

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 21 AND 27 OCTOBER 2015

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2015
AT 1300 HOURS IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, AND TUESDAY,
27 OCTOBER 2015 AT 1400 HOURS IN COMMITTEE ROOM 6,
COUNCIL HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM**

PRESENT:-

Councillor Zaffar in the Chair;

Councillors Brew, Bridle, Chatfield, Gregson, Hunt, Lal, Mosquito, Sambrook and Wood.

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor I Ward – Deputy Leader

Ms K Cook – Interim Head of Organisation Development

Mr J Evans – Interim Head of Human Resources

Mr C Gibbs – Service Director, Customer Services

Mr M O'Neill – Head of Benefits

Ms J Power – Scrutiny Officer

Mr J Warlow – Director of Finance

Miss V Williams – Committee Manager

Miss E Williamson – Head of Scrutiny Services

NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST – 21 OCTOBER 2015

- 24 The Chairman advised, and the Committee noted, that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site (www.birminghamnewsroom.com) and members of the press/public could record and take photographs. The whole of the meeting would be filmed except where there were confidential or exempt items.

APOLOGIES – 21 OCTOBER 2015

- 25 Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillors C Khan and Kooner.
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MINUTES

The Chairman, in referring to the comments regarding the Leader's policy statement, suggested and it was agreed that page 10, paragraph 10 be amended to read 'There had been no discussion relating to the issue of moving from a weekly collection to a fortnightly connection in the future. The use of wheelie bins meant that they were collecting more in terms of materials' (minute no 16 refers).

- 26 With the above amendment, the Minutes of the last meeting held on 8 September 2015, having been previously circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.
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DEPUTY LEADER

A. Update on HR

The following report of the Interim Head of Organisation Development and the Interim Head of Human Resources entitled 'HR and OD Update' was submitted:-

(See document No 1)

Councillor I Ward, Deputy Leader, Kathryn Cook, Interim Head of Organisation Development, and Jonathan Evans, Interim Head of Human Resources, attended the meeting and, in response to questions, the following were amongst the points made:-

1. There was an eligibility criterion that had to be followed for courses provided by the Local Government Association. However, the importance of Members' development and the opportunity to attend all appropriate courses was recognised.
2. Kathryn Cook undertook to circulate to Members information regarding the new values and behaviours.
3. Sickness absence was high and measures had been put in place to try to improve the situation. Compliance rates of return to work interviews had improved.
4. It was important to increase capability and capacity of staff. Performance management of staff was a key element of the Council's culture change programme.
5. It was important for Members to identify and understand the new cultures and values and it was disappointing to hear that some Members had found the training to be ineffective.

6. Openness, transparency and honesty were imperative. Members and officers should be held to account and behave in accordance with the new cultures and values.
7. A training analysis was circulated to Members in advance of running the training courses in order to try to ascertain Councillors' needs. However, feedback had been poor.
8. The need to monitor and scrutinise the implementation of the new cultures and behaviours was noted.
9. With regard to diversity, gender and culture it was important to work with other organisations to face changes. It was recognised that the Council did not mirror Birmingham's diversity and the age profile of the organisation needed to change.
10. Jonathan Evans referred to quarterly reports regarding diversity and undertook to provide Members with further information. He noted the suggestion that diversity and work experience figures be included in the 'dashboard' workforce report in the future.
11. Kathryn Cook advised that as changes to the future council became clearer it would be necessary to identify requirements to make the Council fit for purpose. She offered to provide an update to a future meeting.
12. In recent years, many staff had left the Council. However, it was important not to allow the wrong people to leave. Jonathan Evans offered to provide further information regarding the number of staff who had accepted voluntary redundancy or resigned.
13. Career pathways for young people were important.
14. The importance of a mission statement outlining core values was recognised.
15. It was imperative that managers understood the policies and had the confidence to carry them out.
16. A number of workshops were due to be held in the New Year to assist Members in having a clearer understanding of their role in the future.
17. It was agreed to hold a private briefing for Members of the Committee to update them on the findings of the recent staff survey.

The Chairman thanked Kathryn Cook and Jonathan Evans for attending the meeting.

