

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board



3 November 2016 at 10.00 am

Members Present:-

Councillors: Charlie Bolton, Nicola Bowden-Jones, Tom Brook, Jude English, Geoff Gollop, John Goulandris (for Graham Morris), Donald Alexander (for Gill Kirk), Brenda Massey, Olly Mead, Gary Hopkins (for Anthony Negus) and Steve Pearce

Officers in Attendance:- Stephen Hughes Interim Chief Executive, Anna Klonowski Interim Strategic Director - Business Change, Nancy Rollason Service Manager Legal, Andrea Dell Service Manager, Policy, Research and Scrutiny, Lucy Fleming Scrutiny Co-ordinator, Steve Gregory Democratic Services

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting and explained the evacuation procedure in the event of an emergency.

2. Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Councillors Kirk, Morris and Negus who were substituted by Councillors D Alexander, Goulandris and Hopkins respectively.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting.

Approved as a correct record. Councillor Mead clarified his comment about Interim Service Directors and explained that what he meant was not that they were unhelpful but that it was unhelpful to keep having Interim Service Directors rather than permanent Service Directors. He confirmed that Interim Service Directors had been very helpful.



5. Action Sheet of previous meeting.

Actions carried out were noted.

6. Chair's Business

None.

7. Public Forum

Three public forum submissions were received and noted. Two from one contributor in respect of 'Saving money on public services' and 'Draft Spatial Plan meeting 17th October 2016' and another one about Engagement and Democracy (relating to agenda item 11). (*Copies of the statements are held on public record by the Democratic Services team*).

8. The draft Corporate Strategy 2017-2022, Business Plan 2017/18 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2017/18 - 2021/22

The Board received a report on the draft Corporate Strategy 2017-2022, Business Plan 2017/18 & Medium Term Financial Plan 2017/18 – 2021/22 (including the draft financial and saving proposals contained within it), for consideration and comment.

It was noted that Bristol City Council had launched its draft five-year Corporate Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan, along with a draft one-year 2017/18 Business Plan on 13th October 2016. Each Scrutiny Commission would consider their relevant Business Plan sections at their respective meetings during October/November 2016. Overall scrutiny of the Corporate Strategy would be managed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

The Chair pointed out that he was aware of concerns about current spending pressures but emphasised that the report for consideration at this meeting centred on how the Council should go forward with its longer term Corporate Strategy including assumptions and how the budget engagement would work.

The Chair referred to an ongoing investigation and review about the current spending pressures and that a future report would come to OSMB. The Chair also recognised that his position as Chair could cause some conflict and that it would be appropriate for the Vice Chair to chair that meeting for this reason and so that he could contribute to it in a more significant way. It was important that members did not get distracted about past arguments and delay dealing with the pressures faced by the Council while the investigation was taking place.



A presentation was then given by the Interim Service Director Business Change outlining the current situation, the Medium Term Financial Plan Budget Assumptions and why it was necessary to have a robust Corporate Strategy in place.

Summary of points raised during the discussion –

1. The overspend had not been added to the already known £92m savings that were required and therefore there was a greater need to explain to the public about the Corporate Strategy;
2. Council Tax and Business Rates would be increased by 1% to a total of 1.95%;
3. A recent parliamentary bill (*Higher Education and Research Bill?*) related to non - payment of the education grant might have an impact on the Council's budgetary situation. More work was required to assess the actual impact this would have;
4. New homes budget assumptions appeared quite modest however caution was needed as the Council was aiming to build a significant number of affordable homes;
5. There was a financial commitment for adult social care throughout the new administration's term of office as the Council had no choice but to make provision. Members recognised that adult social care was nationally in crisis not just Bristol;
6. Assumptions for adult social care spend needed to be continually tested and reviewed;
7. Financial issue query raised by Councillor Hopkins relating to the Bristol Waste Company. Information not available at the meeting, Interim Service Director Business Change to provide to Councillor Hopkins after the meeting;
8. Comment made about the efficacy of the online consultation process and whether it could be made more 'user friendly', concern expressed for those without online access. Greater local councillor and neighbourhood partnership involvement was discussed. Acknowledged that 400 responses had been received by the Mayor's office so far. Members were informed that the budget process was on a very tight timescale and that there was a statutory duty to set a budget in an environment which was under significant pressure due to less resources following previous budget reductions;
9. Reliance on savings from greater efficiencies, estimated at two thirds, was not clear and this type of cost reduction would indirectly have a 'knock on' effect on front line services;
10. Members were informed that considerable work was already being undertaken on consultation and any increased spend on this would inevitably lead to a spending reduction elsewhere and in the current financially restricted environment it was not clear where that should fall;
11. Suggestions made to simplify the public consultation questionnaire and perhaps 'stagger' the process so less daunting to public wanting to engage in the process;
12. Reference to KPMG report relating to income generation, recognised that more work needed to be done on this. Options were being considered including the growing of existing sources of income in addition to finding new sources. Recognised however that spending would still need to be 'pushed back';
13. Concern expressed about possible impact of public health budget reduction and the possible need for a second budget scrutiny meeting to dovetail this with other budget reduction considerations;
14. Interim Service Director Business Change suggested that the next meeting of the OSMB could be in the form of a 'Workshop' followed by a short formal meeting to explore ideas and suggestions



further. The Chair proposed that options be discussed after the meeting in consultation with members of the Board, this was agreed;

15. A member mentioned that Oxford County Council had waived rental charges for children's centres and asked if Bristol City Council could do the same. Chief Executive agreed to look at this but emphasised that there would have to be savings made elsewhere if this particular option was taken;
16. Other suggestions to reduce spend were made as well as possible impacts for future spends such as increased housing requiring additional council services. The Chair asked members to submit comments and suggestions to Councillor Cheney Cabinet Member for Finance, Governance and Performance.

