

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission



27 October 2016 at 10.00 am

Members Present:-

Councillors – Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission: Martin Fodor, Carole Johnson (Vice-Chair), Steve Jones, Matt Melias, Anthony Negus (Chair), Steve Pearce (substitute for Margaret Hickman), Jo Sergeant, Mhairi Threlfall and Jon Wellington

Apologies for Absence – Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission: Councillor Hickman

Cabinet Members - Neighbourhoods: Councillor Asher Craig (Neighbourhoods), Fi Hance (Health and Well Being), Paul Smith (Homes)

People Scrutiny Commission Members (In Attendance for Agenda Item 7): Councillors Lesley Alexander, Cleo Lake, Anna Keen, Celia Phipps

Apologies for Absence – People Scrutiny Commission: Councillors Brenda Massey and Ruth Pickersgill

Officers in Attendance:-

Alison Comley (Strategic Director - Neighbourhoods), Di Robinson (Service Director - Neighbourhoods), Joanna Roberts (Commissioning Manager, Strategic Commissioning), Gillian Douglas (Service Director Clean and Green), Robin Poole, Guy Fishbourne, Sally Hogg, Rob McGovern, Nicky Debbage, Lucy Fleming (Scrutiny Co-ordinator), Jeremy Livitt, Patsy Mellor (Service Director Citizen Services), Carmel Brogan and Teija Ahjokoski

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed all parties to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

It was noted that Councillor Paul Goggin had been replaced with immediate effect on the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission by Councillor Margaret Hickman who had sent her apologies for the meeting (Councillor Pearce substituting).



In respect of Agenda Item 7 (Joint Item with People Scrutiny Commission), Councillors Brenda Massey and Ruth Pickersgill had sent their apologies.

Councillor Carol Johnson had indicated that she would be arriving late for the meeting.

Becky Pollard (Director of Public Health) sent her apologies for the meeting.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Chair referred to Paragraph Number (24) (Minute Number 6) and indicated that officers could consider whether action could be taken in this instance:

(24) It was noted that smoking was an area which was the highest preventable risk factor and yet the return for the reduction was low. There need to be an effective cost/benefit analysis in this area. Officers referred to the Sustainable Transport Plan in which consideration of many of the healthy benefits (ie smoking, alcohol, diabetes, prevention, healthy living) were embedded). However, no mechanism was yet in place to track funds – one possible approach to address this could be through the use of Joint Funding arrangements or to develop a Strategic case for pooled budgets;

Paragraph (20) Minute Number 6 – Councillor Fodor drew attention to the need for a budget for walking and cycling in view of the current zero-based budget in this area and requested that officers follow this up. **Action: Alison Comley/Becky Pollard**

Paragraph (21) Minute Number 6 – Councillor Fodor asked if any progress had been made on this action. **Action: Jeremy Livitt to write to Becky Pollard requesting an update on action.**

Resolved – that the Minutes of the above meeting be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to Councillor Liz Radford being recorded as present (substitute for Councillor Steve Jones) and the word “family” being replaced with the word “student” in Minute Number 10 (Risk Register).

Action: Jeremy Livitt

5. Public Forum Statement - David Redgewell, Ian Beckey and Jenny Raggett (South West Transport Network) - Budget Items (Agenda Items 8 and 9) - Saving Public Services

David Redgewell gave a Public Forum Statement concerning the issue. A copy of this statement is contained in the Minute Book.



He stressed the importance of the Council retaining PCSO's and of not shutting down Neighbourhood Offices and Library Information Points. He referred to other Councils such as BANES, North Somerset, Exeter and Plymouth and suggested that they could examine their solutions to the financial constraints with which the Council was faced.

There was a brief discussion during which it was noted that Community Hubs were important, as well as appropriate training for staff.

6. Chair's Business

The Chair informed members that Tom Oswald would be leaving his post and returning to the Policy Team. He thanked him for the work he had carried out. He would be replaced by Romaine De Fonseca.

He stated that the Work Programme needed to be included on future Agendas. **Action: Romaine De Fonseca.**

He expressed concern that the Work Programme was currently underpopulated and stated that he would be holding a meeting with officers and Councillors after the end of the Scrutiny Commission to discuss this issue further.

