

Bristol City Council
Minutes of the Extraordinary Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board



8 December 2016 at 13.30pm

DISCLAIMER

The attached Minutes are DRAFT. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information and statements and decisions recorded in them, their status will remain that of a draft until such time as they are confirmed as a correct record at the subsequent meeting

Members Present:-

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

Officers in Attendance:-

Stephen Hughes, Interim Chief Executive, Anna Klonowski, Interim Strategic Director - Business Change, Denise Murray, Section 151 Officer, 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 Chair welcomed all members to the meeting and explained the evacuation procedure in the event of an emergency.

2. Apologies for absence.

No apologies received.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

At this point, the Chair, with the agreement of the Board, amended the order of the agenda. He also took the opportunity to welcome the recently appointed Section 151 Officer, Denise Murray.



4. Urgent Business.

The Board considered the following three reports in advance of their consideration at Full Council on 13 December 2016. The following comments were made and were conveyed to Full Council.

Approval of Council Tax Base 2017/18.

This year the Council Tax Base is set at £124,083 which is a significant increase from last year. The unprecedented increase is due to growth in the city but also the reduction in the Council Tax Support Scheme. This is a sound figure based on a number of assumptions detailed in the report. The factual figure was provided by the Valuation Office in October. Estimating the number of students was difficult as they were 100% discounted. Lots of additional student housing was being provided as there's been an influx of students into the City Centre and Bristol generally, which was significant.

The following points arose from discussion:-

1. A Councillor observed that the Council used to get compensation for students but if that had disappeared it would have quite an effect on the Council budget;
2. The surplus and deficit calculations had not been calculated yet as they were not due until early 2017 ;
3. The issue of students was particularly relevant as a large development of student accommodation had been approved at Temple Meads, which meant less revenue going through. It was important to know the impact of this. He asked that additional information be provided in relation to student Council Tax exemptions and for information comparing previous council tax base forecasts against actuals;
4. A Councillor who represented the ward with the largest number of students stated that the cost of students was effectively a loss to the Council. Three storey houses in his ward would become HMOs and displace people paying resident rates; The Chair observed that the issue of affordable housing for those who most needed it was a cross- departmental scrutiny issue which should be considered by the Cabinet;
5. The Interim Chief Executive stated that the figure of £9m could not be considered a loss to the Council. Any change to student discounts would require an amendment to government legislation;
6. The Chair referred to the reduction in benefit claimants and asked whether there was a presumption that there would be a permanent reduction in claimants and if so how was it possible to protect against financial challenges. There was a real contingent risk that if benefit claimants increased one year the Council could find it had a deficit when it had budgeted for a surplus. The Section 151 Officer acknowledged that this area was always volatile. Assumptions were trend informed and a range of scenarios had been modelled to arrive at prudent and robust assumptions.



Capital Receipts Flexibility.

This was a Cabinet referral to Full Council detailing the recent change in legislation that allowed Capital Receipts to fund revenue transformational change. This strategy would enable the release of up to £5.3m from revenue reserves that could be used to partly mitigate the 2016/17 budget pressures.

The following points arose from discussion:-

1. This was a one-off payment to bolster revenue. The MTFP had earmarked reserves so this would not impact on revenue. The funding was mitigated as it was anticipated to be a one off;
2. This could not be used for the combined authority as it was not yet in existence.

Review of Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy.

This was a referral from Cabinet to Full Council detailing the re-profiling of debt to better reflect the life of assets and which would provide significant savings to the Council's revenue fund. This would allow the debt to be repaid in 50 years.

The following points arose from discussion:-

1. The debt was still managed separately, the MRP impacted on the revenue account. This was an accounting adjustment by aligning the amount of money set aside to the lifecycle of the asset;
2. The Chair expressed concern that this was effectively depreciation and future adults would have to pay. The Section 151 Officer replied this was prudent accounting as with current arrangements the Council would never repay that debt.

RESOLVED –

- 1. that the reports be noted;**
- 2. that the additional information requested in relation to the Approval of the Council Tax Base report be provided in advance of Full Council.**

4. Minutes of Meeting held on 3 November 2016

These were approved as a correct record.

RESOLVED – that the minutes be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. Action Sheet of 3 November 2016

Actions carried out were noted.



6. Chair's Business.

None.

