

# Bristol City Council

## Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board



2 November 2023 at 6.00 pm

### Members Present:-

**Councillors:** Tony Dyer (Chair), Mark Bradshaw (Vice-Chair), Geoff Gollop, Brenda Massey, David Wilcox, Martin Fodor, Steve Smith, Christine Townsend, Tim Rippington and Andrew Brown

### 1 Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed the attendees. Health and safety information was provided.

### 2 Apologies for absence.

Chief Executive Stephen Peacock was present to item 7 with apologies thereafter. Cllr Gollop was delayed in arrival, with apologies.

### 3 Declarations of Interest

Stephen Peacock declared that he was a nominated director of City Leap, in reference to item 8.

### 4 Minutes of the previous meeting.

The Minutes from the OSMB meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023 were reviewed. Cllr Brown noted that his attendance had been incorrectly recorded as absent. The minutes were otherwise agreed as an accurate record.

**RESOLVED; That the 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023 attendance record for Cllr Brown be corrected, and; that the minutes be approved.**

### 5 Chair's Business



The Chair noted the addition of Cllr Rippington to the OSMB Membership replacing Cllr Pearce who had been appointed as the interim Lord Mayor. No other business was noted.

## 6 Public Forum

The Public Forum was published and can be found [here](#).

Dan Ackroyd submitted a public forum question regarding Bristol Beacon and a written response was provided.

Mr Ackroyd raised an additional supplementary question noting that as the expected Lessons Learnt report for the Bristol Beacon was anticipated in late February 2024 that any delay to this could risk falling within the pre-election period, and asked whether in this circumstance it could lead to the report being pulled. The Chair responded that the report was expected to be taken in February and therefore wouldn't be affected by the pre-election period.

Sid Ryan submitted two public forum questions regarding FOI performance metrics and written responses were provided by the Chair. OSMB members were invited to comment.

As a supplementary question Mr Ryan raised that one of the written responses referred to 'no other concerns being raised' by the ICO when in fact 19 Notices had been made. The Chair clarified that the 'no other concerns' referred to concerns in line with timeliness practice recommendation. The 19 Notices highlighted referred to Decision Notices, which are related to specific individual cases, not wider approaches.

Mr Ryan noted that no response had been provided regarding whether the focus on timeliness led to 'perverse incentives'. It was agreed that a written response to this would be provided.

Following the response to question 3 stating that the reporting of metrics other than timeliness would have an impact on resources Mr Ryan raised that he had expected other data to be collected as a matter of course and queried the nature of the resource impact. It was agreed that a further written response to this would be provided.

**RESOLVED; That the Public Forum be noted, and; that a written response to Mr Ryan's supplementary questions be provided.**

## 7 Bristol Beacon

The Executive Director for Growth and Regeneration delivered a presentation on Bristol Beacon, available in the papers. Key points included:

- The Bristol Beacon was on track to open on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023.



- An agreement in principle had been reached with Bristol Music Trust which was anticipated to be turned in to a contract by 30<sup>th</sup> November.
- The increased costs of the project were noted with acknowledgement of the difficult circumstances.
- Bristol Music Trust were to be given the Bristol Beacon building on a 30-year peppercorn lease, with an £8m 'deemed sum' to be repaid following a 2-year grace period. It was later clarified that the two-year period would begin from March 2024, and was a target that could be reviewed if necessary.
- Louise Mitchell of Bristol Music Trust thanked the Members present for their support and patience with the project. Feedback about the building had been enthusiastic and ticket sales were promising.

Members thanked Officers and Bristol Music Trust for the report and were pleased to hear enthusiasm about the building and the plans for the opening night. It was noted that the Bristol Beacon would be a cultural asset for the city.

Members highlighted the key issue of the significant and unexpected financial outlay of the project. It was queried how the figure of £8m for the deemed sum had been achieved considering this was a small percentage of the final cost. The Executive Director stated that this figure had been identified as part of the structure of the initial agreement in 2018 as an amount to be achieved by BMT through fundraising and underwritten by Bristol City Council. The conditions for repayment were to be in effect once a surplus had been achieved by the Trust. It had not been considered appropriate to have an underwritten agreement considering the Trust's charitable status. A Member challenged that in light of the increased cost of the project the original £8m figure was no longer relevant. The Chief Executive agreed that the arrangement had significantly altered but emphasised that at each point where the original agreement had been revised it had been agreed that the most appropriate course would be to continue with the increased costs of the project.

