

**Bristol City Council  
Minutes of the Strategy and Resources  
Policy Committee**



**14 October 2024 at 2.00 pm**

**Members present:-**

Councillors: Tony Dyer (Chair), Caroline Gooch (Vice-Chair), John Goulandris, Ellie King, Abdul Malik, Tim Rippington, Martin Fodor (substitute for Heather Mack), Kye Dudd (substitute for Tom Renhard) and Ellie Freeman (substitute for Ani Stafford-Townsend)

**45 Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information**

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting and explained the emergency evacuation procedure.

**46 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

It was noted that apologies had been received as follows:

- Cllr Mack (Cllr Fodor was in attendance as a substitute)
- Cllr Renhard (Cllr Dudd was in attendance as a substitute)
- Cllr Stafford-Townsend (Cllr Freeman was in attendance as a substitute).

**47 Declarations of Interest**

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest.



## 48 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

On the motion of the Chair, seconded by Cllr Gooch, the Committee **RESOLVED:**

**- To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee held on 16 September 2024 as a correct record, to be signed by the Chair.**

## 49 Chair's Announcements

The Chair advised that an Extraordinary meeting of the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee would be taking place at 4.00 pm that day to further consider the outstanding recommendation from the report on the future of the Bottle Yard Studios, further to the consideration of this matter on 16 September.

## 50 Public Forum

It was noted that 3 public forum questions had been submitted to this meeting as follows:

Q1. Dan Ackroyd: subject - Corporate Risk Register

Q2. Dan Ackroyd: subject - Legal basis for refusal to answer

Q3. Dan Ackroyd: subject - FOI enforcement notice

In response to a supplementary question on Q1, the Chair confirmed that the questioner's views in relation to the corporate risk register had been forwarded to relevant officers.

In response to a supplementary question on Q2, the Chair confirmed that the matter referred to through this question was an area of legal dispute and the position remained that it was not appropriate for the Council to comment further. The Chair suggested that if the questioner wished to raise any further points in relation to this matter, then the questioner should write to him directly.

## 51 Funding for 'Top 4' Transformation programmes

The Committee considered a report (agenda item 7) seeking approval of the following investment ask against the transformation/change funding earmarked for the transformation programmes as approved in the budget report 2024-25: an increase of one-off expenditure up to £15.7m for the Top 4 transformation programmes (Adult Social Care, Children and Education - Our Families, Tackling Homelessness and Property).



It was noted that this was a key decision report, as the proposed decision involved spend of more than £500k and had a significant impact on 2 or more wards.

Summary of main points raised/noted in discussion of this item:

1. In response to a question, it was clarified that the total proposed expenditure up to £15.7m was constituted from £12.9m confirmed cost baseline as at July 2024, plus £2.8m earmarked, Corporate Leadership Board-managed contingency to take into consideration changes to the programmes.
2. In relation to Figure 2 (Re-baselining budget and savings), it was noted that the programmes would be regularly re-baselined as part of the governance arrangements in place, to take into consideration any changes to current projects within the programmes or any new asks.
3. In relation to recommendation 3.1.2 as set out in the report, it was confirmed that, at this point, the decision proposed was to seek approval to procure and award a Change Delivery Partner, if required in the future, to support the delivery of strategic transformation, in line with the procurement routes and maximum budget envelopes outlined in the report. No final decision on progressing with a Change Delivery Partner would be taken pending the new Council Chief Executive coming into post.
4. The issue was raised, and the importance emphasised of the Council continuing to take all opportunities to progress suitable 'invest to save' initiatives, for example in relation to establishing more local children's homes, noting that such schemes would also align with the objective of securing improved outcomes for children and young people.
5. In response to a question, it was noted that a quarterly progress update report on the 'Top 4' transformation programmes had now been scheduled; the next update was due to be submitted to the Committee on 16 December. It was agreed that, for context, a short progress summary against each programme should also be included as part of future reports seeking approval of financial drawdown against the individual programmes.

The Chair then moved the report recommendations, noting that separate votes would be taken on recommendations 3.1.1, 3.1.2 and 3.2.1. This was seconded by Cllr Gooch.

The Committee then **RESOLVED**:

**1. To provide the following collective approval across the four transformation programmes: Adult Social Care, Children and Education (Our Families), Tackling Homelessness and Property Programme to:**

**1.1 Approve spend of up to £12.9m for 24/25 (for the four corporate transformation programmes) plus a further £2.8m contingency from the resources held for the purpose of transformation, in addition to the £3.9m aligned to strategic and digital transformation already approved (unanimous vote).**



**1.2 Procure and award a Change Delivery Partner if required in the future to support the delivery of strategic transformation, in line with the procurement routes and maximum budget envelopes outlined in this report (unanimous vote).**

**2. To authorise the Chief Executive Officer and Director of Finance in consultation with Executive Directors and Policy Committee Chairs to spend the funding as outlined in this report and the appendices, and to take all steps required to procure and award a Change Delivery Partner if required, including any subsequent extensions/variations, in-line with the procurement routes and maximum budget envelope of Strategic Transformation funding of £1.793m outlined in Figure 1 of this report (unanimous vote).**

**3. To note the quarterly briefing report for the four major transformation programmes as outlined in the Appendix 1 that went to Strategy and Resources Committee on 16 September 2024.**

## **52 Quarterly Performance Report - Quarter 1 2024/25**

The Committee considered a report (agenda item 8) providing an update on performance against the Council's Business Plan for Quarter 1, 2024/25.