7. Public Forum.

None.

8. Increasing Business Efficiency.

The Interim Strategic Director – Business Change introduced the report detailing the efficiency savings that are proposed as part of the budget setting process for 2017 – 2022. The information was complimentary to the Draft Corporate Strategy 2017-2022, Business Plan 2017/18 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2017/18 – 2021/22.

The following points arose from discussion:-

1. The Interim Chief Executive stated that the freeze on spending was an unprecedented action and was a consequence of the extreme financial pressure the Council was faced with. Savings had been made with one off contributions but there was a need to protect reserves as departmental spending had not decreased. The Council was now at a point where the 'easy things' had been done and members would need to make difficult choices in the context of the legislative framework. Officers would be able to provide a range of options for balancing the budget but members may not be happy with the decisions they had to make. The budget would be balanced through continued savings and through protecting reserves. Spending was not frozen for matters of health and safety and where Managers could demonstrate a pragmatic need to spend;
2. The Interim Strategic Director – Business Change stated that the Leadership Team had been open and transparent to members regarding the challenges faced and the Transformation Programme proposed, and whilst the programme had not yet been fully document, all measures taken would satisfy the Council's external auditors;
3. A Councillor expressed great concern at the level of savings expected to come from the People budget. He asked that the surplus from parking revenues be kept in the transport field and not redistributed. He noted the proposal to remove the 30 minutes free parking rule and believed this would damage the ongoing process of RPZ as this concession had made the current schemes palatable for a lot of people. He believed the £675,000 proposed savings was based on spaces being occupied all of the time and a parking attendant being there and was not therefore a viable figure. With respect to Housing Services, he suggested that the only way the service could be turned around was to move it into the Private Sector where efficiencies could be achieved. He noted in particular that other, smaller Councils with retained stock had made those efficiencies.



The analysis had not made in-roads into landlord Services. In response, he was informed that it was a legal obligation to spend income generated from parking services on transport matters. The Mayor had made a statement on the 30 minute parking rule and this was read out to the Board. The Interim Chief Executive agreed that more work was needed on Housing Services' efficiencies, particularly the management of facilities. A revamped business plan was proposed for next year;

4. A Councillor observed that the freezing of wellbeing budgets for Neighbourhood Partnerships would have a huge knock-on effect for small organisations reliant upon grants;
5. A Councillor was very concerned regarding the freeze and could not see how it would save a huge amount of money. He expressed particular concern regarding the CIL money raised for parks from affordable housing. It was unfair to freeze this and also bad for business. It was better to allow CIL money to be spent and give the parks staff useful work to carry out. In response, the Interim Chief Executive advised this point would be taken into account as part of the Parks Management consultation process and would be evaluated before recommendations were produced. Parks staff were clear that incidental spending to keep them occupied would continue. Advice was currently being sought regarding the use of CIL but it was a non-ringfenced grant and therefore was capable of being spent on a variety of things. The Section 151 Officer added that books would be balanced 'in year'. There was an imperative to have a sustainable budget going forward and the freeze on spending was a temporary one in order to gain a clear view. An exception could be made if it could clearly be demonstrated that the spend was grant funded;
6. A Councillor expressed her surprise that the spending freeze had not come sooner to encourage staff to be more prudent. She was concerned with the manner with which the spending freeze had been communicated and would have preferred an e-mail providing greater detail. The Interim Chief Executive agreed that delivery of the information could have been handled more effectively and apologised for the oversight;
7. A Councillor observed that NPs (Neighbourhood Partnerships) were partly through a cycle regarding their wellbeing spends and asked whether there was any flexibility for these grants to be honoured. The Interim Chief Executive confirmed that the purpose of the freeze was to reduce spending not to defer it as that would not produce the savings required. The future of the funding would be a political decision. The Chair expressed concern as a spending 'freeze' suggested a deferral. There was real engagement with wellbeing grants and this was being removed without consultation. It was noted that individually the grants were small but in total they were significant as they amounted to £700,000; The Interim Chief Executive noted the concerns and agreed to discuss the matter with the Mayor and Cabinet;
8. Members were asked for their ideas to make additional savings.
9. The Interim Chief Executive stated that no firm decisions had been made about which savings would go forward into the budget proposals and consultation findings would inform the outcome. It was agreed that the first cut of consultation responses would be circulated to members. The responses would then be summarised by themes and be publically available;
10. The Chair, in summary, noted that it would be prudent to hold another Extraordinary OSMB after Cabinet dispatch of papers for its January meeting but before Budget Full Council. It was agreed to circulate the consultation papers for Cabinet on 24 January to all Members. He thanked staff for the huge amount of work undertaken in putting the information together.



