

Minutes – Place Scrutiny Commission – 24th July 2017

1. Welcome and safety information

The Chair of the Commission welcomed all attendees to the meeting, and made a safety announcement in relation to the fire/emergency evacuation procedure.

2. Apologies for absence and substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from

- Councillor Weston – Councillor Morris was in attendance as a substitute
- Cllr Negus – who had been invited to join in the discussion on Agenda Item 9

3. Declarations of interest

None.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Action Sheet

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.

Action Sheet:

A verbal up-date was provided on the siting of the Megabus stop (Action 1): “Consultation is on-going, with initial feedback being positive. To provide certainty for passengers and operators during the busy summer season, the existing arrangement will continue and a further update will be provided in the autumn”.

All other updates on the ongoing action sheet were noted.

5. Chairs Business

The Chair noted that it had been an interesting and busy few months since the commission last met, with two elections and the council implementing a number of different strands of organisational change. The Chair also highlighted the loss of senior staff within the Place Directorate and reminded Members that this issue had previously been highlighted to the Commission in the Directorate Risk Register (in Dec 2016) as a high level risk that could impact on the Councils ability to deliver on projects and services.

The Chair wished to thank all those who had previously served on the Commission during 2016 – 2017.

6. Public Forum

The Commission received the following statements and petition (copies of which have been placed in the minutebook):

Public Statements:

The Scrutiny Commission received and noted the following statements:

PS 01 South West Transport Network with support from Living Easton Heritage and Environment Group for the WECA: Historical Buildings and Public Transport

PS 02 Cllr Olly Mead: Cribbs Patchway New Neighbourhood (CPNN)

PS 03 Cllr Olly Mead: Council Assets Task and Finish Group

PS 04 Martin Rands: Avon Crescent on Spike Island, is within the 'redline' of the AVTM Metrobus Project

Within the time available, all the statements were presented by individuals present at the meeting. The following comments in relation to the submissions were made and actions agreed:

- SWTN – further to the issues raised in the statement Mr Redgewell also highlighted concerns about the following:
 - Consultation that South Gloucester Council are conducting about a N.O. 25 bus service route which he suggested no one knows about.
 - A Hotwells Better Bus Area consultation from 18th July until 28th July – the timeframes for responses were considered to be very short
 - a petition which asks First Bus for the reinstatement of the N.O. 18 bus service during the evenings and Sundays and reinstatement of the N.O. 16 bus service – both of which cut across the local authority boundary with South Glos and provide services to local hospitals (Southmead and Cossham).
- CPNN – it was agreed that the key points from the statement would be discussed as part of the scoping for the CPNN Task & Finish Group. **(Action: Johanna Holmes)**
- Council Assets Task and Finish Group – in response officers said that there is a high demand for vacant properties that completely outweighed the availability.
- Avon Crescent - After a discussion Members agreed to informally ask the Mayor if he would reconsider the decision not to go ahead with traffic re-routing scheme **(Action: Johanna Holmes)**

Public Petitions:

The Scrutiny Commission received and noted the following petition:

Petition PP 01 – Restore the Number 36 Bus Route; Petition organiser – Mrs Pearse

- After consideration and discussion Members agreed to refer the petition to the relevant Cabinet Member for comment and asked if it could also be referred to the West of England Combined Authority for a review **(Action: Johanna Holmes)**
- Cllr Breckels requested that he is included in further correspondence about this matter **(Action: Johanna Holmes)**

7. Annual Business Report

Members considered the report and accompanying recommendations.

Members discussed the potential September date included in the report and agreed that it was very likely that this would be used by one of Task and Finish Groups rather than for a

Commission Meeting. If the Commission were to meet again it was likely that it would be later in the year, possibly November.

The Chair voiced a concern that Members generally weren't aware that they were invited to the OSMB the following evening to discuss the priority topics for the Scrutiny Task & Finish Groups.

MEMBERS RESOLVED:

- That Cllr Carey be elected as Vice Chair of the Place Scrutiny Commission
- [To note the Place Scrutiny Commission - Terms of Reference](#)
- [That a date for another meeting would be set later in the year. The Chair suggested that WoE Metro Mayor could be invited to do a Q&A session with the Commission](#)
- [To note the topics that were selected as priorities for Scrutiny at the OSMB workshop on 26th June 2017](#)

8. Cribbs Patchway New Neighbourhood: Up-date and Task & Finish Group Scoping

The report provided Members with an up-date on the progress of Cribbs Patchway New Neighbourhood within South Gloucestershire and the proposed measures for mitigating the impacts on Bristol's transport network was presented to the Commission.

A discussion followed about how a Scrutiny Task & Finish Group could add value to the process and help move things forward. Officers said that the 'Master Plan' hadn't yet been finalised and therefore the S106 agreements and legal agreements between South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) and BCC are yet to be signed. The legal agreement is what that confirms the proportion and timings of the S106 contribution payments.

