

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Commission



23 July 2019 at 6.00 pm

Members Present:-

Councillors: Paula O'Rourke (Chair), Fabian Breckels (Vice-Chair), Tom Brook, Mark Bradshaw, Jon Wellington, Martin Fodor, Mark Wright and Claire Hiscott

Officers in Attendance:-

Nuala Gallagher (Director, City Growth, Investment & Infrastructure), Adam Crowther (Head of Strategic City Transport), Ed Plowden, Johanna Holmes (Policy Advisor - Scrutiny) and Patsy Mellor (Director – Management of Place), Kate Cole (Strategic Intelligence & Performance Advisor), Jessica Macdonald (Policy & Public Affairs Officer).

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Scrutiny Advisor opened the meeting. A safety announcement in relation to the fire/emergency evacuation procedure was made.

2. Annual Business Report

The Scrutiny Advisor opened the Annual General Meeting and explained that the Commission Members were required to elect a Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission for the municipal year.

Chair of the Commission – Cllr O'Rourke

- Nominated by – Cllr Brook
- Seconded by – Cllr Fodor

Vice Chair of the Commission – Cllr Breckels

- Nominated by – Cllr Wellington
- Seconded – Cllr Brook

At this point the newly elected Chair thanked the other Members and asked everyone in the room to introduce themselves.



3. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies were received from the following Councillors:

- Councillor Weston. Councillor Claire Hiscott was in attendance as a substitute.
- Councillor Quarterly
- Councillor Wright. Councillor Negus was in attendance as a substitute

4. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

5. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Action Tracker

Minutes of the 21st February 2019 Commission Meeting.

Members made the following comment:

Performance Report - Quarter 3

Members requested more information about the numbers and progress of affordable homes in the pipeline. The Strategic Intelligence & Performance Advisor said that she would look into this after the meeting. It was agreed that any further information would be emailed to the Members.

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as true record.

Members noted the information in the Action Tracker.

6. Chair's Business

The Chair said that during the scrutiny work programme setting workshop in June those present had tried to theme the Commission's meetings where possible. The Chair hoped that the introductions to items from officers would be short, interactive and not feel like briefings. The Chair added that she was confident that the work of the Commission would be good this year.

7. Public Forum

Public Forum Statement 1:

It was highlighted that many of the bus stops at Temple Meads had been moved during the previous weekend which was much earlier than had previously been planned. However, it was reported that pedestrians were still having to use temporary paths with very little signage being provided to help people understand where they should be going. This it was said needed to be corrected as soon as possible, ideally within the next 48 hours because there are thousands of passengers coming into Bristol every day that need to know where to catch buses from when they exit the train station. It was said that the current information from network rail informing people where to go was inaccurate showing bus stops that didn't exist anymore. Transport Officers said that they were already looking into this situation.



8. Work Programme

Members were given the opportunity to comment on the commissions annual work programme which had been set at a workshop in June of this year.

A Member asked if there was any scope to add items if necessary. The Chair replied the work programme had been left intentionally light in places to allow items to be added if necessary. It was agreed that the Members would contact the Chair and Scrutiny Advisor if they were of the view that something should be added to the work programme.

A Member asked about why the Local Plan hadn't been included on the work programme. It was explained that it had been discussed with officers at the scrutiny work programme setting work shop and explained that there was a specific 'Local Plan - Members Working Group'. Officers were surprised that Members had requested it was also brought to scrutiny. A Member explained that as the public consultation was now complete that he thought it would be a useful exercise for scrutiny to understand and consider the results from it. The Chair agreed. **ACTION:** The Local Plan to be added to the scrutiny work programme for September.

9. Performance Report (2018/19 Quarter 4)

The Strategic Intelligence & Performance Advisor introduced the report to Members and briefly elaborated on the significant issues in the report. It was confirmed that the report was the 2018/19 year-end summary.

Some of the measures presented in the report were annual measures (14) and others are taken from the Quality of Life survey (QoL) (13).

Members made the following comments;

- There were in their view a 'worrying number' of downward trends. However it was acknowledged there were difficulties involved in fixing them as some were due to wider impacts highlighted in the report itself, such as the impact of welfare benefits reform on housing figures.
- It was suggested that some of the commentary in the report 'wasn't particularly helpful' because it explained why there were problems but Members didn't think it give enough information about what was being done about them.
- The Chair suggested that the reduction in 'Increase the percentage of people who feel they can influence local decisions' (BCP315 & from QoL) was very likely to be a consequence of the Neighbourhood Partnerships (NPs) not existing anymore. Other members agreed with this point. The Director – Management of Place said that indicator was still being monitored by the Communities Scrutiny Commission and yes it was likely a result of the NPs stopping but there are now new teams and a redesigned service.