7. Young People's Housing and Independence Pathway Plan

Joanna Roberts gave a presentation on the above issue and made the following points:

- (1) A Positive Pathway was being developed to allow Young People of to stay living in family networks between the ages of 16 and 21 and up to 24 if they had a learning disability;
- (2) The pathway included details of the process and the commissioning arrangements;
- (3) An analysis of the plan set out the key issues involved – shortage of affordable housing, benefit changes, increasing numbers of teenagers coming into care, a fragmented approach and supply not being linked to need;
- (4) The 5 stages of the Pathway were set out – Minimising demand, reducing demand and crisis, the Youth Housing Hub acting as a gateway, supported accommodation and flexible support and settled accommodation
- (5) There needed to be realistic expectations amongst young people as to what could be provided;
- (6) Details of the proposed Youth Housing Hub were set out. A great deal of development work on this was currently taking place. Its estimated timescale for operation was August/September 2017;
- (7) Details of the Central Youth Specialist Co-Located Team were set out – including information about multiple front doors and preventative work with the family;
- (8) Details of the various proposed accommodation and support services were set out, including short-term and emergency, high support plus, high support, medium support, low support and young parents supported accommodation
- (9) Low level support could also include specific support such as for mental health.



The Chair indicated that he had requested that the notes of the Youth Council meeting held on Wednesday 26th October 2016 be attached to these draft Minutes **Action: Lucy Fleming/Jeremy Livitt**

In response to members' questions, officers and the Cabinet Member for Homes made the following points:

- (10) There was information currently available to Young People but it was often not as clear as it needed to be – information needed to be available through schools via social media and other digital means
- (11) It was acknowledged that the RIFE online magazine was a valuable source for Young People and helped to provide youth links;
- (12) Concerns about gaps or mismatch in the support were noted – a range of different organisations could help with this;
- (13) The Council's lettings policy was being reviewed in relation to shared accommodation. There needed to be an analysis as to whether or not tenancies were being provided to certain individuals before they were able to manage. A review of the different types of providers was required;
- (14) Members' concerns were noted about the need for an approach to be set out to tackle homelessness. It was acknowledged that the number of people in temporary and emergency accommodation was at far too high a level. Measures needed to be taken to get Young People to come forward and present for housing provision at an earlier stage. In view of the mismatch between demand and availability, the system needed to change to make prevention and early intervention far more of a reality than at present;
- (15) It was acknowledged that the Council's presence in schools was almost non-existent and frequently information from other sources was used. There was often an unrealistic view about what accommodation the Council could provide for Young People who could no longer live at home;
- (16) The best traditional route for identifying need in this area was the youth service, not teaching in schools – although teachers could be primed to give support. It was important to engage with groups who could provide this;
- (17) Officers acknowledged that there were currently no plans to help care leavers who moved out of Bristol.

Action: Joanna Roberts to investigate this

- (18) It was noted that there were issues in wards which bordered other Local Authorities (ie Hillfields) in ensuring adequate communication between them;
- (19) Members' concerns were noted about the use of private companies and the need for different agencies to work together;
- (20) It was acknowledged that further work was needed in respect of a comprehensive database of families to identify people who were missing and/or run away, as well as other groups such as asylum seekers and unaccompanied children;
- (21) It was noted that there were key issues to consider, such as prevention and support for families, different ways of working including a more localised approach where required and the need for the hub to play a central role in information being fed through it.



Resolved – that the report be noted and the actions set out above be taken.

8. Neighbourhoods Budget Analysis

The Strategic Director gave a presentation on this item and made the following points:

- (1) The report set out how money was spent and provided information on the functions that were covered in the Neighbourhoods Directorate;
- (2) £70 Million was provided in the General Fund, with £34 Million being ring-fenced to the Public Health Grant;
- (3) Neighbourhoods had successfully delivered its 2015/16 budget and was forecast to deliver its 2016/17 budget;
- (4) The current financial year was the last year of the 4 Year Medium Financial Strategy;
- (5) There were £2 Million re-structures being implemented following benefits realisation work but with savings already counted. Each Service Director had worked with Ernst and Young as part of its efficiency journey but this was now reaching the end;
- (6) The HRA is a separate account for the landlord function (largely funded from tenants' rents) and could not be used to plug any hole in the General Fund budget. Major savings are needed to balance the HRA and priorities were being reviewed between the three major areas of spend: new build, existing homes and services to tenants
- (7) Public Health – this grant is ring-fenced and comes from Public Health England. There had been discussions concerning the possibility of removing the ring-fence. There had been an in year reduction in 2015/16 of £2.8 Million. It was anticipated that there would be a 2.5% reduction year on year. At the moment, reserves were being used but discussions would be required as to how to deal with a reduced envelope of funding;
- (8) Details of the various types of expenditure were set out – employees, premises, transport, supplies and services, third party payments, transfer payments, support services and depreciation and capital financing;
- (9) The total budgeted expenditure was £325,799 and net expenditure for the General Fund amounted to just over £70 Million – the highest amount was in relation to employees, followed by transfer payments and then others;
- (10) Citizen Services - details of these services and their expenditure were set out;
- (11) Neighbourhoods and Communities – details of these services and their expenditure were set out. It was noted that the Net Budget was just over £41 Million. There was substantial expenditure in third party payments within this Service Areas