RESOLVED – that the Board notes the contents of the report.

9. Democratic Engagement Select Committee – Terms of Reference.

The report set out the draft Terms of Reference and the legal and resource implications of the proposed Select Committee.

The following points arose:-

1. A Councillor suggested that the Council could put 'How to' videos on its website regarding ways to engage ie. Public Forum at Regulatory Committees;
2. Engagement could be daunting for the public and this would make the process easier;
3. Best practice from other democratic organisations should be considered;
4. The frequency of meetings should be considered.

RESOLVED –

- 1. That the draft Terms of Reference be amended following the comments from Members;**
- 2. That updates from the Select Committee will be provided to OSMB**

10. Scrutiny Resolution and Full Council Motion Tracker.

It was agreed that the tracker be updated to track outcomes on Inquiry Days and Select Committees.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

11. Mayor's Forward Plan.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be noted.

12. Scrutiny Work Programme – 2016/17.

It was noted that a Scrutiny Chair's meeting had recently concluded that scrutiny was not working as effectively as it had previously. It was agreed that policy development was far more constructive and of greater interest to the public than pre decision Scrutiny. And that a paper of options would be brought to the OSM meeting on 9th February 2017.



It was also agreed to establish whether the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission had given consideration to the Local Housing Company Business Plan.

RESOLVED – that the current Work Programme be noted.

14. Date of Next Meeting.

5 January 2017 at 2pm.

The Meeting ended at 4.35 pm.

CHAIR _____





Agenda Item	Title of Report/ Description	Action and Deadline	Responsible officer	Action taken
	<p>Urgent Business -</p> <p><i>Approval of Council Tax Base 2017-18</i> <i>Capital Receipts Flexibility</i> <i>Review of Minimum Revenue Provision Policy</i></p>	<p>Full Council report for 13th December to be amended to include information relating to student Council Tax exemptions, and comparisons of the tax base forecast and actuals for the last three years.</p> <p>To produce a summary note re OSMB's comments on Urgent Business for Full Council on 13 Dec</p>	<p>Tony Whitlock</p> <p>Lucy Fleming</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete - note cleared by Chair 9 Dec and sent to Full Council</p>
7	Efficiency Savings	To clarify whether grants will be honoured on monies already spent on Neighbourhood Partnership Wellbeing Fund schemes.	Stephen Hughes to confirm with Gemma Dando	Complete - Officers have confirmed that all spend on Neighbourhood Partnership Wellbeing Fund schemes agreed before the spending freeze date will be honoured.

		<p>To circulate to OSMB members first cut of consultation responses on efficiency savings</p> <p>To fix additional Extraordinary OSMB so that can consider Cabinet report on 24 Jan</p> <p>Circulate budget consultation papers on mod.gov to all Council members</p>	<p>Stephen Hughes</p> <p>A Taylor</p> <p>Dem Services</p>	<p>Complete – e-mailed 19 Dec.</p> <p>Complete - fixed for 19 Jan</p>
9	Scrutiny Resolution and FC Motion Tracker	Provide an additional tracker detailing the outcome of recommendations from Inquiry Days from 2014 and onwards	Lucy Fleming	Complete - the additional tracker will be provided for the February 17 meeting.
11	Work Programme	Establish whether the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission had given consideration to the Local Housing Company Business Plan.	Lucy Fleming	The item is programmed for February 17

Bristol City Council
Minutes of the Extraordinary Overview and Scrutiny
Management Board



12 January 2017 at 13.30pm

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Members Present:-

Councillors: Charlie Bolton (as PGL), Nicola Bowden-Jones, Tom Brook, Jude English, Martin Fodor (substitute for Charlie Bolton), Geoff Gollop, Gill Kirk, Brenda Massey, Olly Mead, Anthony Negus, Gary Hopkins (as PGL) Steve Pearce.

