

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

27 October 2022 at 9.00 am



Members Present:-

Councillors: Tony Dyer (Chair), Mark Bradshaw (Vice-Chair), Geoff Gollop, Tim Kent, Steve Pearce, Barry Parsons and David Wilcox

1 Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed the Members and attendees. Housekeeping information was provided.

2 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Brenda Massey.

3 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were received.

4 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

Resolved; that the minutes of the meeting dated 7th July 2022 be approved.

5 Chair's Business

The Chair welcomed Stephen Peacock to his first meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board as Chief Executive of Bristol City Council.



6 Public Forum

Public Forum questions and statements can be viewed [here](#).

Jen Smith submitted a question through Public Forum on the allegations of Council officer involvement in collecting social media information of parents and the progress of a Freedom of Information request made in regard to this. A written response was provided. A supplementary question was asked requesting an explanation of the timescale for the response, given that a significant proportion of the information requested had already been provided to different individuals and avenues in different formats. This supplementary question was noted by the Chair and agreed to be submitted to the appropriate Officers for a response.

Councillor Barry Parsons presented two questions submitted by Suzanne Audrey. Officer responses were presented by the Chair and the written responses are available in the Public Forum pack.

Jen Smith presented a statement on the actions of Bristol City Council in relation to alleged surveillance of local parents.

Clive Stevens provided a Public Forum statement which was included in the Public Forum pack regarding Bristol City Council governance arrangements.

Cllr Gollop presented a statement regarding the ability to scrutinise Bristol City Council companies accounts.

Resolved; That OSMB note the Public Forum; and, that a response is provided to the supplementary Public Forum question raised by Jen Smith.

7 Updates from task/working groups

Climate Change

Cllr Grant provided an update on the progress of the Climate Change Scrutiny Working Group. The first meeting had taken place with the Terms of Reference agreed. A meeting scheduled for November 2022 was intended to provide further orientation and briefing for Members.

It was agreed to provide the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board with the Terms of Reference for this group.

Finance

Cllr Gollop provided an update on the progress of the Finance Scrutiny Working Group. The working relationship between Officers and the Scrutiny working group had been excellent and the Financial Team was praised for their work. The previous Medium Term Financial Plan had been examined at an earlier stage and the group continued to meet to consider the budget. There was recognition of the financial



challenges that faced Bristol City Council, and it was felt that Members benefitted from the working group process. A comment had been made by the group that a greater spend on an 'invest to save' basis would be recommended, but recognised that the priorities were ultimately down to Bristol City Council to make. The Chief Executive reiterated the good working relationship between the group and Officers, and recognised that 2022 had been a particular challenge.

A Member queried how the delay to the announcement of the UK Government budget to mid-November was expected to impact the Bristol City Council position. Cllr Gollop stated that the working group recognised that the positions could move quickly and accepted that any projection could only be expected to be the best estimate of the time. The Chief Executive stated that the delay to the announcement should not impact the timescale of the Bristol City Council work, but that the proposals would be made against a backdrop of uncertainty.

Libraries

Councillor Barry Parsons provided an update to the progress of the Libraries Working Group commenting that the first meeting was planned for the 28th November where the scope would be considered.

Resolved; That the OSMB noted the progress of the Scrutiny working groups; and, that the Terms of Reference of the Climate Change working group be provided to OSMB.

8 City Office update

The Head of City Office introduced the One City team and presented the submitted report. The report formed part of a general update around changes to governance (such as the formation of a Governance Board and new Terms of Reference) and included proposals Councillor engagement with the One City approach.

Members welcomed the report and the item was opened for discussion.

It had been suggested that the Governance Board would meet four times per year following the structure of other Committees, with the minutes and papers made public. An emphasis was put on promoting transparency.

It was noted that the One City website contained contradictory information about how Councillors could attend Board meetings. It was clarified that there was no requirement to 'apply' and attendance from any Councillor would be welcomed. The current meetings were not yet fully public due to resourcing. It was noted that communications around One City and meeting attendance could be improved; this was acknowledged by the team with the intention to improve this.

The One City team was praised for efficiency for the number of meetings supported in consideration of the limited staffing resource.



