

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

2 March 2016 at 6.00pm



Members Present:-

Councillors Alexander, Bolton, Goulandris, Holland, Hopkins, Lovell, Melias, Mongon, Negus, Pearce, Telford.

Officers in Attendance:-

Nicola Yates – City Director, Max Wide – Strategic Director – Business Change, Alex Minshull – Sustainable City & Climate Change Manager, Andrea Dell – Service Manager, Policy, Research and Scrutiny, Lucy Fleming – Scrutiny Co-ordinator, Allison Taylor – Democratic Services.

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

These were made and it was noted that Audit Committee members had been invited to attend in relation to items 8, 9 & 10 on Green Capital 2015.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Ken Guy – Independent member on Audit Committee, Councillor Hickman and Councillor Means from the Audit Committee.

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Bolton referred to Item 9 – Review of European Green Capital 2015 - and declared that he had worked for Lifecycle which had applied for a neighbourhood grant.

4. Minutes – 4 February 2016.

The minutes of the **4 February 2016** were circulated to the Board. These were agreed as an accurate record.

Resolved – these minutes were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. Action Sheet – 4 February 2016.

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator reported that all outstanding actions had now been done.

6. Chair's Business

There was none.



6. Public Forum

The Commission received and noted the statements (a copy of the statements has been placed in the minute book (accessed via Democratic Services):

7. Bristol's Environmental Trends 2005 – 2014 (agenda Item No. 8)

The Committee received a report and presentation from the Sustainable City and Climate Change Manager which outlined the progress of Bristol's environmental trends based on the 12 topics set out by the European Green Capital Award scheme. During the discussion, the following points were raised:

The following points arose during discussion:-

- A Councillor was extremely disappointed to note the backwards trend recycling and gross waste amount figures had taken in the last two years. He also observed the trend in increased numbers of bus passengers, acknowledging that the GBBN had reduced costs and allowed better travel, he felt there was still some way to go and it was important to work out what caused the trend;
- A Councillor referred to noise pollution and particularly that caused by surface dressing on the Portway. He asked whether there were other forms of tarmac to reduce the noise pollution;
- A Councillor asked for further information on why Bristol was the most sustainable city and was informed that this was determined from the Core City group where Bristol had come out best in each key indicator where there was comparable data, about 6 of them. The Councillor observed there was no evidence to substantiate this for air emissions and noise pollution. He referred to energy consumption and asked for the drivers behind performance improvements save accepting the recession factor. He was informed that there were national and local factors that led to the figure. The local factors which had brought about savings were the domestic programmes run by the Council and what individuals had done. For businesses compared to the gross value added indicator of our economic activity, there had been a 40% increase over the last 5/6 years. There had therefore the economy had become more carbon efficient. Recession was a factor but productivity had been the stronger factor;
- The role of the Council with respect to businesses was limited. A number of programmes had been run to raise awareness and encourage change. One named 'Go Green' had been expanded in the 2015 programme;
- A Councillor referred to the increase in the use of public transport after a dip which correlated with a campaign which had brought about a reduction in fares and week passes and had gained cross-party support as well as support from the Mayor;
- A Councillor noted that this was a very high level report but suggested that it would have greater credibility if the report highlighted obvious reasons why figures had jumped ie. for renewable energy, the first wind turbines being installed in 2007.

Resolved – that OSMB notes the progress of Bristol's environmental trends based on the 12 topics set out by the European Green Capital Award scheme.



