

Bristol City Council Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board



5 March 2021 at 10.00 am

Members Present:-

Councillors: Geoff Gollop (Chair), Celia Phipps (Vice-Chair), Mark Brain, Stephen Clarke, Eleanor Combley, Claire Hiscott, Anthony Negus, Jo Sergeant and Lucy Whittle

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed the attendees. The meeting was conducted via video conference.

2. Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Councillors Massey and O'Rourke.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

4. Chair's Business

It was noted that two items on the agenda had the potential to involve discussion of confidential issues and an exempt session was agreed to be held where deemed necessary.

The meeting was the last scheduled Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meeting of the 2020-2021 year. Scrutiny Officers were thanked for their work and support. Non returning Councillors were also thanked for their contributions to Scrutiny.



5. Public Forum

Public Forum questions and statements were published prior to the meeting and can be viewed [here](#).

A representative of Bristol Animal Rebellion submitted two Public Forum questions regarding the Draft Advertising and Sponsorship Policy and received written responses. As supplementary questions he asked:

- Does Bristol City Council recognise the contribution of Animal Agriculture to the climate crisis?
- Would the Council agree that neglecting to implement changes at this stage would contradict the emergency declaration?

As a response to the supplementary questions could not be provided in the meeting it was agreed to submit these to relevant officers. It was confirmed that Bristol Animal Rebellion had also submitted additional questions to Cabinet regarding the Advertising and Sponsorship Policy and it was agreed to provide the Public Forum to the Mayor's Office in advance of this meeting.

David Redgewell presented a Public Forum statement. This was noted.

RESOLVED; That the Public Forum be noted; and

That the Public Forum questions raised by Bristol Animal Rebellion regarding the Draft Advertising and Sponsorship Policy be submitted to Cabinet for reference and Officers for a response.

6. Goram Homes Land Disposal

The Executive Director of Growth and Regeneration presented the Goram Homes Land Disposal item.

Members asked what the approach would be to existing tenants, particularly the Lifeskills and Create Centre. It was confirmed that outreach and engagement with tenants was fundamental to the strategy and would begin following consideration by Cabinet.

Members were not clear on the interaction between the new consultation around the Western Harbour and the land disposal item. The Executive Director of Growth and Regeneration clarified that the proposal was to earmark Goram Homes for delivery of subsequent plans, but this did not constitute a legal commitment. It was confirmed there were no 'closed door' conversations regarding the Western Harbour beyond the existing scrutiny meetings.

The ability to earmark sites for development was welcomed.



7. Bristol Holding Group Business Plans

The discussion of the Goram Homes Business Plans and strategies followed from the previous item.

Members asked if there was confidence that Goram Homes and Bristol City Council had the expertise to compete with the private sector. The Managing Director of Goram Homes confirmed this to be the case, and part of the objective in the creation of the company.

A Member stated their understanding that land would be essentially loaned to the housing company who would then involve the chosen developer, with the value paid back to Bristol City Council. The Member was concerned that this was excessively front-end loaded to achieve the objectives and requested assurance on the returns for this. The Head of Housing Delivery suggested that a separate discussion of the objectives and how these would be achieved could be arranged and would be welcomed. The use of the Joint Venture model in which Goram Homes would be an equal partner with the private sector was intended to ensure returns.

The ability of the model to develop sites more quickly was supported, but a concern was raised over the achievability of the suggested timing and changes to the Business Plan. It was noted that some details around the delivery of the proposals could fall under exempt information. Caveats were provided on page 17 of the business plan, but it was acknowledged that Goram Homes was currently at the start of the pipeline process.

It was agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board would submit a statement to Cabinet to include that Members felt unable to fully scrutinise the Land Disposal and revised Business Plan items due to insufficient time, and that while new housing would be welcomed and the model of bringing older sites into development was supported there remained concerns over the deliverability of the pipelines and business plans.

RESOLVED; That Members consider the arrangement of a briefing session on the Joint Venture model and the objectives of Goram Homes; and

That OSMB submit a statement to Cabinet reflecting the views held on the Goram Homes Business Plan and Land Disposal.

8. Bristol Beacon

The Cabinet report regarding the Bristol Beacon was published after having previously been deferred. This was available to Members, and the Executive Director for Growth and Regeneration was present to answer questions.

It was noted that Bristol City Council was negotiating the revisions to the agreement with the main contract Willmott Dixon, which will take the form of a Deed of Variation. This would involve the transfer



of risk for much of the remaining programme. However that as the ultimate owner of the building and client BCC would retain some risk and liability for overruns.

Members queried why an initial structural survey did not inform the preparation of tenders. When work began in 2018 the analysis was based only on what was possible to assess within a live venue and further information was not available until demolition began. The situation exceeded the envisaged worst case scenario.

