

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board Referral to Cabinet 3rd October 17 and Response from the Mayor

Referral;

OSM met on 20 September and Members wished a number of areas to be referred to the Mayor and Cabinet and to be raised as a referral from scrutiny at the next cabinet meeting. Details as follows;

1 Concern about the number of vacancies and interim appointments at senior management level.

2 The continued failure to produce a meaningful forward plan, highlighted by the addition of an item at 36 hours notice to the last cabinet meeting.

3 Concern was expressed about the delay in appointing the head of paid service and replacement chief executive. More detail behind these concerns is given below, but in addition OSM requested that the Mayor or a member of Cabinet, and a strategic director/chief executive should attend our meetings.

1 Senior Vacancies and Interims

There are now a significant number of vacancies that have not been filled as well as many others where the role is being filled by an interim appointment. Interim appointments do not go through the full selection process and salary rates are not controlled in the way they are for permanent appointments.

Members asked for a report to our next meeting scheduling management vacancies by grade and department, and interims by grade and department, together with an outline of the strategy for filling posts with permanent appointments in the current competitive market place. Ideally we would ask Marvin or Craig to discuss this report at Mayor's question time at our next meeting. The former Chief exec had indicated that this was a matter of serious concern that needed attention and members feel that delay in facing up to these issues is only making the situation worse

2 Forward Plan

Cabinet will be fed up with me commenting on lack of a forward plan of any detail. However, the issue of late notice reports for cabinet reached a new low this week, with notification of a late report being given on Monday for decision on Tuesday, not providing adequate time to read the report let alone give comment on it. (This is the street lighting report where the timeline for the decision has been known for some 18 months).

OSM is concerned at the Council's inability to plan its decision making and requests target dates be set for a key decision contract renewal register and a fit for purpose forward plan.

OSM believes this is critical good practice to be applied and is necessary for Cabinet and Extended Leadership Team to function let alone for scrutiny.

This has been raised repeatedly on an informal basis, but failure to improve the situation means we feel we have to raise this formally as the current process is unacceptable.

3 Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service

OSM members believed these roles were vital in the organisation in all circumstances, but become critical at times of significant change and ongoing uncertainty. Members were concerned that the delaying of the announcement until the last possible time only added to the uncertainty for staff.

Members felt it was essential that a permanent appointment be made to both these posts to ensure full accountability

OSM debated these issues at some length, and debated whether we should formally submit these comments to cabinet. The overwhelming view was that all these issues are an indication of an organisation that is in trouble, and that OSM has a responsibility to raise these matters given their significance and request urgent action.

Reply from the Mayor

I don't accept there was any undue delay in appointing a head of paid service. In fact, the fuss that was made in the papers and our local broadcaster sat comfortably in the tradition of hyperbolic descriptions of mythical failure more than it spoke to the realities.

The challenge was real, and if we could have scripted the Council's journey, we wouldn't start from here. But we would have needed to avoid inheriting the organisation described by Bundred.

Bundred set out challenges, and there were even more in the last decades. But what you're addressing, this focus on a failed structure, is one of the reason for failure. You're in the weeds of the organisation, we are focused on delivery and a structure that delivers.

Within 48 hours of the last day of employment of the former Chief Exec my team brought forward a draft senior management restructure for consultation within the organisation.

The draft restructure will make the organisation:

- more responsive to political leadership,
- better able to deliver our vision for the city and
- saves three quarters of a million pounds year on year, just from the senior two grades.

On the issues of vacancies and interims, it is surely self-evident that in an organisation that has historically failed to deliver, facing cuts imposed by the national government's philosophy of austerity and was described as having suffered from a collective failure of leadership (both officers and political), and needing to save money, there would be departures. Interim appointments have protected the council from long and expensive contracts, severance payments and brought in urgently needed expertise while we have been working on the future shape of the council.

I would add given the Bundred report, scrutiny should be more self-aware of the errors of the past. We're dealing with the errors of the past.

On the concerns around the Cabinet forward plan, these are mis-directed. To list a raft of officer ambitions that may never come to fruition would be a mistake simply to populate a forward plan. My policy has been that no item is added to the mayor's forward plan until I am completely sure the policy has been appraised, costed, risk assessed and examined by my cabinet. This policy will continue.

However the addition of non-urgent late items is unacceptable, and I sympathise with the view of OSM. I have told council officers we can't work like this.

I would add that some councillors have appeared in the press complaining that they are not being told everything that we are doing to sort out the council, appraise and secure investment for our major infrastructure projects. This while sharing confidential information that harms the council. In the last 2 weeks senior Representatives, of two opposition parties have openly shared confidential information from HR committee to the press. This doesn't make an atmosphere where we can share information that could harm the council if councillors have proven themselves untrustworthy or irresponsible. We have shown our desire to be open, from the Bundred review to the Green capital receipts to the cross party cabinet and the city plan. Be we

also have a duty to be wise in who we chose to trust.

Appendices - Appendix A – Extract draft minute of OSMB 03 October 2017

Extract Draft Minute – from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meeting on 20th September 17;

Chair's Business

The Chair, Councillor Gollop, raised a number of concerns and sought OSMB's agreement to refer them to Cabinet for reply. Details as follows;

- 1. Head of Paid Service.** Concerned that the new Head of Paid Service had not been announced and that at a time of significant change within the organisation the arrangements for permanent appointment to the vacant role of Chief Executive should be made as soon as possible.
- 2. Vacancies at senior level.** Noted that there were a significant number of vacancies at senior level that had not been filled within Bristol City Council. There were also many others where the role was being covered by an interim appointment, which did not go through the full selection process and salary rates were not controlled in the way they were for permanent appointments. Suggested that OSMB request a report for the next meeting scheduling management vacancies by grade and department, and interims by grade and department, together with an outline of the strategy for filling posts with permanent appointments in the current competitive market place. Ideally this report would be discussed with the Mayor at OSM Question Time on 1st November.
- 3. Population of the Forward Plan.** Continued serious issues with the lack of detail on the Forward Plan, including the increasing issue of late notification of reports, for example, a decision relating to street lighting (which had been known about for around 18 months) was added to the Cabinet agenda on Monday of this week for decision on Tuesday. Suggest submitting a comment to the Cabinet stating OSMB's concern at the Council's inability to plan its decision making and to request that target dates be set for a key decision contract renewal register and a fit for purpose Forward Plan.

OSMB noted the points raised and unanimously agreed to support Councillor Gollop's suggestion to refer the issues to Cabinet for action/reply.

RESOLVED; that OSMB refer the issues outlined above to Cabinet on 3rd October 17 for action/reply as necessary.