It was noted that there were no decisions to be taken on this report which was for information.

Summary of main points raised/noted in discussion of this item:

1. It was noted that in addition to highlighting Quarter 1 performance against the Council's Business Plan, the report also focused on metrics that only reported to this Committee, which related mainly to the Effective Development Organisation Business Plan theme.
2. A concern was raised about performance in relation to target BPPM511: Reduce the number of breaches during the procurement process. In response, it was clarified that whilst 15 breaches had been identified, this figure reflected a reduction of over 90% in the non-compliance rate over the last two years. This represented a significant improvement against an ambitious target but existing management/improvement actions would nevertheless continue.
3. It was noted that target BPPM509 (Percentage of agreed savings delivered in year) was a new indicator for 2024/25, reflecting the key focus on closing the savings delivery gap which was required as part of the in-year financial improvement work. The forecast savings delivery at the end of Quarter 1 was £28,709; with the inclusion of optimism bias, this forecast increased to £39,309, representing 84% of the in-year savings target.



4. In response to a question, the Chair indicated that a cross-party process would be put in place for refreshing the Council's Corporate Strategy, noting that as part of this process, appropriate account would need to be taken of the new government's priorities. It would also be important to engage with members across all policy committees in developing the detail of metrics.

The Committee **RESOLVED**:

- 1. To note performance against the Business Plan overall, including the theme summary reports and issues raised, and measures to address performance issues to be implemented by relevant services.**
- 2. To note performance against the Effective Development Organisation theme in particular, including issues raised and measures to address performance issues to be implemented by relevant services.**

### **53 Corporate Risk Report - Quarter 2, 2024/25**

The Committee considered a report (agenda item 9) providing an update on current significant strategic risks to achieving the Council's objectives as set in the Corporate Strategy 2022-2027 and summarising progress in managing the risks and actions being taken as at Quarter 2, 2024-25.

It was noted that there were no decisions to be taken on this report which was for information.

Summary of main points raised/noted in discussion of this item:

1. It was noted that CRR 60 (Failure of Housing Revenue Account stock to meet landlord statutory obligations, the decent homes standard and consumer standards leading to death/serious injury and/or regulatory enforcement action) was assessed as a critical risk due to the number of statutory obligations required by the Regulator of Social Housing.
2. It was suggested that it may be useful to consider updating/redefining CRR 43 (Lack of progress for Mass Transit may have on impact on the city) so that it referred more generally to the risk for the city's growth aspirations if improved transport infrastructure and services are not provided.
3. The improved threat risk for CRR 9 (Possible failure of safeguarding vulnerable children) was welcomed.
4. In response to a question on CRR 55 (Children placed in unregistered provision may be at risk), it was noted that Bristol had 8 children placed in these homes at the end of Quarter 2. This was recognised as a national issue and was known to be a risk within other local authorities. A recent Internal Audit had identified improvements to be undertaken in order to mitigate the risks for these children. These recommendations were being implemented and mitigations were in place, hence the risk had therefore



reduced during this quarter. It was noted that the Children and Young People Policy Committee was also receiving a specific report at each of its meetings on the delivery and performance of children's services (and associated risks) in line with statutory expectations.

The Committee **RESOLVED**:

**To note the report.**

#### **54 Leaseholder Residential Property Insurance for 2025-27**

The Committee considered a report (agenda item 10) seeking approval for the procurement of a minimum 1 year insurance arrangement commencing from 1 April 2025 for the Council's Leasehold and Right to Buy Scheme.

It was noted that this was a key decision report, as the proposed decision involved spend of more than £500k.

The following correction to the report was also noted:

Recommendation 1: Delete the words '*Cabinet member - Finance, Governance, Property and Culture*' and replace with '*Chair of the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee*'.

In discussion, it was noted that due to the withdrawal of the principal supplier from the residential leaseholder market in 2023, market options had been limited; given this, interim arrangements had been pursued to enable cover to be sourced on an annual basis with a full tender to occur in 2026, by which time it was anticipated that the market in this regard would be further developed. It was also noted that the insurance market for this category of insurance was currently very challenging with only a small number of suppliers providing this insurance cover.

The Chair moved the recommendations as set out in the report. This was seconded by Cllr Gooch.

The Committee **RESOLVED** (unanimous vote):

**1. To authorise the Director: Finance in consultation with the Chair of the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee to take all steps required to procure and award a 1+ 1 year contract insurance arrangement for leaseholders and the Right to Buy Scheme as outlined in the report.**

**2. To authorise the Director: Finance to invoke any subsequent extensions/variations specifically defined in the contract(s) being awarded as outlined in this report.**



## 55 Finance Outturn Report - Period 5/Quarter 2 2024/25

The Committee considered a report (agenda item 11) presenting information and analysis on the Council's financial performance against the 2024/25 approved budget and its forecast use of resources for the current financial year. The report also provided an update on the in-year delivery of planned savings.