A Member suggested that public attendance at meetings could be improved by providing greater transparency and accessibility around meeting details on the website. It was acknowledged that the website was limited in this regard due to funding. However, some improvement work was being undertaken with the Bristol Design team. It was suggested that a Google Calendar of meetings could provide some benefit; this was noted.

A Member suggested using political support officers to improve communications and messaging with Councillors. This was noted.

A Member noted a general lack of understanding of One City and its aims amongst Councillors. Officers acknowledged this and reiterated that improvement in communication was needed; an All Member Briefing had been scheduled for November 2022 and there were plans for a workshop to refresh the One City Plan.

Work had been undertaken with the Mayor's Office to ensure that aims were mapped closely against the Corporate Plan, and the One City approach to working was a priority for the Council.

It was queried why it had taken so long to set up a Governance Board. This was due to staff resourcing, which was particularly impacted by Covid. Officers emphasised its importance in reflecting partners across the city.

A Member noted the Task and Finish Groups as a means to deliver work and asked about the mechanisms for Councillors to participate. Officers stated that expression of interest was the primary means, and that the intended work to improve communications should support Members to know more about these groups and what would be involved.

It was queried whether Ward Councillors would be approached where groups were taking on geographically specific work. While this situation had not yet arisen it was agreed that this would be the preferred approach as this would meet the One City approach of improving oversight of work across the city.

Officers were thanked for their work. It was agreed that OSMB would consider and respond to the proposals.

Resolved; That OSMB collates further responses to the proposals to submit to the City Office; and, that individual comments be sent to the One City email address at one.city@bristol.gov.uk.

9 Bristol City Council governance arrangements - update

Cllrs Holland and Bartle presented the report on the progress of the Committee Model Working Group in developing proposals for a Committee model of governance for Bristol City Council. Terms of Reference for the group were provided.



The emphasis on partnership working as outlined in the previous item on the One City approach was welcomed.

Thanks were given to those who had participated in the working group as well as those who attended the Member Briefing held on 12th October 2022.

Work undertaken included learning sessions with the Local Government Association, and a session with the outgoing Chief Executive (Mike Jackson). These sessions had proved useful.

Members were invited to discuss the report. The Chair noted that proposals for Scrutiny mechanisms would be of particular interest. Cllr Holland emphasised that the working group had not yet agreed on specific proposals as the work undertaken had focused on learning lessons and information gathering. The next planned meeting of the working group intended to look at decision principles more closely. Call-in was noted as a mechanism that would need careful consideration under a Committee model.

The working group had met with Sheffield Council to advise on a move to a Committee model which had proved very useful. However, key differences between the two authorities were noted. This included that Sheffield had invested significant sums in making the transition and in Bristol the starting position was that the new model must be 'cost neutral.'. Sheffield was also able to trial a new system before implementation but in Bristol the options for this were far more limited due to the legal parameters relating to the Mayoral model.

The decision not to make the minutes of the working group public was queried. Representatives of the working group confirmed they had considered and voted on this matter at their first meeting and agreed not to publish the minutes in order to allow for wide ranging discussions. While this was considered appropriate for the early stages, the group was amenable to reconsidering this as work moved forward.

A Member queried whether the communications strategy for public engagement would be sufficiently supported and was advised that whilst officer time needed to be met from existing resources, plans were progressing well. The Board noted that a range of activities were underway, including some 'focus group' style community events in November. A webpage and email address for the Committee Model Working had also been established.

The working group representatives were thanked for the report.

Resolved; That the OSMB noted the progress of the Committee Model Working Group.

1 Inclusion in mainstream education - Report from People Scrutiny Commission working 0 group

The Chair of the People Scrutiny Commission presented the report from the working group into inclusion in mainstream education.



Fifteen high level recommendations had been made and these were highlighted. Discussions had been held with schools, which were particularly receptive to the recommendations around a city-wide review of inclusions policies, and inclusion 'tables'. The positive effect of trauma informed teacher training was noted as impressive.

It was noted that no specific funding had been allocated to support the implementation of the recommendations. However innovative practice such as peer to peer support groups was hoped to be effective. The working group hoped to encourage schools to adopt and / or keep mentoring systems as a means to save money within the system.