Officers in Attendance:-

Stephen Hughes, Interim Chief Executive, Anna Klonowski, Interim Strategic Director - Business Change, Netta Meadows, Service Director – Commissioning, Shahzia Daya, Service Director – Legal and Democratic Services, Andrea Dell, Service Manager, Democratic Engagement, Lucy Fleming, Scrutiny Co-ordinator, Allison Taylor, Democratic Services

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting and explained the evacuation procedure in the event of an emergency.

2. Apologies for absence.

No apologies received.

The Chair noted that Councillor Fodor was in attendance as a substitute member for Councillor Bolton who was in attendance as Party Group Leader. Councillor Hopkins was in attendance as Party Group Leader.



3. Declarations of Interest.

There were none.

4. Public Forum.

The response to a Question submitted by Councillor Donald Alexander was circulated to the Board. The Chair reiterated his written response that the question be put directly to the Mayor at the next Mayoral Question Time preceding OSMB on 9 February 2017.

5. Business Planning Update on Companies which the Council wholly own – 2017.

The Chair confirmed with the Board that all confidentiality agreements had been signed.

6. Exclusion of the Public.

RESOLVED – that under s100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public were excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

7. Date of Next Meeting.

19 January 2017 at 5pm.

The Meeting ended at 6 pm.

CHAIR _____





Agenda Item	Title of Report/ Description	Action and Deadline	Responsible officer	Action taken
5	Business Planning Update on Companies which are wholly owned by the Council - 2017	The comments from OSMB on each of the Companies be summarised in a note to Cabinet on 13 January.	L Fleming	The Chair of OSMB presented the comments to Cabinet.

Bristol City Council

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board



19 January 2017 at 5.00 pm

Members Present:-

Councillors: Geoff Gollop (Chair), Charlie Bolton, Nicola Bowden-Jones, Gary Hopkins, Gill Kirk, Brenda Massey, Oly Mead, Anthony Negus, Steve Pearce, Mike Davies, John Goulandris and Clive Stevens

Cabinet Members Present:-

Councillors: Craig Cheney, Estella Tincknell, Mark Bradshaw, Helen Holland, Paul Smith, Asha Craig, Claire Hiscott, Claire Champion-Smith

Officers in Attendance:-

Anna Klonowski (Interim Strategic Director - Resources), John Readman (Strategic Director - People), Alison Comley (Strategic Director - Neighbourhoods), Barra Mac Ruairi (Strategic Director - Place), Shahzia Daya (Service Director - Legal and Democratic Services), Andrea Dell (Service Manager – Democratic Engagement), Lucy Fleming (Scrutiny Co-ordinator) and Denise Murray (Service Director - Finance)

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Cllr Brook. Councillor Stevens substituted for Councillor English.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Chair's Business

The Chair advised that the meeting would be filmed and available on the internet from 20 January. He went onto refer the Board to the Directorate submissions which had been circulated in response to Members' advance questions, a copy of which is appended to these minutes.

5. Public Forum



Two public forum submissions were received and noted in respect of the Corporate Strategy 2017-2022 and the Savings Proposals. *(Copies of the statements are held on public record by the Democratic Services team).*

The Chair advised the Board that an Extraordinary Cabinet meeting had been scheduled for 30 January, 6pm, to consider the budget (postponed from 24th January). Public forum statements noted by the Board would be transferred to the Cabinet for their consideration and the new timescale presented an opportunity for further statements to be made.

6. Bristol City Council Corporate Strategy 2017 – 2022

The Board considered the report on the draft five-year Corporate Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan, along with a draft one-year 2017/18 Business Plan. Appended to the report was a revised Corporate Strategy, produced following the consultation period, which contained details of the City Council's direction of travel for the next five years.

The Service Director for Strategy and Policy provided an overview of the consultation strategy process and feedback received; and confirmed that as a result of the consultation £7.2m of proposals had been withdrawn and that the knowledge gleaned would inform the shape of future plans and proposals.

The Service Director referred Board members to a presentation which summarised the strategy for future revenue spend to deliver increased commissioned, contracted or shared services; as well as the future capital spend where the Council will invest to grow its economy, maintain assets or generate income.