Councillors made the following comments and officers and the Cabinet Member for Homes responded as follows:

- (12) The information was extremely helpful;
- (13) Officers confirmed that the benefit cap would have an impact – it was estimated that transfers would decrease by approximately £20 Million;



- (14) There was a big potential for a knock-on effect to the Housing Benefit Fund which could have a knock-on effect on some services, such as the collection of rent;
- (15) Officers confirmed that there were some areas where the budget was under budget – for example, cemeteries and crematoria where income was obtained (ie head stones) and in areas such as Horticultural Services where plants were sold to other Local Authorities;
- (16) As benefits fall, the impact on the General Fund would become disproportionately large. It was important that there were measures in place in the future to deal with this. Officers confirmed that there was a Working Group looking into this. In addition, an organisation called Advice Plus had contacted everyone affected by Welfare Reform to assist directly with benefits but also to provide help in access to training and employment;
- (17) It was noted that there had been a very good housing Inquiry Day held in 2015. Following a request from members, officers agreed to provide a supplementary report setting out the current situation with the HRA following recent changes
- Action: Nicky Debbage to arrange to be sent out**
- (18) Officers confirmed that there had been hints in the Chancellor’s recent statement that the Public Health ring fence might be removed. If this did happen, the funds would be transferred into the General Fund;
- (19) This analysis was helpful in setting the framework for the decisions that the Council needed to take to assess what services could need to change and whether there were any services that could be stopped and provided in a different way.

Resolved – that the report be noted and the actions set out above be taken.

9. Budget Consultation Report

The Strategic Director made the following points on this issue:

- (1) Since a lot of the services that were carried out were not statutory and since the efficiency journey had nearly been completed, there needed to be consideration as to how they might be delivered differently. For example, the Council could consider how to use some of its existing community buildings;
- (2) Neighbourhood Partnerships – A reshaping of this service was required and possible alternative models needed to be considered. Whatever changes were made, there would be a smaller envelope of funding with which to deliver the service.

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods made the following points:

- (3) Discussions in Neighbourhood Partnerships across the city were required concerning the future role of NPs. This was already starting to take place in some NPs;
- (4) Some NPs were not clear as to their role and tended to focus on a small-scale approach to small highways or wellbeing schemes;
- (5) Meetings outside of the normal NP framework may be required to discuss this issue in detail. Options needed to be explored, such as a Development Trust;



(6) There needed to be an acknowledgement that “one size does not fit all” and that different models will work for different parts of the city – lessons could be learned from some existing approaches ie the Bedminster model.

In response to Councillors questions, officers and the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods made the following comments:

(7) There was a consultation process concerning Neighbourhood Partnerships taking place throughout the city;

(8) As some services had been transferred to the Directorate during the year, this had affected the budget. However, some figures that might seem unclear and could imply overspending were examples of budgeted income;

(9) The final budget cap was £40 Million;

(10) Members’ concerns were noted about any proposals to close the Advice Service and in particular that, since many people were unable to access services online, they needed to have direct access to this service. Particular concern was noted in relation to the Fishponds service which had originally been set up specifically as a local direct access service point;

(11) Officers confirmed that they were looking at how libraries could be used in a more effective way. Discussions were taking place with the third sector to provide advice and guidance across the city for a better service. There would be opportunities to extend this into a number of different areas, such as debt Management, Legal Advice and Refugee Support, as well as a quality advice service online;

(12) Officers noted members concerns that the proposed shift in emphasis to Friends Groups for Parks would struggle to be established in some areas of the city and may require additional support in applying for funding (ie Eastville). It was noted that there were options to develop Development Trusts for parks and museums;

(13) Officers noted members concerns that the increase in Friends Groups that had arisen following the 2015 Library Review Day needed to continue and that, without clear options for alternative approaches in different areas of the city, the situation remained confusing. However, the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods pointed out that the purpose was to focus on delivery in a different way rather than give a series of options which might lead to a more limited focus on these;

(14) Members concerns were noted that the report did not adequately provide the information that was in the Corporate Plan to effectively reach out to communities. As a result, there was concern that it could raise expectations which could not be delivered or not properly open up services to the radical reconfiguration that was required. Officers pointed out that most of this information was available and suggested that this could be placed on the relevant site.

Action: Di Robinson

Any members who had any further views on the document were requested to submit these either through the Chair or directly to the Strategic Director.

