

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Commission



26 September 2019 at 6.00 pm

Members Present:-

Councillors: Paula O'Rourke (Chair), Martin Fodor, Kevin Quartley, Mark Weston and Mark Wright

Officers in Attendance:-

Zoe Willcox (Director: Development of Place), Nuala Gallagher (Director, City Growth, Investment & Infrastructure), Alex Minshull (Sustainable City and Climate Change Manager), Sarah O'Driscoll (Service Manager Planning), Mark Wakefield (Service Manager - Performance & Infrastructure) and Johanna Holmes (Policy Advisor - Scrutiny)

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

2. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from:

Cllrs Tom Brook, Carol Johnson, Jon Wellington, Mark Bradshaw and Fabian Breckels

Cllr Harriet Bradley was a substitute Cllr Fabian Breckels

3. Declarations of Interest

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as true record.

5. Action Tracker

There were some ongoing questions about the Affordable Housing figures in the Quarterly Performance Report. Members asked the Strategic Intelligence & Performance Advisor for further information but were told that the figures were not yet available. **ACTION: Further information about the Affordable Housing figures will be provided to Members as soon as they are available**

6. Chair's Business



7. Public Forum

The Chair highlighted that the deadline for Public Forum submissions had been extended due to some of the meeting papers being published late.

A Member enquired if it was possible to put Public Forum on Mod.Gov. in future **ACTION: Scrutiny Advisor to make enquiries about whether this is possible.**

Public Forum Questions Received:

1. Question - Agenda Item 12: Update on the Mayors Climate Emergency Action Plan
2. Question/s - Agenda Item 9: Bristol Harbour Review
3. Question/s - Agenda Item 10: Performance Report
4. Question/s - Agenda Item 12: Update on the Mayors Climate Emergency Action Plan

Public Forum Statements Received:

1. Statement - Agenda Item 12: Update on the Mayors Climate Emergency Action Plan
2. Statement - Agenda Item 9: Bristol Harbour Review

8. Scrutiny Work Programme

The Chair said that when the next meeting took place in January 2020 there would be a new Executive Director for the Growth and Regeneration Directorate. The Chair said she welcomed Members suggestions for agenda items for that meeting.

9. Bristol Harbour Review

The Director for Commercialisation and Citizens and Shareholder Liaison introduced the item to Members.

The Director said that the Communication/ Consultation project that included Task and Finish Groups were to be put in place to ensure that they could 'drill down' into people's views. She also stated that the previous timeline provided for this work had been optimistic, and the plans originally proposed for taking this Review forward lacked the necessary scope that needed to be broader. An officer workshop had been held in July to identify the aims and objectives of a comprehensive Harbour Review and amongst other things it had been concluded that the Harbour is a 'key historic asset' for Bristol.

Members were taken through the timeline of next steps and the outline of the individual projects. A strategic plan and a business plan will be produced that takes the work up until 2022. A Cabinet paper will be presented on 3 December 2019 seeking approval for both the Feasibility/ Case Study and Communication/ Consultation projects, with the Communication/ Consultation project beginning in January 2020. The Harbour Review will report to Cabinet in September 2020 on the Harbour Strategy, with the formal launch of the Strategy to dovetail with the 50th Anniversary of the Harbour Festival in 2020.

The Director said she was fortunate to have the support of the cross party Commercialisation and Innovation Working Group (CIWG). There are a number of challenges that face BCC in creating income growth and achieving efficiency savings whilst maintaining agreed service standards. She said she is working closely with the Director Economy of Place to ensure there is a coordinated approach.



The following points were discussed with further with Members:

Members said that it had previously been stated that that the Government owns the harbour and Bristol rents it. The Director said that BCC owned and has oversight and strategic responsibility for the Harbour but she would double check this point and report back to Members. **ACTION: Director for Commercialisation and Citizens and Shareholder Liaison to clarify ownership of Harbour.**

Members commented on the varied nature of the Review and asked if that could make it difficult to manage and also expensive. The Director responded that a clear process for effective management of the Review had been established: a full Review had been discussed for many years, and it was important, in order to ensure that the Harbour was sustainable and an asset for future generations, it was necessary to undertake this now.

Members asked how confident Officers were about the timescales being met. The Director said she was very confident that the draft Harbour Strategy that is one of the deliverables from the Review would be ready to take to Cabinet for approval next September 2020, after having completed the consultation exercise and received the Report on this during the summer. It was reiterated that the Members were given a rather optimistic timeline for completion of the Review when it was originally brought to Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Commission in December 2018. The Chair said she welcomed the new approach and acknowledged that issues were likely to arise that are, as of yet, still unknown. She also stated that she was somewhat uncomfortable about the 'cost neutral' standard that was previously suggested for the Harbour. The Director said that, whilst the Review needed to ensure that the Harbour was financially sustainable, the principle focus was on the Harbour as an 'historic asset' for Bristol.

