

Bristol City Council
Minutes of the Communities Scrutiny Commission
(previously Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission)



15 April 2019 at 10.00 am

Members Present:-

Councillors: Gary Hopkins (Chair), Jo Sergeant (Vice-Chair), Jon Wellington, Afzal Shah and Martin Fodor

Officers in Attendance:-

Patsy Mellor, Director of Communities; Penny Fell, Director of Commercialisation and Citizens; Darin Hedges, Contact Centre Manager; Gemma Dando, Head of Community Services; Lindsay Hay, Neighbourhood Services Manager; Sarah Spicer, Business Planning and Service Development Manager; Andrew Corp, Team Leader Housing Options; Dan Berlin, Policy & Scrutiny Advisor

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting

2. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Charlie Bolton, Matt Melias, Jeff Lovell, Carole Johnson, Hibaq Jama, Graham Morris Rizwan Tariq, Head of Citizen Service; Paul Sylvester, Head of Housing Options

3. Declarations of Interest

None

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The draft minutes of the previous meeting (12th January 2018) were not objected to by the Members.

5. Chair's Business

There was a discussion about this Commission carrying forward on next year's programme following the directorate re-structure.



RESOLVED: it has been agreed that that this Commission's terms of reference remains the same in the next programme.

It was acknowledged that the Safer Bristol report will no longer be on this agenda.

RESOLVED: A recommendation has been made that a report from Safer Bristol should be on the first agenda of the next programme.

RESOLVED: A recommendation has been made that the CSC should input into the design of the next Quality of Life Survey and it should be on the first agenda of the next programme.

6. Public Forum

The following Public Forum was received:

- Questions: Agenda item 8, Community Toilet Scheme - Mary & Ron Mellett On behalf of Henbury Healthy Walking Group

Answers to the questions were referred to at Agenda item 8.

- Statements 1-4: Agenda item 8, Community Toilets Scheme

All statements were acknowledged at Agenda item 8.

7. Customer Services

The Contact Centre Manager delivered a presentation, (details are in the published pack).

There was a discussion surrounding the customer satisfaction results, including identifying a need to use clearer and meaningful descriptions, including 'other', and differences between 'query not resolved' and 'Could we have done anything else to help?'

The Chair asked how responses expressing unsatisfied are dealt with.

Officer response:

- Responses can be anonymous so there is not an opportunity to approach the respondent. Some of the responses are forwarded to the appropriate service area for review and actions.
- Exit interviews are conducted at Citizen Service Point (CSP).
- Technical solutions are being investigated to reach and gain feedback from those who do not or cannot access the CSP.

There was a discussion about response rates, and Members expressed a wish to improve, although it was acknowledged response rates are not poor in comparison to other surveys.

The Chair asked if we know what wards the respondents are from.



Officer response:

- This is not information that is gathered, but it can be looked into.

A Member asked whether surveys can be run at the end of phone calls, similar to the face to face 'exit interviews', although on the phone. It was agreed that that this could produce a higher response rate and better inform the service. Officer explained that there would be cost implications.

RESOLVED: Recommendation that an after-call survey is explored, including resourcing and cost implications.

Chair asked what are we doing to improve access to those who do not access the CSPs.

Officer response:

- Access via Skype is to be rolled out later this year

A Member asked what measures are in place to support people in using Skype; and that it is necessary need to be sure people are supported to use it.

Officer response:

- This will be considered during the roll out later this year

RESOLVED: Options, including working with libraries and community groups, should be investigated before roll out of the Skype initiative.

A member asked if there was Benchmarking against other LA's and comparisons between previous years

Officer response:

- No comparisons or benchmarking at present, however, this can be done

8. Community Toilet Scheme

The Neighbourhoods Services Manager delivered a presentation (details are in the published pack).

There was a discussion surrounding how citizens are made aware of what toilets are part of the scheme and what times they are open; what gaps in provision across the city are known; and whether the availability is better than the provision before the closure of some public toilets.

Officer response:

- Community Toilet Scheme has reached over 100 participants;
- The toilets are sign-posted and mapped; it is now easier to understand where and when the toilets are available;
- There are 9 wards without provision;



- There are 20 venues which have expressed an interest and yet to be visited;
- Gaps in provision are highlighted to Councillors in the monthly updates;
- The team has one officer allocated one day a week to manage the scheme;
- This is not re-badging what was there before; it is a different way of making toilet facilities available for citizens, and it is a better provision than before.

Chair stated that Ward Members have a responsibility to raise the profile of the scheme and help enable new participates.

Deputy Mayor and Cabinet member for Communities stated she has written to Councillors about the scheme and the need to be proactive in their Wards; and commended the scheme co-ordinator Georgie Bryant's work to date which has surpassed expectations.

