

Public Forum

Committee Model Working Group

31st March 2023



Questions	
Number	Name
PQ 01	Suzanne Audrey
PQ 02	
PQ 03	Councillor Martin Fodor
PQ 04	
PQ 05	Councillor David Wilcox
PQ 06	
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PQ 08	

Suzanne Audrey

Q1. At your previous meeting decisions were made about scrutiny. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend that meeting as I was away. There have been concerns about scrutiny in Bristol. Please can you explain how scrutiny will be improved with the proposed new arrangements compared with the current system under an elected mayor?

A1. Members have agreed that the core functions of Scrutiny i.e. to consider decisions and undertake policy development, can be conducted effectively in the Policy Committees. This will prevent the duplication that would arise from two separate groups of politically proportionate Councillors looking at the same information in different places and enable Councillors to have oversight of decisions at every stage. However, in recognition of the possibility that some decisions may still benefit from additional review, Members have agreed that a cross party Escalation Panel will be established to consider matters if there are concerns that a decision is not being made in accordance with the principles outlined in Article 14 of the Council's Constitution. For further details please see the minutes from our previous meeting and also the debate at the Full Council meeting on 14th March 23, which is available via the webcast on our website.



Q2. In making decisions about the number and responsibilities of committees, are you also able to incorporate factors relating to the composition of those committees e.g., gender balance?

A2. Each Group will be responsible for making appointments to the Policy Committees once they're established, which will be communicated by the Group Whips. In doing so, the Groups will attempt to ensure diverse representation on Committees where possible, subject to factors such as Members' availability.

Councillor Martin Fodor

Q3. There are various budgets and functions needed by every local authority, e.g. press team, external and internal comms, consultation and engagement work, international links, policy advice for the leadership and dealing with contact from residents, partners and stakeholders. In Bristol much has been centralised into the Mayor's office. Please itemise all the functions, teams, and separate budgets in the Mayor's office for Financial year 2023-24 and beyond, i.e., identify details for those which are still in the council budget for Financial Year 2024-25 onwards.

A3. The 23/24 budget was approved by Full Council in February 23 and includes details of the Executive Office budget, which includes the Mayor's Office and is part of the Legal and Democratic Services division. The other areas that you mention sit within the Policy and Strategy division. As part of the development of the budget for 24/25 we will be reviewing the Executive Office/Mayor's Office budget.

Q4. What is known about core cites and comparator authorities about their arrangements and budgets for such teams and functions inc. noting which governance arrangements each has.

A4. Every Council manages its own staffing and budgets differently depending on the individual circumstances. We understand the organisation of staff and associated budgets varies significantly in comparator Councils.

Councillor David Wilcox

Q5. On March the 16th DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) published new guidance about the devolution accountability framework:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-accountability-framework>

Details: The English Devolution Accountability Framework delivers on the Levelling Up White Paper commitment to publish a new accountability framework to apply to all English institutions with devolved powers. This is part of the process of ensuring local accountability and focuses on ensuring that mayors and other local leaders are subject to robust effective scrutiny by local politicians and an informed public. The English Devolution Accountability Framework is an element of the broader Local Government Accountability Framework which applies to all local authorities, including combined authorities.

Can the members of the committee assure us that this document will be factored into the design of the scrutiny system for a committee model-based council?



A5. This document refers to devolved powers, which in Bristol sit with the West of England Combined Authority. However, scrutiny within the Committee model will be embedded into the Policy Committees and Members will ensure that best practice arrangements, as set out in the document, will be followed.

Q6. How does the council interact with holding companies, e.g., Bristol Waster and joint ventures, e.g. City Leap?

A6. The Council has an interface with its wholly owned subsidiary companies through the Shareholder Liaison service which supports the Council's shareholder, as well as through client teams in relevant service areas that manage contractual arrangements with Bristol Waste and Goram Homes. City Leap is a joint venture, and the Council is a 50% shareholder. The relationship with the joint venture is through the City Leap client team, which is based in the Growth and Regeneration directorate.

A7. How does the committee-based council define policy and interact with the West of England Combined Authority?

A7. Members will be considering these matters further at their meetings in June (corporate policies) and July (external relationships).

Q8. How the committee-based council will interact with the Chief Executive and Senior Management team, and how will disputes about conflicting policies be resolved?

A8. Members will interact with the Chief Executive and Senior Officers in a variety of ways in the Committee Model. In Local Government, Elected Representatives set the strategic direction and policies of the Council, which are then delivered by officers.

