

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board statement to Cabinet 27th April 2020

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held a virtual meeting on Friday and considered items on the Cabinet agenda.

- Item 8: Response to COVID-19. Members had sight of the Cabinet paper on financial implications. We understand that the situation is evolving on a daily basis and acknowledge that the Council is taking actions outside of the normal decision-making process. We have agreed to re-establish the Scrutiny Budget Task and Finish group to work with the Council Finance team in their work in remodelling the budget and medium-term financial plan. That task group will be available to work as and when it is considered appropriate.
- We also received a detailed presentation on the Council's response to COVID 19. Members asked the Head of Paid Service to convey to all council staff appreciation for the extraordinary level of commitment and hard work. In addition, Members also recorded their appreciation of the leadership and direction given by Mike Jackson. Questions were asked about the provision of PPE for Council Staff and care homes. Members were assured by officers that PPE was currently available to all who needed it.
- Item 9. Members then considered the Clean Air Zone proposals. Members understand the difficulties in dealing with this process at the current time. However, concerns were expressed as to whether this proposal represented the best value for money for a spend of this amount.
It is impossible to assess possible outcomes when we do not know whether there will be a full diesel ban or a clean air zone in the central area, and members have no clarity on the impact of the options on monitors outside of the central area. Members are concerned that no consideration has been given to the "overspill" impact on wards neighbouring the Clean Air Zone, or on those wards affected by the main routes into the city centre. Members asked that a full presentation be made to OSMB on the impact on the City as a whole of the final proposals, before the Full Business Case (FBC) is submitted
- Scrutiny Chairs had reviewed in detail other cabinet papers. Cllr Hiscott reported on The Workforce for the Future Item 10. Members urged the cabinet to fully support this bid for additional funding in South Bristol, and also fully supported Bristol apprenticeship Procurement item 11.
- Members welcomed Item 14 the Compulsory Purchase Order at Temple Gate

Members raised questions from the Forward Plan. In particular the absence of Bristol Energy from the plan was noted. Members were advised that a report would be made available as soon as possible and Mike Jackson said that it had been left out of the plan because there was currently no certainty of the timing. Mike also advised members of the departure 5 weeks ago, of the managing director of Bristol Energy and the interim appointment to succeed him.

Members also raised the issue of City Leap. Although inevitable in the current circumstances, members were surprised to only find out that City Leap was now on hold in response to questions, rather than having been informed when the decision was taken. Members would like to receive an update on the impact on the Council.

OSMB members are very much aware of the pressure on Council Officers in dealing with the current crisis and understand that it would be inappropriate for a full scrutiny programme to divert resources away from critical work. However, scrutiny members are keen to play any constructive role in supporting and reviewing work of Officers and Executive and believe that there is an important function for back bench members in monitoring this process. We recognise however that we need to be guided by senior officers.