Bristol City Council
Minutes of the Communities Scrutiny Commission

10 October 2019 at 5.00 pm

Members Present:-
Councillors: Anthony Negus (Chair), Jo Sergeant (Vice-Chair), Estella Tincknell, Jon Wellington, Donald Alexander, Harriet Bradley, Barry Clark, Graham Morris, Matt Melias, Martin Fodor and Carla Denyer

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed the Commission and attendees, and clarified the agenda running order.

2. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Estelle Tincknell attended from 6pm

3. Declarations of Interest

The Chair and Councillor Carla Denyer declared they are members of the Bristol Libraries Forum. Councillor Jo Sergeant is a previous member.

4. Chair's Business

The Chair provided a copy of the statement delivered to Cabinet on 3rd September 2019 as a supplementary item. This is of relevance to Agenda Item 8: Neighbourhood Enforcement.

5. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The draft minutes of the previous meeting (27 July 2019) were considered and a typographical error identified. The minutes were otherwise agreed as a true record by Commission Members.

6. Action Tracker

The Action Tracker from 27 July 2019 was considered; all actions are now complete.

7. Public Forum

The following Public Forum was received:

<u>Questions</u>

- Q1: Agenda Item 8, Neighbourhood Enforcement

Answers were referred to at Agenda item 8.

- Q2: Agenda Item 9, Libraries update

- Q3-8: Agenda Item 9, Libraries update, on behalf of Bristol Libraries Forum

- Q9-18: Agenda Item 9, Libraries update, on behalf of Bristol Libraries Forum

- Q19-20: Agenda Item 9, Libraries update, on behalf of Friends of Redland Library Group

- Q21-23: Agenda Item 9, Libraries update, on behalf of Friends of Redland Library Group

- Q24: Agenda Item 9, Libraries update, on behalf of Friends of Clifton Centre and Library (FOCCAL)

- Answers to the questions were referred to at Agenda item 9.

<u>Statements</u>

- S1: Agenda Item 9, Libraries, on behalf of Friends of Bristol Central Library

- S2: Agenda Item 9, Libraries, on behalf of Friends of Redland Library Group (apologies)

- S3: Agenda Item 9, Libraries, on behalf of Bristol Libraries Forum (apologies)

- S4: Agenda Item 9, Libraries, on behalf of Bristol Libraries Forum

- Statements were acknowledged under Agenda item 9.

8. Neighbourhood Enforcement

Public Forum question regarding noise complaint enforcement in rented properties was asked by Cllr Stevens, with a written response provided by Officers confirming that regular noise nuisance complaints from HMOs or AirBnB rentals are treated in the same way as other complaints. The Chair provided an opportunity to follow up on the Public Forum question and it was established that further considerations around the licensing of rental properties could be referred to the relevant Officer.

The submitted report outlines the approach to Neighbourhood Enforcement. This is a refresh of existing policy to ensure a focus on correct process.

It was clarified that the new tools were introduced in September 2019, while services were restructured and the current Neighbourhood Enforcement team came into effect circa 18 months ago. In the current arrangements the Neighbourhood Enforcement teams work with partners (including the Police and other teams) to improve joint working and avoid silo working. Improvements can be made to working between licencing and planning. Upcoming training will support this. Members supported this action. Further mapping work around joint working will take place around ensuring licensing and planning work is concurrent.

Members found the table on statutory nuisance (council properties) confusing. The previous case management system in place could only record correspondence. The new CMS allows for reporting, and there is an aim to include more detail in the future. Labelling should also be looked at.

Action: Officers should develop the detail and labelling of the statutory nuisance table.

Action: More information should be made available regarding Fixed Penalty Notices (including, if possible, frequency of visits, offences, and breakdown by ward).

The issue of household waste on private property was raised. Officer confirmed that public space protection orders can be issued for domestic waste, and Community Protection Notices can be issued for waste in gardens, served against property owners.