7. Bristol City Council Savings Proposals

In consideration of the Savings and Investment Proposals report, the Board received an introduction to the directorate savings proposals from Cabinet Members and the Strategic Directors for Neighbourhoods, People, Place and Resources. Each Directorate referred to the written Directorate and Corporate responses that had been submitted and circulated in response to the Board's questions in advance of the meeting and summarised key points as follows:

Neighbourhoods

- a. Delivery of discretionary services would be very challenging and require a different relationship with citizens .
- b. Business efficiencies were being pursued with Bristol Waste Company to reduce costs through savings in the waste contract.
- c. A proposal to make parks cost neutral to the Council had been included
- d. A new approach to Neighbourhood Partnerships was needed as the current costs of maintaining them were significant.
- e. Increased income through expansion of licensing schemes and cemeteries and crematoriums were being considered.
- f. The highest risks surrounded Neighbourhood Partnerships, parks and crisis and prevention funds



- g. Housing Delivery would be a growth area for the Council and crossed a number of directorates.. There had been three successful bids for homelessness projects which had achieved match government funding and voluntary sector funding.

People

- a. Demographic pressures and Government policy (including the national living wage for home care workers and Deprivation of Liberty assessments) were noted as some of the reasons for increased pressure on the People Directorate Budget. A further £17m had been put into the budget through the social care precept.
- b. There were efforts to preserve early intervention services and prevent reductions in discretionary spend that could tip people into statutory services.
- c. Full cost recovery would be pursued where appropriate and there was a need to develop a good framework to bid for work to take advantage of any government grants that came through.
- d. The Learning City partnership was a driver for partnership working. The West of England devolution skills work stream deal would increase active work with neighbouring authorities.
- e. The Council would continue to pursue income through maximising trading with schools.
- f. Members were referred to specific targeted investments and savings targets at Appendices 5 and 6 to the report, to meet the rising demand of a changing population.

Place

- a. Ambitions to increase temporary use of empty shops and encourage pop up entrepreneurs
- b. A review of on street parking and resident parking income was proposed.
- c. Some proposed savings would not be progressed due to the high impact on people with disabilities.
- d. There was a need to sustain renowned arts and culture organisations in the city and any cuts to funding needed to be tapered. Museums were continuing to pursue income generation opportunities.

Resources

- a. As the organisation changes there is a need to maintain a strong back office function of HR/IT/Finance. Savings proposals are achievable and include reasonable income generation assumptions.

The Chair thanked Cabinet and the Strategic Leadership Team for a comprehensive and helpful presentation.

Overview of the Cumulative Impact Assessment

- a. The Service Director for Strategy and Policy provided an overview of the Council's Equalities Duty and the process and approach used during decision making to identify, qualify, minimise and mitigate against the potential impacts of budget proposals on equalities communities. As proposals have changed, the equalities impact assessments have been updated accordingly.
- b. Wider measures that can be taken as a Council have been sought to minimise the direct impacts on equalities groups; such as a focus on increasing the Council's ability to raise income, a proposed increase in Council Tax and, where possible, focusing reductions away from those most vulnerable.



Comments from the Chairs of Scrutiny

The Board received comments for the Chair of Neighbourhoods Scrutiny who outlined two key strands of concern:

- (i) A loss of parks, libraries and Neighbourhood Partnerships were areas of concern which could cause cumulative impacts on local communities.
- (ii) The Housing Revenue Account represented a major part of the Council's overall resources but opportunities to maximise opportunities had not been fully explored.

Pre-submitted questions feedback and supplementary questions

The Chair referred members to the 2017/18 Budget Setting Summary by Division, the Directorate and Corporate responses that had been circulated to the Board.

A question and answer session followed:

