

# Bristol City Council

## Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

8 September 2016 at 6.00 pm



### **Members Present:-**

**Councillors:** Charlie Bolton, Nicola Bowden-Jones, Tom Brook, Jude English, Geoff Gollop, John Goulandris (for Graham Morris), Gill Kirk, Brenda Massey, Olly Mead, Gary Hopkins (for Anthony Negus) and Nicola Beech (for Steve Pearce)

### **Officers in Attendance:-**

Stephen Hughes, Interim Chief Executive, Annabel Scholes, Interim Service Director, Finance & Business Change, Nancy Rollason, Service Manager Legal, Andrea Dell, Service Manager, Policy, Research and Scrutiny, Lucy Fleming, Scrutiny Co-ordinator, Allison Taylor, Democratic Services

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

The emergency evacuation procedure was noted. The Chair welcomed Stephen Hughes – the Interim Chief Executive and Annabel Scholes – the Interim Service Director – Finance and Business Change to the meeting.

## **2. Apologies for absence.**

These were received from Councillors Negus, Morris and Pearce.

## **3. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **4.**

### **a) Minutes of Meeting held on 15 June 2016 and reconvened on 27 June 2016**

Approved as a correct record.

### **b) Action Sheet of 15 June 2016**

Actions carried out were noted.



### **c) Minutes of Extraordinary Meeting held on 24 August 2016**

These were approved as a correct record.

#### **5. Chair's Business.**

None.

#### **6. Public Forum**

The Board were circulated a response to a Question submitted by Sid Ryan. There were no supplementary questions. The Chair acknowledged the issues raised in the submission and that there were practical challenges to resolving them and this would be a key issue for the future.

**Resolved - That the Public Forum submission be noted.**

#### **7. Bristol City Council International Strategy.**

The European and International Service Manager introduced the report. The following points arose from discussion:-

- The implementation plan would be shared with partners although there was an issue regarding publishing the named cities when Bristol was still working with cities that were not named in the plan;
- There was so specific timeline and it was hoped to build on existing links and focus on the strategy;
- The strategy focussed on international communities in Bristol as well as abroad. It was less specific than a change of legislation or in policy. It was hoped that activities based on local cohesion would add greater benefits. One of the outcomes was growing global citizens which was a means of sowing the seed within wards and communities in Bristol that whatever race people were, they were citizens of the world and not just Bristol;
- The Chair referred to twinning and felt it was important to build on connections such as Tbilisi and Georgia even if there was not a massive financial benefit. He added that Bristol had sent representatives to trade delegations to Tbilisi but Bristol did not have the resources to reciprocate. If resourced such international relationships gave good returns. He was informed that the implementation plan referred to twinning though this could perhaps be more strongly conveyed in the strategy. It was hoped to raise the profile of Bristol as a low carbon, sustainable city;



- A Councillor expressed concern that the strategy did not have a clear focus on what Bristol did best. There was a need to build on things already in place such as sustainable technologies developed thus making money for the good of the City;
- Regarding Brexit, a citywide cross-sector group was formed after the referendum to deal with the immediate priorities of racial tension and hate crime. There had subsequently been uncertainty from the Government regarding next steps so the group was feeding into the Core Cities Group and awaiting direction;
- A Councillor asked that the Key Performance Indicators be narrowed down to firm strategic outcomes.

#### **Resolved –**

- 1. That the comments of OSMB regarding the strategy and implementation plan be noted;**
- 2. That the report progress through the Decision Pathway.**

#### **8. Delivering the Corporate Plan - Outturn Performance Report for 2015/16.**

The Service Manager – Performance, Information and Intelligence introduced the report. There were 48 measures looking at performance at strategic outcome level. 44% were above target, 39% were below target and 5% were significantly below target. 61% of the PI's had improved compared to the same period 2014/15. Affordable Housing and percentage of 17 – 21 year old care leavers not in employment, education or training have been noted as indicators well below target and these were being addressed with an Action Plan.