Officers said the A4108 proposals are being developed to move as quickly as possible but they were still in discussions with SGC as they were finding it difficult to come to an agreement with them about Crow Lane Roundabout.

Cllr Brook (Lead Member of the Task & Finish Group) ask if it was possible for a scrutiny group to add value to the process. Officers responded that yes they could especially if they were involved over a period of time. It was suggested there is potential for involvement on a number of things such as the Public Transport Strategy and Master Plan.

Cllr Mead raised concerns about the potential knock-on-effects of increased traffic levels from the development on other nearby areas. He suggested that express / direct bus routes such as the x73 would encourage new residents to use buses as they were much more direct, with less stops and therefore had shorter journey times.

Officers suggested the possibility of a joint meeting between SCG and BCC councillors as something else the group could consider. It was also suggested the group would be most beneficial if it were a long-term group for say 2-3 years. Members agreed with this and suggested that they'd also like to engage with the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) on this subject if possible.

9. Council Assets: Task & Finish Group - Scoping

This agenda item was a verbal discussion for Members to agree the scope and remit of the proposed Council Assets Task and Finish Group.

Members began by outlining what were the main areas that a Task and Finish Group could scrutinise. 'Council owned buildings' was the main focus of the discussion and included the following, which members agreed to include in the initial scope of the work: current policies (are they fit for purpose?) strategy, leases, disposals, community asset transfers (CATs) and looking at how decisions are made.

The Chair said that she was aware that it's likely that the work would initially be constrained by staffing resources.

The Service Director for Property said that the process for making decisions about individual properties was a slow process that takes time. Buildings are not homogenous, each one is individual and they often end up being tugged in different directions. It was stated that lots of people are asking for free property for various reasons but there is no budget for this. It was agreed that it would be constructive to have a debate that led to some clarity and guidelines.

Both Officers and Members commented on the number of recent and existing petitions related to council buildings.

Members asked if a list of all council buildings existed. Officers responded that yes they know exactly what buildings the council owns and leases – there are about 2,000 properties.

One Member asked if it would be possible for lists of what council properties / assets exist in each ward to be provided to Members. Officers said yes it would be possible to do a ward-based list of assets. What level of information should be available to Cllrs could also be something that the group could touch on **(Action: Robert Orrett / John Bos to report back on what can be provided, to who and when).**

It was agreed that the presentation given to the Scrutiny Commission in February 2017 could also be very useful if given to the Task & Finish Group members as it would help bring everyone up to the same level of understanding and provide a foundation for further discussions on the scope of the Task & Finish Group **(Action: Jo Holmes & John Bos).**

RESOLVED: That an up-dated version of the February 2017 scrutiny presentation on Community Assets by property officers be presented to the Task & Finish Group at the end of August / beginning of September. Members will at this session further discuss and refine the scope of the group and agree timescales going forward.

10. Prince Street Bridge

The Chair introduced the agenda item by saying that she was mainly interested to know if the Council had achieved value for money on this project.

The Transport Officer presented the report including photos and diagrams of the work undertaken. It was explained that the bridge had to be taken apart before a proper examination of what was going on could be undertaken. The original costs were based on what could be seen from the outside before the bridge was dismantled. Once this had happened it was evident that there was extensive damage mainly due to flaws with the original design of the bridge. Trapped water was discovered sat inside parts of the bridge that weren't previously visible. Beams were rotten, the web was damaged and there were weight issues which had caused some of it to warp. In essence much of the bridge was re-built.

A discussion took place about the traffic issues caused by having the bridge closed to traffic for such a long period of time and what the plans were for future use of the bridge. The bridge is currently open to out-bound traffic. It was stated that the priority is always to help get traffic out of the centre rather than in. Future use will be reviewed once the current work at Temple Circus is complete next year.

The Chair reiterated her original question about whether the council received value for money on the project. The response was that the delays, which also included receiving permissions from Historical England did cost more than expected e.g. increased scaffolding but it wasn't possible to know at the start exactly how much work was going to be required.

A Member asked why the original timings were so far out and why there seemed to be long periods when it appeared nothing was being done. The officer responded that the planks under the road surface needed to be replaced as they were rotten. The new ones were made lighter with a new type of plastic plank that also helped to reduce the weight on one side of the bridge which helped re-balance the weight issues but these needed to be made especially which also took time. Also, as stated above, the time waiting for permissions also meant that the work was stalled at times.

Members suggested that the communication on this project whilst the work was continuing was 'appalling'.

Members requested a more detailed breakdown of the final £1.3M costs (Action: Adam Crowther).

It was asked why a report went to Cabinet when the costs were still unknown. It was explained that this was necessary to have agreement for the funding or it wouldn't have been possible to continue with the work and it wasn't expected that the bridge had been so badly designed in the first place and therefore so badly damaged internally.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

The meeting finished at 8.40 pm