8. Review of European Green Capital 2015. (agenda item no. 9)

The Board received a report from the Sustainable City and Climate Change Manager which outlined Bristol's year as European Green Capital 2015 and gave an analysis of the realisation of the objectives for the programme. The Board received a short film showing the key events and activities during Bristol's Green Capital year. It also heard from the Chair of Bristol 2015. During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- A Councillor observed that in the past sustainable works had been totally disconnected from the Council's mainstream services and this had been a big problem. He noted that that there was no conflict between doing sustainable work and financial efficiency which had in the past been considered a barrier. In fact, most ethically sound companies do better than standard investments. He highlighted the important need to be innovative and bold if the Council wished to maintain a lead. He was disappointed that the hydrogen economy had slipped back when this Council had once led the way and this had affected jobs and air quality. He stated that the key to sustainable roll out was public involvement and referenced the work done with waste in the past and the public's understanding of what was being done;
- A Councillor stated that he had previously misjudged European Green Capital 2015. He had at first not liked the logo but now felt it was very recognised. He had had some concerns about some of the art installations but the whale on Millenium Square had brought fun to environmentalism. Ordinary people had become involved and children had become interested as a result of Bristol 2015 and there had therefore been a very positive impact;
- A Councillor referred to the significant increase in visitors to Bristol as reported by Destination Bristol and it was noted that the reason had been Bristol 2015. He also referred to the closing ceremony and the few protesters outside compared to the many volunteers inside and asked that it be placed on record his thanks for the thousands of volunteers who had worked mostly without reward and made a difference. This sentiment was supported unanimously by the Board;
- A Councillor stated that Bristol 2015 had been positive overall and a good thing for Bristol, particularly the grants in wards which had engaged young people. He believed there remained questions regarding its legacy. He had concerns regarding value for money which he noted would be considered in detail by the Audit Committee. His main concern was how the objectives for the year were measured. He observed that the numbers crossing a bridge to attend an event was a rather lose measurement. The number one objective had to be local empowerment and behaviour change and he was sure that this had happened but was concerned that there was little evidence in the report to support that. The Chair Bristol 2015 agreed that empowerment and behaviour change were key but felt it was a little premature to measure, 5 years being a natural period for measurement. However, he was sure that there were already small percentage changes in people's behaviour due to Bristol 2015. He reported that there had already been changes in investment, £9m this year as a result of 2015. The Sustainable City and Climate Change Manager added that the grant projects had been asked to report by the end of march 2016 and the information on 200 projects would be collated for September 2016 and provide a clearer picture regarding empowerment;
- A Councillor stated that it was important to continue to achieve what 2015 did so well but this needed to be based on sound information and he was concerned that some lessons had to be learned before the work could be driven forward. The fun would soon be forgotten and it was only what happened in the future and particularly with children that would count. Assurances



regarding commitment, resources and experience to drive forward were key for the next decade and beyond. ;

- A Councillor noted that the Labour administration had made the first application to be European Green Capital. They stated that not everybody equally reaped the benefits as the city was very divided. It was therefore not surprising that a ward such as hers, being one of the most deprived in the city, did not have the capacity to draw down funding and with hindsight it would have been helpful to spend some time capacity building in those areas. Whereas more affluent wards were able to bid and they would have done anyway. The Chair of Bristol 2015 acknowledged the concerns. He noted that efforts were made through Neighbourhood Arts Projects and Neighbourhood Grants with additional resources allocated to more deprived areas to address these issues, but that more could have been done. The Partnerships Director acknowledged this point and reported that this is being fed into a review of the city council's whole community grants process. He added that there had been 204 projects and 120 different organisations involved and some had already expanded to collaborate with each other. It was hoped to develop other opportunities for collaborative bidding with big lottery funding. It was also hoped to use successful organisations and target them to work with groups in less well represented areas. He emphasised that these organisations would help existing groups who had expertise in their areas and help move ideas forward;
- A Councillor noted that he felt that it seemed to take a long time to create the structures within the council to organise the programme. He also believed that a significant problem at the start from the approach taken by the initial director of European Green Capital 2015 which could have involved more people to make a positive contribution to the year..