It was asked if there were any plans to try and ensure that the Harbour Festival would be cost neutral in future years. The Director of Economy of Place said that it had been discussed, and action was being undertaken to ensure it was sustainable going forward.

Members thanked the Officers for their time. It was agreed that further discussions would take place about if/when this should be brought to the Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Commission.

10 Performance Report (Quarter 1)

The Strategic Intelligence & Performance Advisor introduced the report to Members and explained that there was a new smaller suit of measures. In summary: 12 reported indicators this quarter; 7 were on or above target; 4 were below target; 10 were performing better than the previous year.

- BCP475: Increase the number of passenger journeys on buses (Passenger numbers down 5.3% when compared to the same period last year): the Members commented that the figures appeared to contradict what had previously been said i.e. that Bristol was 'bucking the national trend' with increased numbers of passengers. Members asked again about receiving the MetroBus passenger figures. Officers said that some of the information was commercial and therefore it was problematic to split the passenger data out for MetroBus only. A Member responded by saying that over £200 million of public money had been spent on MetroBus and the public therefore had a right to know if the money had been well spent. He said he doubted he was the only person asking about the figures and couldn't understand why the information wasn't being made available. **ACTION: Officers to continue to pursue this information.**



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- BCP474: Increase the number of single journeys on Park & Ride into Bristol: A Member commented on this indicator and said that in her view more people would use the Brislington Park and Ride Service if stopped a bit more frequently. She said she was concerned that stops were being decreased which would likely reduce its use further. Officers said they would look into this. **ACTION: Officers to see if it's possible to look into the frequency of Brislington Park and Ride service bus stops**

11 Local Plan Consultation March - May 2019 Summary

The item was introduced by the Director: Development of Place and the Strategic City Planning Manager who provided a summary of responses received to the local plan review consultation March – May 2019. It was highlighted that the web-link in the published paper would take Members to all of the comments that had been submitted during the consultation. This was a 260 page document and which was why it had not been included in the meeting papers.

A discussion was had about the report the Council had received from the Independent Planning Inspectors after the review of the Joint Spatial Plan (JSP) had taken place. It was said that the report detailed that there were some suggested inadequacies in the Plan. Officers said that the four Local Authorities (LAs) were giving due consideration to this report. Members had asked if this would have some bearing on the Local Plan's completion. Officers said yes it was likely this would have an impact on the Local Plan and until they have clarity the process would be delayed. It was said that the Council had received lots of responses to the consultation process and will progress this process but it would not be at the pace that had previously been envisaged. It was stated that there were certain strategic figures that need to be known before the Local Plan can be implemented.

The following points were discussed with further with Members:

It was said that the previous report the Commission had received from officers hadn't indicated there was likely to be any problems however it was now clear that the Inspectors were not happy with what had been submitted. Officers said they had understood when the Inquiry took place that they would have the opportunity to clearly explain the Plan to the Inspector. However, it became clear when the Inquiry took place that the Inspector had issues with the Plan. Officers had thought that the issues could be addressed but that wasn't the case.

A Member said that he had two main concerns about this: 1) the knock-on effects of a delay to completing the JSP. 2) delays in putting policies in to place. These he said were policies that are desperately needed, for example, the climate emergency, tall buildings and advertising. This was in his view a threat to the future of city.

Members wanted to know when the plan would now be up-dated. Officers said this had yet to be decided but how to progress this needed to be decided formally by the four LAs because this was a plan that all four had signed up to. Officers highlighted that the same challenges were still there i.e. transport and the numbers of homes yet to be built. They said the delay to the Local Plan was likely be about 12-18 months. However, in the meantime they could still continue to progress sustainability plans. Also the consultation process had raised a variety of issues that they were looking into.

Officers then summarised some of the key points of interest that had been raised during the consultation process. They emphasised that consultations such as this one are a 'moment in time', for example, over half of the responses were connected to Stoke Lodge Open Space because this was a big issue for some people at that particular time. Other key issues raised were:

- the potential relocation of Stapleton Cricket Club (29 against and 27 for)



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- changes in green belt land in South Bristol
 - Yew Tree Farm
 - Proposed development at College Road, Fishponds.
 - Climate Emergency, conservation and environmental issues also come out strongly it was said.

