

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 8 MARCH 2016

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY, 8 MARCH 2016 AT
1400 HOURS IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, COUNCIL HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM**

PRESENT:-

Councillor Zaffar in the Chair;

Councillors Brew, Bridle, Chatfield, Finnegan, C Khan, Kooner and Wood.

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Stacey – Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Contracting and Improvement

Ms P Buckley – Assistant Director, Customer Services

Mr C Gibbs – Service Director, Customer Services

Mr N Kletz – Assistant Director, Procurement

Ms J Power – Scrutiny Officer

Miss V Williams – Committee Manager

Miss E Williamson – Head of Scrutiny Services

NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

- 70 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

- 71 Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillors Hunt, Lal, Mosquito and Sambrook.
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MINUTES

- 72 The Minutes of the last meeting, having been previously circulated, were confirmed and signed.
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DISTRICT AND WARD ARRANGEMENTS

- 73 Miss E Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services, gave a verbal update and advised that it was the intention to send a letter to the Leader of the Council outlining the findings of the inquiry.

A discussion paper on the devolution options, to be compiled jointly with the Neighbourhood and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, was due to be submitted to a future meeting of the City Council.

A discussion ensued and the following were amongst the points made:-

1. It was recognised that webstreaming offered members of the public the opportunity to watch meetings they might be unable to attend. However, it was noted that it might be impractical to webstream meetings held in Wards and Districts.
2. The use of mobile 'apps' was suggested as a possible way of webstreaming meetings in remote locations.
3. Some members of the public still preferred to attend a meeting rather than watch the webstream. It was important for local residents to have the opportunity to take part in a debate.
4. It was suggested that the funding of Ward meetings and how they might be developed in the future should be investigated.
5. It was suggested that co-opted members and representatives of outside bodies/organisations serving on District Committees should be considered.
6. With regard to the number of people viewing webstreaming, it was important to identify how long they actually watched ie whether it was a few seconds, for a particular item, or the whole meeting.
7. One possibility was to strengthen the Ward Meetings and scrap District Committees altogether. The implementation of Parish Councils was also recognised as a possible way of doing things better in the future.
8. In some situations, such as holding contractors to account, there was a clear case for local Councillors working together regardless of the Ward they represented. The structure needed to be more flexible.

9. It was important to recognise the needs of the local community.
 10. There was concern that, with diminishing resources, it might be difficult for officers to cover a large number of Wards.
 11. It was suggested that the procurement system should be simplified to enable local working and decision making.
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CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS/AGENDA

The following report was submitted:-

(See document No 1)

Miss E Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services, introduced the report.

Members commented on the information submitted and the following were amongst the points made:-

1. The time allocated for Notice of Motions should be used more wisely. It was suggested that only two Motions should be submitted with the debating time split equally between them.
2. It was recognised that there were some statutory issues that would need to be retained as part of the Council agenda.
3. Any important issues due to be considered by Cabinet should also be debated at City Council.
4. Backbench Councillors should be renamed 'Frontline Councillors'.
5. When debating Overview and Scrutiny reports, Members who did not sit on the responsible Committee should be given more opportunity to comment rather than the Councillors who served thereon and had, therefore, already had a chance to discuss the issue in detail.
6. Prior to the implementation of the current system comprising Regulatory, Scrutiny and the Executive functions, Members recalled that the Council had received regular reports from each Committee and meetings had, generally, tended to last longer than at present.
7. In the past there had been more opportunity, such as in the post room and canteen, for Members of all parties to interact. A common room for use by all parties to try to encourage more engagement between Members was suggested.
8. Members recognised the importance of giving members of the public the opportunity to ask questions but wondered whether there might be a more efficient way than inviting them to read it out at the Council meeting with the Cabinet Member giving a pre-determined answer.

9. Members wondered how many questions had been submitted by members of the public and how many had been refused/not permitted, for example if it had been of a personal nature.

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RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMISSIONING, CONTRACTING AND IMPROVEMENT

A. Update Report

The following update report of the Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Contracting and Improvement was submitted:-

(See document No 2)

Councillor Brew declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Director of Acivico.