The Board commented as follows:-

- Public Health outcomes had worsened mainly due to inequalities between the richest and poorest;
- BCP005A and 5B – direct payments. A great deal of work had been done on this and it was a good outcome;
- BCP183 - Overall satisfaction with Council Services. It was noted that residents often came to their local Councillor with their frustration when trying to get assistance with the Council;
- BCP124 – reduce the number of CO2 emissions in Bristol. It was unclear if this below target was a one off trend, although it was worse than a year ago;
- A Councillor asked how this information could inform the Board so that job losses did not happen in areas where improvements were needed and was informed that the performance framework would be based on the new priorities where outcomes would be linked to activity and finance.

**Resolved – That the Performance Outturn for the final quarter 2014/15 be noted.**



## 9. Performance Reporting Framework 2016 onwards.

The Service Manager – Performance, Information and Intelligence introduced the report. The development of the Corporate Plan was underway. The new administration required new performance reporting arrangements reflecting their priorities and governance arrangements. There needed to be an appropriate balance between cost and performance rather than simply a drive for performance.

The Chair observed that there were too many key performance targets and efforts were made to improve them but it was possible to lose sight of what was being achieved. It was important to have enough indicators so that the direction of travel was clear. The financial parameters were more important than ever and OSMB and the Executive needed to ask if we could continue to afford to deliver some of the targets.

**Resolved – That the report be noted.**

## 10. Quarter 1 Finance Report.

The Interim Chief Executive and Interim Finance and Business Change Service Director were in attendance to respond to questions.

The following comments arose:-

- A Councillor expressed surprise that an organisation the size of the City Council did not have the financial controls in place to immediately see such a huge deficit. He believed that somebody must have known and should have informed members sooner. The Interim Chief Executive replied that a review was underway to properly understand what happened. There was an awareness that the budget was off track but the full extent was not clear as the Change Programme had been difficult to estimate and there was a risk element. Efforts had been made to bring the budget back on track. He now intended to put in place a greater degree of openness at Cabinet and Scrutiny meetings. The outturn report was not accurate to the last degree bit was a forecast if action was not taken;
- A Councillor had asked a question at Cabinet regarding the spending pressures in social care and was informed that this amounted to £9.5m. He noted that this was a broad estimate and not based on individual properties but therefore asked how the shortfall could be estimated if the individual elements were not known. He was informed that assumptions had been made at the outset but not on individual properties;
- A Councillor asked whether there was enough skills with outsourced services to properly monitor contracts and was informed that this Council had not outsourced as much as other council's but there were significant contracts. The Chair noted that the monitoring of contracts was a possible Work Programme item. He reported that until now the Business Change and Resources Scrutiny Commission had monitored the budget process. It had now been decided that it was as the issues were primarily business change, OSMB should lead on scrutinising the budget;



- A Councillor expressed his frustration with the budget process. he suggested that Interim Senior Officers were not helpful when controlling the Council's budget and looked forward to more longer term stability;
- A Councillor expressed surprise that it was not possible to set a budget for housing need and stock when there were statistics to assist with that. She also referred to the proposed closing of the M Shed and museum on Mondays would save £2m and asked how it was possible to measure some and areas and not others. In response, the Board heard that homelessness was a demand-led service which made it difficult to set a budget whereas museums were not. Homelessness was not just about social housing but also temporary accommodation where the costs were higher and B&Bs were higher still. These costs were volatile and very difficult to manage daily;
- A Councillor stated that it was important to ensure Commissioned Services were controlled and value for money secured as well as maintaining social value. She also suggested that consideration should be given to dropping the hire price of the M Shed which might lead to increased use and more revenue;
- A Councillor expressed concern at the chaos that could be caused by the very quick job losses across the Council and asked whether this could be managed without the degradation of services. The Interim Chief Executive emphasised the seriousness of the situation. There was not time for a long term plan, the Council had to act now so that the situation could be turned around in year and the Council secure a sustainable budget in the future. He did not believe there would be a degradation of services as there would be risk assessments and flexibility with resources;
- A Councillor expressed surprise that it was possible to spend so much without noticing and was concerned that the urgency to make savings might cause more damage in the long run. She noted there was a lag in the Change Programme and asked whether anything else would be delivered and was informed that consideration would be given to what could still be delivered;
- Noting that the Change Programme was the biggest overspend, an in depth review of specific items not realised would take place;
- The Council was quite successful with income generation but was open to suggestion for other opportunities, although this had to be measured alongside the costs of generating that income.

