

# Bristol City Council

## Minutes of the Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Commission



7 March 2024 at 5.00 pm

### **Attendance:**

#### **Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Commission members present:**

CLlr David Wilcox, Chair  
CLlr Andrew Varney, Vice-Chair  
CLlr Jenny Bartle  
CLlr Emma Edwards  
CLlr Kevin Quartley  
CLlr Tim Rippington  
CLlr Mark Weston

#### **Cabinet members in attendance:**

Councillor Don Alexander, Cabinet Member for Transport

#### **Officers present:**

John Smith, Executive Director: Growth and Regeneration  
Felicity Williamson, Strategic Intelligence and Performance Advisor  
Alex Hearn, Director: Economy of Place  
Karen MacDonald, Head of Public Engagement, Culture  
Elise Hurcombe, Arts Development Manager, Culture  
Adam Crowther, Head of City Transport  
Lloyd Allen, City Leap  
Helen Reed, City Leap Client Manager  
Johanna Holmes, Scrutiny Co-ordinator

## **1 Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information**

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting and explained the emergency evacuation procedure.

## **2 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from CLlr Farah Hussain.



### 3 Declarations of Interest

None.

### 4 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Commission held on 27 November 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

### 5 Action Tracker

The update on outstanding actions (as per the paper included in the agenda pack) was noted.

### 6 Chair's Business

There was no specific Chair's business.

At the invitation of the Chair, however, the Director: Economy of Place gave an update as follows on the decision taken by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities to designate the Council's planning service in relation to the speed of decision making for non-major planning applications:

1. With effect from 6 March 2024, any individual making a new, non-major planning application had the choice between submitting their application to the council's planning department or to the national Planning Inspectorate (PINS).
2. It was important to note that the designation specifically related to applications for 'non-major development' that does not meet or exceed any of these criteria:
  - for housing, development where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more.
  - the provision of a building or buildings where the floor space to be created by the development is 1,000 square metres or more.
  - development carried out on a site having an area of 1 hectare or more.
3. The designation did not apply to any of the following types of application:
  - applications where the development has already been carried out (retrospective applications).
  - householder applications.
  - applications to vary or remove conditions.
  - major applications.



In response to questions, it was confirmed/clarified that:

1. Notwithstanding the designation decision, the service had a clear and credible plan to recover the situation and improve the service. Vacant posts had now been filled and additional resource had been allocated to the planning service to support its improvement efforts. Supported by the Planning Advisory Service, the last 9 months had seen steady performance improvement and the service expected to eliminate the backlog of cases by early summer. A re-designed and faster service was already in place for new applications.
2. The designation arrangements would remain in place while work continued to bring down processing times down and clear the backlog of applications and until the Secretary of State decided to revoke the designation. Officers would be meeting with DLUHC and PINS representatives to agree an action plan; the designation was likely to remain in place and then be reviewed after 12 months but it was possible that an earlier date to exit the arrangements could be agreed by the government if the Council demonstrated significant improvement over 2 successive quarters.
3. Whilst there would be some loss in income from planning applications submitted direct to PINS, the impact of this would be limited as the designation did not apply to all applications.

In further discussion, it was suggested that the performance of the planning service should be kept under review through 2024/25 by the Economy and Skills Committee under the committee governance system.

## **7 Public Forum**

### **a. Public Questions**

Public questions were received as follows:

1. David Redgewell - questions on transport issues:

It was noted that written responses to these questions had been provided to the questioner and published in advance of the meeting.

In response to a supplementary question from the questioner, it was confirmed that currently there were no proposals to move the bus shelter function to the West of England Combined Authority. The Combined Authority had also indicated more generally that it would not be able to progress with discussions in relation to any potential transfer of transport functions from Bristol City Council at this time.

In response to a further supplementary question from the questioner, it was noted that there were ongoing community concerns about the lack of effective bus services serving the city, including the Stapleton area.



2. Helen Powell - questions on Stoke Lodge playing fields - incorrect registration of land at HM Land Registry:

It was noted that written responses to these questions had been provided to the questioner and published in advance of the meeting.

Via a supplementary question, the questioner referred to the decision taken by the Public Rights of Way Committee as the appropriate regulatory committee to register the land as a Town and Village Green and asked which member(s) of the Executive had subsequently issued instructions to officers to object to the registration.

In response, officers commented that the Executive had not supported the registration of this land as a Town and Village Green; officers were unable to comment further in respect of this supplementary question.

3. Ian Beckey - questions on transport issues:

It was noted that written responses to these questions had been provided to the questioner and published in advance of the meeting.