Officers also added that:

- Student accommodation often comes up as a concern
- Comments about outdoor advertising had been timely and valid
- They still needed to scope and clarify some policies but they will ensure Members are up to speed on everything before they take the work on to the next stage. The Members agreed they would like officers to keep them well-informed of further developments.

The Members then asked the following questions:

- The Joint Spatial Plan (JSP) and whether the Inspectors been critical of the release of green-belt land? Was there more information available on this point? The Member said he asked this because he had thought that the release of green belt land was also included in the Local Plan. Officers said yes the formal release of land from Green Belt designation is a matter for the Local Plan and delay to the formal process for examination and adoption of the review of the Local Plan will delay any change to Green Belt designation.
- With the JSP being delayed what does this now mean for the site allocation programme i.e. what happens now? Officers said this was a good question They said the Local Plan will need to respond to the strategic housing numbers to be set through the JSP and the extent and form of land allocation will need to reflect the strategic housing numbers sought. This will need to reflect the appropriate density on sites. It is likely that a number of the processes related to assessment of demand and capacity will need to be revisited in the light of the new National Planning policy Frame work. It was asked if this would put a pause on developments going ahead. Officers said it would not but it would mean that it would be harder to manage until it was resolved.
- Members said they were not clear if Inspectors were saying the density is high or too low in some places. Officers said they can help establish that if it would be helpful.

Members said they thought it was concerning how few people responded to Council consultations especially ones as important as this. Local groups it was said were very helpful but they don't always exist and it was suggested that Officers should perhaps consult more with scrutiny in future. Another Member agreed and said that regrettably many people only find out what's going on when out it's too late to influence things.

The Chair said that regrettably there were not any Cabinet Members in attendance at the meeting. Another Member commented that it was his understanding that Cabinet Members should be in attendance to answer the Commissions questions because it shouldn't be left to Officers to answer on their behalf. After a brief discussion it was agreed that the Chair would write to the relevant Cabinet Members on behalf of the Commission and ask them to attend scrutiny meetings where possible in future. **ACTION: Chair to write to the relevant Cabinet Members on behalf of the Commission.**

12 Update on the Mayors Climate Emergency Action Plan

A Public Forum Statement from Cllr Denyer was read aloud by Cllr Comley and a short discussion ensued about the scale and pace of the Mayors Climate Emergency Action Plan. Examples were given on how and where investment is being targeted, for example, the Council is investing in programmes to leverage in further external funding to deliver on the actions.



The Sustainable City and Climate Change Service Manager then went on to present the published slide deck on the Mayor's Climate Emergency Action Plan Update which focussed upon:

- Governance Arrangements – to ensure the Council has the right advice and expertise guiding it e.g. One City Environmental Sustainability Board and Bristol Advisory Climate Change Committee
- Development of the One City Climate Strategy
- Communication and Engagement
- Integration into Council Systems
- Climate Change Training

The following are some of the key points that were highlighted:

- It was said that consultants are currently working on potential heat networks for the future.
- The Council is working with businesses and also community groups by helping to point them in the right direction and develop a common strategy to work together on.
- The Lottery - Climate Action Fund is coming soon and officers are working with a consortium to prepare bids for this.
- The Plan is being integrated in to the Councils service planning process. Officers said that it was not just about environmental assessments on cabinet reports, but rather it needed to be embedded in the processes much earlier than that.
- There is an identified need to ensure officers are trained in this field so they can ask the right questions of others including consultants etc. This is about equipping people with the right information to make more and more changes. It was said that Bristol is one the first councils to be doing this at this level, which makes it quite difficult.

Questions and comments from Members:

- The Chair said she wasn't sure why the Advisory Board was only meeting quarterly and not more often. She therefore hoped there was a lot of work going on outside of the meetings.
- Several Members said they thought the pace of action appeared slow and it also frustrated many other people outside of the Council. It was suggested that the Council needed to encourage more behaviour change rather than waiting for it to happen. One Member suggested that the Council should 'exemplify, explain, and enable it by removing barriers where they currently exist'.
- It was asked if the Council is asking the Government to remove some of the barriers. Yes it was said this was part of the process that was currently happening as part of the Strategy. Officers did however highlight there was a slight conflict between 'doing things quickly and doing things well'.
- Is the Council working with Core Cities on this? Officers said yes they are working on 'common asks' and there would be a joint declaration the following week. Yes there were barriers and a need for more funding and skills to be developed; they all need to be in place for things to work at a pace and effectively it was said.
- Another Member said he believed that the Action Plan should be both 'top down' so business can buy in to it and be encouraged to change their practices and 'bottom up' to capture the enthusiasm of young people.
- The Chair said she was slightly concerned that now there is an Action Plan coming thorough there will also be some level if complacency when actually there is still so far to go. She said the Strategy 'would not get us there'. Officers said no but the Action Plan is what is being done to 'get us there' and this this will be completed in March 2020. The Chair asked 'whether it would have everything in it that was necessary to get us to be where we need to be'? Yes it was replied. She asked if behavioural change in there 'because without it we won't get there'. No was the reply.