**Resolved – that the Q1 Finance Report be noted.**

### **11. Audit Referral - Public Engagement at meetings.**

The Board made the following comments:-

- The Chair remarked that it was a challenge to think of whether Work Programme items were relevant or of interest to the public;
- This issue would be considered at the Constitutional Working Group. It was noted that 30 mins of Public Forum on meeting agendas aimed to engage the public but perhaps it was necessary to reconsider its aims;



- A Councillor referred to the open event held for the Housing Big Conversation which had been successful and suggested that this could perhaps be copied for scrutiny items. Of course, this would come at a cost;
- A Councillor observed that the public would be engaged if the subject was of interest and made a difference. There was engagement at Full Council as this was a public stage. He suggested that OSMB should react when issues arose and take place in different venues. A Councillor replied that cabinet had met in different locations but the location never satisfied everyone;
- A Councillor referred to comments from the Public Forum statement regarding 'turgid reports' and asked if reports should be more user-friendly;
- The use of social marketing to promote the meetings was suggested;
- The Chair suggested that members and the Public Forum submitter submit any further ideas to the Scrutiny Co-ordinator for a report to come before the Board at a later date.

**Resolved - That the comments be noted and a report be considered by OSMB at a later date.**

## **12. Cabinet Referral - Elimination of the Gender and Race Pay Gap.**

The Human Resources Committee were leading on this matter and this report was before the Board was a watching brief.

**Resolved – That the Board notes the update on the work taking place to review gender and race inequalities.**

## **13. Mayor's Response regarding Cabinet Referral – Budget Timetable and Mayor's Forward Plan.**

The Chair noted that the Forward Plan was not currently fully populated. It was important to have a Plan so that decisions were capable of being scrutinised and not simply pre-decision scrutiny.

**Resolved – That the report be noted.**

## **14. Scrutiny Shadow Work Programme 2016/17.**

The Chair reported that this was for the Board to note as Scrutiny Workshop would define the final Work Programme for 2016/17.

**Resolved – That the report be noted.**

## **15. Mayor's Forward Plan.**

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator reported that this was the latest edition at the time of publication and in the future an update would be issued should a new Plan be published at the time the Board met.



**Resolved – that the Board notes the current Forward Plan.**

**16. Protocol for dealing with exempt items.**

The Chair confirmed that he wished the Monitoring Officer to develop a protocol that worked as there had been recent instances of wholesale exempt reports when not all of the material warranted that approach. The Interim Chief Executive made clear that the objective was that as much information as possible went into the public domain. A Councillor added that it was vital that any protocol had the ability to challenge the decision to make information exempt in order to see that the decision was robust. The Chair accepted this was a valid element of the protocol.

**Resolved – that the Board notes that a review of procedures relating to exempt/confidential material would be conducted and a report be brought back to the Board later in the municipal year.**

**17. Scrutiny Resolution and Full Council Motion Tracker.**

It was noted that this was a Standing item brought before the Board. There were no comments.

**Resolved – that the Board notes the Scrutiny Resolution and Full Council Motion Tracker.**

**18. Date of Next Meeting.**

It was noted that an Extraordinary OSMB would take place on 3 November 2016. The next scheduled OSMB was 9 February 2016.

Meeting ended at 8.15 pm

**CHAIR** \_\_\_\_\_