The Performance Officer said that she had recently worked on a Citizen's Panel which had proven to be very popular with those involved. She said that it was being looked at how they can be better publicised in future and recruit to as they are a positive way for people to engage in local matters.



- Members also noted the that performance indicator (BCP540): Reduce percentage of people who feel that street litter is a problem in their neighbourhood (QoL) was displaying as worse compared to same period in the previous year and much higher than the 2018/2019 target. One Member said that about a quarter to a fifth of his local case work was residents complaining about litter and mess on the streets. He said it hadn't previously ever been such a problem and he wasn't really sure what was going on. It was said that the Mayor had said the situation would improve by means of the Clean Streets Campaign. It was thought that the officers running the programme were very effective and so he was not sure why it appeared to be failing especially given the large amount of funding that had been placed into it. In his view it was fair to say that the project had been a failure so far.

Officers responded that regardless of all the resources that had been channelled into this issue, the figures for litter and graffiti were still very high and that the council were "losing the fight against tagging and graffiti." It was said that four teams of targeted officers with a neighbourhood approach would start in September working across all areas of the city. Their aim was to reduce the percentage of residents who felt that street litter was a problem. However, the new resources were still unlikely to be enough to completely eliminate the issues. Officers also said that for first time all the teams responsible for waste and street scene were to be brought under the same directorate which would allow an improved and combined approach from now on.

A senior officer added that the underperforming results of the QoL Survey would lead to action being taken to address them and that they were already speaking to Service Managers about them.

10 Public Transport

The Service Manager - Sustainable Transport and Group Manager for Highways and Traffic introduced themselves and explained that they would present and then take questions one section at a time if that was acceptable to members, which it was.

Bus Strategy

Transport Officers introduced the Bus Strategy section via some presentation slides. Some of the key points were as follows

- West of England (WoE) bus use has continued to increase. Figures show that Bristol is bucking the national trend on patronage and doing quite well compared to other local authorities. Student use of buses has risen too.
- Officers said that it's difficult to find funding for public transport compared to funding for motoring.
- First Bus currently severs services in the city centre to help improve reliability i.e. so that congestion doesn't continually affect the outer areas as much.
- A review of the network is currently taking place and being carried out by ARUP. They have already reported that the way things are currently done in Bristol isn't as efficient as it could be and patronage can be increased further.
- It wouldn't be until next year when the strategy was ready to be consulted upon.

Questions and comments from Members:

- It was said that there are still far too many old and polluting buses being used in some parts of the city.
- Members thought that Old Market Bus Interchange worked well as an interchange. But it was suggested that they are future proofed to enable the use of future technology.



- Members agreed that there were still gaps in the current route map; for example East Bristol still has no direct route to Temple Meads Station.
- Members considered it positive that residents will be consulted about bus routes but asked whether they shouldn't also be asked about additional plans or ideas for the future? Officers said they need to be careful what they ask for views on because it needs to be considered whether we have the physical space to do some things i.e. are people willing to walk further or change buses or give up road space for other things etc. Members suggested that was why people ought to be asked those questions.
- Members expressed their continued frustration that First Bus still has a 'monopoly' on buses in Bristol and were of the view that the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) needed to do more about this.
- It was said that although WECA isn't officially the Transport Authority yet, it is correct in doing this work because apart from the recent introduction of Metrobus Bristol's Bus Network had not changed since the 1990s. It was agreed that building the orbital routes outward would provide room for more interchanges. And that interchanges would not work effectively until all the bus operators are working under one single ticket system. This in his view really needed to be pushed though as quick as possible.
- Other Members agreed that more interchanges and cross-boundary tickets were the way forward as well as the need for more high frequency buses.
- Some Members felt that franchising would solve many problems but that the Council had already been talking about this for many years.

Bus Deal

Officers took Members through the relevant slides that had been published and explained that the 'Bus Deal' is a partnership arrangement to deliver significant improvements to services and aims to increase bus patronage.

