

# Bristol City Council

## Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board



**31 August 2017 at 5.00 pm**

### **Members Present:-**

**Councillors:** Geoff Gollop (Chair), Charlie Bolton, Tom Brook, Jude English, Brenda Massey, Graham Morris and Anthony Negus

### **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 for absence were noted from Councillor Kirk.

### **3. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **4. Minutes of the previous meeting.**

It was agreed that consideration of the minutes of the meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> July 17 would be deferred until the next meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> September 17.



**RESOLVED; that consideration for the minutes from 24<sup>th</sup> July 17 be deferred until the meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> September 17.**

## **5. Chair's Business**

The Chair advised that as the Resources Scrutiny Commission had not yet met in 2017/18 the Vice Chair for that body had not been elected asking the Commission to note that it was important that this position be filled due to the potential role for Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs on leading future task and finish groups. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSM) unanimously agreed to appoint Councillor Stephen Clarke to the position with immediate effect (moved by Councillor Gollop and seconded by Councillor Goulandris). The Board were then advised that feedback had been provided from Members regarding the length of previous meetings. As a result Councillor Gollop confirmed he would try to keep the meeting to time, if possible.

**RESOLVED; that Councillor Stephen Clarke be elected as a Scrutiny Vice-Chair**

## **6. Public Forum**

The Board received one public forum statement in relation to Metrobus, a copy of which can be found in the Minute Book.

Members noted that the statement had also been received by the Place Scrutiny Commission and commented that a reply to the resident had been provided by the Mayor. Some Members were concerned that the Mayor's response did contain sufficient information and suggested that the current public forum arrangements did not enable enough opportunities for the public to engage.

Members discussed the need to work more closely with Cabinet Member to resolve ward issues where appropriate since not all issues needed to route through scrutiny. It was noted that in most cases the Cabinet Members were happy to engage with other Members on matters relating to their portfolios. Alternatively, Members could use the OSM Mayoral Question Time to direct queries to the Mayor if that was felt a more suitable avenue.

Members went on to discuss Mayoral Question Time generally, noting that to date it had not been fully utilised and often presented a missed opportunity. The Board were advised that one of the changes being put forward as part of the Constitutional review was that Mayoral Question Time be replaced with a less formal conversation between OSM and the Mayor but that in the meantime, until any such changes had been approved, the arrangements could be implemented informally if all parties were in agreement.



## 7. Scrutiny and the Youth Council

The Board was advised that Councillors Keen and Brooks would be visiting the Youth Council on 11<sup>th</sup> October 17 to discuss how Scrutiny can assist with delivery of their manifesto objectives and would provide an update in due course. Members agreed that it would be useful to be advised about Youth Council meeting dates and forthcoming agendas so they could embrace opportunities to work together more closely on shared objectives in the future, if it was something the Young People would be interested in pursuing.

**RESOLVED; that the report be noted.**

### School Admissions Inquiry Day Outcomes

The Board welcomed the report and thanked the relevant Members for the robust work they had done in order to understand the issues affecting school admissions in the city and prepare a set of recommendations that could make a tangible benefit for young people in the city. The following summarises the key points made in the arising discussion;

- The Inquiry Day was a good example of how Scrutiny can operate effectively in order to help Members to gain better understanding in some areas and use that knowledge to develop and influence Council policy.
- The report contained a balanced range of recommendations, some of which would be relatively simple to implement and therefore considered quick wins.
- One of the findings was that an annual report on School Admissions be added to the scrutiny work programme for future years. This approach should be adopted more widely across scrutiny work streams to ensure key findings did not become lost. The item would be added to the OSM Work Programme and the appropriate methodology decided nearer the time.

