

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Resources Scrutiny Commission

10th January 2019 at 4.00 pm



Members Present: Cllr Stephen Clarke (Chair), Cllr Afzal Shah (Vice Chair), Cllr Don Alexander, Cllr Mark Brain, Cllr John Goulandris, Cllr Tim Kent, Cllr Sultan Khan, Cllr Graham Morris, Cllr Clive Stevens.

Also in attendance: Cllr Craig Cheney – Designated Deputy Mayor (with responsibility for Finance, Governance and Performance), Cllr Holland, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Adult Social Care; Cllr Geoff Gollop, Cllr Mark Weston, Cllr Celia Phipps,

Officers in Attendance: Mike Jackson, Executive Director of Resources and Head of Paid Services; Denise Murray, Service Director of Finance; Michael Pilcher, Finance Business Partner; David Tully, Interim Finance Business Partner; Alan Stubbersfield, Service Director, Education, Learning & Skills; Jacqui Jenson, Executive Director Adults, Children and Education; Terry Dafter, Service Director - Care and Support – Adults; Jon Toy, Senior Consultation & Engagement Officer; Neil Sinclair, Interim Finance Business Partner; Johanna Holmes, Scrutiny Advisor.

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair 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 were received from Cllrs Steve Pearce and Marg Hickman

3. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Kent stated that his wife was part of a group that had submitted one of the public forum statements.

4. Chair's Business

The Chair expressed his concern about the lateness of the reports for the meeting. Other Members then also expressed their frustration about this. Cllr Brain said that the meeting was unconstitutional and it should therefore be postponed. After further discussion the Members agreed to continue with the meeting but the Chair stated Members reserved the right to request a future meeting and ask further questions.

5. Public Forum

Public Forum Statements were received as follows:

- PFS 1 - Bristol Independent SEND Community (present)



- PFS 2 - Julie Boston (not present)

6. Budget Consultation - Report of Findings

The Senior Consultation & Engagement Officer introduced the item to Members and took them through a set of presentation slides which explained what the process had been this year and what results and information had been gathered from those whom had participated in the consultation.

Scrutiny Commission Comments

Members were encouraged by the following;

- The broad array of communities that officers sought to engage with and the steps taken to achieve this. Members were particularly impressed by the fact that officers had proactively gone to shopping centres, cafes and libraries and other public areas with their iPads to obtain opinions from a much wider cohort than is usual in such consultations. This approach led to a considerable increase in response rates (especially from those who are often 'hard to reach' groups).
- The valuable insights and high quality data gained by the consultation process.

The Commission commended officers on the high standard and achievements of this piece of work.

7. Adults, Children and Education (ACE) Directorate Savings

The Director of Finance presented the published information on the up to date schedule of savings to the Commission. Members made the following comments:

- Members noted the high costs currently required to care for people with learning difficulties e.g. over £200,000 per person each year.
- Members were encouraged to see that the costs of Adult Social Care (ASC) for those 64 years and over were now considerably lower than they were. Officers predicted that the budget for ASC for 64+ was to be reduced from £71 million to £59 million over three years. The Commission Members were encouraged by this although a number of them were sceptical that these figures could actually be achieved.
- It was acknowledged that some of the issues in this spending category were influenced (both on the income and expenditure side) by matters outside the control of this council.
- Members considered that they did not have enough detail with regards to what sits below the headline budget figures i.e. how do the savings break down and how are savings going to be achieved? It was recognised by Members that it was difficult to scrutinise information when only the headlines figures are provided because of the timing and circumstances.
- Members were pleased that an apparently balanced budget had been achieved. They did however express concern about likely future pressures on this budget item.

Adult Social Care: Officer Presentation and Comments by Commission Members

The Service Director - Care and Support – Adults presented the published information to Members.

The following key points were explained and comments were made:

- The costs for Adult Social Care (ASC) for over 64 year olds have been reduced by over a million pounds.
- ASC for 18-64 year olds – Bristol has an average number of individuals but some of the individual costs are high, especially for people with learning difficulties. Of which there are currently 2,000 people of working age. There are some instances where costs are as high as £200,000 per year. The costs of care packages are something that officers are looking to reduce going forward.



- Officers said the delayed transfer of care situation was much better than it was the previous year.
- Members were encouraged to hear that no additional savings were being proposed and that it appeared that things are moving in the right direction.
- It was the Commissions understanding that holistic actions have brought the costs down for the ASC for 64+ provision.

Dedicated School Grants (DSG): Scrutiny Commission Comments

The Service Director, Education, Learning and Skills presented the published information to Members. Some of the points that were discussed were as follows:

- Members were of the strong opinion that despite the provision of additional funding financial resources in this area were still inadequate.
- Members understand that the numbers of children and the complexity of their needs have increased and that this is increasing costs and generating a cumulative pressure on the High Needs Budget. They did applaud the fact that officers specifically confirmed that the Council budgetary process did now seem to be based on the anticipated needs of children and not the anticipated spend.
- £58.2 million is the likely spend, resulting in a £3.3 million forecast deficit; Members appreciated that this figure had reduced. Questions were asked about borrowing from the future and comments were made about the risk involved.
- Members would require further clarification but currently understood that the £2 million transferred across to the High Needs Block was from the Growth Fund (money for expansions of existing and new schools) and heard officer's reassurances that this is being monitored and does not affect schools' abilities to deliver mainstream education.
- The Commission Member stated that schools still appear to be underfunded and that there should be more clarity that the responsibility to fund them properly actually lies with central Government. The costs of education (both mainstream and SEN) should not need to be funded and subsidised by other areas of the Council.
- It was agreed that the Transformation Programme would be scrutinised by the Adults Children and Education (ACE) Scrutiny Commission.

The Commission thanked officers for their time.

8. Period 7 Budget Monitoring Report - Information Item

9. Report from Chair of the MTFP and Budget Task and Finish Group Introductory Presentation

Councillor Stevens provided a short overview presentation of the work of the Budget T&F Group. This explained the key areas that the group had looked at plus what Councillor Stevens considered the main risks to be.

The presentation slides have been up-loaded with the meeting papers.

Please note, this item was taken at the start of the meeting after Public Forum

10. Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update - Information Item

This report was first published for the 4th December 2018 Cabinet meeting.

CHAIR _____

