

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board



18 January 2018 at 5.00 pm

Members Present;

Councillors Don Alexander, Charlie Bolton, Tom Brook, Craig Cheney; Asher Craig; Jude English, Geoff Gollop (in the Chair), Gill Kirk, Brenda Massey, Graham Morris, Anthony Negus, Steve Pearce, Clive Stevens and Estella Tinknell.

Officers in Attendance (in full or part);

Tim Borret, Director, Policy, Strategy and ICT (interim); Gemma Dando, Director of Neighbourhoods and Communities (interim); Andrea Dell - Head of Democratic Engagement; Shahzia Daya – Service Director, Legal and Democratic Services; Lucy Fleming – Democratic and Scrutiny Manager; Chis Holme, Head of Finance; Jacqui Jenson, Acting Executive Director Care and Safeguarding; Denise Murray - Service Director, Finance; Mike Pilcher, Business Partner, Finance; Steve Somerfield, Director of ICT (Interim); and Zoe Wilcox, Director, Planning.

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed all those in attendance.

2. Apologies for absence.

There were no apologies for absence.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Chair's Business

The Chair advised that due to the scale of the budget proposals scrutiny would be split between two sessions with the Resources and People directorates and Corporate Risk Register being considered initially, and the Place and



Neighbourhoods directorates plus Capital Programme and Treasury Management following at the meeting at 5pm on 22nd January 18.

5. Public Forum

There were no items of public forum business.

6. MTFP Scrutiny Task and Finish Group

Councillor Morris, Chair of the Medium Term Financial Plan Task and Finish (MTFP T&F) Group provided a presentation setting out their key findings, a copy of which can be found at Appendix A. During the ensuing discussion the following matters were discussed;

- The MTFP T&F Group recognised the importance of the MTFP and suggested that it should ideally cover more than 5 years and continually be reviewed to ensure it remained fit for purpose.
- The work of the MTFP T&F Group had been very robust and was a significant improvement on scrutiny of the budget from recent years. The strength of the T&F Group was largely due to the fact that meetings were not public, which meant confidential matters could be freely discussed, and also that the membership was relatively tight (at 5 Members) which increased expertise and ownership.
- In future it would be prudent to strengthen the budget scrutiny process by starting earlier and drilling down into pressure points (e.g. Adult Social Care) in more detail. Key Performance Indicators could play more of a role in budget scrutiny going forward as would provide an easy way in which to measure progress.

Members and officers who supported the work of the MTFP Task and Finish Group were thanked for their contributions and it was agreed that the process would be replicated for future years.

RESOLVED:

That the findings of the MTFP T&F Group be noted and inform the ensuing Scrutiny of the budget proposals for 18/19; and

That the MTFP T&F Group process for budget scrutiny be rolled out for 18/19 and beyond.

7. Bristol City Council 2018-19 Budget Proposals

Following a brief introduction from officers, Members went on to scrutinise the budget proposals for the Resources and People Directorates, as well as the Corporate Risk Register. The key points were as follows;

- BE6 - Plans were in place to make savings by freezing incremental pay rises for senior managers.
- BE43 – The Council was owed a substantial sum from outstanding debts, mainly in relation to Adult Social Care. The payments would be recovered sensitively and more cohesive systems would be introduced going forward. It was agreed that additional details of the scheme would be provided in due course.
- FP01 – The proposal to save £4.4m from the Neighbourhood's budget by introducing efficiencies would be delivered by reducing support to some external organisations (as approved 3 years ago) and seeking better



value for money from contracts. The savings for 18/19 had already been identified. Any surplus from Bristol Waste Company would be reviewed towards the end of the period.

- FP14 – The proposal to establish an in-house debt collection service would aim to make the process more ethical and reduce stress for families, whilst also reducing costs by seeking solutions and requiring fewer house visits.
- FP32 – The budget to assist families with ‘no recourse to public funds’ was being reduced, however, the intention was that more money would be reclaimed from the Home Office so the level of service provision would not be affected. A policy for the future was being prepared and would be circulated to Members for comment.
- FP33/37 – It was right to look at ways to enable people to stay in their own homes whilst reducing costs, but not if there were knock on effects on other services such as the NHS. Within the last 6 months there were 60 fewer users in residential care.
- RS02 – The road maintenance budget included provision for tree pollarding and reduction of epicormic growth during 18/19, after which the longer term plan for trees would be agreed.
- RS14 – The closure of all Citizen Service Points bar that at Temple Street may inconvenience some residents although the Customer Service Call Centre could assist in most instances.
- RS15 – The outcomes around the consultation re the proposal to remove discretionary rate relief on business rates for charities, voluntary groups and not for profit organisations would be available in late January 18. The suggestion was that rate relief be withdrawn for organisations with turnover of £100k or more but a Cabinet paper setting out the details of the policy would be prepared in due course.
- IN25 – The plans to increase the admission fees at Red Lodge and the Georgian House Museum had led to concerns being raised that visitor numbers would reduce, which would be counterproductive, although the Cabinet Member was confident the savings could be delivered.
- IN30 – The Bristol Platform to increase use of volunteers across the city was in the early stages but it could potentially bring in significant income (e.g. York were raising £90k a year for a similar scheme).
- PE02 – The additional funding identified to support the Special Educational Needs programme was not due to commence until 19/20.

Risk Matrix

- BR9/10 – Work was underway to assess the steps that needed to be taken to better protect the city from flooding and funds had been set aside for any necessary works. This would include improvements to the Chocolate Path. It was suggested that Flood Risk could be the focus of a potential Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.
- BR14 – The introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations was being managed to minimise the risk to the organisation.
- BR19 – the Council had in the past experienced issues with delivery of major projects on time and within budget so now a more cautious position would be adopted based on the assumption that additional investment would be required. ‘Health checks’ would also be conducted during large scale schemes so that issues could be spotted earlier.
- BR20 – Joint working was taking place with the Core Cities to increase understanding of the impact of Brexit. A report to summarise the findings would be provided in due course.
- BR21/22 – The Council was planning to increase its investment in ‘spend to save’ initiatives.

RESOLVED;



That the Scrutiny comments on the 18/19 budget proposals detailed above be referred to the Cabinet for their consideration.

Meeting ended at 18.57

CHAIR _____

