



Corporate Strategy 2022 - 2027

Cabinet – 02/11/2021

Appendix Cii – Report of the Councillors'
Working Group on the Corporate Strategy
2022 – 2027



Councillors' Internal Working Group for the Corporate Strategy 2022 – 2027

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, cc Cabinet

Introduction

In July 2021, an internal working group of councillors was formed to contribute to the development of a refreshed Corporate Strategy for Bristol City Council, giving the perspective of elected Members and participating in co-design activities. The group worked to provide a level of embedded and informal scrutiny within the process including reviewing evidence, discussing emerging drafts, reviewing consultation plans and interim consultation results, considering measurement of the strategy, and providing general support and challenge to the process.

The Group met five times throughout July – September 2021, and its agendas are attached at Appendix A.

Its members were nominated by Party Group Leaders, with available spaces matching committee entitlement for the 2021/22 year:

- Councillor Carla Denyer, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (Chair) [Green]
- Councillor Amirah Cole [Labour]
- Councillor Geoff Gollop [Conservative]
- Councillor Katy Grant [Green]
- Councillor Alex Hartley [Liberal Democrat]
- Councillor Paula O'Rourke [Green]
- Councillor Steve Pearce [Labour]
- Councillor Mark Weston [Conservative]

Meetings

The Group met in virtual and hybrid format, with meetings taking place:

- 30 June 2021
- 14 July 2021
- 05 August 2021
- 25 August 2021
- 15 September 2021

Key contributions to the Corporate Strategy

The final draft Corporate Strategy has been directly influenced by feedback from this group, with notable contributions including:

- To achieve carbon neutrality by 2030, **higher and multi-faceted external investment** is required beyond the £1bn already planned for as part of City Leap. This is now reflected in the final draft (ENV1).
- **Measures in building and urban design to cool the city** are necessary to build climate resilience, and invest in infrastructure and systems which will protect us from climate change and shocks. This is now reflected in the commitment (ENV4).
- The differences between **climate resilience/adaptation and carbon reduction** were explored a use of terms clarified and updated (ENV1, ENV4)
- The ambitions around decarbonising homes, improving warmth and benefitting people's health should be expanded **to encompass private housing and be better aligned to recommendations from the Citizens' Assembly about financing and information**. Promoting suitable schemes to private homeowners, such as around retrofitting, and carbon reduction measures is now incorporated (HC2).



- Ensuring that we maintain a policy **ask for main line rail electrification** as part our commitment to improve physical and geographical connectivity. This is now included (TC1).
- **Enabling effective and democratic decision-making and scrutiny** as part of the Good Governance commitment (DO6).
- Including **outcome statements** for the ‘Development Organisation’ theme, which is now included.

Other internal groups that input into the Corporate Strategy during the drafting process were: Mayor and Cabinet, Corporate Leadership Board, Directors, Heads of Service, Managers’ Sounding Board, Staff Led Groups, Youth Mayors / Youth Council.

Reflections on the draft Corporate Strategy and development process

On behalf of the Group, the Chair notes:

- There was broad support for the content of the Corporate Strategy from the group, and the evidence and engagement used to develop it appeared sound and robust. Its focus on equality, equity, population health and social justice was welcomed. The document also provides a suitable focus on the city’s needs in relation to recovery from COVID-19 as well as other pressing challenges including the climate and ecological emergencies.
- Members supported the realignment of Themes to match the One City Plan; the introduction of Building Blocks; and the mapping these and the Sustainable Development Goals across intersecting priorities.
- Some members felt that the high-level nature of the document made it “hard to disagree with” and had concerns about the ability to deliver its high aspirations, meaning that the next level of detail within the council’s planning framework would be vital. Members will see this in the forthcoming annual Business Plan 22/23.
- The group welcomed the use of qualitative as well as quantitative evidence used to inform the strategy, including citizen comments from the annual Quality of Life survey and from Bristol’s first Citizens’ Assembly process; and political inputs across all manifestos from the recent local elections.
- Members recognised that there are many competing priorities and acknowledged that all of them felt valid, but could create challenges in bringing sufficient dedicated focus from the council on key areas.
- Some members felt that Equality and Inclusion were well threaded throughout the document, but sustainability less so. Views were expressed that a ‘gender’ lens might be usefully applied more in the strategy, as well as more emphasis on applying commitments to people with disabilities. Officers have sought to strengthen this in updates made following the public consultation, provided in the newer version to be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.
- The merits of identifying specific equality groups and protected characteristics in relation to each Priority was discussed, and members acknowledged the intention of E&I as a ‘Building Block’ made this implicit across Priorities. It was acknowledged that ‘listing’ groups every time could feel tokenistic, and would increase risks of oversights or disparities as to who each Priority is ‘for’. Members appreciated that the majority of Priorities will include further



assessment of all equality and inclusion considerations as more detailed delivery plans are developed.

- Members proposed that the document should incorporate actively the role of Bristol in building an effective regional presence through key relationships, such as Western Gateway, WECA, West of England and with national Government and include this as part of our commitments to building a ‘Development Organisation’.
- Members provided considerable contributions to the language used throughout the document. This was useful for ensuring the final draft accurately reflects the council’s intentions. A view was expressed that the language was sometimes too ‘bullish’, and more could be done to acknowledge the issues the council faces. The use of plainer language was raised and the balance between this and the need for technical accuracy and ensuring staff/management understanding of the document was considered. Officers offered many revisions to simplify ‘Priority’ descriptions and move closer to making the document more accessible to lay-people.
- The consultation process was proportionate in terms of scale and cost, with Members able to contribute ideas for ways to promote it and encourage uptake. However, response levels were initially disappointing and whilst the final rate is in keeping with many consultations of a similar nature, the under-representation of some demographic groups and Wards should be carefully considered when interpreting results.
- Members engaged with measuring performance and agreed with Officers that this needs further development work to create a strong performance framework in coming months, and that high-level ‘insight statements’ (summarising performance against a range of targets within each Theme) would be more suitable to include in the Corporate Strategy document than detailed Key Performance Indicators and targets. Member oversight of the performance framework and target setting was considered to be important going forwards.
- Members welcomed the pro-activity of Officers in forming the working group and inviting cross-party collaboration and embedded scrutiny within the Corporate Strategy process.

Councillor Carla Denyer

Chair, Councillor’s Internal Working Group for the Corporate Strategy 2022 – 2027

07/10/2021

Officer Response

We have been pleased to work closely with members as we updated our Corporate Strategy, and we found that this way of working brought fresh perspectives to the process and helped build a deeper mutual understanding about the Corporate Strategy, its purpose, and the many complexities involved in creating such a wide-ranging strategy.

Officers have carefully considered the comments of the group throughout the process, and this has directly influenced many parts of the strategy. It has also provided useful input for us to consider in future, particularly as we work on detailed planning at a departmental level and do more work to create a new approach to measuring and managing performance against the Corporate Strategy.

Throughout the process there has been a constructive, respectful and thoughtful engagement from the group, and this has helped us develop a stronger strategy and recognise where there is more work still to do.

Tim Barrett



Director: Policy, Strategy and Partnerships
07/10/2021

