

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Commission



13 February 2020 at 6.00 pm

Members Present:-

Paula O'Rourke (Chair), Mark Bradshaw, Tom Brook, Martin Fodor, Kevin Quartley, Tim Rippington, Jon Wellington and Mark Weston

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked them to introduce themselves.

2. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies were received from Councillors Johnson, Breckels and Wright.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting on the 9th January 2020

Agenda Item 12. DRAFT Corporate Property Strategy:

It was requested that the minutes of the last meeting reflected that one Member said that with regards to the One Public Estate (OPE) Projects and the Corporate Landlord Model, there were implications for people wanting to use the buildings that could disadvantage community organisations.

5. Action Sheet

Members noted the progress on the previous actions.



6. Chair's Business

The Chair apologised to the other Commission Members and said that she should have copied them into a statement that she had made at the 4th February Cabinet meeting. She said the statement was in essence a personal statement but it was made in her capacity as Chair of the Scrutiny Commission. The statement described how opportunities to involve scrutiny in the disposal of Temple Island had been missed and that it urged the Administration to allow for better oversight in the future. It also explained what the Commission would be looking at during the current meeting and how this was early, discursive and informative scrutiny to provide the foundations for next year's Work Programme. The Chair said she wanted the Commission to leave the meeting feeling empowered and enthusiastic about what lies ahead for scrutiny.

7. Public Forum

The following public forum was received:

Public Forum Questions Received:

1	Suzanne Audrey	Agenda Item 8. Bristol Temple Quarter
2	Suzanne Audrey	Agenda Item 10. Bristol Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

Public Forum Statements Received:

1	Councillor Clive Stevens	Corporate Property Strategy (previous meeting agenda item)
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A brief discussion was had about the officer reply that was provided to the second public forum question. The questioner said they were "not impressed with the answer" and that they were still unsure why the Environment Agency was not a member of the Advisory Group.

The Executive Director for Growth & Regeneration Directorate elaborated about the role of the Advisory Group and said that its remit was to engage with different stakeholders but that it was one strand of a number of actions and activities that would take place. The Director of Economy of Place said the project was still at a very early stage of the process and that as it moved forward more people would be involved.

The questioner said that they believed people were very concerned about the potential flooding issues and asked why experts were being excluded? Officers said that this was not a 'council group' as such and that it had been set up for a particular purpose for a particular time and has a specific role.



8. Bristol Temple Quarter

This meeting agenda item was coordinated with a site visit earlier in the day when Members of the Commission visited Temple Meads Station and the surrounding area with City Council officers and a representative from Network Rail.

The BCC Senior Project Manager for Temple Quarter introduced the item to Members and clarified the presentation provided information and an up-date on:

- Progress on current Temple Quarter projects
- Future proposals for Temple Meads station, Temple Quarter, and St Philips Marsh
- Develop a scrutiny programme for next year

A study has been commissioned to develop long term proposals for the area by developing a high quality, deliverable, flexible and phased masterplan, focused on and around Bristol Temple Meads station. This study wouldn't be completed until later in 2020 but in the meantime the station would be introducing some short-term solutions to help peak time travellers. A summary of the key points were as follows:

- Collaboration on the plans was working very well and has momentum.
- There are 14 million passengers annually at Temple Meads (Paddington has 100m per year).
- Passenger numbers are growing; forecast to 20m per year by the end of this decade.
- The lay-out is not perfect and there are pinch-points at peak times, especially on platform 3.
- 65 - 70% of passengers currently use the Northern Entrance / Gateway.
- It is not currently the experience that Network Rail want passengers to have.
- The WH Smiths shop will be removed soon and an additional set of stairs will be installed in that location instead. When asked why stairs and not an escalator it was stated that stairs have more capacity than escalators.
- The lift on platform 3 will also be moved and will be replaced with a much improved facility.
- The booking office area is not ideal where it is so it will be moved to the Northern Entrance at some point.
- The space outside near the priory will be opened up for public realm instead of being a car park.
- There will be interchanges for buses at Temple Way and The Friary.
- The ramp has become very congested over time and is not a pleasant experience for passengers. In future, only taxis will be able to continue to use it.
- A recent opportunity has emerged for a potential Southern Gateway on the A4.
- Delivery timescale for all station components will be up to 15 years.

The following points were discussed:

- Members appreciated the opportunity to understand more and feed into the future plans for the site.
- Members were interested to know more about the potential new south gateway. A Member who's Ward was very close to the area stated that local residents were concerned about access to and from the new University Campus.



