

**Bristol City Council**  
**Minutes of the Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny**  
**Commission (previously Place Scrutiny Commission)**



**21 February 2019 at 5.00 pm**

**Members Present:-**

**Councillors:** Paula O'Rourke (Chair), Tom Brook (Vice-Chair), Nicola Bowden-Jones, Mark Bradshaw, Fabian Breckels, Martin Fodor, Chris Jackson, Mark Weston and Mark Wright

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

**2. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

Apologies were received from Councillor Quarterly

**3. Declarations of Interest**

None

**4. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Action Sheet**

November 29<sup>th</sup> 2018, Agenda Item 8 – Public Forum Questions (which referred to Agenda Item 9)

Ref: the £9.5M income from city parking. It was queried whether some of this income could be spent on minor traffic schemes (MTS) in future: Members requested a response to this question.

This question has now been added to the Commission's ongoing Action Sheet

Aside from this the minutes, of the last meeting were agreed as true record.

**5. Chair's Business**

None

**6. Public Forum**



The following Public Forum was received:

Statement 1: Public Funding for Bus Services

Statement 2: Light Rail Issues

Statement 3: Clean Air (Related to Agenda Item 11)

Statement 4: Clean Air (Related to Agenda Item 11)

Question 1: Clean Air (Related to Agenda Item 11)

## 7. Scrutiny Work Programme

It was suggested by some Commission Members that the Local Plan should be brought to a Scrutiny Commission meeting at the earliest opportunity.

### Cumberland Basin / Western Harbour

The Executive Director, Growth and Regeneration provided an up-date about the current position of the Cumberland Basin / Western Harbour area. He said the area is dominated by the highways network which has an ageing infrastructure and is now coming to the end of its natural life. It was said that the infrastructure requires full renovation and maintenance to extend its lifetime a further 30-60 years but this is likely to cost in excess of £40M. Failure to undertake this work would likely result in its demolition in the future. It was stated that this would be a difficult area to develop and therefore requires a lot of careful planning and thought in-advance. The area provides opportunities for a potential creative quarter to the city. A high level feasibility study of highways and development options had been commissioned. A Project Brief had been provided to 'Arup' and they were currently looking at different options for the area and will finish these at the end of March. There will be a process of public engagement about the potential options during the spring / summer which will lead to the development of an outline business case.

The following points were discussed between Members and Officers:

- It was confirmed that there were 10 options being drawn up and all of them would be available for the public to view.
- Members asked what types of schemes were being drawn up. They were informed that the company were given a free reign. However, Members wanted to understand if Arup were provided with a briefing paper. It was confirmed there was a briefing paper yes.
- It was confirmed that this had been funded from the Council's transport budget.
- Members wanted to know if a tunnel was being considered as one of the potential options. It was confirmed that yes a tunnelling option was being looked at as part of the Western side of the area.
- A Member commented that they felt it was difficult to access information about this project and that in their opinion officers were being unusually guarded about it. It was agreed that the feasibility project brief would be provided to the Commission Members and would also be uploaded onto Mod.Gov for members of the public to see. **ACTION: for the Western Harbour project brief to be sent to the Commission Members and uploaded to the meeting webpage.**



- It was discussed and agreed that this topic would return to the Scrutiny Commission in the new municipal year. **ACTION: Scrutiny Advisor to ensure that this topic is added to the list of potential items for the 2019/2020 Scrutiny Work Programme Setting Workshop.**

The Work Programme was noted.

## 8. Performance Report - Quarter 3

The Strategic Intelligence & Performance Advisor introduced the item and took Members through the report. It was said that due to the changes in the Council Directorates the report now contained some additional information compared to previous performance reports. The directorate is on track with a range of measures contained within Appendix A1. Of the 19 measures reported this quarter:

- 11 (58%) are on or above target
- 3 (16%) are below target
- 14 (74%) are performing better than at the same time last year
- 5 (26%) are new measures so have no trend to report or no target.

The following points were discussed:

- BCP425 - Increase the number of affordable homes (AH) delivered in Bristol: Members queried the progress on this indicator and said it didn't appear to positive even though it seemed to be generally understood that targets would easily be achieved this year. Officers were asked qualify the position. Officers said the situation was a lot more positive than had previously been reported and projections indicated that the target for 2018/19 would be achieved. Officers said they knew what developments were in the longer-term pipeline because they are tracking applications coming through the planning process.

It was said that the Communities Scrutiny Commission were looking at some AH information and when this was available it would also be sent to G&R Scrutiny Commission Members. **ACTION: to ensure Commission Members have sight of this information when it is available.**

- Members said they would exercise caution until 'keys are handed over' as many developments don't actually materialise. Officers agreed there was uncertainty but still positivity.
- BCP475 - Increase the number of passenger journeys on buses: It was asked if the MetroBus statistics could be separated from other bus figures so that proper comparisons and evaluations could be carried out. It was also asked if it is known whether MetroBus was negatively affecting any other routes passenger figures. Officers said that they hadn't seen any figures where MetroBus had been separated from other services. But they would look into it to see if this was possible. **ACTION: Officers to find out if it's possible to separate MetroBus statistics from other bus services statistics.**

Members commented that there was plenty in the report to be pleased about and that a lot had been achieved.



