

Committee Model Working Group Minutes

Friday 28th April 2023

Attendees: Councillor Jenny Bartle, Councillor Geoff Gollop, Councillor Nicola Beech, Councillor Marley Bennett, Councillor Richard Eddy (left at 11.45am), Councillor Gary Hopkins (arrived at 10.30am), Councillor Helen Holland, Councillor Tim Kent, Councillor Lorraine Francis, Councillor Heather Mack (substituting for Councillor Makawi), Councillor Steve Pearce, and Councillor Guy Poultney.

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 meeting on 31st March 2023 were approved subject to:

- The inclusion of Councillor Gary Hopkins in the list of attendees
- It was agreed that the discussion around the need to ensure all Cabinet Member portfolios were incorporated into the Policy Committees, particularly in relation to cross cutting areas had not been adequately captured.

Members noted the decision log.

RESOLVED: That the minutes from the previous meeting be approved, subject to the amendments above.

5. Public Forum

The following public forum questions and statements were received for the meeting.

Questions (and answers)

No.	Name	Question
PQ 01	Dan Ackroyd	Q1. Meetings in Bristol City Council have a recurring problem with senior council members talking out of turn, to talk over other people, and currently the people chairing meetings seem to take no action against this disruption. What changes are going to be made to how meetings are run to make this less of an issue under the committee system? A1. This is a question for the Committee Members to answer.

PQ 02	Clive Stevens	<p>Q2. Agenda item 4 - decisions log: In the February sessions you decided to constitute an Escalations Panel. This was in response to issues about scrutiny and ensuring decision making is to the best benefit of the public as a whole. I do not see from the Work Programme that you have allocated time for further discussion about this valuable new addition to Bristol City Council's system of governance. Could you consider including time for further discussion and decisions please to refine the workings of the Escalations Panel? (I would be very happy to furnish some examples of why it is an important addition to the Committee System).</p> <p>A2. In July 23, the CMWG will be agreeing the remainder of their Work Programme for 23/24. Items will include consideration of any areas, such as the Escalation Panel, where more details may be required before redrafting or preparing the relevant parts of the Constitution can commence.</p>
PQ 03	Clive Stevens	<p>Q3. Agenda item 7 – Roles and Responsibilities of Councillors: There doesn't appear to be any mention in the current report of councillors' requirements to scrutinise the information provided to them. Given that you have decided to build scrutiny into the job tasks of each committee, could you consider adding this job to committee members please?</p> <p>A3. Members of the CMWG are invited to share their views on this suggestion.</p>
PQ 04	Clive Stevens	<p>Q4. Agenda item 7 - Appendix A part 6 - Chair of a Policy Committee – Generic Chairs' Responsibilities. (Para 2, top of page 8 of 11). This paragraph requires the chair of a policy committee to be impartial. I don't think this is possible in many cases and could become grounds for challenge. The chair needs to be fair and run a meeting in such a way as to facilitate open discussions etc. Clearly a chair mustn't be pre-determined but I don't think they need to pretend to be impartial, being fair is sufficient. Please consider the use of the word impartial in that specific clause?</p> <p>A4. The Nolan Principles state that 'holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.' Therefore, use of the term impartial is consistent.</p>
PQ 05	Clive Stevens	<p>Q5. Agenda item 7 - Appendix A part 6 - Chair of a Policy Committee – Generic Chairs' Responsibilities. (Para 2, top of page 8 of 11).</p> <p>In the future you may decide you need to add the requirement that a chair allows a minority report (or however you call it) from a few councillors on a Policy Committee to go to the Escalations Panel. Could you confirm with the Monitoring Officer that an amendment like this could be added in at a later date please?</p> <p>A5. Members have not yet finalised the arrangements for the Escalation Panel and will consider this in due course.</p>
PQ 06	Suzanne Audrey	<p>Q6. The paper on the roles and responsibilities of councillors seems to focus on the practicalities of who does what, and that is obviously important. There is some reference to 'high standards of ethical conduct', but there is nothing in the paper to say what those standards are. Is it possible to include a paragraph referring to the 'Nolan principles' and Bristol City Council's Member Code of Conduct?</p> <p>A6. Members of the CMWG are invited to share their views on this suggestion.</p>
PQ 07	Suzanne Audrey	<p>Q7. I see that the current member Code of Conduct states: This code of conduct is to be signed immediately by you upon being sworn office and this will be done by the Monitoring Officer. What training is provided to councillors about the content and meaning of the member Code of Conduct, and could it be improved under the new committee system?</p> <p>A7. All Councillors are provided with training on the Code of Conduct as part of their induction and we will be working with Members to design the training programme for 2024 in due course.</p>

Statements

Number	Name
PS 01	Suzanne Audrey
PS 02	David Redgewell
PS03	Clive Stevens
PS04	Martin Fodor

The following information was provided in response to supplementary questions:

- A comprehensive Member Induction Programme will be delivered to the 2024 cohort of Members which will include sessions on chairing skills training and the Code of Conduct.
- Attendees were reminded that all Members sign the Member Code of Conduct, and the Monitoring Officer is available to provide advice and guidance when required. It is the responsibility of Members to ensure all appropriate interests are declared.
- Committee Chairs are required to ensure that any disruption in meetings is kept to a minimum, and that Members are working as a cohesive group.
- The Escalation Panel would be discussed in further detail at a later meeting, to include consideration of the composition and how decisions will be referred.