Some of the key points made by officers and Members were as follows:

- This project is also a means of implementing the Bus Strategy objectives and requires gaining commitments from both the bus operator and transport authority.
- As part of the project, officers have identified where buses are delayed the most and which are the worst performing services across the city. The Number 2 Service was identified as being the worst after officers spent time with bus drivers to detect the frequency and length of delays and causes of those delays. Through new technology, signals and priorities will be improved on the routes. The 'Real Time Information' (RTI) system will be linked into other transport systems such as traffic lights so it can be prioritised to help the service run faster. Routes are also being looked at to ensure they are fit for purpose and more buses will be introduced year on year. There will also be a process of cleaning the buses up with regards to the amount pollutants they're emitting.
- Members suggested this project sounded very similar to the previous Better Bus Deal project. However it was said that in this case they now need to be viewed as 'set of individual deals or packages over as number of years'.
- A Member commented that the focus of the programme sounded very promising. It was his view that in the past too much focus had been on infrastructure and not enough on actual passengers' experiences.

Smart and Integrated Ticketing

Officers took the Members through the published slides which explained what's available now, what the vision is and what plan going forward is. They said they were learning from Transport for London (TfL) and the timescales for implementation were around 4-6 years.

- Members enquired about the Smart Ticketing project plan phasing and asked why three out of four phases didn't show any timescales. Officers responded that they needed to see how phase one or two went first.



- A Member enquired if the project plan was currently BCC's aspirations or was the bus company already signed up to this? It was said that the bus company were engaged on phase one but yes but that was still work to be done before the phase two could begin.
- A Member commented that he thought this was all excellent but requested it be progressed as fast as possible.
- Another Member said they recognised that there are many obstacles to overcome but that WECA does have a considerable amount of funding for the regions transport.
- Officers said that the road to smart ticketing had been a long and painful one. What was really needed was a plan that all the providers signed up to. It had previously been the Oyster Card but that way of doing things was 'old hat'. It was also highlighted how another local authority had spent £16 million on this issue with an operator and had ended up walking away without any results at all.

WECA (West of England Combined Authority) RTI (Real Time Information) System

Officers provided Members with a summary of the current system and how it operates. It was said that Bristol runs the RTI system on-behalf of WECA now.

It was said that there had previously been two contractors but in January 2019 a new contractor was appointed and the system was changed from a radio system to a sim-card one. There were some problems initially i.e. once the signal was lost it took around an hour for it to come back online. However, since March or April it's been performing much better and a new system will be installed in September.

Members were keen understand and discuss why there were different contractors. Some said they were pleased this was being done as it is very annoying when buses on route just disappeared of the screen.

- It was suggested that the period of time where the RTI hadn't been working properly had been very detrimental to the usage.

Officers said they'd now pin-pointed where the main issues were and had hopefully fixed them now. Officers said they were confident that passengers would soon start to see improvements.

11 Multi-Modal Transport

The Head of Strategic City Transport said that the agenda item had been separated into two sections and confirmed what was meant by the terms 'multi-modal transport' and 'mobility stations'.

Mobility stations are about identifying 'first/last mile solutions to connect communities to frequent public transport services and provide integrated transport options'. Officers said they had learned a lot about these on a recent study trip to Cologne - a city region with a similar population to the West of England.

Officers are looking at the current issues, what facilities and benefits could be on offer, whereabouts they could be based and how they can be developed. It was said they were very keen for Bristol to make much better use of what it already has.

Officers said there are frequent public transport services on Bristol's corridors but that people are not always aware of them or cannot easily access them. There is a lot of work needed to improve communication and connections between things. It was said that mobility stations can help addresses the lack of orbital connections in the city.



Members were keen to understand more about what the 'last mile delivery' and what that could involve. Officers said there were a range of different facilities that could be provided depending on the location and identified needs which could include lockers that provided a place for people to collect from.

It was asked if electric bicycle hire could potentially be included. Officers said that they are asked about this point quite often and so it will be looked into but that electric bikes can already be hired from a few different places in the city.

Members asked when they would start to see some of this happening. Officers said that WECA had applied to the Government's 'Future Mobility Zones Fund' and had a reasonably good opportunity to be successful. Offices highlighted Avonmouth as a potentially good opportunity, adding that there are all sorts of things there that people don't know about e.g. cycle paths that could be beneficial to people.

One Member recommended having bike racks on buses as they do in some other European Cities.

Members were positive about the prospect of local mobility stations. They asked about what publicity there might be because it was thought that unfortunately it could take some time for some people to catch-up with what's new and available as with local car clubs for example. Officers agreed with the points being made and said that communication about this would be key to its success and that it would be important to get the local communities involved from the outset.