## **9. Bristol Housing Festival and Modern Methods of Construction**

The Executive Director for Growth and Regeneration introduced the item and explained that the purpose of this report was to update the Scrutiny Commission on ongoing work in relation to:

- The Bristol Housing Festival
- The council's emerging approach to 'Offsite Manufacture Housing' and 'Modern Methods of Construction' (OSM & MMC)
- The first two innovation projects we are taking forward under the banner of the Bristol Housing Festival.

Officers highlighted that this was an emerging industry but that it is very hard for smaller players in the building / housing industry market to contribute. It was suggested that the vision that emerged from the Housing Festival could provide some of the solutions. These will however need to be tested in the real world.

- It was reported that 6,500 thousand people attended the housing festival and the response from attendees was very positive. The Council is working with Homes England and the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) on taking some the concepts forward.
- Ideas for delivering faster affordable housing (AH) in Bristol are also being explored.
- Members were taken through some slides that explained new concepts and ideas such as the ZedPods. Chalks Road in St George was one of the sites currently being explored. Officers said efforts were being made to make the ZedPods 100% affordable as young people can only receive £70 per week Housing Support.
- Officers said that the creation and investment in local jobs was also another major factor in these projects. Some of the smaller suppliers are particularly keen to demonstrate what they can do.

The following points were among those discussed and asked by the Members of the Commission:

- Could people get mortgages for these types of homes? It was replied that these types of accommodation are mainly for renting. They have a warranty for 60 years. They are 'prefabs' and good quality which is essential. It was said however that discussions are taking place with an ethical bank about potential future funding opportunities. One Member said that he was aware of a building society that is trying to come up with arrangements for mortgages for modular homes.
- The future of building council houses was briefly discussed and it was asked if some of them could be built along these lines, perhaps via the Council's Housing Company. Yes that was a possibility but officers said they aren't yet at that point but it was being discussed.
- Members said they were generally impressed by what was being shared with them but expressed some slight frustration at the pace of things happening. Officers said they were very keen to be able to demonstrate that modern methods of construction can be delivered at pace and that they are continually learning by testing new ideas.
- Members asked how the modular homes sit with regards to current planning regulations size standards. Officers said there were some challenges with the national space standards which



came into practice several years ago. These are being looked at in light of the current housing crisis. There is also work being undertaken locally as there is definite appetite for some very small units and BCC would like to take a flexible approach to this particularly for those modules which are to rent. A Member commented that size standards had also become an issue at planning committees where many people object to houses being split up into small flats resulting in the number family size houses being reduced. Officers said that there were now a number of key issues that require up-dated planning guidance and practice notes. This would also help to ensure potential developers don't need to get all the way to planning committee stage before they can gauge if it's like they might get the go-ahead.

- Members asked if new methods of construction will require fewer numbers of workers and different types of skills than traditional house building would. Yes 'different skills sets' was the response but this would hopefully be a hub and spoke approach with a view to ensuring that SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) are also part of the whole process.

The Commission thanked the Officers for their time.

## **10 Bristol Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, including River Avon Flood Strategy Update**

The Flood Risk Manager introduced the item to Members and confirmed that this was the annual update to the Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Commission on progress with our Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, with a focus on the Avon Flood Strategy project. Officers were seeking Scrutiny's advice and feedback on their progress to date and next steps.

The Commission's views were also sought on how officers can work closer with communities to raise awareness of the flood risks posed to the city, as well as wider resilience issues. It was noted from many examples across the country that show engagement is low until an event occurs. Officers confirmed they have struggled in the past to engage with local people on this. This was perhaps because Bristol hasn't experienced a major emergency /incident for a number of years. Officers were keen to discuss how the strategy can be used to raise awareness and advocate a more proactive approach. Officers explained the summary of works completed and how the flood defences that had been used and were successful.

The following points were discussed and questions asked:

- The two major sources of flood risk for Bristol i.e. tidal and fluvial. Members were told that there are now a number of tunnels in place that would help to prevent a repeat of the 1968 floods but there is still more preventative work that can be done.
- River Avon Flood Strategy: is one part of a much broader strategy although it is a considerable part.
- Officers said that Bristol has been lucky to-date but they want to proactively manage risks.
- The Natural Streets Approach; which reduces surface level flooding is good for biodiversity and traffic management. Officers recommended that more of these are built.