Members raised a concern around the lack of enforcement taken against landlords – core cities have similar problems. It is not thought that any changes in this area are forthcoming. It was clarified that any waste (domestic or commercial) that is fly tipped is subject to the same legislation, but that domestic waste is not as regulated as commercial.

Areas with active Street Scene groups have expressed interest in future collaboration with the council.

Action: Ward prioritisation issues to be fed in to Clean Streets work.

Action: Messaging around evidence needed and actions that can be taken to support enforcement to be promoted within Clean Streets project.

Members raised that engagement initiatives have not been effective, and raised whether a pilot to could assess the effectiveness of the new teams. These checks are being made on Gloucester Road.

The transient nature of student residents is problematic as it can take some time to locate the property owners.

The nature of the roles of the 15 officers within the enforcement team were discussed.

In terms of KPIs, for noise complaints this is the speed of response. In the Clean Streets project local environment quality is monitored by a third party and photos and surveys conducted before and after operation.

Members commented on the fact that successful prosecution would cover Court expenses, but not receive the fines themselves. It would be beneficial if the enforcement programme could eventually become self financing.

Officers were thanked for their report, presentation and responses.

9. Libraries Update

A number of statements and questions were received as part of Public Forum in relation to this item.

The following statements were received and acknowledged.

S1: Agenda Item 9, Libraries, Helen Pocock, Rebecca Amiel, on behalf of Friends of Bristol Central Library. Statement regarding recognition that the Central Library serves many Communities and has a range of different roles requiring more varied levels of engagement.

S2: Agenda Item 9, Libraries, Lloyd Roberts, on behalf of Friends of Redland Library Group. Statement raised a number of issues around Redland Library that are items of concern for the FORL, including recent roof leaks.

S3: Agenda Item 9, Libraries, Lloyd Roberts, on behalf of Bristol Libraries Forum. Statement raised concern about engagement with the Bristol Libraries Forum and future implementation of the Libraries Innovation Fund.

S4: Agenda Item 9, Libraries, Merche Clark, on behalf of Bristol Libraries Forum. Statement addressed that the BLF believe the Vision should reflect the impact Libraries have on literacy and culture, and raised that the strategy should address stewardship of buildings.

The following questions were received with written responses provided by the Head of Libraries; these have been edited for clarity and brevity so do not contain the full detail of question and response. Due to the high volume of question the opportunity for supplementary questions were grouped with themes rather than raised at each question.

The Chair thanked the Officers for providing full answers.

Question 2, Cllr Clive Stevens acknowledged the work of the Friends of Libraries Groups and highlighted that these partnerships will be very helpful towards making libraries sustainable, asking whether the Libraries Service would thank Bristol Libraries Forum (BLF) for their work.

Response from Head of Libraries. Bristol Libraries Forum operates independently from the Council and as such we do not know what specific development support Bristol Libraries Forum has offered friends groups. The Head of the Library Service thanked the two Library Development Officers (LDO) for their work in following up with people interested in running new friends groups.

As part of the supplementary discussion, the Head of Libraries made clear that communications with BLF is very welcome and would be happy to engage further.

Question 3, Lloyd Roberts, on behalf of Bristol Libraries Forum, asked what plans does the Library Service have to engage with the Bristol Libraries Forum?

Response from Head of Libraries. The library service approach is to communicate directly with Library Friends Groups, some of whom may or may not be part of the Bristol Libraries Forum. However we are talking to many community groups and partners and are open to any communication from the Forum. The Bristol Libraries Forum operates independently from the Council and its membership is known only by the Forum, which does not report to the library service.

Question 4: Lloyd Roberts asked why wasn't some of the £108k allocated to the Libraries Innovation Fund directed towards promotional activities and what plans does Bristol Library have to improve their promotion activities?

Response from Head of Libraries. Social media support within the Library Service is currently shared across the Reader Development Team, which includes Library Development Officers and a Reader Engagement Librarian. There is a rota between team members to support social media communications across the week. The Libraries Project is supporting the team to look at ways they can build on the success of the Libraries Twitter account and maximise the impact of social media relating to Libraries. The Innovation Fund is intended to kick start community led ideas centred on local libraries, which may include promotional activity.