B. Finance Reporting

The following report of the Chief Executive, Director of Economy and the Director of Finance considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 20 October 2015 entitled 'Corporate Revenue Budget Monitoring 2015/16 Month 5 (Up to 31 August 2015)' was submitted:-

(See document No 2)

Councillor I Ward, Deputy Leader, and Jon Warlow, Director of Finance, attended the meeting and, in response to questions, the following were amongst the points made:-

1. The need to engage in a meaningful conversation regarding the budget was recognised and a number of consultations with the Committee in the future were proposed.
2. A plan was being brought forward to deal with pressures on former district services.
3. Page 9, section 2 of the report set out details of the current position regarding Shelforce. Orders were now on track and it was hoped that Shelforce would be removed from the monitoring report in the near future.
4. Page 7, section 2 of the report outlined the pressures regarding the refuse collection service. However, any structural issues would not be dealt with by putting more money into the service.
5. The Star Chamber had been effective in ensuring that numbers were driven in the right direction and was an important part of the financial reporting process.
6. Former library service staff were currently investigating the possibility of setting up a co-operative. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) had offered to work with the Council regarding the future of libraries. Members agreed to get involved 'cross party' with CIPFA and the libraries. Councillor I Ward undertook to circulate information on the cost of providing self service facilities in Soho Library.
7. The Chairman advised that City Council at its meeting on 14 April 2015 had passed a resolution to establish a cross party group to start work on a coherent, comprehensive, cross party document of proof for Birmingham to have a fair funding settlement aiming to increase funding from the Government elected on 7 May (of whatever Party), going forward.

At this point Jon Warlow tabled a letter sent from Birmingham City Council, on a cross party basis, to local authorities throughout England seeking support for the proposal:-

(See document No 3)

The Committee supported the action taken.

Jon Warlow undertook to provide Members with details of responses received.

8. Budget pressures were at a similar level to previous years at month 5. However, it was becoming more difficult to make savings.
9. Staff received regular updates and meetings had been held to enable them to have an opportunity to express their views and have an input into issues such as the future council and budget.
10. It was hoped that the establishment of Sutton Coldfield Parish Council would benefit the local community and, if successful, the Council would look at how parish councils might be introduced in other areas of the City.
11. Page 10, section 2 - paragraph 2.4 of the report explained the current position regarding the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The government had recently announced new proposals regarding the HRA.
12. The auction of 212 Winson Green Road, a former community centre, was scheduled to take place on 22 October 2015. Anyone who had used the premises in the past would have until 6 November 2015 to retrieve their items/belongings from the building. Councillor I Ward assured the Committee that the correct procedure had been followed regarding the disposal of the premises.

The Chairman thanked Councillor I Ward and Jon Warlow for attending the meeting.

27

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the HR and OD update report be noted;
 - (ii) that the corporate revenue budget monitoring 2015/16 month 5 (up to 31 August 2015) report be noted;
 - (iii) that the letter regarding fairer funding for local authorities be noted.
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THE BIRMINGHAM COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME REVIEW 2015

The following report was submitted:-

(See document No 4)

Chris Gibbs, Service Director, Customer Services, and Martin O'Neill, Head of Benefits, introduced the report and, in response to questions, the following were amongst the points made:-

1. A brief explanation was given of the discretionary hardship fund referred to in paragraph 3.2 of the report.
2. The 80% collection rate for Council Tax had already been met for the current year.
3. The Council received funding from the government to meet the cost of collecting Council Tax. Chris Gibbs undertook to provide Members with further information thereon.
4. Information regarding the support scheme was sent out with Council Tax bills.
5. Chris Gibbs undertook to circulate information to Members regarding the methods used and timeline for retrieving Council Tax, including the utilisation of bailiffs.
6. At the request of the Chairman, Chris Gibbs undertook to provide all Councillors with information on the Money Advice Trust including the circulation of a letter from the Chief Executive of the Trust concerning the use of bailiffs in 2014/15.

Members congratulated Chris Gibbs, Martin O'Neill and the officers working in the Revenues and Benefits Team for their work.

The Chairman thanked Chris Gibbs and Martin O'Neill for attending the meeting.

28

RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

**CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
WORK PROGRAMME 2015-16**

The following work programme was submitted:-

(See document No 5)

The Chairman drew Members' attention to the forthcoming meetings and made particular reference to the proposed visit to the Contact Centre.

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services, briefly explained the proposed itinerary for the visit to the Contact Centre at 1100 hours on 10 November 2015 and the inquiry session regarding the customer journey that was due to commence at 1400 hours on that day.

Chris Gibbs suggested that, in addition to listening to calls received at the Centre, Members might wish to spend some time with the Resolution Champions.

29 **RESOLVED:-**

That the work programme be noted.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

At 1525 hours the Chairman proposed and it was:-

30 **RESOLVED:-**

That the Committee adjourn and reconvene on Tuesday, 27 October 2015 at 1400 hours in Committee Room 6, Council House, Victoria Square, Birmingham.

27 OCTOBER 2015

PRESENT:-

Councillor Zaffar in the Chair;

Councillors Brew, Bridle, Hunt, C Khan, Mosquito and Wood.