4. Cllr Tessa Fitzjohn - questions on Culture and Creative Industries service:

It was noted that written responses to these questions had been provided to the questioner and published in advance of the meeting.

5. Dan Ackroyd - questions on transport, risk and housing issues:

It was noted that written responses to these questions had been provided to the questioner and published in advance of the meeting.

In response to a supplementary question from the questioner, it was confirmed that as part of the approach in taking forward liveable neighbourhood schemes, proactive outreach work to communities was undertaken to explain proposals and support local people in terms of their awareness and understanding of the different transport options available in the area.

Via a further supplementary question, the questioner queried whether this scrutiny commission would push for an inquiry into how the Barton House emergency evacuation had been handled. In discussion, the Executive Director: Growth and Regeneration commented that the Council recognised that the evacuation had been a very serious incident, resulting in significant impacts for the residents affected. The actions taken would be reviewed to identify lessons that could be learnt. Most tenants had now returned to their homes in Barton House and had been supported in this; officers continued to work with those tenants who remained in temporary accommodation.

## **b. Public Statements**

Public statements were received as follows:

1. Felicity Pine: Stoke Lodge Town and Village Green registration
2. Helen Powell: Stoke Lodge Town and Village Green registration



3. Emma Burgess: Stoke Lodge Town and Village Green registration
4. Sue Sage and Ian Beckey: Transport issues
5. Jackie Lewis: Transport issues
6. Dan Ackroyd: Quarter 3 risk report
7. David Redgewell: Transport issues

Those in attendance at the meeting presented their statements.

## 8 Quarter 3 Performance Report

The Commission considered the Quarter 3 performance report 2023/24.

Summary of main points raised/noted in discussion:

1. An issue was raised about performance against actions connected to the Council's 2030 carbon net zero ambition. It was noted that there were local, national and government level challenges in meeting net zero targets.
2. In relation to target BPOM467, it was noted that the number of people actively travelling to work by walking and cycling remained significantly behind target but had improved by 2.5% compared to last year to 34.5%.
3. It was noted that there had been no progress yet in relation to target BPPM120 around road safety incident numbers. It was noted that there was an ongoing data supply issue in terms of the timeliness of road traffic collision data being forwarded to the Council by the police. The Chair advised that he would be meeting the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner in the near future and would raise this matter.
4. It was noted that the number of households in temporary accommodation (targets HC3.2 and BPPM357) was mirroring the national trend and had risen nearly 9% since Quarter 2; and that the number of people rough sleeping (BPPM352a) was still significantly worse than the target of 50 at 67 but had reduced from 86 in Quarter 2. In discussion, it was noted that improving the 'turnaround' time for reletting void council homes was and would continue to be a key area of focus/improvement.
5. It was noted that Park and Ride bus service usage levels had not recovered to pre-Covid pandemic levels. In part, this was explained by lower demand due to the sustained rates of individuals working from home compared to the pre-pandemic position. It was noted that work was ongoing in terms of improving journey times where possible (e.g. in relation to the A4 corridor and the Portway route) as a means of incentivising patronage of Park and Ride bus services.
6. In relation to target BPPM414 (Improve energy efficiency from home installations for low-income households living in the worst quality off-gas grid homes), performance was still significantly worse than target but the number of installations was continuing to increase each quarter. It was also noted that



further information could be made available on the work taking place to increase take-up levels around home insulation.

## 9 Quarter 3 Risk Report

The Commission considered the Quarter 3 risk report 2023/24.

Summary of main points raised/noted in discussion:

1. There was a discussion in relation to risk CRR 52: Potential failure to manage and evidence building safety obligations in HRA stock. The mitigating actions against this risk were noted – further detail on the progress in taking forward these actions to ensure building safety compliance could be made available to members on request, including those specifically in relation to Barton House. In terms of fire evacuation plans for tower blocks, it was noted that these had been reviewed taking full account of advice from Avon Fire and Rescue Service.
2. In relation to risk CRR 58 (Failure to maintain and replace the Highway and Traffic assets may lead to future budget shocks and potential injuries to the public), it was noted that officers could provide further detail on background/context and mitigating actions being taken in relation to this risk.
3. In relation to risk CRR 27 (We may fail to deliver the Capital Transport Programme), it was noted that a key area of mitigation had been to progress recruitment to key posts across the service. The effect of inflation in the construction industry remained an important issue affecting local authorities generally.
4. In relation to risk CRR 43 (Lack of progress for Mass Transit may have an impact on the city), it was noted that at the West of England Combined Authority Committee meeting held in October 2023, an agreement had not been reached on the way forward on the Mass Transit project. In discussion, it was noted that there were region-wide economic impacts linked to the delivery of the project. The Council was now waiting to hear back from the Combined Authority on potential next steps.
5. Members noted the existing controls and mitigations in place in relation to risk BCCC1 (Flooding may impact public safety).
6. In relation to risk CRR 59 (Failure to deliver timely statutory planning decisions), and noting the discussion earlier at the meeting, it was noted that members would be kept updated on the backlog position and progress on the recovery measures that were in place.