It was confirmed that the project was now within the revised budget. A Member queried what the carrying value of the Bristol Beacon would be, whether this would reflect the peppercorn rent or the full cost. It was agreed that further detail on this would be sought from Finance Officers.

A Member queried whether the debt servicing or the peppercorn lease were over a longer period. It was clarified that the duration of the peppercorn lease was 30 years while the debt would be written off after 50 years.

The term 'soft landings' (as used in the presentation) was clarified to mean continuity of support in operating the building during the first months of opening. This provides onsite support to quickly address arising issues. It was confirmed this remained within budget under 'professional support'.

The 'opportunity' cost and cultural implications were raised. In the original agreement assurances had been made that the success of Bristol Beacon would help to fund other projects. As loan repayments had become necessary it was assumed this would no longer be possible. It was queried how social and



cultural outcomes would be supported across the city. The Head of Capital Projects responded that along with the wider economic contribution of having the Bristol Beacon as an asset, the social value as measured in the last full year of events 2017/18 using the Social Value Calculator had come to £8.5m, not including outreach work. Further detail on this could be provided.

The long-term maintenance of the Bristol Beacon was discussed. The assumption was that these issues would be brought to Policy Committees (which would be implemented from May 24) as public meetings. Bristol Music Trust welcomed discussion around the suggestion of a 'critical friend'.

The agreement for representation on the BMT Board was raised as it was thought that two places were open. The Chief Executive confirmed that all places were expected to be filled by the time of the first Board meeting following opening.

**RESOLVED; That 1) information regarding the Social Value of Bristol Beacon be provided to Members; that 2) clarification of the carrying value of Bristol Beacon be sought, and that 3) the report be noted.**

## 8 City Leap

The Director for Property, Assets and Infrastructure delivered a presentation on City Leap, available in the papers. Key points included:

- A background and context to the City Leap Energy Partnership
- An outline of the Client Function process, roles and governance
- An outline of the Project Acceptance Process
- An overview of current projects
- A planned timeline demonstrated the expectation of finalising the Business Plan in December 23 – January 24 followed by a Scrutiny Briefing in 2024 and business plan approval by the council in accordance with the Concession Agreement by mid-February 2024.

The Cabinet Member for Housing Services and Energy also commented that he was pleased with progress made while noting some issues encountered with grant funding.

The distinction between public and private investment in projects was discussed. It was noted that the Heat network was a private investment. Multiple Members expressed an interest in seeing the breakdown of types of investment in various projects. A Member suggested that an interactive map of City Leap projects across the city to clearly show how these had been delivered would be useful. This was noted.

A Member enquired about the return on investment for Ameresco. This will vary, project by project. Each project will be reviewed and tested through the Project Acceptance Criteria. Bristol City Council would benefit from social value achieved per project as well as the resultant decarbonisation.

A Member recommended that where interventions and programme delivered were public that they be branded as City Leap.



The governance around the Joint Venture company and Non-Executive Directors was clarified. The Client team had been put in place alongside the Non-Executive Director to deliver any support necessary. A Member queried how interaction between Members and the Non-Executive Director was expected to take place, and how views from Members could be taken on board as part of the governance structure.

This was noted to be discussed with the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer as part of the planned transition to the Committee Model system.

Further detail was requested over the skills needed and achieving a skilled workforce for the delivery of projects, particularly whether this would include construction employment. Part of the Social Value commitment of Bristol City Leap is a commitment to create 1000 jobs, 410 of which would be in Bristol. It was confirmed this would include construction. It was recognised that ensuring a consistent labour and supply chain would be a challenge and it had been agreed that part of the Joint Venture's role was to develop this. A relationship with the City of Bristol College had been fostered as part of this.