Resolved:- the Board noted:-

- I. **the progress of the overall Green Capital Initiative;**
- II. **the progress against the objectives set for Bristol's year as European Green Capital 2015;**
- III. **the details of the Bristol 2015 Programme as summarised in this report.**

9. Green Capital - maintaining the momentum – presentation and discussion (agenda item no.10)

The Committee received a presentation from the Director, Bristol Futures, the Sustainable City and Climate Change Manager, the Strategic Resilience Officer and the Director Bristol Green Capital Partnership. During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- A Councillor noted that she was not aware of the role of Resilience Officer and that she had not been invited to any of the focus groups referred to in the presentation. She noted that she had not heard anything to address the greatest threat in terms of resilience and that was the division between the have and have not's. She asked where were the projects that took people the furthest away from the employment market into jobs. There was not even broadband across the city. She suggested that, in terms of legacy, if we were not doing enough to engage with the most deprived parts of the city, what is the point of doing the other things highlighted.



She reported she had not heard of the electric vehicles project and it appeared to her elected members were being ironed out of the picture. In response, she was informed that resilience work was being done on narrowing divides and reducing inequalities underpinned all their work. The Strategic Resilience Officer welcomed the opportunity to engage with Councillors and would do so in the future.;

- A Councillor referred to Bristol day and believed that it had been dominated by white, middle-aged, middle-class people. Sustainability had to be at the heart of all decision making. He therefore suggested that all reports have a sustainability assessment so that it could be given considered whenever a decision was taken. The Board noted that an eco-impact assessment was routinely done for key decisions;
- A Councillor referred to the Replicate Project but was disappointed that it was decided to invest 7/8m euros in East Bristol. There had been no consultation or communications on this and South Bristol was not given the opportunity to bid. Such funding would have been a wonderful opportunity to tackle deprivation. In response, the Board was informed that the Commission had set the criteria for a successful bid which was based on building on existing activities and opportunities already in place. There have been other projects that better suited the South of the City;
- A Councillor shared the concern at the lack of involvement across the Council. He expressed disappointment that hydrogen vehicles could not operate in Bristol as the infrastructure had been taken out and the council's approach to develop electricity was not as good as developing hydrogen mobility. In response, the Board heard that presentation was not intended to drill down to detail of projects but to report that after 2015 and there would be new opportunities to position the whole of the city for new investment and build on progress already made ;
- A Councillor echoed the previous comments regarding the have and have not's, adding that the focus of people living in deprived areas was not sustainable matters because of more pressing needs. However, he had seen a commitment from people living in those areas who were excellent champions of environmental activity and believed that a sense of empowerment was prevalent because of Green Capital and that more people were seeking to influence council decisions as a result. He believed the long term legacy would be many, interweaving strands and would carry on regardless of political support. The Sustainable City and Climate Change Manager replied that in previous quality of life surveys Redland, for example, had been at the top regarding levels of concern on climate change and Southmead at the bottom. However, the recently published survey showed Redland at same level whereas Southmead had a 17% increase in level of concern. This was the first year a marked change in concern levels had been seen so it was important to continue to work to help translate that concern to empowerment and action;
- A Councillor stated that the biggest issue going forward was credibility – it gave us credibility to bid for future funds and a greater chance of success.;
- A Councillor observed that this forum had not been the best one for deciding on how we create the legacy of Bristol 2015. He highlighted the need to consider how to change the Council's approach to build on the legacy and how decisions were made on funding and how to get impact in areas of the city which are more difficult to reach, how to get businesses to take action and how to harness energy of volunteers. He suggested that there be another opportunity to address these issues in the near future, about how we work with citizens and partners to improve people's lives from an environmental perspective;
- A Councillor reported that he had attended the Bristol Day to discuss the Resilience Strategy, referred to be the Strategic Resilience Office. He felt that it was an energetic day and that there were lots of people who were pushing in the right direction and that green capital had



helped to some extent with this. He considered that Councillors need to acknowledge concerns expressed about the 2015 programme and learn some lessons but to get on board with the future development and changes which need to be made in the city.

- The Chair supported the idea of a future session and asked that officers report back on how this be taken forward in the new municipal year. He also supported the sustainability assessment of Council reports. He warmly welcomed the development of the Resilience Plan. He referred to the large numbers of people who had participated or reached through the European Green Capital 2015 programme describing them as spectacular and that there was excellent reach in all age groups. He felt it would be a tragedy to squander this momentum and that we had a duty to continue. He suggested that there was a need to have a dedicated office to perpetuate the legacy.

