

OSM met yesterday and wished to make the following submissions to cabinet.

A detailed report of the Medium Term Financial Plan Task and Finish Group is attached to this report. Members recorded their thanks to the Finance team who had done a great job supporting and informing the Group whilst under significant pressure of daily changes in the situation. Members felt this was an example of positive engagement with back bench councillors and particularly welcomed the openness of officers in sharing information.

OSM, in contrast, expressed concern around the ongoing challenge of the forward plan. We understand that the current situation is difficult for all concerned, but we feel there is no recognition of the role of scrutiny or how to make it workable. If we look at the forward plan published on 7th September, there were 7 new items to be tabled at the 6 October cabinet meeting. The narrative is insufficient for members to know how significant an item is and whether it is a normal procurement exercise or a more significant item requiring attention.

We can approach the lead officer on each item to find out more details, but it does not appear to be open and transparent and is not available to interested members of the public.

The only way we can be certain of the nature of the report is to read it when it is published 5 working days before the cabinet. It is impossible to scrutinise it in that time frame, so we are left having to guess which items we ought to be looking at.

If scrutiny is a fundamental part of the governance of the authority, it seems extraordinary that the selection of items for scrutiny has to be left to guesswork.

It remains a frustration that the support for scrutiny expressed by cabinet members and senior officers does not seem to manifest itself, in either the forward plan or the engagement of scrutiny, other than in the finance function.

OSM also wished to raise specific concerns on 3 items not on this cabinet agenda

- although a timetable for the Clean Air Zone decisions was tabled at the September cabinet meeting, no key decisions relating to this were in the forward plan published in September. Members wanted to be

involved as early as possible in the process and welcomed an offer from Mike Jackson to receive a report before the end of the calendar year

- members also recorded concerns about BE2020Ltd (formally Bristol Energy). Members wanted to see a quantification of the total loss to the authority, and a note on how this loss would be recognised in the Councils 2020 and 2021 accounts and the narrative that would accompany it. Members particularly wanted to understand the impact on the Councils reserves.
- City Leap Governance was also a matter for concern. Members want to see the plans for scrutiny of this venture before selection of the Joint Venture Partner. Members recognise the council we have to be involved in “agile” decision making but that this must not prevent the scrutiny of key financial and strategic decisions

Geoff Gollop

On behalf of OSM

6/10/20