ACTION: It was agreed that Officers would bring a further update on the Mayor’s Climate Emergency Action Plan in January 2020

13 Property Assets Strategy

The Chair of the Scrutiny Commission began the item by asking officers why the draft Property Strategy wasn’t being presented to Members at this meeting as she had been led to believe it would be and asked what the situation was. The Director: Economy of Place said in response that a recruitment process had been undertaken to fill the post of Head of Property. But she said the process had not been successful because an offer of employment had not been taken up by the individual it had been offered to. This meant the recruitment process would now need to be repeated. This had already and would cause further delays.

The Chair pointed out that it had been quite some time ago that the former Scrutiny Assets Task and Finish Group had highlighted the number of issues being caused by the temporary nature of senior property staff. She also pointed to the “huge amount of money’ this had cost and was still costing the Council.

The Chair enquired about the whereabouts of the Draft Property Strategy again. The Director said that it was still being refined and it was currently being socialised across the council by officers who work in other areas as well as property because of the wider implications across the Council. She said the work hadn’t stood still and had kept progressing through the correct channels. It had been taken to the Strategic Property Group and the Corporate Leadership Board (CLB) and that substantial work had already begun, including work on the Corporate Landlord Model.

The Director said she would send the draft version to the Strategy to the Commission Members as soon as she was in a position to do so. The Property Strategy would be presented to Cabinet in February 2020 and a new Director of Property would be in post in December. **ACTION: for the draft Property Strategy to be sent to the Commission as soon as is possible**

The Director: Commercialisation and Citizens and Shareholder Liaison said that it was clear that they were addressing some systematic errors that had been there for a long time. They had been addressing a range of issues over the past 12 months including preparations for the Corporate Landlord Model. The Chair stated that she was still expected the Draft Property Strategy to be brought to the meeting as had been agreed and she still didn’t understand why it hadn’t been, especially when she had just been informed that it was now being socialised throughout the council.

The discussion then moved on to the Baseline Assessment that had previously been undertaken using the Property Asset Management Capability Assessment Model (PAMCAM) approach. PAMCAM is a self-assessment tool that was first developed by the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) and is designed for use by public sector organisations to measure their corporate property asset management capability and highlight areas for improvement. The Director: Economy of Place took Members through some slides about the PAMCAM Assessment and the Councils current position on these (both the Assessment Document and the details of the Councils current position will be up-loaded with the minutes of the meeting). It was said that if the Assessment was carried out again today the Council would score higher than it had previously.



A Member commented that in his view the results of the assessment were quite shocking and he didn't feel very assured that the results would now be better than awful. Some Members suggested that this assessment should be carried out again and bench-marked against the previous one.

The Chair emphasised that the Assessment Report had also highlighted a lack of leadership in the Council on this subject. Officers said that was fair point because at that time the officers in question were interim officers.

The Chair said that she had contacted the relevant Cabinet Member for this item and asked that they attended the meeting to respond to Members questions that evening. She said it was unfortunate they hadn't attended because it meant that all of the questions had been directed towards Officers instead, which she said wasn't really fair.

Another Member commented about how low the assessment rating had been. She said that she had previously been part of the Scrutiny Assets Task and Finish Group and they had been assured they would receive information previously such as a data-base or inventory but it hadn't ever emerged. Officers said the property database information was now on Pinpoint and they would send the link to Members so they could find it. **ACTION: Property Officers to send the Pinpoint web link so it can be forwarded to Commission Members.**

It was highlighted that the majority of the language on the final 'Progress to Date' slide of the PAMCAM presentation was in future tense. The Chair said that she would have preferred to see it written in the present tense so Members could be confident that things were really happening.

Officers reassured Members that communication on this would improve. Members suggested providing a timeline in future so they could understand what is happening and when.

The Chair said that she would like this to be brought back to scrutiny in January before it goes to Cabinet. **ACTION: for the Asset Management Strategy is to be added to the January 2020 meeting agenda.**

Meeting ended at 8.50 pm

CHAIR _____