**RESOLVED; that the report of recommendations be referred to the Cabinet to be adopted.**

### Scrutiny Ways of Working

Members considered and commented on the report. The salient points were as follows;

#### **Chairing of task and finish**

- The Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) paid to Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs for chairing Task and Finish Groups was a temporary arrangement until such time that the Scrutiny model going forward had been decided upon and appropriate discussions could take place with the Members Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) in order to agree the appropriate recompense.
- It was noted that some Members felt the temporary arrangements were not equitable (specifically the difference in SRAs between Chairs and Vice-Chairs) and would not necessarily secure the best outcomes but that they understood the constraints within which the SRAs could be changed. The Chair set out the intention to try and encourage engagement from interested and committed



members but that the SRA position did present difficulties until such time it can be changed. It was noted that the previous reports from the IRP had been discounted by Full Council. The Chair advised he had been in contact with all vice-chairs and members of OSMB not in receipt of SRAs and all were keen to progress under the new model.

☐ The following chairing allocation was agreed:

Air quality – Cllr Carey

Children’s Centres – Cllr Keen

Council Assets (property) - Cllr English

Council Commissioning – Cllr Clarke

Cribbs Patchway New Neighbourhood – Cllr Brooke

Fire Safety (watching brief) – Cllr Bolton

Libraries – Cllr Negus

MTFP and Budget – Cllr Morris

Parks – Cllr Johnson

Reducing demand on social care (adults) – Cllr Massey

Reducing demand on social care (adults) – Cllr Campion-Smith

Youth Council (watching brief) - Cllr Keen and Brooke

☐ It was agreed that in the event of capacity/chairing concerns that Cllr Gollop would be requested to assist with the chairing of any task and finish group.

Scrutiny ways of working - general

☐ The key driver for the pilot of new ways of working was to do less but do it better but not all of the mechanics of how this would be achieved were known yet and it was important to continually adapt and evolve.

☐ Two members highlighted concerns about the differentiation between overview and scrutiny and raised concerns that the new model runs the risk of losing the overview element and therefore risking that key items are not scrutinised. The nature of scrutiny as a mechanism for policy development was also discussed and the need to strike a balance with that and holding the executive to account. One member cited an article by Steve Pearce and how scrutiny works with the political system. The article was circulated to all members of scrutiny.

☐ The proposals to bring items such as the risk register and performance reports were noted however some members were concerned that items could still be missed and there is a risk that only items of interest are scrutinised as opposed to items that are not hugely engaging (e.g. council tax base) but are critical to the organisation.

☐ The process for reviewing the priority items for scrutiny was highlighted as requiring development and an area of risk if not regularly reassessed by members.

☐ The Chair advised that it is vital that scrutiny is responsive and that we need to evolve the processes and continue to develop and that OSMB will continue to respond to feedback in shaping the model.

☐ It was clarified that OSMB will receive all public forum. Members discussed the issue of public accessibility and it was concluded that this should be monitored going forward. Clarification was requested on the process for submitting questions to the Mayor’s Office and the next steps if a



## 8. School Admissions Inquiry Day outcomes

There was no discussion

## 9. Scrutiny Ways of Working

The work programme must evolve and not be static. Members (and officers) should highlight topics that they have concerns about so that they can be considered.

☐ It was noted that the next approach to setting the work programme should be more scientific and should involve the whole member cohort.

☐ One member expressed concern about the limiting of scrutiny activity, the risk of overload on OSM and the decision making being within the OSMB committee. The chair reminded the committee about the earlier decision to move forward with the trial.

### Scrutiny Work Programme – Task and Finish Updates (verbal)

As not all groups had commenced only a small number had updates at this time.

#### MTFP

☐ The scoping group has met three times and feel that it has been a very meaningful engagement on the MTFP. Members would like to thank the officers for their support in engaging with this.

☐ It was noted that going forward this would be a significant area of work.

#### Council Assets

☐ The council's current policy direction is not clear in this area and this is a very live issue given our budget position. A policy review is required of this area and members are encouraged to be involved in this and work quickly.

#### Libraries

Information is being chased from officers and this is required in order to progress.

## 10 Work Programme

There was no discussion.

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

