

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission



24 February 2017 at 10.00 am

Members Present:-

Councillors: Harriet Bradley, Martin Fodor, Carole Johnson (Vice-Chair), Steve Jones, Anthony Negus (Chair), Jo Sergeant, Mhairi Threlfall, Jon Wellington and Steve Pearce

Officers in Attendance:-

Alison Comley (Strategic Director - Neighbourhoods), Nick Hooper (Service Director Strategic Housing), Tracey Morgan (Managing Director Bristol Waste), Mark Wakefield (Service Manager - Performance & Infrastructure), Netta Meadows (Service Director, Strategic Commissioning & Commercial Relations), Helen Wheeler (Companies Project Officer), Simon Anthony, Tom Watton, Robin Poole, Romaine de Fonseca (Policy Advisor) and Jeremy Livitt

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

All parties were welcomed to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were noted (see above).

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the following alterations:

(1) Minute Number 7 – Neighbourhood Partnerships – Asset Mapping to include action requiring an indication of how asset mapping would operate



- (2) **Minute Number 8 – Housing Revenue Account Business Plan – Re-Lets – £484 to be altered to £484,000**
- (3) **Minute Number 10 – Supermarkets Dealing with Waste – Update on the Current Position – the words “in Bristol” are added to the end of Resolution (1) and Resolution (2) is altered to read “Waste and Resources Action Group” and various other minor changes**
- (4) **Minute Number 11 – Quarterly Financial Report – Period 6 (to the end of September 2016) – Voluntary Severance – This sentence to be altered to read “The voluntary severance cost was a one-off cost but there is a cumulative saving which was included in the budget but paid corporately”**

Action: Jeremy Livitt

The Chair commented that he did not believe it was appropriate for the Scrutiny Commission to note an article by the Mayor concerning the Voluntary and Community Sector item.

5. Public Forum

Members received statements and questions (together with answers) from Viran Patel relating to Agenda Item 8 (Strategic Business Case for a Housing Delivery Company) and Agenda Item 10 (Bristol Waste Performance and Report Feedback). Details of these statements, questions and answers are held in the Minute Book.

With the agreement of the speakers, members agreed that the statements from Hugh Holden and Francis Greenacre relating to Agenda Item 9 (Parks and Green Spaces Moving Towards Cost Neutral) should be considered at the beginning of that item.

The Democratic Services Officer advised that the statement by Julie Boston relating to the Jubilee Swimming Pool should be disregarded as Ms Boston had indicated that this had been sent in error.

6. Chair's Business

The Chair made the following points:

- (1) **MUGA Horfield – There are further meetings taking place of this body. This body provided a fundamental role in the city, in particular in terms of tackling Anti-Social Behaviour**
- (2) **Hot Food takeaways and Deprivation – Councillor Mhairi Threlfall referred to the deprivation indicators in respect of this issue. It was agreed that this was an issue that needed to be considered at a future meeting. It was noted that a joined up approach was required between Public Health, Development Control, traders and neighbourhoods on this issue. There were concerns that local aspirations in Bristol could be restricted by national guidelines. In addition, 2 officers from the Public Health team would attend 13th March 2017 Planning Meeting to discuss this issue**

Action: To add to Work Programme for Monday 24th April 2017 meeting



(3) Supermarkets – At the request of the Chair, the Scrutiny Commission formally agreed to request the Mayor to pursue the actions in Minute Number 10 from 26th January 2017 Minutes relating to Supermarkets (that the Mayor be requested to take action to open up a conversation with the 8 leading supermarkets in respect of food waste, packaging and distribution)

Action: Romaine De Fonseca – Action Already taken

(4) Council Tax Reduction – there was a resource issue concerning the provision of this service. A report would be submitted to Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission, at which members of the Resources Scrutiny Commission would be invited to attend;

(5) Future Structure of Scrutiny – It was noted that the current arrangements for Scrutiny Commissions would continue until at least May 2016.

7. The Strategic Business Case for a Housing Delivery Company

Officers noted the above report and the following points were made by Councillors (with responses as required by officers) as follows:

- (1) Officers confirmed that as much of the report as possible would be put into the public domain at the Cabinet meeting. Where it was not avoidable, some commercially sensitive information would not be included;
- (2) In response to Councillors' questions about the Joint Venture Partners and the need for the Council to retain transfer and ownership of assets, officers confirmed that further detail was required concerning the Strategic Business Case. Whilst the organisational values of the organisation were significant, Housing Development expertise was also important – a private developer could provide investment or a quasi-commercial body such as a Housing Association. Any land asset arrangement was likely to be freehold;
- (3) Officers confirmed that it was anticipated that 30 % to 40% of the arrangement would be some form of social housing – one possible approach would be to assess the value of the asset and then sell it on to the Housing Association. Approximately 100 hectares of City Council-owned developable land is available. The operations of the new vehicle are not planned to be restricted to the city boundary;
- (4) In response to Councillors' concerns about any potential difficulties that could be caused by a mix of partners being chosen to deal with different scales of housing developments, officers stated that, whilst City centre sites would have higher end values, all sites had been assessed as providing a potential return to Bristol City Council and any potential Joint Venture Partner, subject to market conditions and specifics of the development;
- (5) Councillors pointed out that developers primarily wanted high density small flats and, for this reason, any Joint Venture arrangement could cause difficulties. Therefore, it would be better for BCC to retain a controlling share in the Company. In response, officers pointed out that the single partner approach had not been pursued since it locked BCC into one partner and it was, therefore, felt appropriate to operate on a scheme by scheme basis. In addition, Bristol City Council has no experience of being a developer and managing risk.;