9. Mayor's Forward Plan

The Board received the October 2016 version of the Mayor's Forward Plan to identify any forthcoming Key Decisions that would require input from Scrutiny.

The Board was advised that the Plan was up to date as of end of October. The November edition would be published in the near future.

Points raised during discussion –

1. Confirmed that Young People's Housing and Independence Pathway had been considered by the Neighbourhood Scrutiny Commission at its October meeting. The Board was given assurance that further scrutiny would continue via a Select Committee. The Scrutiny Coordinator to supply Minutes of Select Committee to Councillor Massey;
2. Warm up Bristol, information lacking about progress and some residents claiming little support from officers. Information to be fed back to Councillor Mead;
3. Members asked for clarity about the Long Ashton Park & Ride service where the Council had continued to pay the Company running it after there was apparently no longer a contractual obligation to do so. The Chief Executive acknowledged the concerns raised and said that the matter would be followed up as quickly as possible but stressed that it was a difficult situation as it related to interpretation of contract law. It had been agreed by the Mayor and Cabinet to cease payments to the operating company and as a result this was now subject to legal challenge. A report would be submitted to Cabinet in due course for consideration. The Board emphasised the need for future contractual obligations to be effectively scrutinised with full transparency in the future;
4. Broomfield Housing Development and loss of open space concern raised. The Board was advised that the new development ensured that any loss of existing open space would be mitigated by the creation of new open space as part of the overall development;
5. Temple Quarter development and related transport costs/bus fares concern about impact on the overall transport plan. Chair suggested that Place Scrutiny Commission consider this.



Resolved – That the current edition of the Mayor’s Forward Plan of Key Decisions including the points raised above, to help inform the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2016/17 and beyond, be noted.

10 Scrutiny Work Programme 2016/17

Points raised –

1. Scrutiny of procurement to be moved from People Scrutiny Commission and be placed with Business Change Scrutiny Commission;
2. More business to be clarified for Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission, this would include items such Libraries and Neighbourhood Partnerships;
3. A workshop to be held on 19 December in preparation for an Inquiry Day about School Admissions on 17 February. All Members of Council to be invited to attend. A second Inquiry Day would be held which would be open to all representatives from schools in Bristol to attend;
4. The Arena project to be returned, from OSMB, to Place Scrutiny Commission for ongoing scrutiny;
5. Consideration to be given for the Green Capital project scrutiny to be shared with OSMB pending outcome of report on this issue.

Resolved – that, subject to the points made above, the Work Programme be noted.

11 Engagement and Democracy

The Board made the following comments:-

The Chair emphasised the need to ensure that the work of the Select Committee blended seamlessly with the work of the Constitution Working Group.

Resolved –

1. That it be noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board had agreed, as part of their work programme, to review and improve the City Council’s approach to securing public engagement in democracy;
2. That a Select Committee was the most suitable method for taking this work forward;
3. That as the work of the Constitution Working Group was reviewing the Council’s Constitution had a work stream on public engagement and there was an independent review of the 2016 election processes the Select Committee needed to align its work to complement these two work streams and that this be specified in the terms of reference;
4. That the Terms of Reference for the Select Committee be prepared, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, for consideration at the next meeting of OSMB.

12 Preparing for Future Devolution Deals



The Board noted the proposal to set up a working group to work collaboratively with the Executive to engage members in the shaping of any future devolution deal and to act as a point of reference for the Executive.

In response to discussion the Chair asked that consideration be given about whether the Working Group should be open to the public from its commencement or whether there should be an informal phase initially.

Resolved –

- 1. That the OSMB set up a cross party scrutiny working group to examine the potential for further devolution deals in the West of England region and the potential areas of focus for any deals, once clarification about its public accessibility status had been determined;**
- 2. That it be noted that this proposal was identified as a priority for the 2016/17 Scrutiny work programme at the Scrutiny Workshop on 9th September, and that the Mayor had also proposed this as an area where Scrutiny could add value.**

13 Scrutiny Resolution and Full Council Motion Tracker

The Board received the Scrutiny resolution and Full Council motion tracker.

Resolved – That the Scrutiny resolution and Full Council motion tracker be noted.

14 Date of Next Meeting.

8 December 2016 at 1.30pm.

Meeting ended at 1 pm

CHAIR _____



Meeting ended at Time Not Specified

CHAIR _____