Action: Alison Comley

10 Progress Report - Cotham Trial for Glyphosate - Free Weed Treatment



Members noted the report and made the following comments:

- (1) There needed to be discussion with other Councils concerning the approach taken by them on this issue. Officers confirmed that, whilst Bristol University were still using glyphosate, they were looking at alternatives – in addition, Local Authorities such as Glastonbury also continued to use it. A recent survey through the Local Authority Forum had received 17 responses, all of which confirmed that glyphosate continued to be used primarily due to concerns about cost, although alternatives were being sought. Therefore, the principal focus remained on the trial;
- (2) Glastonbury will be trialling cider vinegar. Discussions with Universities would help to establish if further research could be carried out into this area. It was acknowledged, however, that some treatments did not kill the stronger root systems.

Action: Teija Ahjokoski

- (3) Thermal treatments were being trialled in Corn Street to isolate and retain heat longer;
- (4) Further research into the use of vinegar was required. If glyphosate needed to continue to be used for the time being, the husbandry needed to be sensitively handled. Officers stated that there remained an issue with run off in its use – reference was made to trials which were taking place in the Netherlands to put glyphosate directly on weeds. Members' attention was drawn to the DEFRA Weeds Report which had highlighted the problem and proposed a more targeted approach;
- (5) Work was required on different means of sourcing vinegar to reduce costs.;
- (6) Weeds in some areas were damaging the tarmac which would have a long term budgetary impact.

Officers confirmed that the final report would be produced in February 2011. In the meantime, discussions would take place with the key organisations and external stakeholders to incorporate information into the scheme.

The Chair requested further information on deoxyribonucleic acid in respect of this issue.

Action: Di Robinson/Teija Ahjokoski

11 Overview and Current Status of the Draft Playing Pitch Strategy

In response to members' questions, officers made the following comments:

- (1) Members concern was noted that, whilst the main cricket pitches were in the north of the city, the majority of the BME community were in the central area. They confirmed that they would always seek to place people in contact to gain access to the relevant pitches across the city;
- (2) Work was being carried out with the ECB to develop more cricket pitches across the city;
- (3) Following high level findings of the recent report on this issue, some pitches had been developed (ie Bonnington Walk in Lockleaze which was now a full size Rugby pitch);
- (4) The condition of pitches and their proper maintenance were an important aspect of their development. This could allow more games to be played on them and in theory enable pitch stock to be reduced. Funding had been secured through the FA for Specialist Grounds Maintenance equipment to assist with this;



(5) Officers noted members concerns that the impact of additional funding from external sources was not properly taken account of at an early stage. Therefore, key issues such as disturbance from flood lighting became the focus of opposition, including as a Planning Issue. They also noted concerns that the provision for the Downs appeared separate from all other provision. It was acknowledged that further work was required in this area to ensure the most cost effective and best operational models were developed. In relation to the Downs, the issues relating to Playing Pitches were similar to those in other parts of the city. Planning issues were assessed for each Planning Application on an individual basis so issues such as their impact on Neighbourhoods would not be considered until this point

(6) Further work was required to assess the use of lease arrangements and whether they could ease budgetary pressure;

(7) Officers noted members concerns that changing facilities needed to be upgraded in order to ensure a greater emphasis on equalities and for more frequent use by women or other groups who required greater privacy than some facilities currently offered. They stated that 6 Million Pounds would be used to upgrade current changing facilities where necessary, mainly at multi-pitch sites;

(8) Officers confirmed that, due to a change in methodology by Sport England, the information for this strategy had been re-collected from when it was first carried out 2.5 years ago;

(9) Officers confirmed that the issue of pitch ownership being a risk factor would be emphasised further in the final version.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

12 Date Of Next Meeting

Members noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 10am on Friday 25th November 2016 in Committee Room 1P09, First Floor, City Hall, College Green, Bristol.

Meeting ended at 12.40 pm

CHAIR _____



Appendix 1

Feedback from the Youth Select Committee re Young People's Housing and Pathways Plan

The Youth Select Committee received a presentation regarding the Young People's Housing and Pathways Plan at their meeting on 26th October 16, and were invited to comment on the proposals. The following is a summary of their feedback;

- One of the main issues affecting young people was the lack of education and communication;
 - PHSE in schools was not always of a high standard as the curriculum varied and it was often delivered by teachers lacking specialist skills. Local Authorities should have more of a role overseeing curriculums across all models of schools.
 - Young people preferred online sources of information. They would like to look up information themselves rather than ask a teacher or other professional. For this to be successful, they needed better signposting.
 - Some schools and colleges issued email information out to pupils or used Moodle (an online system), but in many cases young people didn't know how to access the notifications. Social media would be a better option.
 - If young people really understood what it was like to be homeless – including learning from people with first-hand experience - it would help them to make informed choices about their own circumstances, and could reduce the number of young people choosing to leave home.
- The design and location of the Housing Hub for young people was important. It needed to be in a central location with good transport links, and the setting should be casual. The Station would be ideal as young people already went there for other types of advice and support.
- More needed to be done to overcome the issues preventing young people accessing social housing.

