

Committee Model Working Group – Friday 26th May 2023.

Attendees: Councillor Jenny Bartle (Chair), Councillor Nicola Beech, Councillor Marley Bennett, Councillor Richard Eddy, Councillor Gary Hopkins, Councillor John Goulandris (substituting for Councillor Gollop), Councillor Tim Kent, Councillor Ellie King (substituting for Councillor Holland), Councillor Lorraine Francis, Councillor Heather Mack (substituting for Councillor Makawi), Councillor Steve Pearce, and Councillor Guy Poultney.

Apologies: Councillor Helen Holland and Councillor Geoff Gollop.

1. Welcome, Introductions, and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed those present and introductions were made.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Holland, substituted by Councillor King, Councillor Gollop, substituted by Councillor Goulandris, and Councillor Makawi, 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 28th April 2023 were approved as a correct record.

Members noted the decision log.

5. Public Forum

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

No.	Name	Questions (and answers)
PQ 01	Martin Fodor	Q1. What evidence has the CMWG gathered from other authorities like core cities or local government bodies like the LGA gathered to advise on this issue of devolved decision making? A1. Local decision making was one of the key design principles that was developed by the CMWG during their first phase of work, which involved discussions with the LGA, CfGS and other Local Authorities. Members gathered a good deal of information during this process, the most pertinent of which is captured in the report.
PQ 02	Martin Fodor	Q2. When can an inquiry be held to develop these ideas into practical proposals? A2. The CMWG will be considering their first report regarding local decision making at their meeting on 26 th May 23. Once Members have provided a steer on which model (s) they would like to explore further appropriate steps will then be taken to produce a more detailed report of options.
PQ 03	David Redgewell	Q3. What discussion have taken place with the chief executive of the west of England mayoral combined Authority about this committee functions and the mayor for the west of England Dan Norris and when time and dates please. A3. Members of the CMWG will be considering partnership working at their meeting on 28 th July 23 which will include further consideration about any discussions that may be required with WECA and other key external stakeholders.

PQ 04	David Redgewell	<p>Q4. In view of the west of England mayoral combined Authority being responsible for Transport Regional planning and Housing skills and Education Economy growth and Tourism. With the west of England mayoral combined Authority also being told to absorb the local Enterprise partnership and North Somerset council into the Authority and with the cabinet decision to Transfer the Transport and public transport staff to west of England mayoral combined transport Authority. What discussion have taken place about the working arrangements between the western gateway transport board city and county of Bristol council, Banes South Gloucestershire council and North Somerset council and the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and Mayor Dan Norris over these committee and the Role of leader and Deputy leader of the council</p> <p>If no meeting has taken place when does this committee intend to discuss these proposals with the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and mayor Dan Norris.</p> <p>A4. As above.</p>
PQ 05	Suzanne Audrey	<p>Q5. Although not perfect, I believe Neighbourhood Partnerships were important. The Neighbourhood Partnership meetings I attended enabled police officers, council officers and others to meet and discuss local issues and priorities. Although attempts have been made locally, nothing has really been able to replace the Neighbourhood Partnership meetings in the area where I live. To help me understand why they were abolished, please can members of the committee explain what the problems were with the Neighbourhood Partnership Model?</p> <p>A5. Please see the Cabinet report of 2017 for more details about why the Neighbourhood Partnerships were replaced with Area Committees. Members of the CMWG may wish to comment.</p>
PQ 06	Suzanne Audrey	<p>Q6. I believe that one of the main reasons the elected mayor system was rejected was because people felt they were not being listened to at local level. People will be looking to the new committee system to be more willing to listen to concerns at ward level. Please will you ensure that your working group does come up with a model for local decision-making, rather than postpone this important aspect of the future governance model?</p> <p>A6. Members will be considering the options around local decision making at their meeting on 26th May 23. Members of the CMWG may wish to comment.</p>
PQ 07	Dan Ackroyd	<p>Q7. Although long term planning is usually a good idea, the "Bristol One City" appears to be hugely undemocratic, an attempt to give a façade of inclusion rather than actual inclusion. For example, for the "March City Gathering 2023" some people who live in Bristol had their tickets cancelled, as the event is "always invite-only". If "Bristol One City" is to continue, how would it be changed to support conversations started by the plebians, rather than only having conversations started by the people running it, and in general have a more open approach to discussions?</p> <p>A7 – The One City presentation that the CMWG will receive today is designed to give Members a better understanding about how One City currently operates. The discussion may continue at the Committee Model Working Group meeting on 28th July 23.</p> <p>One City is about bringing organisations and networks together to try and tackle city problems. This includes a large number of voluntary community organisations and equalities forums. Bristol City Council is just one of many partners involved and One City could continue without the support of the Local Authority.</p> <p>Under the Mayoral model, democratically elected Cabinet Members and the directly elected Mayor have been represented within the One City structures. Other councillors have been invited to attend. Going forward, the Committee System may wish to review councillor engagement within One City.</p>