RESOLVED: That the public forum be noted.

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

The Head of Democratic Engagement provided a brief introduction to the report and reminded the Committee of what was discussed at the previous meeting. The Group went onto consider the report, commenting as follows:

- The responsibilities of each Policy Committee as set out were broadly acceptable, however, there were concerns about the need to ensure public health was given sufficient prominence. In view of this, it was agreed that there should be an eighth Policy Committee 'Public Health and Communities' and the 'Homes and Communities' Policy Committee would be changed to 'Homes and Housing Delivery.' It was noted that this would increase the number of seats each Group was required to fill, however, it was also noted that not all Policy Committees would need to meet with the same frequency.
- The Group heard from a Councillor on the need for the Health and Wellbeing Policy Committee to have a clear focus on Adult Social Care, as this was where the majority of the Council's budget was utilised. The Group was reminded of the statutory requirement to have a separate Health and Wellbeing Board, made up of Members and external partners.
- Members discussed the option of establishing any standing Sub-Committees and agreed that from the outset there should be one relating to budget matters, which would report to the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee, with another covering Health, which would report to the Public Health and Communities Policy Committee. Any other Sub-Committees would be agreed in due course.

- Consideration was given to local decision making with differing views about if and when the current arrangements should be reviewed and potentially expanded. Members noted that this would be subject to in-depth discussion at their meeting on 26th May 23.
- It should be noted that the Local Plan Working Group would be retained in the new model.
- The Group agreed that a forum should exist for all Policy Committee Chairs and senior officers to meet regularly to discuss key strategic matters. These would not be formal, decision-making meetings but would enable a cohesive approach.
- Members went on to consider the arrangements for review of the Council's monitoring of risk, performance and budgets and agreed that each Policy Committee should receive reports in these areas, with oversight being the responsibility of the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee.
- It was noted that the Policy Committees would need to be politically proportionate, and Members agreed that the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of all Committees (including the regulatory ones) would be appointed at Full Council.
- The group agreed that the Strategy and Resources Committee does not have to exclusively be made up of Policy Committee Chairs, with appointments to be made by the Whips in due course.

RESOLVED: That the following recommendations be made to Full Council:

- That there would be standing Sub-Committees relating to Health and Budgets, reporting to the Communities and Public Health and Strategy and Resources Committee respectively.
- That there be 8 Policy Committees as follows:
 - Adult Social Care
 - Children and Young People
 - Economy and Skills
 - Environment and Sustainability
 - Homes and Housing Delivery
 - Public Health and Communities
 - Strategy and Resources
 - Transport and Connectivity

7. Roles and Responsibilities of Councillors under the Committee Model of Governance

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services provided a brief introduction to the report.

It was noted that consideration was needed for who would agree decisions in the period between the Mayor stepping down and the Council Leader being elected.

Members suggested the following amendments be made to the report:

Roles and Functions of All Councillors

- Item 4: Addition of 'act as community champion and encourage community cohesion' and change to 'all Councillors must advise local individuals and interest groups in their dealings with the Council where appropriate'
- Item 7: Inclusion of a line to reflect the requirement for all Councillors to examine and challenge issues.
- Item 8: Include reference to the Member Code of Conduct.

- Item 9: Add the requirement to uphold the Public Sector Equalities duties.

Leader of the Council

- Include the role of Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

Chairs and Vice Chairs

- All Chairs and Vice-Chairs will be appointed by Full Council.

RESOLVED: That the following recommendations be made to Full Council:

- That the Chairs and Vice Chairs of all Committees in the Committee system would be appointed by Full Council.
- The Strategy and Resources Committee will have oversight of the Councils Corporate Finances and will be Chaired by the Leader of Council.
- The Strategy and Resources Committee does not have to exclusively be made up of Policy Committee Chairs, with appointments to be made by the Whips in due course.
- Risk and performance will be monitored by individual Policy Committees. The Strategy and Resources Committee will monitor corporate risk and performance.

8. Stakeholder engagement feedback - standing item

No updates were provided.

9. Work Programme - for noting only

Members noted the Work Programme.