Question 5: Lloyd Roberts asked if Bristol Libraries could release metric data so that book stocks could be measured across all libraries?

Response from Head of Libraries. We do not monitor statistics on monthly acquisitions and withdrawals as it is not useful to assess stock, but use a combination of professional judgement, staff and customer feedback, usage, reports from a stock management software tool and the space limitations.

Question 6: Lloyd Roberts asked if any book stock was being diverted into other initiatives such as mini libraries?

Response from Head of Libraries. No.

Question 7: Lloyd Roberts asked what plans does Bristol Library have to improve their support of individual Library Friends groups?

Response from Head of Libraries. The Library Service will offer ongoing support of Bristol Library Friends Groups via online resources (new resources recently added online); via face to face support by the Libraries Development Officers and via email support to the library.ideas@bristol.gov.uk email account. In addition the Library Service has launched an innovation fund, which includes £1000 for Friends Groups to apply for.

Question 8: Lloyd Roberts asked what plans are there to disperse literacy projects, health projects, talks etc to branch libraries?

Response from Head of Libraries. The Libraries Project is developing a way to centralise information about events across libraries and publish this list of events and activities. Greater visibility of events will help community led activities and council led activities be better dispersed across the network of libraries, because we will see better what is happening where.   Examples of local activities were provided.

Question 9: Joanna Booth, on behalf of Bristol Libraries Forum, asked to clarify the details of the Arts Council bid and project as specified in section 48 of the report.

Response from Head of Libraries. The arts council bid will be applying for funds to develop new approaches for young people participation in the library service and improvements in social media engagement in libraries by young people 16-24, and the bid remains under development.

Question 10: Joanna Booth, on behalf of Bristol Libraries Forum, asked what is the data associated with 'young people NOT feeling that libraries are relevant enough for them'?

Response from Head of Libraries. The pilot referred to in the report is about young people who are 16-24 year olds, not 5-15 year olds. In the Quality of Life survey 2018-2019 only 26.8% of 16-24 year olds have a Bristol Library Card which is significantly lower than any other equalities group.

The findings of the Rising Arts 're-imagine libraries' report published 9th October includes views from non-users of libraries which found that for those that didn't use the library (31% of respondents), the main reasons were: "unwelcoming" (53%), "there's nothing that appeals to me" (47%), and "not open when I'm free" (32%). We are exploring community led ways to extend the use of the library and access to the library service. This is part of opening up the library buildings outside staffed hours.

As part of supplementary discussion it was clarified that no age is specified in regard to 'young people'. Opening hours are a key. This is also linked to question 14. As extended access is a key factor for engaging with young people, it was raised whether this could be looked at further. There is no resource for extended opening hours, but as part of the pilots there are a number of 'proof of concept' ideas which can be investigated, and flexible stances on access in included here. This is part of the pilots project, not the library service strategy.

Question 11: Joanna Booth asked if the referenced "Review of Rising Arts Agency report on engaging young people in Libraries" will be made publicly available.

Response from Head of Libraries. This will be published on 9th October on web page: https://www.bristol.gov.uk/tell-us-your-idea-for-the-library-service

Question 12: Joanna Booth asked what work is being done to increase opening hours and to therefore increase footfall across all of Bristol's Libraries?

Response from Head of Libraries. We have opened the Central Library an additional day a week since May 2019 and are working with Friends Groups and community organisations to enable them to open library buildings outside library opening times, for activities that may not relate to library services but use the building as a community asset.

Question 13: Joanna Booth, asked to clarify the statement "We are also considering a call to action citywide by involving organisations linked to the One City Plan where we can show them the ideas suggested, but are lacking a lead in developing them" considering libraries are not mentioned in the One City Plan. Which organisations will be contacted and how is it envisaged that these organisations can help since libraries aren't even in the One City Plan?