- (6) In response to a members' question, officers confirmed that the 3 modelled sites had been chosen to allow cross financing;
- (7) In response to a members' question concerning Right to Buy, officers confirmed that primary legislation would need to be passed to require an arms length holding Company to offer Right to Buy properties;
- (8) Officers confirmed that the long-term maintenance would be a consideration at the detailed business case stage;
- (9) Officers confirmed that there would be a procurement process for the partner and that BCC would also invest cash as well as land.. It was explained that the scheme had arisen following a series of workshops, and consideration by the Executive Board, which had agreed the objectives and criteria for the scheme from which 3 short listed options had emerged. The Business case had been very clearly developed on a coherent and rational approach;
- (10) Councillors pointed out that the balance between objectives and costs was important. There was a major housing problem in the city which needed to be addressed. Officers pointed out that this scheme would improve what the Council already had control of. It could not solve, on its own, the long-term problems of lack of housing that the city faced
- (11) Councillors indicated the need for other organisations to be involved in this project, such as Bristol Energy and Bristol Waste and also pointed out the need to look at measures taken elsewhere, for example Amsterdam where waste is held below the pavement;
- (12) In response to Councillors' questions, officers confirmed that the target of 30/40% affordable social housing was a total figure for the whole programme, rather than a specific requirement for each site. Councillors expressed concern that that officers should consider that it might be difficult to sell developments if this was strictly enforced;
- (13) Officers noted a question from Councillors concerning the extent to which the programme would achieve community and self-build housing. It was explained that, although achievement of increased housing in this area was a Council policy, this had not been specifically factored into the business case;
- (14) Councillors stressed the importance of short to medium term innovative solutions for housing to ensure structures were built as quickly as possible to sufficiently acceptable standards. Officers stated that, whilst the scheme was neutral about construction methods, if it made sense to use off-site manufacture, this could take place;
- (15) Officers noted comments from Councillors that there was no mention of a Metro Mayor. However, the devolution arrangements were mentioned in the Strategic Business Case and there were opportunities for involvement in West of England Combined Authority development corporation.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

8. Housing Delivery Plan

Councillors noted this report and made the following comments with officers responding as indicated:

- (1) Councillors stated that engagement was required with Community Planning Groups and commented that the east of the city in particular had lots of housing but little community resource. Officers pointed out that this was primarily an issue to be considered as part of the Spatial and Local Plan



but would also be part of housing delivery. They were aware that the approach had previously been piecemeal but it was intended that the newly created Integrated Delivery Team would address the scope of housing quality in the city;

(2) In response to a question from Councillors concerning the need for greater consultation with local communities, officers confirmed that part of the scheme would include a Community Engagement Officer;

(3) Officers noted Councillors' concerns about the need for oversight of housing sites, such as with the Bedminster Green development. Members' attention was drawn to the scheme in operation at Lockleaze which was one of the priority sites where such an approach was working. However, it was pointed out that only some sites had been included due to the limited resources available;

(4) In response to a Councillor's question, officers confirmed that a policy concerning Home Choice was being developed.

The Chair thanked officers for such a well prepared report and commented that he was pleased to see significant progress had been made on this issue over the last few years.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

9. Parks and Green Spaces Moving Towards Cost Neutral

Members received Public Forum statements from Francis Greenacre and Hugh Holden (Parks Forum) in relation to this item. Details of these statements are held in the Minute Book.

Resolved – that copies of these statements are sent to the relevant cabinet Member (Councillor Asher Craig – Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Communities). Action: Jeremy Livitt

The following comments were made by Councillors concerning this report, together with comments from officers as follows:

(1) The report did not seem to show a future direction for parks. Officers noted Councillors' concerns about this matter and indicated that officers intended to submit a report to the meeting for the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission on Monday 24th April 2017. A scoping paper on the possible commercial use of parks was anticipated to be completed by May 2017. Since there was currently no in-house expertise in this area, a business case was being prepared to support the Neighbourhoods team and set out what was achievable. The person who had originally indicated that they would be accepting the vacant Head of Parks post had since refused it;

(2) Councillors expressed concern that the report was too vague in respect of events in parks – in particular, the costs, what was involved and what information needed to be included. A strategy and a transparent approach was required for local people to enable a case for investment to be made;

(3) Councillors pointed out that the impact on wildlife also needed to be included;

(4) Councillors indicated the importance of involving community groups and for the role of Health and Safety Inspections. In addition, the responsibilities of individuals was also important;

(5) Councillors drew attention to the need to address the issue of revenue from parks and any potential to cross subsidy between larger and smaller parks. In particular, there was concern about the



impact on the Parks groups' willingness to continue their role if their funding was taken away and they were also advised that they would need to carry out the work themselves. In this situation, the co-ordinated partnership between various local groups could prove difficult to maintain;

(6) The Cabinet Member advised that a hot housing event would be taking place with various groups before the end of May 2017. It was likely that most parks would need more than 1 event per year to be self-sufficient. There were examples of trusts and endowments operating in some parks outside the UK which were cost neutral.

