

# **BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

## **CO-ORDINATING O&S COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING**

**1000 hours on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2020, On-line meeting**

### **Action Notes**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Carl Rice (Chair)

Councillors: Deidre Alden, Albert Bore, Debbie Clancy, Liz Clements, Roger Harmer, Ewan Mackey, Rob Pocock, Lou Robson and Kath Scott.

#### **Also Present:**

Cllr Brigid Jones, Deputy Leader

Chris Naylor, Interim Chief Executive

Jonathan Tew, Assistant Chief Executive

Varun Sitaram, Head of Business Improvement & Change

Peter Bishop, Director Digital & Customer Services

Wendy Griffiths, Assistant Director Customer Services and Business Support

Catherine Parkinson, Interim City Solicitor and Interim Monitoring Officer

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services

#### **1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST**

The Chair advised that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site ([www.civico.net/birmingham](http://www.civico.net/birmingham)) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

#### **2. APOLOGIES**

None received

#### **3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

None.

#### **4. ACTION NOTES**

(See document No 1).

##### **RESOLVED:**

1. The action notes from the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2020 were agreed.

#### **5. INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE UPDATE**

Chris Naylor, Interim Chief Executive, introduced himself, why he had chosen to come to Birmingham and next steps for the city. He spoke about the work on transparency and open government he undertook when at Barnet Council, including in 2014 publishing a mainly unredacted contract with Capita. In March, he agreed to come to Birmingham because it is one of the most important jobs in the public sector. There are many challenges and opportunities, and a need to match changing expectations in the city.

He explained that he had considered applying for the role last year but felt that there was one criterion he could not meet, which was that the candidate should come from or live in Birmingham. This was the result of personal circumstances. He stated that he felt that the criteria could be met in other ways and that he would demonstrate that.

In terms of next steps, he noted that a lot of progress had been made as evidenced by the relaxation of external scrutiny. The context now reflects in the impact of the pandemic on the city's finances, the way it has amplified challenges but also revealed the art of the possible. There is also a need to take a longer term stance. His intention is to be clear about deliverables and develop the purpose of the organisation based on the role of the Council in the city. He set out four questions he is currently exploring:

- How can we increase the scale and pace of growth in a way that benefits those that need it most and meets carbon reduction commitments?
- What changes do we need to make to public services in the city so that we can move from crisis to prevention?
- How do we build a new relationship of trust with citizens?
- What does the Council need to be like to achieve the above?

Members then made the following points:

- Some members indicated that they were keen to move back to the Council House and would like to see preparations for that. The resumption of face to face meetings was important. Other members noted the benefits of flexible arrangements. Chris Naylor confirmed he would like to see a balanced approach and would like to see rule changes with regards to hybrid meetings. The Chair noted that his ward meeting had seen more engagement on-line than had previously been achieved with physical meetings.
- Members asked how the Interim Chief Executive would engender change amongst management to be more empathetic to the needs of the city. This is particularly difficult to do remotely and in a short space of time. Chris Naylor said

he would be happy to visit local areas with members. He noted that tone and stance are important, as well as getting the basics right.

- The plans in place for the transition period when a new Chief Executive is appointed was discussed. Chris Naylor emphasised that getting a delivery plan in place so that the Council can be taken forward in a consistent way was key. Educating people on fiscal responsibility is key, as is attracting the best people to the City Council and growing talent in the organisation.
- The reference to the climate emergency was welcomed, and the Interim Chief Executive confirmed that this would be hardwired through everything the City Council does, addressing the need for growth alongside it. He spoke about the work Barking and Dagenham had done, including setting up a heating and energy company.
- Driving improvement in services and support for members' casework is needed. Poor customer service in the public sector is unacceptable as often people cannot choose to go elsewhere for the services.
- How the City Council will engage with the public, and measures of success, will be set out in the delivery plan. This is fundamental and depends on basic services being met.
- Equalities should also run through everything the City Council does.
- The new way that schools are delivering education has benefited some, such as those with special needs. It was also noted that different ways of working work better for different needs, and this can help attract and retain people in the organisation.
- The role of scrutiny is to support good policy development as well as scrutinise the Executive.

**RESOLVED:**

1. Members to contact Chris Naylor to arrange visits to their wards.

**6. DEPUTY LEADER UPDATE**

(See documents No 2, 3 and 4).

Cllr Brigid Jones introduced the reports. On the Performance Monitoring report, she noted that some measures had not been recorded (in relation to Commonwealth Games and others are related to the Covid-19 pandemic as officers have been redeployed). The new framework has also been delayed because of the pandemic.

The City Board has been in existence for two years and is now focusing on the group as a cross-city forum and to move to a joint city vision. Other cities have long term city visions, whereas Birmingham has a number of smaller, shorter term visions. The intention is to bring the partners – public and private sector – together to achieve common goals in a more systematic way. Increasing public engagement is also to be addressed.

During the pandemic, the Customer Services team have been outstanding, moving to working from home with no disruption to services. Enquiries dropped initially in the lockdown, so efforts were put into outbound calls – over 40,000, mostly to those on

the shielding list. The Citizen Access Strategy had also been delayed but is now being picked up again, including work to map the customer journey. With the pandemic, more services had wanted to put their phone lines through the contact centre and improve their web presence. The service had commissioned some research, the findings of which reinforced what this Committee has already said, that complaints need to be much better handled and issues resolved more quickly.

In response to questions the following points were made:

- The work of the IT team in mobilising the Council and Trust to get home working is rightly congratulated;
- In relation to the performance report, this should be brought back to discuss actions to address areas of poor performance. The Deputy Leader suggested that individual O&S committees could pick up areas in their remits;
- There were questions about the accuracy of the data particularly around waste collection and recycling. There was also concern about measures relating to the climate emergency. The Deputy Leader said that this feeds into how the framework will be developed, to link data with outcomes better;
- It was noted that the cultural sector is currently in crisis, and this will have an impact on what we want to measure;
- There have been examples of poor communication with those newly arrived to the city and who have English as a second language and the Deputy Leader will take that back.

At this point it was agreed to defer the item to a future meeting to allow more time for discussion.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the item be deferred and brought to a future meeting of the committee.

**7. SCRUTINY CALL IN**

(See document No 5).

Members agreed to defer the item to a future meeting.

**8. DELEGATIONS BY CABINET**

(See document No 6).

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services, introduced the report. Cllr Bore added that he had spoken to the Leader, who agreed with the principle of the proposal.

The Chair proposed that six months would be adequate, subject to appropriate safeguards.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That a recommendation be made to the Leader that delegations from Cabinet are reviewed after a specified period (6 months), subject to appropriate safeguards, to ensure the decision is still in line with Council policy.

**9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is the 18<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

**10. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL-IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)**

None.

**11. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

**12. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS**

RESOLVED:

In an urgent situation between meetings, the Chairman jointly with the relevant Chief Officer has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

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The meeting ended at 1235 hours.