made in developing the overall changing portfolio and delivery of key programmes.

The Strategic Director Organisation & Development acknowledged Members comments about the implementation of the ABW finance scheme and confirmed that the Audit team were being engaged as much as practical in the continuing process of development and improvement.

The Service Director, Business Change & ICT advised that briefings on the ROSP (Right outcome, service, provider) programme and the Customer & Process programme would be brought to future meetings of the Commission.

Action : Service Director, Business Change & ICT

RESOLVED –

That the progress being made in developing the overall changing portfolio and delivery of key programmes be noted.

RSC

34.7/13

UPDATE ON BRISTOL WORKPLACE PROJECT

The Commission considered a report from the BWP Senior Responsible Owner (agenda item 16) regarding the revised proposals for the Bristol Workplace Programme (BWP) who detailed the changes described in the report.

Councillor Wright asked for confirmation that the primary change was that two buildings in the centre of Bristol (Brunel House and Wilder House) would be disposed of in favour of offices located at Broad Walk, Bristol. This was confirmed.

The Chair commented that some information was not included in the exempt appendices attached to the report and asked that paper copies of the complete document be recirculated to Members of the Commission.

Action : Steve Gregory Democratic Services Officer to recirculate complete exempt appendices.

RESOLVED –

That the revised scheme proposed for the Bristol Workplace Programme, be noted and approved.

RSC

35.7/13

RESIDENTS' PARKING SCHEMES – UPDATE

The Commission considered a report of the Service Director, Transport (Agenda Item No. 17) regarding an update on the resources issues relating to the proposed Residents Parking Scheme programme approved by Cabinet on 27 June, 2013.

During consideration of this item officers were advised that –

- The RPS was not an income generation scheme as set up costs would negate any benefit of additional income for several years;
- The capability of the Directorate to operate the scheme needed to be reviewed and taken fully into account;
- Ward Councillors would be kept fully informed and consulted on the progress of the Scheme.

RESOLVED –

That the response to the concerns raised in the Resources Scrutiny Commission’s statement to the Cabinet meeting of 27 June, 2013, be noted.

RSC

36.7/13

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED - that the next meeting of the Resources Scrutiny Commission be held on 20 September, 2013 at 9.30 am.

(The meeting ended at 12.15 pm)

CHAIR