

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee



14 October 2024 at 4.00 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).

57 Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

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

58 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).

59 Declarations of Interest

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest.



60 Public Forum

Public questions:

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

Qs 1-3: Dan Ackroyd - subject: Agenda item 5 - The Future of the Bottle Yard studios.

It was noted that responses to these questions had been published in advance of the meeting.

Public statements:

It was noted that 2 public statements had been received for this meeting, as follows:

1. Dan Ackroyd: - subject: Agenda item 5 - The Future of the Bottle Yard studios
2. Ian Harris - subject: Agenda item 5 - The Future of the Bottle Yard studios

Dan Ackroyd and Ian Harris presented their respective statements.

61 Future of the Bottle Yard Studios

The Committee gave further consideration to the report on this matter as submitted originally to the Committee on 16 September 2024.

The Chair reminded members of the following context for the further discussion of this item:

1. On 16 September, the Committee had approved recommendation 1 as set out in the report: i.e. Approval had been given to the proposal to identify a purchaser of the long leasehold interest of the Bottle Yard Studios.
2. No decision was taken on 16 September on recommendation 2 as set out in the report, which asked the Committee to: 'Authorise the Executive Director for Growth and Regeneration, in consultation with the Leader, Director of Finance and the Director of Legal Services, to settle the terms of disposal and negotiate (as necessary) the final terms of contract, subject to any condition or requirements set by the Committee.'
3. At this meeting, the Committee was being asked to consider and take a decision on recommendation 2 as set out in the 16 September report.



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

1. It was noted that the report included certain exempt appendices (relating to matters of commercial sensitivity) and that, in the event that any member wished to raise a question or matter specifically in relation to the exempt information, it would be necessary for the committee to move into exempt session.

2. In response to a question, it was confirmed that this project had first been put forward as a proposition in November 2022, and had then started in early 2023. Relevant Cabinet members had been briefed confidentially as the project then developed through 2023 and into 2024, and a confidential briefing had been provided for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board in early 2024. These briefings had been provided on a confidential basis in light of commercially sensitive issues around the proposal.

3. Officers responded to questions from members about the consultation that had taken place on the proposals. It was noted that consultation had taken place with all relevant Council staff and their trade union representatives. Officers had now met with Equity but had not specifically briefed freelance workers (who were not employed directly by the Council).

4. In response to questions, it was confirmed that the proposal approved by the Committee on 16 September was to identify a purchaser of the long leasehold interest of the Bottle Yard Studios; the Council would still be the freeholder. It was not currently proposed that break clauses would be included as part of the lease.

5. It was noted that Phase 1 market testing had been undertaken in February and March 2024. It was noted that due to commercial sensitivity considerations, any detailed questions around this would need to be taken in exempt session.

6. Cllr King stated that Cabinet members had, under the previous administration, explored options with officers but had made no decisions. The view of Labour group members of the Committee was that the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee should considering pausing this decision process on the basis that collaborative consideration could then also be given to other options such as a joint venture. In discussion, it was noted that, on 16 September, the Committee had discussed the report and approved the proposal to identify a purchaser of the long leasehold interest of The Bottle Yard Studios; paragraph 8 of the 16 September report had set out the full list of options that had been considered as part of the project. The Chair emphasised that the issue for determination at this meeting was whether to approve the second recommendation as set out in the 16 September report.

7. In response to a question, it was confirmed that there was no current proposal to ring-fence the proceeds from a sale of the long leasehold interest for cultural purposes. The use of the proceeds would be an issue to be determined as part of the wider consideration of the Council's financial position.



It was noted that some members had indicated that they wished to ask questions which related to the commercially sensitive information included within the exempt appendices to the report.

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

That under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the business to be discussed is likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of schedule 12A of the Act.

Whilst the Committee was in exempt session, members asked questions and sought clarification on a number of points referred to in the exempt appendices.

Once the discussion in exempt session had concluded, the Committee went back into public session and the meeting was re-opened for members of the public to observe proceedings.

The Chair then moved recommendation 2 as set out in the 16 September report, i.e.

That the Committee:

'Authorise the Executive Director for Growth and Regeneration, in consultation with the Leader, Director of Finance and the Director of Legal Services, to settle the terms of disposal and negotiate (as necessary) the final terms of contract, subject to any condition or requirements set by the Committee.'

This was seconded by Cllr Gooch.

Cllr Rippington then moved:

That recommendation 2 of the 16 September report be amended to read as follows:

'To authorise the Executive Director for Growth and Regeneration, in consultation with the Leader, Director of Finance and the Director of Legal Services, to negotiate the terms of disposal and the final terms of contract and to consult with all relevant trade unions including those representing freelance workers. Any final decision on disposal including the final terms of the contract to then be considered by the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee.'

This was seconded by Cllr Goulandris.

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

The Committee then **RESOLVED** (6 members voting in favour and 3 against):

To authorise the Executive Director for Growth and Regeneration, in consultation with the Leader, Director of Finance and the Director of Legal Services, to negotiate the terms of disposal and the final terms of contract and to consult with all relevant trade unions including those representing freelance workers. Any final decision on disposal including the final terms of the contract to then be considered by the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee.



Meeting ended at 5.52 pm

CHAIR _____

