

## Committee Model Working Group Minutes

Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

**Attendees:** Councillor Jenny Bartle, Councillor Geoff Gollop, Councillor Nicola Beech, Councillor Marley Bennett, Councillor Richard Eddy, Councillor Helen Holland, Councillor Tim Kent, Councillor Lorraine Francis, Councillor Heather Mack (substituting for Councillor Makawi), Councillor Steve Pearce, and Councillor Guy Poultney.

**Also in attendance:** Councillor Ellie King, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities, and Councillor Tom Renhard, Cabinet Member for Housing Delivery and Homes.

### 1. Welcome, Introductions, and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed those present and introductions were made.

### 2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Makawi who was substituted by Councillor Mack.

### 3. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

### 4. Minutes from the previous meetings and decisions log

The minutes of the meetings on 27<sup>th</sup> January and 24<sup>th</sup> February 2023 were approved as a correct record.

Members noted the decision log.

### 5. Public Forum

The following public forum questions were received for the meeting. There were no public forum statements.

#### Questions (and answers)

No.	Name	Question
PQ 01	Suzanne Audrey	<p><b>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?</b></p> <p>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</p>

		debate at the Full Council meeting on 14 <sup>th</sup> March 23, which is available via the webcast on our website.
PQ 02	Suzanne Audrey	<p><b>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?</b></p> <p>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.</p>
PQ 03	Councillor Martin Fodor	<p><b>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.</b></p> <p>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.</p>
PQ 04	Councillor Martin Fodor	<p><b>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.</b></p> <p>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.</p>
PQ 05	Councillor David Wilcox	<p>Q5. On March the 16<sup>th</sup> DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) published <a href="#">new guidance about the devolution accountability framework</a>.</p> <p><b>Details:</b> 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.</p> <p><b>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?</b></p> <p>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.</p>
PQ 06	Councillor David Wilcox	<p><b>Q6. How does the council interact with holding companies, e.g., Bristol Waster and joint ventures, e.g. City Leap?</b></p> <p>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</p>

		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.
PQ 07	Councillor David Wilcox	<b>Q7. How does the committee-based council define policy and interact with the West of England Combined Authority?</b> A7. Members will be considering these matters further at their meetings in June (corporate policies) and July (external relationships).
PQ 08	Councillor David Wilcox	<b>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?</b> 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.

The following information was provided in response to supplementary questions:

- The arrangements for the Escalation Panel were yet to be agreed, although it was likely to be similar to how 'call in' currently operated, which could be requested by any five Members.
- The members of the public who attended the community engagement events in November 23 had been informed that public meetings of the Committee Model Working Group were now taking place.
- Roles and responsibilities of Members would be discussed at the 28<sup>th</sup> April 23 meeting of the Committee Model Working Group, with partnership arrangements on 28<sup>th</sup> July 23.

## **6. Committee Structure; to determine the number of Committees and their general responsibilities**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services provided a brief introduction to the report, advising that three potential models had been provided for illustrative purposes and Members were now asked to clarify their preferred option. During the ensuing discussion, the following points were made:

- Policy Committees could delegate matters to sub-committees. Membership of Subgroups could be any Councillor and did not need to be taken from the parent body. Matters could also be addressed via Task Groups, Working Groups and Inquiry Days.
- Consideration should be given to the remit of each Policy Committee to ensure balanced workloads.
- There were several cross-cutting issues of significant importance such as public health, climate change and equalities that needed to be given appropriate attention in the Policy Committees.
- Members agreed that flexibility was important, and the remit of the Policy Committees may need to be regularly reviewed to ensure the best outcomes.
- The Committee confirmed that all items that currently go to Full Council should continue to do so in the new model. It was reiterated that decisions currently made by elected Members should remain political decisions. Members noted that further discussion was required about how officer delegated decisions would operate, including the options for Member oversight, but the prevailing view was that use of this mechanism should not be increased in the new model.

Following the initial discussion, Members agreed that the Policy Committees should broadly reflect the seven Corporate Themes as outlined in the [Council's Corporate Strategy 2022-2027](#), with the exception that the 'Effective Organisational Development' theme would become the 'Strategy & Resources Policy Committee'. Details as follows:

- |                                 |                             |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Children & Young People      | 5. Homes & Communities      |
| 2. Economy & Skills             | 6. Strategy & Resources     |
| 3. Environment & Sustainability | 7. Transport & Connectivity |
| 4. Health, Care & Wellbeing     |                             |

Members went on to state that:

- The Strategy & Resources Committee would be the same as the other Policy Committees, with all seven reporting to Full Council. Membership would need to be politically proportionate, and the options for this wouldn't be known until after the election in 2024, although the working assumption was nine Councillors. Due to scale of work required in relation to budget matters, it was noted that this may need to be picked up via a sub-Committee.
- The list of current Cabinet Member responsibilities and decisions should be mapped against the Corporate Themes and brought back to the next meeting to enable the Committee to identify any gaps and consider the approach to cross cutting topics.
- Members discussed the frequency of meetings and agreed that the indicative frequency should be every 6-8 weeks, depending on the Committee and level of business.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- **That there will be seven Policy Committees based on the Council's Corporate Themes all reporting to Full Council, but the 'Effective Organisational Development' theme would become the 'Strategy & Resources Policy Committee'. Further details to be agreed at the CMWG's meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> April 23.**
- **Policy Committees could delegate decisions to Sub Groups, membership of which could be any Councillor and did not need to be taken from the parent body.**
- **That the indicative frequency of Policy Committees would be every 6-8 weeks depending on volumes of business.**

#### **7. Stakeholder engagement feedback**

Councillors Bartle and Gollop advised that they had recently attended the following meetings to discuss the work of the Committee and engage with partners.

- City Gathering
- Mayor's Community Leaders Forum
- Bristol Women's Commission (*also attended by Committee Members*)
- Bristol Disability Equality Commission

Attendance at other Groups was planned and updates would be brought back in due course.