- Any potential for bus passengers on the A4 and A37 to have improved access the station was welcomed.
- It was confirmed the plan was for a new cycle hub with 1000 spaces.
- The new bus hub would be dispersed between 4 sites. Members thought a dispersed bus hub could be confusing, saying it would need to be made very simple for people to navigate, such as coloured lines on the road. Officers agreed with the point being made.
- A Member said they very much appreciated the site visit. When looking at the exits, bottle-necks and conflicts, in his view the journey to the station needed to be continuous one. Officers said they are looking at the connectivity of the Enterprise Zone to the rest of city and how people use and access the sites. They said they did want to do a 'design review' of people's needs, where they were going and how they'd get there and they needed to make sure they weren't making the situation worse.
- With the positive Government funding announcement that week about the Bristol East junction; would this have a bearing on this Master Plan? It was said that Network Rail has plans in place and this was good opportunity for future developments.
- Chair asked about the potential for bringing this back to Scrutiny in future. Officers said they were cautious but hopeful the funding could be found to implement the plans. This was initially likely to be a 'cocktail' of public sector funding.
- It was asked if there was to be a rapid transit system in Bristol, how that would interact with current plans. It was said it could either be at the lower end of the Friary or at the lower end of the ramp on the left; how transport links up is front-and-centre of the Master Plan.
- It was suggested that the Commission could in future undertake a joint session or piece of work with the West of England (WoE) Joint Scrutiny Committee to look at the West of England Combined (WECA) transport plans that are in the pipeline.
- It was said that during some previous projects such as this, some of the existing infrastructure had been removed and the city had therefore lost some of its history. It was asked if care will be taken this time to ensure that did not happen again. Officers said they agreed with the point being made and they had already produced some information about how to avoid that happening again.

9. Bristol City Centre - Core Retail and Leisure

The Director of Economy of Place introduced the item and said that things had moved on a lot from the draft plans produced in 2018. The presentation highlighted the changes and next steps and officers were very keen for scrutiny to have a role in shaping it.

The Senior Project Manager for the City Centre Development took Members through the published slides and added the following comments:

- Bristol City Centre is relatively resilient compared to some other centres across the country.
- Bristol is ranked 12th in the national rankings for retail. It was 27th before Cabot Circus opened.
- How people move around the city centre and use areas such as to shop, live and spend their leisure time has and will likely continue to change.
- People want an 'experience' now which calls for more than just shops.
- Access to Castle Park will be improved as part of the Plan.



- The proposed area with blue lines (on the slide) is emerging and still draft.
- This is a potential opportunity to increase pedestrianised areas such the 'old city'.
- Officers said they would welcome bringing the Framework back to scrutiny before any decisions were made

Members Questions and Comments:

- Members were interested in potentially making the 'old city' pedestrians only. It was said that mixed use (cars and shoppers sharing the same space) shopping areas don't really work. It was suggested that Broadmead could also be included. It was asked if there were any timescales for this. Officers said that nothing firm had been decided yet and discussions were on-going with shop owners and landowners about the proposals.
- A Member said that in his view the Haymarket and St James Barton Roundabout created a "massive barrier" across the middle of the city centre and asked if officers were looking at how that could be addressed i.e. traffic is just going through and not stopping. Officers said their intention was to improve the public realm but some of it was not going to be easy. The Castle Park changes were an opportunity to re-look at things there. Some would be short, medium and long-term changes but there will always need to be some access for some traffic.
- Another Member said they agreed with the earlier point about semi-pedestrianised areas not working and said people needed to feel safe or they wouldn't use them.
- It was asked what the unique selling points of the changes to the city centre were? For example, how do you get people that don't use it to start coming in; what will draw them in? Officers said the plan as it stands doesn't yet do that and agreed they need to get that right at the first stage and create a gravitational pull. Castle Park would become a leisure destination / experience going forward and it can then be used as a tool to draw more people in.
- The Chair asked if the policy of 'mixed uses' in the city centre would be maintained to bring more people to live in the city centre. It was said there would likely be another 11,500 new homes in the Centre by 2030 but that they were also still 'sense checking' what market is saying.
- Officers said they would respect the character of areas when making decision about changes. This was a great opportunity but there are also many issues to consider.
- It was requested that officers didn't neglect the smaller areas and those on the edge of the city centre. Also because as it was suggested that developers 'want to pinch bits'. It was asked how new and small businesses were going to be nurtured when areas such as Cabot Circus was mainly all large units and national chain stores. Officers said they expected things to change over time.
- It was said this was an opportunity for BCC to be bold. Yes many units were too big or too old and what was required was a master planning exercise. It was important to understand where secondary and tertiary properties were and where the scope was to bring people in. Broadmead was said to be very low density but had good potential for changes to be made, but the market wouldn't wait. Was it possible that Cabot Circus was giving an artificial ranking when there was in reality some slippage backwards?
- Officers said yes it was potentially City Centre living that was protecting the night time economy.
- Members suggested looking at some more good international examples such as those in Germany as well as Cardiff.