PQ 08	Dan Ackroyd	<p>Q8. There appears to be a bug or flaw in the planning process, when planned work becomes unfeasible, as was shown in the recent 22/05943/X planning application for Avon Crescent. For those who don't know, the original plan (as far as I understand it) was to make Avon Crescent be a shared space with traffic calming measures in place. When that became unneeded for the Metrobus, and against government guidelines, a proposal emerged from somewhere to just abandon the traffic calming scheme and return Avon Crescent to being open to cars travelling at speed, despite it now being used by far more pedestrians and cyclists. Dropping significant parts of an application, without consulting the people who would be affected seems undemocratic. Is the committee system planning changes to address this flaw in the process? Have other councils tackled this problem?</p> <p>A8. Planning is covered by a separate regime and no changes are intended as part of the introduction of the Committee Model system of governance. However, if residents have concerns about planning matters in their area, we recommend that they raise them with their local Councillor.</p>
PQ 09	Dan Ackroyd	<p>Q9. The "Western Harbour consultation" was a farce. When the planning group refuses to call Cumberland Basin by that name, and substitutes a name more marketable to investors, it shows a clear lack of respect for the people who actually live in Bristol. The Masterplan document is apparently currently being developed, and as far as I'm aware, no-one outside of BCC has any idea what is going to be proposed, other than a strong suspicion Avon crescent is planned to be opened to cars. Under the committee system, will there be any changes to bring planning and redevelopment under better democratic control?</p> <p>A9. As above, planning decisions are dealt with under a separate regime where no changes are intended. However, political oversight of strategic matters will be provided by the relevant Policy Committee. It will be for members of the Policy Committee to decide how to achieve democratic participation in strategic planning matters.</p>

Statements	
Number	Name
PS01	Martin Fodor
PS02	Suzanne Audrey
PS03	Anita Bennett
PS04	Roger Gimson
PS05	Tim Kent and Guy Poultney

The following information was provided in response to supplementary questions:

- The Committee will engage with WECA at the appropriate time.
- Attendees were reminded that the decision to replace Neighbourhood Partnerships with Area Committees was agreed at Full Council in 2017.

Public statements were noted by the committee.

RESOLVED: That the public forum be noted.

6. One City Report

The Director of Policy, Strategy, and Digital introduced the report, setting out the role of the City Office and Bristol City Council's status as a key stakeholder. It was noted that many partners had stated an aspiration to continue the One City Approach, with the Council's involvement, although recognised that the model may change with the new Committee system of governance. The Group went on to consider the report and ask for additional details in a number of areas. The discussion was as follows:

- The One City Approach was an excellent example of the Council working in partnership with the city, especially in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, and the consensus from Members was that it should remain in place. The City Office team were happy to explore different models or approaches that best reflected the needs of the city.
- Examples of the work of the City Office included setting up a weekly City Partners Group, made of CEOs and Chairs of organisations that provide major infrastructure in Bristol during the pandemic. This was a forum to speak to the Director of Public Health, cascade information across the city, and request or offer support to other partners.
- The One City takes a 'convene and ask' approach by bringing people together in a room and asking them to follow a common direction for the benefit of the city. This worked very well at a strategic partnership level, and organisations developed their own plans and activities, based on a shared understanding.
- The One City Boards are a useful forum for connecting partners with relevant experience or specific sectors. Each Board was chaired by the Cabinet Member with the relevant portfolio.
- As the City Office takes a city-wide strategic approach, Members were reminded that work was done by the Council to ensure communities had a voice.
- It was agreed that a further brief discussion on One City would take place at the July meeting, in order to confirm that arrangements for the body would continue largely unchanged in 24/25 but that a review may be required in a future year. Members thanked the City Office and all its partners who have supported the city.

RESOLVED:

That a further discussion on One City take place at the July meeting of the Committee Model Working Group, which would ask Members to confirm the arrangements for the 24/25 Municipal Year.

7. Mayoral Commissions Update

The Head of Equalities and Inclusion introduced the report which provided an initial overview of current activity related to the Mayoral Commissions. Members were reminded that these Commissions were made up of volunteers and received funding from the Mayor's Office budget. During the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- The Equalities Team shared responsibility for liaising with the Commissions, including working with them on drafting new policies and supporting provision of their annual reports to Full Council.
- The History Commission had been established as a short life task and finish group with a specific remit and would soon be completing their work.

- As the Commissions were introduced at different times and with differing roles and responsibilities, they didn't all follow one standard operating model. This may be one area that required review in the future.
- Members agreed that a flexible approach was required so the new administration can make an informed decision on the future of the Commissions.

RESOLVED:

That further consideration to the approach to the Mayoral Commissions be considered at the July meeting of the Committee Model Working Group.

Local Decision Making

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the report which set out an initial range of options for the Group to consider relating to decision making under the new committee system. The Group went onto consider the report, commenting as follows:

- The Group agreed that they would like more decisions to be made at a local level but were mindful of the potential costs, so requested more information on this in order to make fully informed recommendations.
- Some Members raised that their quarterly neighbourhood forums worked well and had a high level of attendance which could be further improved with the right support.
- After some discussion about the various options to expand the current arrangements for local decision making, Members agreed that this should take the form of expanding the existing Area Committees, with other options such as reintroducing Neighbourhood Partnerships or establishing Parish Councils being disregarded.
- Members agreed that a Working Group be established to further develop the proposals around increasing the remit of Area Committees including additional devolved powers, objectives, costings, logistics etc. The Group will be made up of one representative from each party and report back monthly to the Committee, with full recommendations to be made by in autumn 23.

RESOLVED:

That the CMWG establish a Working Group to consider how to increase local decision making through the existing Area Committees. The Area Committees Working Group would aim to complete their review in autumn 23, and would provide progress updates at each meeting of the CMWG.