Response from Head of Libraries. The way we interpret the One City Plan in relation to libraries is applying the core principle of working in partnership across the City. Where we have ideas in libraries which do not have friends groups we are keen to develop connections between organisations so that ideas can still be taken forward. The organisations linked to the One City Plan are already involved with citywide initiatives and we have demonstrated their interest in a previous citywide meeting earlier in 2019.

As part of the supplementary discussion Members raised whether libraries could be included in the One City Plan.

Action: Officers to consider adding Libraries / literacy levels to the One City Plan.

Question 14: Joanna Booth, asked that as demographic data about library use from the Reading Agency suggests that children are already using libraries more than adults so why is the library service focusing on young people? Is it just because there is arts funding involving young people?

Response from Head of Libraries. The Library Project is working with the Culture Team on a specific funding bid that concentrates on 16-24 year olds (not 5-15 year olds). This is because the Quality of Life survey 2018-2019 shows us, only 26.8% of 16-24 year olds have a Bristol Library Card which is significantly lower than any other equalities group.

Question 15: Joanna Booth asked if Bristol Library considered BAME use in their impact assessment?

Response from Head of Libraries. Yes, in any Equalities Impact Assessment we consider impact on all protected characteristics. The full business case will include an EQIA.

Question 16: Joanna Booth asked if any aspect of the report adversely impact the provision and availability of books for children and young adults?

Response from Head of Libraries. We are not expecting any adverse impact.

Question 17: Joanna Booth asked how will the community 'living rooms' affect stock, staff and buildings and how will Bristol Library guarantee stock, staff and buildings?

Response from Head of Libraries. This approach has come from a community suggestion and the group are already taking it forward in Shirehampton Library. It matches with our ambition to have a core and local offer that is tailored to the local community so that stock may change and layout and approach may be different depending on the needs of the community. We are trialling this approach in partnership with the Friends and community group and will learn these very things – i.e. learn about impacts positive and negative, and learn what is involved.

Question 18: Joanna Booth, asked that as the Mayor has gone on record to suggest that Bristol's Libraries are not fit for the 21st century, which parts of the draft suggestions so far are meant to help it come up to speed?

Response from Head of Libraries. One key part is the digital upgrades in libraries, specifically new public computers (as part of the council's IT Transformation Programme), library kiosks and extended access technology, and new printers. These are referred to in the scrutiny report.

Question 19: Merche Clark, on behalf of Friends of Redland Library Group, requested the following data to understand the full costs of Redland Library.

·   Spend from the Library Services Budget since 2016 on Redland Library
·   Projected expenditure for 2019-2024 from the Library Services Budget on Redland Library
·   Spend from the Properties Budget since 2016 on Redland Library
·   Projected expenditure for 2019-2024 from the Properties Budget on Redland Library
·   Any other expenditure on Redland Library from non-Library Service or Property Budgets (including IT and any other) since 2016 on Redland Library
·   Projected expenditure for 2019-2024 from non-Library Service or Property Budgets on Redland Library

Response from Head of Libraries. The library service funds the staffing for Redland Library as part of the complete staffing budget of £3,791,000 for all 27 libraries. This is projected to continue until any changes are made as part of any annual budget setting at Full Council in February for any financial year that starts in April.

There is no separate staffing budget for Redland as library staff are in a team of three branches, the Library Group Manager manages 9 libraries and all central service staff and management are part of the provision of the whole library service.

There is no separate book fund spend for Redland Library as all stock is bought for the city as a whole and can be circulated. Free reservations ensure all items in Libraries West can be obtained through Redland.

Property Services budget for utilities is detailed in the library data sheets at https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/3184729/Data+Pack+Redland.pdf/e599cc9c-56f4-d09b-824e-70a7e2082266

This is projected to continue assuming the same budget setting protocols mentioned above.

We have no further information of any other council department spend on Redland Library.

Question 20: Merche Clark asked which Libraries are being considered for pilots, what sort of infrastructure modifications are contemplated and how will the impact of these changes be assessed on delivery of the Library Service?

