

# Bristol City Council

## Minutes of the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission



17<sup>th</sup> July 2017 at 10.00 am

### **Members Present:-**

**Councillors:** Martin Fodor, Carole Johnson (Vice-Chair), Donald Alexander (substituting for Jeff Lovell), Steve Jones (part), Anthony Negus(Chair), Jo Sergeant, Jon Wellington, Harriet Bradley, (part) Asher Craig

### **Officers in Attendance:-**

Alison Comley (Strategic Director, Neighbourhoods), Di Robinson (Service Director), Kate Murray (Service Manager, Libraries), Steven Barrett (Service Director), Gillian Durden (Head of Planned Maintenance), Romaine de Fonseca (Policy Advisor), Andrew Mallin (DLT Support Manager)

### **1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information**

All parties were welcomed to the meeting.

### **2. Apologies for Absence**

None.

### **3. Declarations of Interest**

Declarations of interest were received from Cllr Negus in respect of being a member of the Tree Forum and Cllr Sergeant as an ex-Library Service employee.

### **4. Chair's Business**

This item was taken at the end of the meeting.

The Chair remarked that there were unresolved items on the Action Sheet. It was agreed that these would be passed to the Strategic Director for response.

**Action: That the outstanding items on the Action Sheet be passed to the Strategic Director for response.**

### **5. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting were agreed with no amendments.

**Resolved:**

**(1) that the minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2017 be approved as a correct record.**

**6. Public Forum**

Members noted the following statement which had been received for this meeting, details of which are available in the Minute Book:

	STATEMENT SUBMITTED BY:	AGENDA ITEM
1	South West Transport Network	Agenda Item 9 – “Your Neighbourhood” Consultation”

**7. Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission Annual Business Report**

This item and Item 8 were taken in reverse order at the meeting.

The Commission elected Cllr Carole Johnson as Vice Chair for the 2017/18 year.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That Cllr Johnson be elected as Vice Chair for 2017/18.**
- (2) That the Commission’s Terms of Reference are noted.**
- (3) That the additional meeting date set for 2017/18 is noted.**

**8. Fire Safety in BCC Tower Blocks**

This item and Item 7 were taken in reverse order at the meeting.

Officers provided a verbal briefing to the meeting and in the ensuing meeting the following points were made:

- Officers confirmed that there were 59 high rise blocks, of which 34 have cladding, with 3 more in the pipeline.
- Information bulletins have been provided to residents and councillors have been made aware of these.
- Where fires have occurred in blocks, these have not spread beyond the flats where they have started.
- The cladding materials in use are not completely non-combustible, but have limited combustibility, and as a complete system with the render finish, is a fire safe product.
- Members suggested that information be displayed in tower blocks where there is cladding, to explain the type and purpose of the cladding. A discussion ensued on how best to communicate information to residents without inadvertently giving misleading or confusing information, and without making assumptions about the forthcoming Grenfell-related government recommendations.
- There is a multi-agency group that meets weekly which is concerned with all high rise buildings in the city, not only council owned properties.
- Officers agreed that a priority was to clarify the advice given to residents in event of an fire emergency.
- The process for assessing fire safety of a project involved council technical officers as well as Building Control inspection and sign off.

- Members raised the issue of the number of agencies involved in a major refurbishment project, and the potential lack of communication and ownership of safety and quality assurance issues.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the issue of Fire Safety in BCC Tower Blocks be referred to Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, with a recommendation that scrutiny is involved in assessing the impact of the post-Grenfell government recommendations, when these are issued.**

## **9. “Your Neighbourhood” Consultation**

A discussion took place around the “Your Neighbourhood” consultation, including the consultation in general and the individual service areas within this. Discussion centred around a number of issues including:

- that these proposals had not previously come to Scrutiny prior to being published in the consultation;
- it was suggested that the comments/feedback facility needed to be more structured to encourage more detailed feedback, and there was a lack of guidance in engaging with the options presented;
- that additional information should be available to assist respondents in thinking about what alternative solutions there are; the Executive Member agreed that further information will be added to the website shortly;
- that the single closures option was a disincentive to responding with ideas;
- that in the consultation document, volunteering had been dismissed as a viable option, and this would also act as a disincentive to potential volunteers;
- that other issues could be included in the weighting criteria above the 4 selected
- that it was not clear from the consultation documents how respondents’ views would be taken into account in making the final decision regarding school crossing patrols in particular
- the variation in running costs of the different libraries and reasons for this;
- that some organisations have approached the Council with a view to taking on the running of public toilets, and this was a positive sign;
- that if libraries are closed, whether this will be a permanent reduction in the municipal infrastructure that will prove to be irreversible;
- that the joining up of consultations for different service areas in order to demonstrate local impact was, in principle, a positive approach and to be welcomed, however in this case the service areas are not particularly connected to each other

The Commission agreed by a majority decision (7 in favour, 1 against, 1 absentee) that the Chair would take the following statement to Cabinet.

**Resolved**

- (1) that the Chair convey the following statement from the Commission to Cabinet:**

**“This Scrutiny Commission considers the “Your Neighbourhood” consultation document to be flawed, as it does not provide explicit opportunities to put forward meaningful alternatives to the**

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**options already presented, and does not encourage public engagement in suggesting and shaping alternate options.”**

The meeting closed at 1.00pm.

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