Resolved – that it is noted that officers intend to submit a progress report on parks to 21st April 2017 meeting and that this report should also consider the role of the Health and Well Being Board for parks.

Action: Alison Comley/Gemma Dando to prepare report, Romyne De Fonseca to add to Work Programme

10 Bristol Waste Company

Bristol city Council Officers introduced this report and pointed out that they were looking with colleagues from the Bristol Waste Company at current KPI's and options for potential future KPI's (Performance Indicators).

Councillors made the following comments set out below and officers responded as appropriate:

- (1) Councillors expressed concern that, where there was evidence that the "carrot" was working, KPI's which increased the "stick" to meet a target could prove counter-productive. Such targets did not need to be increased where success was being achieved;
- (2) Councillors noted that in some instances it was currently cheaper to pay a fine for failing to meet a target than to address the problem – this urgently needed to be addressed;
- (3) Councillors pointed out the importance of monitoring the work of partnerships and of monitoring the effectiveness of collaboration between the Council and community groups;
- (4) Councillors stated that further analysis was required on the targets for litter picking (ie to make them target focused rather than time focused) and of the number of journeys required to transport weeds;
- (5) Councillors suggested that local communities, such as schools, could be involved in helping to dispose of dog excrement;
- (6) Officers acknowledged Councillors' comments about whether or not the target for a zero waste strategy by 2030 was achievable and the need for greater clarity on collaboration to tackle issues relating to bulky waste, as well as the need for repair where possible;
- (7) The Bristol Waste Company confirmed that they would be examining the KPI's relating to improved public engagement as part of a cultural shift towards greater involvement in this area. Officers acknowledged that changing behaviour was a major challenge. However, whilst it was labour intensive, it was very effective;
- (8) A Councillor pointed out that there was no information on the website about the following weekend's Spring Clean event;



(9) In response to issues raised by Councillors concerning measures for re-education of students, officers stated that they were working with Universities. However, this was an area where further work could be carried out. It was acknowledged that all KPI's needed to be measurable and based on the need to achieve the right outcomes;

(10) Officers noted that the Mayor had recently written to all Councillors concerning KPI's and stressing the need for everyone to play their part in helping to improve performance.

Resolved – that officers and Bristol Waste Company Representatives note the issues raised by Councillors above and take appropriate action as required.

Action: Netta Meadows/Tracey Morgan

11 Impact of Budget Decisions on Neighbourhoods

Officers introduced this report and circulated hard copies of the budget decisions that had been agreed at full Council as they related specifically to the Neighbourhoods Directorate. They explained that they would regularly report back on certain key areas (ie parks as previously indicated). If further detail was required, officers would be able to report back to a future NSC if required.

Councillors made the following comments, with replies by officers as indicated:

(1) Whilst the envelope of funding for the various categories of service had been provided, the form of the reduced services needed to be clarified;

(2) Councillors pointed out the need for a more detailed plan, including timescales, as well as information about savings in other Directorates which could impact on the service. Officers confirmed that the Director of Strategy and Policy (Di Robinson) was carrying out an asset mapping exercise across the city to assess what was available for Neighbourhoods and this could also include those areas which were cross-cutting affecting other Directorates;

(3) Officers noted concerns raised by Councillors about the percentage of the service remaining at the end of 2016/17 needed to be clarified for the forthcoming Financial year, as well as the need to address other issues such as the importance of Equalities Impact Assessments and Health Service Provision. Councillors noted that officers were preparing a map of service provision to ensure there remained a critical path for service delivery.

Resolved –

(1) that it is noted that officers are available to provide any further detail for future meetings of any particular savings areas;

(2) that the asset mapping work being carried out by Di Robinson also includes details of cross cutting areas of work with other Directorates.

Action: (1) Alison Comley to action, Romyne De Fonseca to note to add to the Work Programme as required, (2) Di Robinson



12 Work Programme and the Rolling Action Sheet

Members noted the Work Programme. It was noted that it was currently anticipated that the proposed new Scrutiny structure would be introduced in May 2017.

In relation to the Rolling Action Sheet, the Scrutiny Commission re-iterated that the request made at the previous meeting for the current Mayor to take forward the need for discussions with the 8 leading supermarkets in respect of waste, packaging and distribution. The Chair indicated that he would pursue this matter himself as required.

It was also noted that the reference to “Waste Action Group” should be altered to read “Waste and Resource Action Group”.

Action: Jeremy Livitt to re-iterate this in the Rolling Action Sheet.

13 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 10am on Friday 31st March 2017 in the Writing Room, City Hall, College Green, Bristol.

The meeting finished at 1pm.

CHAIR _____