It was confirmed that at this point there are no plans to reduce Officer resource for managing the scheme.

There was a discussion surrounding standards, and a Member asked how many participants have not achieved them.

Officer response:

- 75% of toilets in the scheme should be accessible, and we have over 80% at this point
- Accessible toilets are illustrated by symbols on the map

Chair stated that a steering group would be able to assist in the agreement and understanding of standards.

RESOLVED: It was agreed that a steering group to support the officer promote the scheme and visit premises is a good idea and it is recommended it should be looked into.

Chair asked how much input disabled groups have had into the scheme.

Officer response:

- We have liaised with disabled groups and the Bristol physical access chain (BPAC) has provided insight and comment;
- There is an information directory for disabled people which includes information about accessible toilets;
- The Changing Places website has been updated (which includes details of Changing Places facilities).

Deputy Mayor and Cabinet member for Communities stated that the Community Toilet Scheme is highlighted nationally as an example of good practice.

ACTION: Officer will liaise with the City Office and One City Plan partners regarding how the CTS fits into the One City Plan and feed back to the Commission.



Chair referred to the response to the Public Forum question and it was agreed that it was encouraging.

Member stated that a responsibility to provide access to toilets for employees could be shared with partners such as First Bus and business owners on high streets and areas with a high volume of tourists including Clifton Village (where there is a lack of provision); and working in partnership could help with increasing provision.

Member provided positive feedback from taxi drivers, who have said they appreciate availability.

RESOLVED: It is agreed the Commission feels that it is positive that progress has been and continues to be made.

9. Clean Streets

The Neighbourhoods Services Manager delivered a presentation about Bristol City Council's approach to graffiti (details are in the published pack).

There was a discussion about a need to clarify policy and messaging. The following points were raised by officers:

- Data shows us (including the Quality of Life Survey), that perceptions of littering increases when there is a higher amount of graffiti. The data shows a higher perception of littering in comparison to previous years, although the amount of litter is not dissimilar to that of four years ago.
- If there is a popular community mural, this will not be removed.
- Tagging will always be removed.
- Bristol Waste has invested money in new equipment so can remove at height now.
- Proposal to Cabinet next month to increase maximum penalty for graffiti.
- Using Community Protection Notices more for private businesses to take more responsibility for their buildings.

There was a discussion surrounding reasons people do graffiti, and how to prevent tagging on large empty spaces, and the following points were raised:

- Suggestions include growing plants up buildings; and using anti-graffiti paint;
- There is a need for clarification on the availability, role, funding, and ability of volunteers to remove tagging and graffiti;
- Advice should be provided to developers to design out graffiti.

Officer response:

- Funding for use of anti-graffiti paint will be investigated.
- Proposals to use an App to report tagging which will enable a quicker and easier way to target prolific taggers.



- Proposing to use our operations centre to use CCTV for identifying tagging.
- Discussions are being had with planning colleagues about planning out graffiti.

RESOLVED: That clear messaging regarding the policy and approach to graffiti and murals across the city will be welcomed by the summer.

The Neighbourhoods Services Manager delivered a presentation about the Clean Streets Enforcement contract (details are in the published pack).

There was a discussion about examples of fly tipping, specifically in Avonmouth being seen as not treated as a priority.

ACTION: Officer to ask Bristol Waste to contact Ward Member about the Avonmouth site

Chair stated that there is public support for enforcement, but due to Kingdom's way of working, some support has been lost and it needs to be regained.

Members asked how the community is communicated with about the clean streets work.

Officer response:

- There are no resources to visit community groups; but representatives of groups do attend the Clean Streets forum.

Members asked how enforcement by 3GS is measured and reported on.

Officer response:

- Councillors receive monthly updates with a breakdown of enforcement by offence. The updates are within the wider report which provides Councillors with updates on the whole of the Neighbourhood Services service enforcement area. Councillors are able to review the data and ask questions.

There was a discussion about partnership working with the Police. It was acknowledged that the relationship with the Police needs to improve, although there is not usually a need for Police intervention (eg for identification). Following the change of contract this will be focussed on.

Member stated he is reassured by monthly briefing and ethical approach, although these assurances were given before; and asked what lessons have been learned to avoid past mistakes.

Officer response:

- It was a pilot, so what we have learnt is built into new contract. The reporting will be more robust, and from next month there will be updates on offences by type, broken down by ward.
- The staff moved over from the previous contract have received further training.

10 Waste collections



The Head of Community Services delivered a presentation about waste (details are in the published pack).