Mass Transit and Rail Up-date

The Head of Strategic City Transport delivered a short presentation on 'Mass Transit and Rail' to Members which explained what is currently being worked on and the plans for moving things forward. The following points below were highlighted to members:

A study has now been undertaken. The study brief defined four mass transit routes for investigation which were:

- Airport corridor
- East corridor
- North corridor
- A4 corridor

Officers stated the overall scheme had a clear objective of creating a step change in the mass movement of residents and visitors across the region and to 'address existing congestion issues and provide new capacity to sustainably facilitate growth in Housing and Employment across the West of England'.

It was said that a mass transit scheme had the potential for 'making positive changes to air quality and reducing congestion in the region as well as better opportunities to move people around and thus stimulating regeneration'.

At the current time, all options were still being considered. The feasibility study indicated that there was merit in exploring options further and that all options showed reasonable business cases but further work was required to assess them.

Officers explained that they are moving towards developing a strategic outline business case which will take around 12 – 18 months to complete.

The Value for Money (VFM) assessments suggest there is a good case and that the work should move on to the next stage. WECA have allocated £2-3 million for taking this to the next stage.



It was said that over-ground projects were showing a better VFM ratio because they are cheaper to build. The more funding that's spent the more the VFM ration comes down.

The assessments still require more information on the costs of the tunnelling work.

Officers said it was important to try and consider what technology might be available in 10/15 years - not just today.

Members commented and asked the following questions:

- When would 'actual costs' be available? Officers said that the feasibility studies would be undertaken in autumn. But the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) will contain a lot more details.
- Usage rates; Members would like to see projections included if/when possible and how much money systems are likely to cost to run. The figure quoted by one Member was £4 billion and 15 years. His view was that it's unlikely that the Council will ever have that kind of funding.
- Members raised concerns about the 15 years it might take for this to come to fruition and said that was a danger that 'in 20 years' time this could be seen as a 20th century solution'. Officers said that the DfT still view mass transport is the way forward. Officers said that in their view it's worth going forward and seeing where it takes us. Adding that this sort of project isn't currently happening anywhere else in UK but is quite common in other parts of the EU.
- A Member said that it had taken years just to open up a few old train stations and lines and years of funding. Also, would this just fill up all the spaces that aren't already developed i.e. more new roads and losing even more trees? Officers said that the objective was to connect things up.
- Another Member said that the demand figures looked impressive but the profit margins weren't very big and so it was questionable if it would ever attract private investment. Officers said in response that there were different ways of funding project but yes this would need to be very innovative. The Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) would be ready in the next 12-18 months.

Members thanked the officers for their time and for being so positive about the projects.

12 School Streets and Anti-Idling Report

This section was discussed in the context of Full Council previously asking the Mayor to: By spring 2020 investigate, and implement if financially feasible, the introduction of an enforceable "anti-vehicle idling" zone outside every school and in every park in the city.

Officers said this requires specific enforcement powers. As noted above it was said that banners and/or messages could be confusing especially if used outside schools.

It was that it is a criminal offence to idle unless queuing in traffic but it's difficult to enforce. The law isn't generally used for enforcement because people tend to switch off their engines when asked. This means it is not self-financing.



Officers said they would like to see a mix of both approaches (enforcement and voluntary behaviour change) for example they would like people to turn their engines off when queuing in traffic and that they would prefer to invite people to be part of the solution rather than penalising them.

Officers said that the backs of buses have shown to be an effective part of campaigns in the past. But ideally it would be best if people didn't actually use their cars so often rather than just switch their engines off when stationary.

Officers had as previously asked by the Commission had a discussion with Director of Public Health about this. It was said they are keen to do some work on this especially around behaviour change initiatives.

One Member he was generally keen on the school streets project rather than just the no idling.

Officers said there was still room to try affecting behaviour changes on no idling such a posters and banners. Members were shown some of these were generally impressed by them. Officers said these could be deployed in areas where pollution was high, such outside the Bristol Royal Infirmary (BRI). It was said that there is a 15 minute drop-off / waiting time outside the hospital and most drivers leave their engines running unnecessarily for the full 15 minutes.

Members asked about whether it was thought some measures would just push the problem elsewhere. Officers said that displacement was a concern and would be considered when any trials were held.

The Commission thanked the transport officers for their time and general candour throughout the meeting.

Meeting ended at Time Not Specified

CHAIR _____

