

# Bristol City Council

## Minutes of the Resources Scrutiny Commission

28 February 2019 at 4.00 pm



### Members Present:-

**Councillors:** Stephen Clarke (Chair), Afzal Shah (Vice-Chair), Donald Alexander, Mark Brain, John Goulandris, Margaret Hickman, Tim Kent, Sultan Khan, Graham Morris and Clive Stevens

### 1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair led welcome and introductions.

### 2. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

### 3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

### 4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting & Action Sheet

The Commission Members agreed the minutes of the following previous meetings as correct records:

- 24<sup>th</sup> September 2018
- 6<sup>th</sup> December 2018
- 10<sup>th</sup> January 2019 (Budget Scrutiny Meeting )
- 14<sup>th</sup> January 2019 (Budget Scrutiny Meeting)

Members requested that the following comments were added to the 6th December 2018 - Item 12. Collection Fund (Surplus/Deficit) Report

A short conversation took place about the high and rising number of 'Airbnb's' in Bristol and what this meant with regards to collection of business rates and council tax. Members asked and it was confirmed



that the numbers were being monitored. However, Members have clarified that they suggested that the 'impacts on housing and communities' were to be monitored and understood not just the actual figures.

## 5. Chair's Business

There was none on this occasion but the Chair said he wished to thank the Members of the Commission for their hard work throughout the year.

## 6. Public Forum

No Public Forum received.

## 7. Work Programme

Members noted the scrutiny Work Programme and made the following comments:

- Collection Fund Surplus/Deficit Report; members recommended that further report should be presented to the Commission in the following year
- Council Tax Base Report – Members recommended this item should return in the following municipal year.

## 8. Performance Management

The Director for Workforce and Change presented the published slides to Members. It was stated that the council was in the process of developing a strong performance culture. It was said that some changes were needed because it was stated that 42% of officers were not having their performance managed when in fact 100% of officers should. The current My Performance system had been reviewed by a working group and it was agreed that it was costly, inefficient not as smooth or easy to navigate as it should have been.

A new 'iTrent' system that includes an Employee Self Service (ESS) feature being introduced across the whole organisation which was integrated with payroll and HR. It was expected that 100% of council staff will comply with this new system.

Officers added that a new Staff Survey was also being rolled-out right across the organisation during the following week.

Members made the following comments:

- A Member said that it was positive to hear that individual managers now have ensuring others have their performance managed as part of their own performance management.



- It was suggested that everyone should be able to view the results of the Staff Survey. It was recommended that this was added to the Scrutiny Work Programme the following year. It was highlighted that this report may go to the HR Committee but it was agreed by officers that any plans that result from the survey should go to scrutiny yes. **ACTION:** for any plans arising from the staff survey to be considered by scrutiny
- It was asked if 360 degree appraisals would be carried out. It was confirmed they will in some areas and in fact a pilot 360 degree appraisal was currently taking place for the top two tiers of management.
- It was confirmed that people would be marked on their performance i.e. 1, 2, or 3

## 9. Risk Register Report

The Director of Finance introduced the bi-annual Resources Directorate Risk Report to Members and invited them to comment on any areas of interest.

It was explained that there were three 3 new risks in the report which were ICT, Procurement and Brexit Preparedness.

- A Member said that they had been concerned about a previous presentation to scrutiny on the current state of ICT. It was stated further that when one looks at this report you can see that the risk levels are up and another risk has been added. ICT risks hit was said were supposed to be reduced but have instead gone up. He stated that he would ask that question again when the relevant Director was present in the room. The Director of Finance said that it was correct that the risk levels had risen but that there were already plans in place to monitor and manage them.
- The Chair said it appeared there were 'opportunity' risks in the report too and if this were so this was rather confusing and needed to be clarified. Officers agreed with this point.
- Members asked why 'Brexit' was showing as amber in this report and not red. The Director of Policy & Strategy said that yes as an 'opportunity' it is rated as amber. Members were also reminded that this report timeline runs from September to December and the risk had now increased.
- It was confirmed that there would be another up-date on Brexit Preparedness which would be presented to OSMB in March where the risks as a whole would be rated. The Brexit Board were at the time meeting fortnightly.

## 10 Commercialisation Strategy and Programme

The Director of Commercialisation and Citizens introduced the report to Members. This was an up-date on progress on the New Commercialisation Strategy and Programme 2018/2021 as requested by the Scrutiny Commission in December 2018. The Director stated they are now a team of four officers. Officers said that commercialisation 'boot camps' were being run in December and February followed by



subsequent training and a series of incubator sessions to develop individual projects. The work was not just about generating income but also about efficiency savings and working more effectively.