Response from Head of Libraries. The evaluation and impact assessment is part of the work being managed by the Libraries Project – we have a new data analyst starting next week (w/c 14th October) to help with this work. The specifications for each pilot are in the very early stages and location of pilots is currently unclear. All pilots will be planned as part of development of the Full Business Case which will go to Corporate Leadership Board for approval in December 2019.

Question 21: Lloyd Roberts, on behalf of Friends of Redland Library Group, asked what can be done to expedite even small changes which involve the Building Services team considering that two ideas suggested by FORL could not be progressed as they would involve Building Services.

Response from Head of Libraries. We work closely with the Building Practice, Facilities Management and Property Services. Therefore, we need to fit in with their resources, work plan and priorities throughout the city. This is not a barrier but a necessity as library services do not have the budget or staff or responsibility for maintenance and repair of library buildings as they are corporate assets.

As part of the supplementary discussion the fact that there have been a number of recent roof leaks in Redland Library was raised, and queried whether there was scope for Facilities Management to prioritise this? The Deputy Mayor with responsibility for Communities was not aware of these specific problems and will look in to this issue separately.

Question 22: Lloyd Roberts asked what can be done to improve Bristol Library's intermittent social media support for events considering there is no dedicated staff to support promotion activities.

Response from Head of Libraries. We have produced a guide so that it is clear what we can support and how often: https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/3773161/social+media+guidelines.pdf/7337e4d9-46cd-9791-5cae-06d14c184ed6

The Libraries Project is supporting the team to look at ways they can build on the success of the Libraries Twitter account and maximise the impact of social media relating to Libraries.

Question 23: Lloyd Roberts asked what can be done to improve the cleaning of libraries?

Response from Head of Libraries. The cleaning contract is managed by Facilities Management in the council and monitored by library supervisors. When we are aware of an issue, it is raised with our colleagues in FM. In extreme circumstances we can get in emergency cleaners. All cleaning contracts are different as they depend on the opening hours.

Question 24: Marian Tucker, on behalf of Friends of Clifton Centre and Library (FOCCAL), asked how does the corporate landlord approach evaluate the financial benefits of the library service?

Response from Head of Libraries. The concept of a Corporate Landlord is that the "ownership" and the responsibility for management and maintenance of property assets sits with the corporate landlord with service departments making use of the property or land they require to deliver their services and making decisions around service delivery. Property Services does not evaluate the financial benefits of the service. If any building is surplus then Property Services will look at the value of the building for sale together with any other options for its future use. There is currently no library buildings declared surplus.

As part of the supplementary discussion following questions 24 and 21, it was stated that facilities management will also be considered as part of the asset management strategy. Libraries will be one of the first service areas looked under the new asset management strategy.

It was made clear that there will not be a decision around selling library stock, and any changes that involved a building would be subject to consultation.

It was queried whether there has been a financial evaluation of the social value of libraries. Social value is recognised, and would be assessed. It was raised that a tool to assess this would be of benefit, and Officers may wish to consider exploring this.

Following public forum a discussion was held on the benefit of libraries to communities and the how engagement with Friends Groups can be used to support understanding of local community needs.

Several libraries do not have a 'Friends of' group or similar supportive community. The Deputy Mayor for Communities is working with anchor organisations that work within communities to support their local libraries.

Members raised that where three libraries trialled extended access this proved extremely popular, but the resource for this is not available. The Head of Libraries is costing pilots that look at extended access, and this would need to be completed before rolling out. The pilot framework is expected to be announced in November.

Mini libraries in children's centres were discussed. These now exist in Windmill Hill, Knowle and the Children's Hospital.

Members raised the issue of DBS checking of volunteers – this will be relevant to discussions of expanding library activities (such as homework clubs). It was agreed that guidance for libraries should be available

and parents can be assured that volunteers working with children have had appropriate background checks.

'Footfall' as a measurement was discussed. This would be affected by opening hours. On its own this metric is not the most meaningful; the Libraries service reports on 52 different measures. More work on evaluating impact is needed.