There was a discussion about the collection methodology for recycling, including the following points:

- Proposal to roll out the blue bag rather than box which has more storage and is easier to use. The bag, which is being trialled, is weighted so will not blow away. The material is durable.
- The blue box roll out has been halted – this will not be used.
- There will be a report to Cabinet in June / July with clarifications and proposals for collection methodology for recycling.

RESOLVED: It was agreed that communication with Councillors has been difficult and a clear message regarding methodology will be welcomed this summer.

There was a discussion about missed collections, including Members asking why the data (including over 30,000 collections) was inaccurate. Chair stated there is an understanding why some collections were missed, but the main issue is that the lists available were inaccurate. We need to rely on accuracy for scrutiny.

Officer response:

- The software has previously not been compatible and, with inaccurate data input, incorrect information was produced; and this is to be rectified via a software upgrade this summer.
- There is therefore no list available at the moment, but after the software upgrade rollout an accurate list will be produced.
- Likelihood of collections on the correct day has now increased due to new fleet, all of which will have cameras installed. This will show any dropped plastic and if the bin was out when a missed pick up is reported. This will allow better understanding of internal and external quality.

There was a discussion about food waste, and the need or not for the compostable lining bag. A Member stated she has been informed that any bag can be used, and questioned why this has not been published, providing an informed choice for people to buy cheaper bags and to be aware that the compostable bags are going into landfill.

It was acknowledged that people may want to purchase and use the compostable bags for their own purposes, although they should not be used for food recycling.

Officer stated that information about recycling is to improve with an updated pack and items being rolled for all households in the summer.

ACTION: Officer to provide clarity on content of information pack and items and whether there are different vehicles for different services.



11 Housing - Temporary Accommodation

Team Leader, Housing Options, delivered a presentation about temporary accommodation (details are in the published pack).

There was a discussion about the use and costs of temporary accommodation, including the following points:

- There is a reliance on the private sector landlords, and not all costs can be recovered.
- As there is no supported element in nightly paid Temporary Accommodation (TA) (which is the most used type of TA), there is a housing benefit subsidy gap which BCC makes up. This subsidy loss is just over £3M/year.
- Nightly paid accommodation has the following costs (no inclusion of any support):
 - Adult with partner £35-£40/night; child over 10- £15 / night; under 10 0-£5/night.
- The most costly types of TA are privately managed spot purchased accommodation followed by Housing association block purchased accommodation.
- By moving Block purchased accommodation to the new model of Family Supported Accommodation, BCC will lower TA costs due to only needing to cover support costs, with the provider dealing with rent and housing benefit subsidy. The savings amount to £201K/year.
- There is usually a degree of support required for households who become homeless.

Chair asked if we use our own accommodation for temporary accommodation.

Officer response:

- Use of our own accommodation is part of the solution. We use a range of interventions including improving access to the private rented sector, prevention work, and increasing affordable housing provision
- Since 2017 57 'acquired homes' have been brought into use for TA. These units were not purpose built Council housing but bought for other reasons. By the end of 2019/20 the income collected from these properties will have covered the costs of bringing the properties back into use and ongoing maintenance.

A Member asked how much reduction in the reliance on private landlords there will be.

Cabinet Member for Housing said that we always look to fill our own properties first; and that permanent affordable housing is coming on line which will reduce reliance temporary accommodation in the private sector.

Cabinet Member for Housing stated that some properties previously earmarked for sale are now kept to be used as temporary accommodation (TA) rather than going to auction.

Also, subject to Cabinet approval in May 2019, the Council is proposing to secure an initial 30 properties on the open market across the city to be used for TA (funding by prudential borrowing), reducing the



need to rely on privately managed spot purchase, which is high cost with no assets, where ownership provides for lower costs and assets.

There was a discussion about how long households stay in different types of temporary accommodation, and whether some longer stays are increasing average costs.

ACTION: Officer to provide average periods of time households in temporary accommodation (by household type if data available).

RESOLVED: It was agreed that it would be valuable for future reporting to provide cost per unit per week for the different types of TA, including comparisons to how much it costs to purchase units for TA use.

There was a discussion about alternative options, including modular construction for intermediate, move on, usage and also conversions of Council assets for 'meanwhile use' TA, and the following points were made by Officers:

- Some office conversions need to be looked at carefully.
- Intervention and prevention work, together with funding for affordable housing, all work together and part of the bigger picture.

12 Performance

The performance report was noted. There were no questions about items on the report.

13 Safer Bristol

Safer Bristol report was not brought to this agenda.

RESOLVED: A recommendation has been made that a report from Safer Bristol should be on the first agenda of the next programme (see agenda item 5. Chair's Business).

Meeting ended at Time Not Specified

CHAIR _____