The arrangements around the scrutiny of the Business Plan were discussed. It was confirmed that the City Leap Business Plan was expected at an OSMB meeting in February 2024 for public Scrutiny. The implications around this were discussed; it was raised that a Business Plan of this significance could be considered a 'Key Decision'. It was agreed that further detail around the progress and consideration of the Business Plan would be provided.

There was a discussion regarding the Project Acceptance Process. As with Key Decisions any project over £500k required Cabinet approval. A Member raised concern over this and felt greater oversight was required. It was noted that the decarbonisation fund was in the Capital Programme. It was agreed that that further discussions on this point could be held outside of OSMB.

A Member queried that as residents would effectively be 'locked in' to purchasing through the Heat Network, what guarantees around charges would be put in place to ensure fair pricing. The Cabinet Member confirmed that a Heat Trust Standard on transparent pricing had been agreed and signed, essentially allowing Bristol City Council to act as the local regulator.

A Member queried what timescale was expected to see an improvement in some of the poorer quality council owned housing stock with low EPC ratings. There was a commitment to improve EPC ratings by 2030, and a social housing decarbonisation paper was expected to be presented to Cabinet in February 2024 which would outline some key projects and investments in this area.

**RESOLVED; That 1) The Executive Director for Growth and Regeneration would raise how Members could interact with City Leap governance with the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer; and that 2) further detail around the progress and consideration of the Business Plan would be provided to Members; and that 3) the report be noted.**



## 9 Q1 2023-24 Performance Report

The Head of Insight, Performance and Intelligence presented the Q1 2023-24 Performance report.

It was noted that the day prior to the meeting (Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> November) a briefing had been delivered to Members explaining the new interactive Performance Dashboard available to each Scrutiny Commission, replacing the PDF reports previously provided.

Of the overall Performance Metrics and Actions reported in Q1 23-24

- 6 of the 7 Themes were On Schedule
- 90% of Business Plan Actions were on track or better
- 53% of Business Plan Priority Measures were on or better than target
- 69% of all City Outcome Measures were on or better than target

The project for improving access to high-speed broadband for council owned properties (P-ES5.2) was noted, and a Member queried whether and how this was being addressed for residents outside of council owned properties. It was agreed this would be directed to relevant Officers for clarification.

Further details were requested regarding the change to the approach behind replacement call centre telephony platform project (P-ES5.3) and its underpinning strategy. It was agreed this would be directed to relevant Officers as an action.

A Member raised concern regarding the audited children social care records (BPPM201) being significantly behind schedule. This was noted.

Members were reminded that individual thematic reports would be brought to the relevant Scrutiny Commissions for more detailed consideration. Members were asked to ensure that lines of enquiry be raised in advance to ensure that the appropriate Officers could be present to address questions.

The format for the presentation of Performance data as part of Scrutiny was discussed. Members requested a more strategic understanding of how various measures were produced. It was agreed that this would be added to the agenda for a Scrutiny Workshop in 2024 to support the transition of scrutiny work to the Committee Model system. It was expected that Performance reporting had the potential to be more stream-lined with the Committee system as the Themes were generally aligned to the Policy Committees.

A Member noted that there had previously been sight of more trend data. The Head of Insight, Performance and Intelligence stated that the Performance Dashboard circulated was the public version while an internal version with trend data did exist.

It was agreed that this could be shared with Members.

**RESOLVED; That 1) the raised questions regarding P-ES5.2, P-ES5.3 and BPPM201 be directed to the relevant Officers with responses circulated for information; that 2) a discussion of Performance**



reporting be added to the agenda for the planned Scrutiny Workshop; that 3) access to the internal Performance Dashboard including trend data be shared with Members, and; that 4) the Q1 Performance Report be noted.

## 10 Scrutiny Work Programme

The Scrutiny Work Programme was noted. Attention was drawn to the meeting dates for 2024.

**RESOLVED; That the Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.**

## 11 Mayor's Forward Plan - Standing Item

The Mayors Forward Plan was noted. Members were concerned that the Forward Plan did not contain sufficient information about upcoming decisions. The Chair supported this and proposed that he would write to the Mayor accordingly.

**RESOLVED; That Cllr Tony Dyer write a statement highlighting the issues with the Mayor's Forward Plan in its current format, and; that the Mayors Forward Plan be noted.**