The Chair moved the report recommendations, noting that there were 14 recommendations for noting by the Committee and 1 recommendation for approval.

This was seconded by Cllr Gooch.

In relation to the recommendation for approval, Cllr Rippington moved the following amendment:

That the recommendation for approval be amended to read as follows:

*'To approve:*

*Revisions to the revised Capital Budget to incorporate the reprofiling of £57.3 million budget into future years following both the total £70.7 million forecast underspend at Q2/P5, with the exception of Baltic Wharf and Hengrove Future Phases (Hengrove 1B) which are subject to review.'*

This was seconded by Cllr King.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was CARRIED (unanimous vote).

The Committee then **RESOLVED**:

To note:

- 1. The council's General Fund forecast outturn revenue overspend of £19.7 million at P5/Q2 2024/25 against the council approved budget of £533.7 million.**
- 2. In-year measures to reduce this financial pressure.**
- 3. The Quarter 2 technical virements (Appendix A1a, Section 3, Tables 3a to 3d).**
- 4. The performance on delivery of savings (Appendix A1a, Section 4, Tables 4a and 4b).**
- 5. The additional weighted net risk of £7.8 million per the risks and opportunities register (Appendix A1a, Section 5, Tables 5a and 5b).**
- 6. The council's outturn position of £14.8 million overspend within the Housing Revenue Account to be transferred to the HRA general reserve at the year end (Appendix A1a, Section 6.4).**
- 7. The council's outturn position of a £31.7 million overspend (net £15.0m) in the Dedicated Schools Grant and that this brings the carry forward deficit to £90.3 million. Following the application of the DfE's 24/25 Safety Valve combined with contribution from the General Fund a total £52.2 million is forecast to be carried forward at the year end in the DSG deficit reserve (Appendix A1a, Section 6.5).**
- 8. The breakeven position on Public Health services (Appendix A1a, Section 6.6).**
- 9. The breakeven position on the Bristol Harbour Fund. (Appendix A1a, Section 6.7).**
- 10. The current planned flexible use of £12.0 million capital receipts (Appendix A1b, Section 3).**



11. The current levels of outstanding debt (Appendix A1a, Section 7.9).
12. Current balance sheet risks (Appendix A1b, Section 8).
13. The council's forecast underspend of £70.7 million against the Capital Programme revised budget 2024/25, comprised of £42.7 million underspend on the General Fund and £28.0 million underspend on the HRA. (Appendix A1b, Section 1) and notes that there will be further Capital Programme deep dive reviews in September (Appendix A1b, Section 1.9).
14. The Executive Director for Growth and Regeneration's decision to return unspent capital grant allocation of £0.895m to Homes England and that this has no consequent budget impact (either capital or revenue).

To approve (unanimous vote):

- **Revisions to the revised Capital Budget to incorporate the reprofiling of £57.3 million budget into future years following both the total £70.7 million forecast underspend at Q2/P5, with the exception of Baltic Wharf and Hengrove Future Phases (Hengrove 1B) which are subject to review.**

## 56 Medium Term Financial Strategy and Capital Strategy

The Committee considered a report presenting the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Capital Strategy.

Summary of main points raised/noted in discussion of this item:

1. It was noted that there were no decisions to be taken on this report which was for information at this point; the MTFS and Capital Strategy were fundamental parts of the Council's financial planning process and together set out the Council's strategic approach to the management of its finances and provided a framework for delivery of the Council's priorities. It was further noted that the MTFS and Capital Strategy were 'rolling' documents (covering the periods 2025/26 to 2029/30 and 2025/26 to 2034/35 respectively) and, in line with good practice, both would be regularly refreshed so that their assumptions remained relevant, up-to-date and accurate.
2. The Chair commented that these strategy documents set out the clear and significant financial challenges faced by the Council. It was also important to recognise that updates to the strategies would be informed by the coming local government financial settlement, and, beyond that, by the government's comprehensive spending review due to conclude in spring 2025.
3. Further to discussion earlier at the meeting, the importance of actively pursuing 'invest to save' initiatives was again emphasised.
4. It was noted that the Finance Sub-Committee had been actively engaged through a series of detailed briefings over the summer/early autumn in the development of the refreshed MTFS and Capital





Strategy. Further discussions would be taking place to clarify the detail of the process by which the Finance Sub-Committee would propose 2025/26 budget recommendations to this Committee.

The Committee **RESOLVED**:

**To note:**

- 1. The outlook and projections within the 5-year Medium Term Financial Strategy and Capital Strategy (Appendices A1 and A2).**
- 2. The updated Reserve Policy (Appendix A3).**
- 3. The Medium Term Financial Strategy Principles (Appendix A4).**

The Committee considered a report presenting the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Capital Strategy.

Meeting ended at 3.36 pm

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