- a. Members sought clarification on the certainty of proposals for restructures and it was advised that full details for 17/18 had been provided and an outline was in place for subsequent years.
- b. Members commented that there had been positive discussions /plans around income generation. It was confirmed that commercialisation and income generation in future years would be really key to filling the £42m funding gap.
- c. Members asked whether it was appropriate for funding for the Combined Authority (of £2m) to be included in the proposals when it had not yet been established. It was confirmed that this was one of a number of budgets ring-fenced to transition into the Mayoral Combined Authority but that opportunities for collaborative working across all relevant local authorities would be explored once it was set up.
- d. Members asked if taking £2m out of the £30m annual funding would mean less money available in the first year to invest and develop. It was confirmed that this was the case and that the MCA would need to ensure that the funding was fully utilised. It was clarified that if the MCA was set up at 1st February, funding would be earmarked for the period ending 31st march and any sums received would need to be spent in first financial year so not to be recovered.
- e. Members asked whether Capital Programme proposals consulted upon as part of the Corporate Strategy would be modified and made available. It was advised that the refreshed Capital Programme incorporated all the schemes that can be funded within the next Medium Term Financial Plan and outlined £200m per year of capital investment going forward.
- f. Members asked whether more clarity could be given to separate discretionary income streams from other budget lines such as grants, business rates or Council Tax revenue to develop a greater understanding of services that were paid for. It was agreed that the analysis would be carried out and sent to all Members.

Action: Officers

- g. Members to be provided with an update regarding Jubilee Pool. **Action: Officers**



- h. Members expressed concern that it would be difficult to address the need to increase home building if the number of planning officers was reduced. It was confirmed that planning staff were funded through a £226k net revenue generated through fees and sometimes capacity was scaled up through agency staff.
- i. Members expressed concern about proposed reductions to funding for Destination Bristol due to the economic contribution tourism made to the city. It was confirmed that funding reductions for Destination Bristol were being tapered over a 5 year period to enable the organisation with some flexibility to grow its income generation, so the reductions should be manageable. The Board noted that a 'bed tax' for hotels was not being considered at the current time as it resulted in competitive advantage to other cities.
- j. Members questioned whether future income could be used to redress the negative impact of cuts on the most vulnerable in the city. It was confirmed that services should be working at all times to mitigate impacts. Members were reminded that the medium term financial plan had not yet closed the funding gap and any new income would first be needed to address this.
- k. Members sought assurance that each budget proposal would have a full Equalities Impact Assessment and it was confirmed that these would be carried out where necessary and would become living documents that developed over time. Members raised concern regarding the treatment and analysis of gender in the Equalities Impact Assessments which did not appear to note for example the impact on men as lone parents or as potential victims of domestic violence. Officers confirmed the comments would be addressed.

Comments to cabinet

The Board agreed that the following comments would be referred to Cabinet;

Comments to Cabinet Regarding Council's Revenue Budget for 2017/18.

At the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meeting on 19th January 17, Members considered Bristol City Council's Corporate Strategy 2017-2022 as well as the Savings and Investment Proposals, which form the basis of the Council's Revenue Budget for 2017/18 and Capital Programme for 2017 – 2022.

Members noted that the Mayor and Cabinet would be considering the Revenue Budget for 2017/18 at the Cabinet meeting on 30th January 17 (postponed from 24th January) and asked that the following comments be provided for consideration at the meeting;

This submission reflects the discussion had by members at OSMB and is not a reflection of unanimous support for all the recommendations.

1. Budget Process

- a. Members commented on the process to date for setting the budget, acknowledging that it had been a very complex task for all parties to gather the relevant information, particularly due to the levels of savings that needed to be identified.
- b. The Board suggested that scrutiny could be a useful forum for developing any proposals that require more work for this budget.



- c. Concern was expressed about the timescales and rapidly changing nature of proposals and it was suggested that lessons could be learnt from this process for the future.
- d. The Board agreed that scrutiny would like to play more of an active role in setting future budgets and hoped they could work with the Mayor, Cabinet and senior officers to improve the level of engagement and information flow in subsequent years particularly with communities and external partners.

2. Impact of Proposals specifically the Equalities Impact Assessments

- a. The Board considered the Cumulative Equalities Impacts Assessment (EqIAs) that had been prepared to accompany the budget proposals. There was strong consensus that the impact of service changes on equalities groups needed to be carefully assessed if the Council were to continue to serve and protect those most in need of services.
- b. It was felt that in future a breakdown of equalities impact by directorate (not just by individual proposal) would be useful but that this must feed into a robust overall picture. In addition the impact of proposals taken forward should also be tracked cross council to create a 'whole council' view of the impact. There was concern that proposals may have been developed in directorates and impacts in other directorates not fully considered.
- c. Members agreed that EqIAs were an essential part of any review of spending and suggested that they needed to be prepared earlier in the process, during the early design stage, so they could shape emerging ideas, rather than assessing the impact of a decision once it was close to the point of being made.
- d. Concerns were raised about the quality of the impact assessments available. It was acknowledged that these were being updated and this was a reflection of the tight timescales being worked to by officers.
- e. Members also highlighted concern about the process for engaging other service providers and partners during the design of the proposals. It was felt this should be strengthened in future and brought in during the early design phase.