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor S Stacey – Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Contracting and Improvement

Mr H Brown – Head of Category
Mr N Kletz – Assistant Director, Procurement
Mr J Lawton – Cabinet Support Officer
Ms J Power – Scrutiny Officer
Miss V Williams – Committee Manager
Miss E Williamson – Head of Scrutiny Services

NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST – 27 OCTOBER 2015

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APOLOGIES – 27 OCTOBER 2015

- 32 Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillors Chatfield, Gregson, Kooner, Lal and Sambrook.

CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMISSIONING, CONTRACTING AND IMPROVEMENT

A. Key Priorities

The following report was submitted:-

(See document No 6)

Councillor Stacey, Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Contracting and Improvement, Nigel Kletz, Assistant Director, Procurement, and Haydn Brown, Head of Category, attended the meeting and, in response to questions, the

following were amongst the points made:-

1. Councillor Stacey briefly explained the review of the Living Wage Policy and the implications of the Chancellor's proposals due to be implemented in April 2016.
2. The details of contracts, such as travel time costs, would be subject to negotiation with providers.
3. Councillor Stacey undertook to speak to the Place Managers regarding dealing with local contract negotiations and report back to a future meeting of the Committee.

Haydn Brown undertook to speak to Councillor Brew after the meeting regarding work that had been carried out in Northfield Ward.

4. The living wage should apply across the board regardless of the size or make up of the company or the background of the worker involved.
5. Nigel Kletz explained the purpose of the contract management toolkit and the audit methodology. It was important to identify and cover all risks.
6. The Birmingham Business Charter for Social Responsibility required contractors to sign up to provide job opportunities, including work experience. Performance KPIs were routinely measured and some contracts included a penalty payment for failure to deliver.
7. The current contract with Acivico would expire on 31 March 2017 and it was hoped that a new contract would be completed by March 2016. A substantial part of the contract had already been achieved and would run until 2019. Keeping staff at Acivico updated with the position regarding the contract was not within the remit of the Cabinet Member.

At this point Councillor Brew declared an interest as a board member of Acivico Limited.

8. Negotiations regarding the Citiserve contract were ongoing.
9. Open book reporting was not continuous but was investigated from time to time.
10. Any risks relating to the provision of Christmas trees would rest with the contractor.
11. Most contracts were for four years. Benchmarking of prices was done regularly and procurement was conducted competitively.

The Chairman thanked Haydn Brown and Nigel Kletz for attending the meeting.

B. Tracking: Council Commissioning and Third Sector Organisations

The following tracking report entitled 'progress report on implementation: council commissioning and third sector organisations' was submitted:-

(See document No 7)

Councillor Stacey, Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Contracting and Improvement, and Haydn Brown, Head of Category, introduced the report.

A brief discussion ensued regarding each recommendation.

The Committee agreed with the Cabinet Member's assessment in respect of all recommendations.

In referring to recommendation 2, Councillor Stacey circulated a document regarding the contracts finder 'Find it in Birmingham' and invited Members to submit comments/responses to him via e-mail within the next week.

In referring to recommendation 3, Councillor Stacey suggested that it might be useful to arrange a meeting between suppliers and beneficiaries to try to identify ways of achieving support to third sector organisations from contractors.

The Chairman thanked Nigel Kletz and Haydn Brown for attending the meeting and requested an update on all recommendations to the meeting scheduled to take place on 19 January 2016.

C. Zero Hours Contracts

The following report was submitted:-

(See document No 8)

The Chairman introduced the item.

Councillor Wood pointed out that organisations supplied goods to many different authorities throughout the country, not just Birmingham and considered that not all companies might be able to comply with the sub-group's recommendations regarding zero hours contracts.

33

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the key priorities report be noted;
- (ii) that the progress report on implementation: council commissioning and third sector organisations be noted and an update on the recommendations be submitted to the meeting scheduled to take place on 19 January 2016;

- (iii) that the recommendations of the sub-group established to consider zero hours contracts as set out in the report now submitted be noted.
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GOLDEN SQUARE

The following report was submitted:-

(See document No 9)

34 **RESOLVED:-**

That the report be noted.

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

- 35 The Chairman advised that there had been no requests for call in/councillor call for action/petitions received.
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OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

The Chairman was of the opinion that the following item should be considered as a matter of urgency in view of the need to expedite consideration thereof and instruct officers to act:-

Update on the Staff Survey

- 36 Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services, advised that briefings for Members regarding the findings of the staff survey were due to be held later today at 1645 and 1800 hours in the Council Chamber.

Members requested that the results of the survey and any other information, such as powerpoint slides to be used at the briefings, be circulated to them.

AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

37 **RESOLVED:-**

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

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

38

RESOLVED:-

That in view of the nature of the business to be transacted which includes exempt information of the category indicated the public be now excluded from the meeting:-

Golden Square – Exempt Paragraph 3
