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BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMISSION
HELD ON 24TH JANUARY 2014 AT 9.30 AM**

P Councillor Hopkins (in the Chair)
P Councillor Brain
P Councillor Emmett
P Councillor Khan
P Councillor Naysmith
A Councillor Watson
A Councillor Weston
P Councillor Wright

Also in attendance :

Councillor Gollop, Deputy Mayor

RC

**110.1/14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCES, SUBSTITUTIONS AND
INTRODUCTIONS**

Apologies were received from Councillors Watson and Weston.
Councillor Abraham substituted for Councillor Watson.

RC

111.1/14 PUBLIC FORUM

None received.

RC

112.1/14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

RC

113.1/14 WHIPPING

None declared.

RC

114.1/14 MINUTES – RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 13TH JANUARY 2014

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the meeting of the Resources Scrutiny Commission held on 13th January, 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

RC

115.1/14 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Chair reported that he had written to the Mayor about the Commissions concern regarding the non-attendance of the Mayor at the recent round of Resources Scrutiny Commission budget meetings. The Chair of OSMB had been copied in to the letter.

Members welcomed this and expressed agreement with the Chair's views that it was important that the Mayor as 'decision taker' was at scrutiny meetings in order that proper and effective scrutiny could be achieved. It was hoped that the Mayor would be able to attend the next budget meeting on 3 February, 2014.

The Deputy Mayor acknowledged Member's concerns however it was emphasised that the budget timetable had been exceptionally tight this year and that in future year's scrutiny would be factored into the budget setting process so that this issue would be resolved.

RC

116.1/14 WORK PROGRAMME

The Commission referred to the unscheduled items that had been listed on the Work Programme and agreed to prioritise these at its meeting on 28 February.

RESOLVED -

That, subject to the above, the Work Programme be noted.

RC

117.1/14 2013/14 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT

The Commission considered a report of the City Director (agenda item no. 8) providing members with an overview of performance for the period April to September 2013, in line with the agreed

reporting arrangements. The Commission were informed that information 'gaps' in the Data were due to the cyclical nature of collating some of the information. The raw data was available if Members wanted to access it.

The Commission considered the report and made the following comments/requests –

- Raw data to be provided in respect of municipal waste to landfill by percentage and an analysis of the affect new arrangements for disposal might have on the figure;
- Recycling facility proposed for south Bristol to be further scrutinised by both the Resources Scrutiny Commission in respect of the financial considerations and the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission for other issues;
- Suggested to separate the performance results between Housing and Council Tax Benefit and also the performance post 14 day target. Service Director, Integrated Customer Service to be asked about facilitating this;
- Public health function should be more closely scrutinised given its importance with regard to integrating with other council services. Strategic Director Neighbourhoods and Councillor Janke Assistant Mayor for Health & Social Care be asked to contribute to the scrutiny process;
- High speed broadband capacity not progressing as fast as it could so there was a clear need for scrutiny by both Resources and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commissions.

RESOLVED -

That, subject to the above comments, the overview of performance for the period April to September 2013 be noted.

RC

118.1/14 CORPORATE PLAN 2014-17

The Commission considered a report of the City Director (agenda item no. 9) setting out the Council's contribution to the Mayor's Vision for the city and the actions to be taken over the next three years to achieve this.

A general point was made that the Corporate Plan 2014-17 was essentially a continuation of the same shared goals and was not very different from plans that had gone before, with an apparent lower number of new commitments.

Specific points and comments made by the Commission:

- BM2 to reduce emissions in the city - this objective would benefit from a specific action or actions to show how it would be achieved e.g. implement a low emission zone in the city centre. It was noted that the city centre area had been in breach of emissions targets previously;
- A high level commitment to addressing health and wealth inequality needs should be made more explicit. The Commission were informed that there were a number of references in the document regarding actions that would help to reduce the equality gap;
- The future vision for Metro West was not included in the Corporate Plan. It was noted that the re-opening of the Portishead line was included and that the various strands about a wider rail network needed to be brought together in the Plan;
- Empowered City need to be reflected in greater detail in the Plan including specific actions on how progress was to be achieved and how it might be possible to seek greater resources or influence as a Mayoral authority;
- Much greater emphasis on the chronic housing shortage in the City and the solutions that could be considered to deal with it. Much more ambition needed.

RESOLVED –

That, subject to the above comments, the report be noted.

RC

119.1/14 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Commission considered a report of the Interim Service Director, Finance (agenda item no. 10) relating to the Treasury Management Strategy.

The Commission considered the report and the following points were made or clarified –

- Economic forecasts should be built into the Treasury Management plan as it could have an effect on interest rates. The Commission were assured that this would happen however it was not thought that there would be an imminent change to the interest rate;

- Uncertainty of the UK's continuing membership of the EU might affect future investment. The Commission were assured that this and other relevant factors would be monitored and adjustments made as necessary;
- Ethical investments needed to be included in the Investment Policy. This would normally be included in Treasury Management practices however assurance was given that this would be included in the Investment Policy;
- Use of surplus cash in lieu of external borrowing was considered to be a more efficient use of resources but it was important to robustly review this process. The Commission were informed that the Strategic Leadership Team was reviewing the use of earmarked reserves and the outcome of the review would be reported in the Outturn report. The Chair asked to see the 'raw data' at the 3 February, 2014 meeting acknowledging that the information would have to be tabled on the day as it was not available prior to that and would not be in standard report format;
- The revenue implications of the Council's capital spending plans, including borrowing for the Arena, were forecast to peak at around 14% of the net revenue budget. Debt financing represented 9% of the budget in 2014/15 increasing to 12% by 2016/17.

RESOLVED -

That, subject to the comments made as outlined above, the Treasury management Policy and Investment Strategy be noted.

RC

120.1/14 SCRUTINY OF 2014/15 BUDGET

The Commission considered a supplementary report of the Interim Service Director, Finance (agenda item no. 11) relating to the 2014/15 budget and received a presentation on the updated budget proposals.

The Commission considered the supplementary report and the information given during the presentation and made the following comments –

- Concern was expressed about the continuing lack of specific detail with regard to the budget proposals. The Commission were reminded by the Deputy Mayor that efforts were being

made to improve the process and that a Base Budget with a Departmental breakdown had been supplied whilst acknowledging that fine 'line by line' budget detail was not available;

- A query was made regarding pay contingency. A 1% allowance had been included in the budget proposals for pay awards, in addition £400k was included toward implementing the minimum living wage. This was lower than previously advised. Members felt that this example illustrated the difficulty that some members had in effectively scrutinising important budget related issues;
- The Deputy Mayor undertook to provide any information that members asked for if the information was available and invited them to submit questions via the Scrutiny Officer and Clerk for the Commission to coordinate.

RESOLVED –

That, subject to the above comments, the report and presentation be noted.

RC

121.1/14

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

3 February, 2014 at 6 pm.

(The meeting ended at 12.00 pm)

CHAIR