## 10 Culture and Creative Industries Service

The Commission considered a report setting out an update on the Culture and Creative Industries Service including an update on the Cultural Investment Programme (CIP).

Key points highlighted by officers in presenting the report included:

1. An update on the structure of the service, noting that the service is now placed within the Economy of Place division within the Growth and Regeneration Directorate.
2. An update on current activities and priorities, including those related to:
  - Collections and archives.
  - Commercial business and operations.
  - Public engagement, including engagement around arts development.
  - South West museums development.
  - Film.

Summary of main points raised/noted in discussion:

1. It was noted that Philip Walker, the new Head of Culture would start in post on 18 March.
2. It was noted that overall visitor numbers were 700k per annum; this was still below pre-pandemic levels, but the position was steadily improving.
3. In response to a question, it was noted that arrangements were in place to review/refresh displays at appropriate intervals across the city's museums, including Blaise Museum.
4. In terms of the city's local history archives and with reference to successful local history projects, it was suggested that it was important to try to capture oral history wherever possible from local people in communities across the city – for example, in relation to those residents who had lived through the creation of communities via the expansion of outer suburbs of the city during the 1940s.
5. The concept of pop-up museums and using temporary exhibitions was welcomed as a means of reaching communities, especially in terms of encouraging interest from and engaging younger people. The work taking place through the service more generally to engage communities was welcomed.
6. The importance of commercial and fund-raising operations, and attracting investment was noted, particularly given the ongoing national pressure on resources available to local authorities.



## 11 Strategic Transport Update

The Commission considered a report setting out a strategic transport update.

Key points/areas highlighted by officers in presenting the report included updates on:

1. The Strategic Corridors Programme.
2. East Bristol Liveable Neighbourhood project.
3. South Bristol Liveable Neighbourhoods study/project.
4. Updates on the following projects:
  - Cotham Hill
  - Park Row
  - Old Market Gap
  - Cycle Hangars
  - A4018 corridor
  - Streetspace 1 (Princess Victoria Street, Clifton; Overton Road, St Andrews)
  - Streetspace 2 (Rosemary Lane, Easton; Denmark Street, city centre)
  - Queen Charlotte Street/King Street

Summary of main points raised/noted in discussion:

1. Members generally welcomed the breadth of work and activity which was being taken forward.
2. In relation to the A4018 corridor project, it was noted that this would include a segregated bi-directional cycle lane alongside the A4018 Passage Road between Crow Lane and Charlton Road. It was suggested that opportunities should also be investigated around other additional cycle routes that could be introduced as part of this project.
3. In relation to the development of the East Bristol Liveable Neighbourhoods Scheme, it was confirmed that valuable lessons and lived experience had been gained through the public/community engagement that had been undertaken.
4. In response to a question, it was confirmed that the Overton Road project had been taken forward as an active travel project through the initial Covid emergency funding, to enhance local walking and cycling.

The Commission also received an update on progress in relation to Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (EVI).

Summary of main points raised/noted in discussion:

1. It was noted that key considerations for future roll-out would include ensuring:





- the right type of charge point for the right location, including a mix of on-street chargers, community hubs/car parks and rapid chargers.
  - that accessibility and usability were at the heart of EVI roll-out both now and into the future; this was already being factored into standard design work.
2. It was noted that where supermarkets provided EV charge points in their car parks, this would usually be facilitated through a partnering arrangement with a charging operator, not via public funds.
  3. It was noted that there may be an opportunity to work with groups of residents who may collectively wish to pay for the installation of EV charge points.

## 12 Capital Programme Update

The Commission received a report setting out a Capital Programme update including an overview of the current programme and proposals for a Capital Portfolio Management Office.

It was noted that the aim was to develop and implement a Capital Portfolio Management Office (PMO) function for the capital portfolio from 2024/25 onwards. Building on best practice models and learning from other Core Cities, the proposed Capital PMO would aim to become the 'centre of excellence' for all standards and approaches relating to capital portfolio delivery.

## 13 Work Programme

The work programme was noted.

Meeting ended at 8.02 pm

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_