Cllr Craig, Deputy Mayor with responsibility for Children's Services, Education and Equalities, welcomed the working group report and recommendations, and suggested there would be value in looking beyond schools as the means for solutions. The interaction of schools with external partners was an area for good practice. A pilot that aimed for 100% inclusion was being developed in discussion with the Youth Mayors and three academy trusts. A conference was being organised with areas of discussion which included a number of the recommendations from this report.

It was recognised that the Local Authority and Schools could come under additional pressures in the near future. The Chair of OSMB highlighted the need to identify and encourage good practice where found.

Dan Berlin, former Scrutiny Advisor, was thanked for his support to the working group.

Resolved; That OSMB note the report.

1 Quarterly Performance Report (Quarter 1 2022/23)

1

The Strategic Intelligence & Performance Manager presented the quarterly report. It was noted that this report was different to previous iterations as it now focused on the seven themes of the business plan aligned with the corporate strategy. The intention was also to streamline reports for the future.

The OSMB Chair noted that to make the best use of Officer time the reports would be examined within the relevant Commission meetings, with comments and questions raised in advance to identify the areas OSMB wish to focus on in the meeting.

Members welcomed the changes but noted that it was difficult to see detailed trend change over time, as comparative historical data is not fully shown in the report. The Director of Policy, Strategy and Digital noted this; there was an intention to develop a dashboard that could visualise this data which was on hold while funding was established.

It was noted that some actions did not have a performance metric attached, and completion would therefore be decided by the action lead. The Strategic Intelligence & Performance Manager noted that Actions are not aligned to Metrics in the Business Plan, as they are intentionally measuring different



aspects in order to give a fuller picture against each Priority, and he confirmed that there was no specific metric aligned to the action on SEND queried.

A Member highlighted an example of staff sickness days having been identified as high risk for a number of years, and queried whether targets were achievable. The Director of Policy, Strategy and Digital agreed that while there was significant annual input from Scrutiny and Cabinet around performance metrics the discussion around target setting was led more by Directors. The suggestion for greater Scrutiny involvement around targets was noted.

Cllr Wilcox raised some questions in advance of the provided report, and these were noted for action by Performance Officers. It was confirmed that written responses would be published as an appendix to the minutes in due course.

Resolved; That Scrutiny Commission-specific Performance reports be circulated in advance in order to obtain written responses or attendance from relevant Officers; and, that the questions and responses provided regarding the Q1 2022-23 Performance report be published alongside the OSMB minutes.

1 Corporate Risk Management Report (Quarter 2 2022/23)

2

It was noted that the Risk Report would be examined in Commission meetings for Directorate specific questions.

A Member queried why risk CR29 had been lowered as this conflicted with his understanding of a limited staffing resource. The Director of Policy, Strategy and Digital stated that the restructure of ICT was an active conversation, and an increase of resource was being looked in to.

A Member identified risk CR49 as an example where it was unclear whether the risk had dropped due to mitigating actions or a reclassification of risk and suggested that a commentary around this would be useful. The Director of Policy, Strategy and Digital confirmed that this risk had been reclassified, and noted the wider point regarding context.

As a point of best practice it was recommended that Commission agendas be structured to hold Performance and Risk items at the start of meetings to make the best use of Officer time and allow sufficient time for discussion.

1 Work Programme

3

It was noted that future Board dates had not been scheduled, but that dates would be arranged once the sequence of items going to Cabinet was known.



Members were requested to indicate their availability to attend the Commission specific budget scrutiny sessions that would be taking place on 22nd and 23rd November.

Cllr Gollop reiterated the concern raised in the Public Forum statement regarding the Bristol City Council companies accounts and requested that the companies accounts be presented to Scrutiny alongside the historic budget projections at the planning stage, with an explanation of any differences. This was put to a vote and unanimously agreed.

Resolved; That a request is made to Bristol City Council companies to present their accounts alongside the historic budget projections.

1 Mayor's Forward Plan (standing item)

4

No comments were made on the published Mayors Forward Plan. It was noted that the next publication was expected on 8th November 2022.

**1 Minutes from the WECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee - for information (standing
5 item)**

The WECA minutes were noted for information.

Meeting ended at 12 noon