- Officers said they would return to the Commission when the Plans were more developed to ensure Members agreed and could feed into the process again. But in the meantime they would welcome hearing from the Commission Members about any further ideas they had.

The Commission thanked officers for their time and hard work.

10 Bristol Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, including River Avon Flood Strategy

The agenda item was introduced by the Flood Risk and Data Manager who took Members through the published presentation slides which included a summary of the work completed and key achievements on the two Strategies. The following key points were discussed:

- Officers said that Community Engagement in this subject currently was and has always been difficult. It was said to be the same situation across the world. Officers were interested to know if scrutiny could help with this in any way.
- A short discussion took place about the potential for flood defences to fail and how the Environment Agency and the Council were looking ahead to future scenarios and 'future proofing'. Examples were, if sea levels were to rise up much quicker than previously expected and the need to 'embed resilience' in Bristol.
- The Environment Agency's approach was now understood to be more directed towards more nature-based solutions. It was said that Bristol has a very 'artificial' City Centre and it was asked if nature could help. Officers said that nature could help on many things but not all, for example not tidal effects. The Council's focus was currently on 'greening' the urban realm and to influence the potential flooding issues where it can.
- It was said that the 'Avon area' is working well in partnership to promote schemes and good practice e.g. Frome in South Gloucestershire was doing some good work which would also benefit Bristol.
- Local Flood Wardens: drop-in sessions are happening but there was not enough traction. It was said that people generally don't get involved until something bad has happened.
- Members said that Area Committees were still used for a variety of local issues and asked if there was enough up-to-date information about flood risks and potential community engagement opportunities being communicated to them. It was said they were quite transport oriented but had previously undertaken some flood prevention planting and drainage projects that had been effective. Councillors thought it would be a good idea to contact them all again.
- Another Member said he wasn't completely sure what is being asked of communities but he did think it would be good idea if flood risk officers wanted to come speak with them in his area (Brislington). He said it was important to be clear about what was being asked of them.
- A Member of the public who was present at the meeting said it was possible that officers were 'missing a trick' with community groups. Adding that if officers were to draft some information most community groups would be happy to distribute it in their local areas. In their view people



would be interested although they wouldn't necessarily get straight on the phone but would find it interesting and it would raise a lot of awareness. This could be done across the city.

- River Avon Strategy: climate change assessments have meant officers have had to re-model the potential timelines and effects.
- All around the City there are lots of developments happening. How are the Council discussing these with our neighbouring local authorities and do they have good communication channels in place? Officers replied that planning regulations are in general quite stringent, for example with rainfall; developers must to show no increase in levels of run-off. The Council has representatives at developments to manage and control this. The regulations are constantly being monitored and reviewed.
- It was asked if the financial contributions from developers needed to contribute to more than run-off i.e. the impact of swell because cumulatively this must still be increased. Officers agreed there are very likely to be cumulative impacts. They also highlighted that in 2011, Defra had announced changes to the way funding would be allocated to flood and coastal defence projects. It was said that there is a lot of property in the city centre that was vulnerable. However, flood risk was in a much better place than it was in terms of funding and partnership work than it was previously.
- It was suggested that Temple Quarter needed to be looked at strategically rather than as individual developments so as to protect the existing property as well as future developments.
- It was asked if it would be more helpful if the Temple Quarter area was restored as a marsh instead. Officers said that they had previously considered strategic water storage i.e. using the harbour as a type of overflow 'sink'. But it was concluded that it was very unlikely to work and it thought that using the marsh probably wouldn't help either.
- One Member said that there had previously been discussions on installing tidal barriers; was this still a viable option? Officers said this option was still on the table but the costs would be very high. It would be a huge challenge especially taking into consideration the number of environmental issues that would also need to be overcome.

11 Scrutiny Work Programme

Members noted the work programme and were asked to send any suggestions for the next municipal year to the Chair of the Commission and Scrutiny Advisor.

CHAIR _____