A Member of the Scrutiny Commission provided a verbal up-date on the Commercialisation and Innovation Working Group (CIWG) of which he is also a Member. It was said that that progress had originally been quite slow but that he very much welcomed the new Director and team. The group had previously had lots of ideas, some very good ones but didn't really know how to take them forward. For example the pest control service which had been very busy but wasn't previously making much of a profit but it's reporting to be now he said. Some ideas are currently on the 'back-burner' because he said they can't do everything at the same time. Some current projects are 'quick wins' but they are also taking on some bigger and long-standing issues where the Council is not generating enough income, for example the Harbour which it was said was costing the council £1M per year.

The Chair enquired further about the Harbour and why it was costing the Council so much; officers responded that it wasn't 'washing its own face'. The Chair said he thought this was an 'extraordinary' situation. Officers said that a stakeholder consultation to review the situation was currently being planned will be undertaken in the near future.

Members congratulated officers on the work so far and said that they were pleased that various conversations were now taking place. It was also stated that a 'round table' innovation event for key stakeholders was taking place in March. The Director of Finance said that a number of local authorities have propositions for potential economic growth that need to be brought together so they can understand more if there are ways of progressing them. The Director stated for information that this was outside of the 'commercialisation' work-stream.

A Member commented on the seven steps contained within the report and asked if they were 'check points' and suggested that there be a number eight which was for the Council to be in a 'monopoly position'.

Some of the individual projects highlighted in the report were also discussed including the 'Know Your Place Application'. It was said that the Council owns the intellectual property rights which makes this an even bigger opportunity.

Another Member said that he was impressed with the report partly because he had not expected the Council would be so entrepreneurial and show such of imagination as they currently were.

## **11 Exclusion of Press and Public**

## **12 Performance Report - Quarter 3 - Part Exempt**

The Head of Insight, Performance & Intelligence introduced the report to Members and explained that the purpose of the report was to brief the Commission on the progress made against the Directorate specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Q3 2018/19. In summary for this quarter 46% of those with



established targets are performing on or above target and just over half (51%) of those with a direct comparison from 12 months ago have improved. It was said there was a fairly neutral picture when looking at the Directorate as a whole.

The following targets were briefly highlighted:

- % Corporate Freedom of Information (FOI) requests responded to within 20 working days. This target it was said had never been met which officers commented was disappointing. However, hitting the target would be assisted by the installation of an improved electronic case management system as well as the planned introduction of smarter data retention policies.
- My Performance (Employee Performance Management system); compliance for BCC as a whole is low and has not changed this quarter but preparations are underway to implement the new HR system which it's anticipated will improve the rates (as discussed above).
- % of deaths registered within 5 working days – still below target but is improving.

Members raised the following points and questions:

- It was generally agreed that the report contained some mixed results.
- The difference between progression rates of BME and non-BME employees: Members suggested that this needed to be a focus for officers to address. Officers agreed and said that the HR Committee are looking at this in more detail.
- BCP522: Reduce the average number of working days lost to sickness (BCC): Officers said that sickness levels were at their highest level since 2010 but that it was believed that this was related to a number of factors. Officers referred to the information contained within the report and said that HR are working with managers at all levels to further develop policies and practices to improve staff engagement and wellbeing that will reduce sickness absence.
- DRE212 Legal Services spend on external barristers: this was well above target but officers said that figures were slightly misleading as they are actually underspending now but may have underestimated what we may have to pay out, so they are still treating this position with caution.
- BCP327: % Corporate Freedom of Information (FOI) requests responded to within 20 working days. This was highlighted as well below target and officers said that BCC had been on a warning from the Information Commissioner. The warning has not been followed through because officers have altered and improved the situation as instructed. Members asked if FOIs were 'cab ranked' and officers responded that they were well triaged across to the relevant manager when they arrive. It was explained that individual directors retain responsibility for them as the FOI team don't have the necessary specific knowledge to respond. It was said that the management team get a report to flag what's outstanding. There are FOI requests that require gathering huge volumes of information. Some were very complex and so it can take a long time to respond i.e. longer than 20 days but is better to comply and be transparent than to refuse to do them. It was asked how much time was spent on them. Officers said that they couldn't say precisely but there were some individuals that regularly submitted FOI requests. Members said that it might be useful to highlight how much council tax is being used to comply with them. Officers said that there are quite a lot of international requests, so they are putting some information on-line so the information is readily available.



In line with the following information, the remainder of this agenda item and the following agenda item (13) were taken in an exempt session.

***Exclusion of Press and Public***

***That under s.100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that it (they) involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of schedule 12A of the Act.***

**13 ICT Systems and Strategy - Exempt**

As stated above, this item was taken in an exempt session.

Meeting ended at 7.00 pm

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