- Members asked about the Harbour operation and if this could provide any solutions. This was however already being used to its full capacity.
- Tidal flood waters; Members were told that it's not possible to hold it back up-stream as there is not enough storage.
- It has been concluded that dredging rivers can actually makes things worse by allowing larger volumes of water to enter the water ways at a faster rate.
- A tidal barrier and river front defences and public realm are currently being looked at.
- Officers asked for any advice on how they can spread messages out in the community. It was suggested that now that Neighbourhood Partnerships were no longer in existence they focus on community groups that either show an interest or on those with an environmental emphasis. Members said they were happy to be contacted about local groups in their wards
- It was asked if the strategy had been delayed in any way as officers were exploring bigger projects and had the strategy changed. It was said that there weren't any changes and that they were currently undertaking feasibility assessments.
- A Member said that he had followed the progress of the strategy closely for a number of years and that even though communities hadn't really engaged in the process, there were risks and threats now more than before. And that given their positions, the potential developments at Cumberland Basin and St Philips in his view gave further cause for concern. Officers said that holistic solutions would be built in to the strategy and any potential schemes at every stage and that these would be well-thought-out before any building could be considered.
- A member suggested using the term 'climate emergency' to encourage more people to engage.
- It was also suggested that if there are health implications then Public Health and schools should be involved.
- Members said that the Flood Risk Management Strategy was on their radar so to speak and that there is enthusiasm to keep it on their agenda and for scrutiny to play a constructive and challenging role. It was suggested that in light of potential developments a discussion should take place to identify when this should be brought back to the commission. **ACTION: for the Bristol Local Flood Risk Management Strategy to be included on the 2019/2020 Scrutiny Work Programme**

## 11 Clean Air Plan

The Chair commented that this agenda item was in the context of the Mayors letter to the Under Secretary of State for the Environment, Dr Thérèse Coffey MP.

Officers outlined the current situation and said that the work on the Outline Business Case for the Nitrogen Dioxide Compliance Plan had taken longer than initially anticipated and so the Council was unable to submit the Plan by the requested date of December 2018. The City Council is working with Defra in continuing detailed technical work on the Outline Business Case to fully explore all possible options. This includes an option which does not require the charging of private cars.



Officers said there are two main issues needing to be addressed which are particulates and nitrogen dioxide however the burning of solid fuels is also an issue.

The Chair reiterated that this agenda item was in the context of the Mayors letter to the Under Secretary of State for the Environment which had laid out Bristol City Council's position in developing an approach to improving Bristol's air quality.

- As was stated in the report, senior officers met with the Government's Joint Air Quality Unit on 11th February 2019 to discuss progress on the Outline Business Case (OBC). Officers said it had been reported then that BCC would not be submitting the OBC as they were relooking at alternative options to reach compliance. The letter it was said 'sets out the Council's position'.
- A Member asked if officers were 'right back at the desk-top stage' again. He stated that last March officers said they were trying to protect those on low incomes as they were most at risk but asked how was the Council protecting those at risk dying early?
- It was asked how and why other cities are doing this and Bristol isn't yet. In response it was said that Southampton has just said that it is not doing Clean Air Zone as they need to revisit some elements first. Bristol it was said wants to learn from others too but others are changing their assumptions as well. Officers said that everyone was of the view that this needed to be done but there were also a range of other issues to consider. The modelling showed the proposed options would have a disproportionate effect those on low incomes.
- The Chair said that the Mayor speaks of unacceptable outcomes and yet the courts have said that this must be completed in the shortest possible time.
- It was suggested that a transport policy change is needed that for example targets buses and taxis. The bigger challenge it was said was cars but perhaps this was for a later day.
- Some Members described the pollution levels as a public health issue and asked why the Council couldn't start with some practical actions such as no idling zones outside schools and play areas. One Member was suggested that people should be made aware of poor air quality issues so they can take precautions. It was replied that there are high levels of pollution almost all of the time and that warnings could result in scaring people inappropriately. It was argued that at least people would be alerted to it as they are with such things as congestion problems.
- The Cabinet Member for Transport said that there will shortly be a freight consolidation trial for 6 months along the Avon Portway.
- One Member said that he had previously shown some draft plans to his residents and their view was that it could push more traffic on to A37 and negatively affect their life expectancy.
- It was strongly suggested by a Member that 'no one has asked the poorest people what they think about this' and that the Council was supposed to be doing this. Members subsequently requested an up-to-date timeline of what will happen when. **ACTION: Officers to provide this information to Members**
- Officers said lots of engagement work had been undertaken but not 'public consultation' yet because the Council doesn't know what it is consulting on yet. The Chair said that the Mayors letter says we need to re-model again and we need resources to do it. **ACTION Members asked if they could have a breakdown of costs required.**



- Members expressed their disappointment that the Council had not moved forward on this when other cities appeared to be.
- Officers said that further technical information would be uploaded on the webpages the following day.
- **ACTION: Members requested a progress update on the 'no idling' zones.**
- **ACTION: It was agreed that the presentation slides would be provided to Members and uploaded on the meeting webpage.**
- Officers confirmed that they are looking at ways to accelerate the work on this so that the Council can still make its targets.

## **12 Exclusion of Press and Public**

The following agenda item is confidential because it falls within paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Explanation of Reasons

• By Virtue of Paragraph 3

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

## **13 City Leap**

As above

Meeting ended at 8:15pm

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