Members raised the limited relationship between the BLF and services. It was raised that some information on the Bristol City Council website is not up to date. It would be useful to see the aims and objectives publicly available. Officers agreed to make the constitution public by putting this online.

Action: BLF representatives to inform Head of Libraries what online information is incorrect

Action: Libraries to publish the Constitution.

A new community development framework is being developed to ensure that Bristol City Council is not working with communities in a transactional way.

It was acknowledged that for some members of the public the Libraries are the only point of contact with Bristol City Council services.

Members raised the absence of literacy and reading for pleasure in the strategy; the One City Plan could also reference improving literacy levels. Libraries should be at the heart of this.

Members were positive about the report and strategy, but agreed ongoing concerns over future uncertainty, particularly as next year's budget is unknown. It is understood that Libraries are moving forward with the same revenue budget. There has been no indication of change. Work is ongoing around monitoring and evaluation.

Members agreed a broad consensus to the proposed strategy, with a request for greater reference to literacy.

The final report is going to the Corporate Leadership Board and finalised in December. Sign off has been delegated by Cabinet to a senior officer. The strategy shows the broad direction of travel with a more developed document sitting behind this. Officers stated that further consultation has not been planned as city wide engagement has fed in to the strategy. Specific separate actions would, however, be subject to consultation.

The sign off procedure was discussed and it was agreed that while sign off has been delegated to a senior officer, the Deputy Mayor with responsibility for Communities will bring the item to Cabinet as an information item.

Action: Deputy Mayor with responsibility for Communities will bring the item to Cabinet as an information item.

Further concern was raised over the corporate landlord approach. It is important to recognise the difference between the value of the building as a library and a property investment opportunity. When the investment strategy is available the services that buildings provide should be made clear. The corporate landlord approach is to review 20% of stock yearly over a rolling 5 year basis, with Library stock being in the first tranche. Concern was raised over libraries being a 'test' in this approach. This was considered by officers to be a reflection of the prioritisation of libraries. Part of the strategy is to clarify the community assets. The libraries service has no engagement with renegotiation of rent.

Members raised that considering that some decisions regarding budget and parallel strategies are not yet known, and in light of the universality of the Libraries service, in order to be assured of the appropriateness of the 5 year strategy it was recommended this item be received at the Overview Scrutiny Management Board.

Action: Chair to recommend to OSMB leads that the Libraries item is added to the OSMB work programme (subject to agreement).

It was noted that the outcome of project work will not be known for an additional year. These will be implemented and evaluated during 2020.

The Chair thanked Officers and Members for their contributions.

10. Performance Report Q1

A performance report specific to the CSC has been produced in response to feedback. The report is now more streamlined, with 18 KPIs identified.

Items of concern included:

- High number of empty council properties as an ongoing issue (including some properties being finished to a poor standard)
- Explanation of why 67 of indicators are below target
- An explanation of changes in approach to tenant arrears was provided but further information is requested around the approach to ethical debt collection
- Issue of rise in complaints amid reports of complaints being closed before being actioned. Explanation of a new case management system was provided, with an expectation of seeing improvements by Q3. This should be monitored on the agenda for next year.

Action: Performance queries to be addressed by relevant officers through action tracking.

11 Risk Report (Corporate)

The full corporate risk register was received as it is not possible to produce an individual Communities specific report. It was agreed that this report is too large to be of practical use to the CSC.

Action: Risk Register to be discussed as an item at OSMB leads meeting.

12. Work Programme

The Chair suggested that the current CSC agenda for December is thin, and could accommodate an additional item examining the impact of university expansion on communities. This was agreed, although noted that some specific issues may fall within the remit of a different directorate the wider impact on wards should fall within CSC. This would need to be tied to the Local Plan.

Action: Chair to suggest to OSMB that an additional item examining the impact of university expansion on communities to be added to the CSC agenda for the next meeting on 9 December 2019.

Additional items for discussion at OSMB included changes to the company introducing the cardboard sack recycling scheme, and potential impact on Bristol waste collection.