Resolved:- to note the report and to propose a session in the new municipal year on how to build on the momentum of the European Green Capital year..

10. Scrutiny Resolution and Full Council Motion Tracker (agenda item no.11)

The Committee received a report from the Scrutiny Co-ordinator which summarised Scrutiny resolutions and Full Council motions, and progress to date.

Reference was made to the Full Council Motion – 10 November 2015 – Standing against the Trade Union Bill. The Strategic Director, Business Change confirmed that the City Council had not informed employees that they could no longer have their Union dues automatically deducted from their wages at this stage. However, legislation would require that in the future.

A Councillor referred to a Full Council Motion – 15 December 2015 - Making Avon pension fund a fossil-free fund (Motion A, Minute 70) and asked why the Mayor had not yet signed off the letter. The Scrutiny Co-ordinator agreed to report back on this.

Resolved:- that the report be noted.

11. Dealing with 'exempt' information. (agenda item no.12)

The Committee received a report from the Interim Service Director, Legal and Democratic Services which outlined the issues surrounding exempt information being received at scrutiny meetings. She stated that any Committee could receive exempt papers but the test for doing so was weighing up if the public interest was best served by keeping a report exempt or by making public. This was a tricky balancing exercise. She was responsible for taking this decision before papers were published but it was the Committee's decision if they chose to go into exempt session at the meeting. Of the 12 occasions this has happened this year, 10 have been partially exempt ie. as much information as possible was released in to the public domain. The initial principle was to disclose as much as possible. The impacts on the public purse needed to be at the forethought of members' minds when deciding to disclose. Training could be provided for this.

The following points arose from discussion:-



- A Commission Chair strongly objected to the amount of exempt documents coming before the Commission but it had still continued. He recalled an occasion where the Committee agreed to refer to things without referring to other things in order to retain the meeting in public session which he considered absurd and undemocratic. He believed that this report was conflicting as it refers to both the Committee making the decision and the Proper Officer. This was open to interpretation and lead to Councillors being unsure of their position. He asked why it was not possible to redact information so that it could be considered in public instead of producing one large document at a meeting and the committee having no choice but to keep it exempt. This was against the spirit of democracy. The public had a right to know what business was being conducted in their name. The degree of exclusion should be kept to a minimum. This report was clearly a position statement and he therefore recommended that Councillors be given much earlier input and an appreciation of what was sensitive and what was not, and then this could be separated out. The current situation meant that documents had already been circulated to informal briefings and become known as an exempt document. Earlier involvement from Councillors would potentially allow a document to be redacted from the start;
- The Chair suggested that greater clarity was needed and the report should be rewritten to reflect the need for exempt appendices rather than wholesale exempt documents. He also proposed that the induction training include training on this matter. The Interim Service Director, Legal and Democratic Services replied that the position was clear that at pre-publication stage it was the responsibility of the Proper Officer and at the meeting a decision for members. An adjournment could help clarify any issues before such a decision was taken. It was clear that more information was required on this matter at induction;
- A Councillor stated that the reputation of the Council was at stake if the public perceived information being hidden. He appreciated there was sensitive information that could not be made public but concurred with previous comments about democracy and public inclusion;
- A Councillor endorsed the comments of the previous Board members. He understood that the Proper Officer had the final decision regarding exempt papers but asked for a mechanism so that Councillors could have early input on such matters as it was too late at the meeting. The Interim Service Director, Legal and Democratic Services replied that the forum for this would be at the agenda planning meeting.

Resolved:- That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board request officers to arrange a training and briefing session on the issues set out in the report, both specifically for Scrutiny and also for all Members.

12. Date of next meeting – To be confirmed (agenda item no.13)

The Chair took the opportunity to thank all officers who had contributed to the work of the Board during this municipal year.

The meeting finished at 9.10pm

CHAIR _____