Members emphasised the need to understand how and when decisions were made. As Officers were focused on progressing the project this information was not ready to hand. The Executive Director for Growth and Regeneration agreed to provide the dates that the pre-contract and main contract ended.

Members noted that the cost increase was significant, although the exact figures had been misreported by the press in places. It was confirmed that the total outturn was £106 million.

The Executive Director for Growth and Regeneration stated that significant progress had been made in establishing known costs and risk since December 2020, moving from 60% to 90% 'green' (ie. agreement reached on a specific deliverable). 92% of the risk had been passed to the contractor, with the remaining 8% in the process of being established. It was felt that risk was sufficiently covered to enter into a contract after Cabinet agreement, albeit as client BCC would remain liable for any further external risks, hence the necessity for thorough consideration and assessment.

Members reiterated surprise at the cost overrun and agreed to recommend an inquiry into how the current position was reached in order to learn lessons, acknowledging that this had not been an area of focus for Officers in progressing the project. It was agreed that a statement would be submitted to Cabinet to contain the following:

- Concern regarding the 100% increase in spend
- Concern regarding how the project evolved
- Recognition of the importance of the Bristol Beacon
- Recommendation for an Inquiry into the issue.

Members expressed support for the Executive Director for Growth and Regeneration for the hard work he had done in improving and clarifying the project.

RESOLVED; That the dates that the Bristol Beacon pre-contract and main contract ended would be provided to OSMB Members; and

That OSMB submit a statement to Cabinet reflecting the views expressed on the Bristol Beacon and recommendation to establish an Inquiry.



9. Review of Cabinet 9 March 2021 Agenda

The Cabinet Agenda for the meeting scheduled 9th March 2021 was reviewed.

The Flood Strategy was noted as a potential item for Scrutiny within the work programme following the 2020-2021 year and as the project developed. An Inquiry Day with the involvement of experts at the appropriate time was suggested.

Temple Quarter was also noted as a Work Programme item for over a period of years. This item covered a number of areas, and Officers supported Scrutiny to use the working group to inform engagement.

The Chair of the Resources Scrutiny Commission agreed to submit a statement to Cabinet regarding the work of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group with the Social Value Review item.

RESOLVED; That the Chair of the Resources Scrutiny Commission submit a statement to Cabinet regarding the work of the Social Value Review Task and Finish Group.

10 Mayor's Forward Plan

This item was noted

11 Work Programme

It was noted that the civic plan had ended and no further Scrutiny meetings were planned.

12 Draft Advertising and Sponsorship Policy

Members welcomed and endorsed the Policy but noted the queries raised by the Public Forum questions regarding the impact of deferring contract agreements to provide more time to make amendments. Members expressed a desire to see the list of inappropriate advertisers expanded. It was agreed to submit a statement to Cabinet to reflect this.

RESOLVED; That a statement be submitted to Cabinet expressing support for the Advertising and Sponsorship Policy with an ambition to see it strengthened in the future.

13 Corporate Business Plan and Performance Framework



A Scrutiny workshop was held in February 2021 to consider the Business Plan. The engagement with Scrutiny was welcomed and supported, and Officers were thanked for their work.

14 Q3 Corporate Risk Report

This item was noted.

15 Q3 Performance Report

This item was noted.

16 Covid-19 Update - Information item

This item was noted.

17 City Leap

It was understood that the City Leap item prepared for Members contained both information appropriate for the public domain as well as exempt information. It was agreed that the item would begin as part of the public meeting and be brought in to exempt session where necessary. Members requested a discussion around governance and accountability as a key concern.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport, Energy & New Green Deal was welcomed.

The City Leap project had been in the process of procurement for a strategic partner since August 2020. Aspects of the tender were in the process of being discussed.

Officers stated that the role of Scrutiny within City Leap would be in line with other Cabinet key decisions, i.e. there would be an opportunity to scrutinise Cabinet papers around City Leap and related projects.

A Member noted that City Leap was anticipated to be a major intervention around how the council worked, and queried whether this would require a bespoke type of Scrutiny. Members queried how direction of travel decisions would be set between Bristol City Council and the strategic partner, and how management information would be received and assessed. It was emphasised that Scrutiny would hope to be involved in a constructive role.

The Executive Director for Growth and Regeneration stated that Officers would welcome Scrutiny input, particularly around procurement. The procurement process involved the seeking of feedback from potential partners as industry experts, supporting the development of the Bristol City Council



understanding of an appropriate model for governance and balance between the need for accountability and agile decision making. Those discussions continued to be navigated. A model for accountability (including scrutiny) would follow those discussions.

The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport, Energy & New Green Deal supported ongoing Scrutiny involvement particularly due to the long term nature of the project. Other regulatory functions was also expected to have a role (i.e. Planning, property, etc).

The Chair ended the public section of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board at 12.10pm.

1£ 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.

1£ City Leap - Exempt item

This item was exempt from publication.

