

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CO-ORDINATING O&S COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING

1000 hours on Friday 8th November 2019, Committee Rooms 3 & 4

Action Notes

Present:

Councillor Carl Rice (Chair)

Councillors Deirdre Alden, Albert Bore, Debbie Clancy, Liz Clements, Roger Harmer, Ewan Mackey and Rob Pocock.

Also Present:

Cllr Mike Sharpe, Armed Forces Champion

Cllr Peter Fowler

Suwinder Bains, Partnerships Manager

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) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllrs Ali and Scott.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

4. ACTION NOTES

(See document No 1)

RESOLVED:

The action notes from the meeting held on 6th September 2019 were agreed.

5. CHAIRS ACTIONS

The Chair welcomed Cllr Ewan Mackey to the committee and thanked Cllr Charlotte Hodivala for her service to the committee, following changes to the membership agreed at Full Council on Tuesday 5th November.

The Chair also noted that as the General Election had been called for Thursday 12 December, the council was now in the pre-election period.

6. UPDATE ON ARMED FORCES COVENANT

(See document No 2)

Suwinder Bains, Partnership Manager, introduced the report. Members then made the following points:

- The additional information given verbally was welcomed but members would also like to see that information in the report.
- The information in the report should be available on the website so it is transparent. There is a web page but it does need updating.
- The steering group is not cross-party. Cllr Sharpe told the committee that it took him a long time to get the group set up and he would welcome cross-party engagement. He noted that it was due to the work of Suwinder Bains that we are where we are today.
- The next steps could be more detailed in terms of the governance and whether a report will be brought back to Full Council or Council Business Management Committee. Cllr Sharpe agreed that a report should go back to Full Council to give support to the work.
- The report shows excellent work and the power of having member champions.
- There is a need for champions with regards to mental health and other health matters. They do not exist currently, though deep dives are currently being done. This will be taken back to the Health and Wellbeing Board for further discussion.
- The advantage of scrutiny is that it is cross party and transparent, with public meetings and published papers. This approach would support the steering group and give impetus to any recommendations.
- Some of the points in the motion are covered in the report but needs to be followed up with further action. The steering group is clear that it wants to be action-focused.
- It is important to work with other partners and local authorities to learn and to benchmark.
- It was suggested that members of the public are invited to steering group meetings, and the six bullet points in the motion are reviewed. Cllr Rice could update Council Business Management Committee.

- This is about co-ordinating with the work with partners and not assuming the City Council should take control. The steering group is a multi-agency approach. The City Council needs to look at how it can join up resources to support this agenda.

RESOLVED:

That the Armed Forces Champion and partners are asked to include cross-party representation on the Steering Group.

That a report should be taken by the Armed Forces Champion to Full Council next year (timings to be agreed by the Steering Group).

That the Steering Group is asked to consider ways in which information can be shared with members and officers and communicated to the wider audience.

7. PROTOCOL FOR MEMBER ENQUIRIES

(See document No. 3)

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services, introduced the report. Members made the following points:

- It would be useful to have data from BCC enquiries broken down by directorate – the volumes of enquiries and the timescales for responses;
- There are many good arguments for directing enquiries through the BCC enquiries, but is difficult to do on every enquiry, especially when members know that going to a particular officer directly will get it sorted much more quickly (e.g. revenues and benefits);
- It is necessary to have a system with follow through – the system has to pick up and try again where things are not resolved and pursue them. The volume of Members' enquiries means that they cannot keep doing that and that service would be invaluable for Members;
- At the moment waste issues take up a great deal of time. Members were impressed by response from contact centre officers and use of Resolution Champions. But it is still not working, with members having to constantly follow up enquiries and complaints.
- The system should monitor enquiries and inform the centre that matter had not been resolved, and therefore needed to be followed up to resolution.
- There should not be a direction for all members to use BCC enquiries (not all members thought that they got timely responses), though as the system becomes more successful, more will be encouraged to use it;
- There should be a set timescale for responses to member queries though that should depend on the nature of enquiries, with longer timescales for more complex ones. There should be conformity across directorates with a more robust escalation process;

- With regards to response, there should be an acknowledgement that the enquiry has been received (some officers are very poor at that) though the real interest is in the resolution of problem and a higher standard in getting matters resolved;
- It may help to distinguish requests for a service and request for investigation, for example where an alley way has not been cleaned and ownership/responsibility is disputed. This is a systemic flaw that needs investigation and resolution;
- Members questioned if there should be a role for Relationship Managers in resolving complex cases or for escalation;
- Responses should contain an explanation as to why something went wrong;
- Whilst use of BCC enquiries would enable the collection of data, this is not necessary as member enquiries will mirror those of the public. We don't need to capture everything to get a picture of the problems in city

In discussing next steps, Members agreed:

- The protocol should be short and not overly prescriptive;
- It should explicitly identify where areas may have different standards;
- A draft should be worked up with officers to ensure it is feasible;
- That draft should be circulated to all members for comment.

8. EXECUTIVE BUSINESS REPORT/SCRUTINY BUSINESS REPORT

(See document No. 4)

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services, introduced the report. Members agreed with the proposals in respect of the Executive Business Report but suggested considering a different approach for the Scrutiny Business Report, as the nature of scrutiny work might be better represented in an alternative format.

Whilst the Scrutiny Inquiry report on the Full Council proposed the idea of a scrutiny commentary on Executive Business Reports, it was agreed that members would be able to make comments as part of the debate.

The first Scrutiny Business Report is scheduled for February Full Council; Scrutiny Chairs will meet to agree a report, which will be circulated to other members of the committee ahead of publication.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

(See document No. 5)

The Chair noted that the committee would be holding an informal session to look at housing issues in relation to customer services on Friday 15th November.

He also informed the Committee that he would be meeting with the Acting Chief Executive to discuss next steps with regards to the customer services inquiry. He also noted the need for an Executive Scrutiny protocol to ensure there was no misunderstandings in the future.

Members requested an update on the recruitment of a new Chief Executive and clarification of back bench involvement.

RESOLVED:

The work programme was noted.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed to cancel the meeting scheduled for 03 December 2019, and that the next meeting would be 10 January 2020.

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

None.

12. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

13. 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

The meeting ended at 1145 hours.