3. Prioritising spend across the council

- a. Consideration was given to the scale of proposed reductions to the People directorate budget, which included Children's Services and Adult Social Care. Members noted, with reluctance and unhappiness, that there would be significant cutbacks in some areas, which would inevitably affect service provision for some residents. There was particular concern about the proposed reductions in funding for early intervention schemes, such as Children's Centres and housing for the vulnerable, since stopping spending on preventative measures often resulted in additional spend later down the line.
- b. Members accepted that the savings required in the current financial year meant that reductions were necessary across all directorates. However, they were concerned that overtime the Council could find itself channelling the vast majority of its budget into supporting the People directorate at the expense of many other important elements of the Council's work, for example infrastructure provision, community amenities and so on.



- c. The Board suggested that a debate should take place to agree the longer term strategy around spending priorities that explores the balance between investment in the economy, provision of statutory services and early intervention. It was highlighted that a cross directorate approach should be taken and consider both the short, medium and long term implications. Certain areas, if protected from savings, could have a longer term benefits that could be transferred to supporting other services. It was raised that once certain facilities or amenities are lost they will not be regained and consideration should be given to the longer term implications of this.

4. Specific savings proposals - Council tax, Neighbourhood Partnerships, Libraries & Parks

These points were highlighted specifically by a number of members of OSMB. This is however not a reflection of unanimous support for all the remaining proposals.

- a. The Board considered the proposals in relation to increasing Council Tax by 5%. Members were concerned that the rise could affect the most vulnerable residents but reluctantly acknowledged that it was a necessary in order to produce a balanced budget.
- b. There was strong opposition to the plans in relation to changes to Neighbourhood Partnerships (NPs). Members were firstly concerned about the suggestion that NPs be replaced with other mechanisms for community engagement as some had been very effective at facilitating the relationship between the Council and local residents. Secondly, Members were disappointed to see that the NPs appeared to be winding down before any formal decision had been made, and they expressed concern about timing and communication around the proposed changes to enable communities to adjust as required.
- c. Members were also disappointed to see the plans in relation to libraries. The Board agreed that the current network of libraries provided vital community assets across the city and once they had been scaled back they would never be replaced. Members expressed regret that the plans to develop libraries into community hubs that offered shared services from a number of providers had not fully materialised and saw this as a missed opportunity.
- d. Members were also concerned about the extent of the savings proposed for the Parks service and questioned the deliverability of this level of savings and self-financing options.

5. Income generation and commercialisation

- a. The Board went on to consider the role that income generation and commercialisation should play in future plans for the Council. There was universal agreement that whilst income generation inevitably required some investment it was essential for the Council to develop other sources of income if it was to become more self-sufficient. Members suggested that Scrutiny would be the ideal vehicle for exploring new opportunities for generating income and hoped the Executive would embrace joint working in this area.

6. Thanks

- a. Members expressed thanks to all those involved in the budget process, particularly the Section 151 officer and her team, who had worked tirelessly to ensure the relevant information was available on time.



- b. Members of the People Scrutiny specifically welcomed the number of briefings run by officers this year on the people budget proposals.

8. Date of Next Meeting.

9th February 2017

Meeting ended at 8.55pm

CHAIR _____



Bristol City Council
OSMB
Action Sheet
19 January 2017



Agenda Item	Title of Report/ Description	Action and Deadline	Responsible officer	Action taken
7	Bristol City Council Savings Proposals.	Analysis of the Council's discretionary income streams to be carried out and sent to Members.	L Fleming	Complete – sent to Members 27 th January 17
7	Bristol City Council Savings Proposals.	OSMB comments regarding Council's Revenue Budget for 2017/18 to be provided to Cabinet for their meeting on 30 th January 17.	L Fleming	Complete
7	Bristol City Council Savings Proposals.	Members to be provided with an update regarding Jubilee Pool	L Fleming	Complete – sent to Members 27 th January 17