Councillor Stacey, Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Contracting and Improvement, and Mr N Kletz, Assistant Director – Procurement, introduced the report and, in response to questions, the following were amongst the points made:-

1. Councillor Stacey undertook to provide Councillor Brew with information regarding the pilot to try to forge links between providers/contractors and local communities in Northfield District referred to in paragraph 2.3 of the document.
2. Nigel Kletz gave details of how many companies were registered with 'finditinbirmingham'.
3. Councillor Stacey undertook to speak to Councillor Brew after the meeting regarding Shelforce.
4. A report concerning commercialism was due to be considered by the Corporate Commissioning Board later in the month.
5. Nigel Kletz undertook to circulate further information to Members regarding commercialism, including details of the recently established team.
6. In order to be more 'commercial', it was noted that it might be necessary to bring in people with specialist sales skills.
7. Nigel Kletz briefly explained the contract management process which comprised three stages – product, process and price.

8. With regard to contract awards, Nigel Kletz explained the tolerances referred to in paragraph 2.1.1. – appendix 1 and pointed out that every local authority had its own set of arrangements.
9. With regard to schools' catering, Acivico and contracts generally, it was important to ensure that contractors fulfilled their obligations.
10. Nigel Kletz briefly explained why Acivico had been established as a wholly owned company.

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RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted.

B. Progress Report on Implementation: Council Commissioning and Third Sector Organisations

The following tracking report was submitted:-

(See document No 3)

Councillor Stacey, Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Contracting and Improvement, introduced the report.

A brief discussion ensued regarding each recommendation.

The Committee agreed with the Cabinet Member's assessment in respect of recommendations 2, 4 and 5.

Recommendation 1

Councillor Kooner, requested more information regarding 1 c) which Councillor Stacey undertook to provide.

Councillor Kooner was concerned that recommendation 1 f) might have been misconstrued. She explained in more detail what had originally been the intention of the recommendation ie engaging in the delivery process not the commissioning process. She suggested and it was agreed that this should be assessed as 3 – not achieved (progress made).

Councillor Stacey acknowledged that there appeared to have been a difference of understanding regarding 1 f) and undertook to speak with Councillor Kooner after the meeting to clarify the matter.

Recommendation 2

Councillor Kooner requested more information regarding 2 a) which Councillor Stacey undertook to provide.

Nigel Kletz advised that meetings with third sector champions were due to take place in the next few weeks and undertook to provide information thereon.

Recommendation 3

Councillor Kooner considered that the recommendation had not been achieved and it was agreed that this should be assessed as 3 – not achieved (progress made).

76 **RESOLVED:-**

That the report be noted.

PROCUREMENT OF FLEET AND WASTE VEHICLES

77 The Chairman explained that, due to a family bereavement, Councillor Trickett, Cabinet Member for Sustainability, was unable to attend the meeting.

The Chairman updated the Committee on the progress to date.

Councillor Wood briefly explained the findings of the working group, outlining the shortcomings and the fact that the procurement process appeared to have been flawed.

Councillor Stacey, Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Contracting and Improvement, briefly explained the process adopted for the implementation of wheelie bins, pointing out that their introduction was Council policy and had been funded by the Government.

The Chairman advised that a letter, outlining the findings of the working group, was currently being drafted and would be sent to the Cabinet Member for Commissioning, Contracting and Improvement and the Cabinet Member for Sustainability in due course.

The Chairman varied the agenda and considered the following item at this point.

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:-

Birmingham City Council's Website Project – Design Concepts

78 Mr C Gibbs, Service Director – Customer Services, Ms P Buckley – Assistant Director, Customer Services and representatives of Jadu, a

website design company, gave a powerpoint presentation outlining the possible new design concepts to the contents of the Council's website.

Members commented on the proposed design and the following were amongst the points made:-

1. Information regarding local councillors should be easier to access and clearer.
2. A universal set of icons was welcomed.
3. It was important to ensure that the website would be easily understood by members of the public.
4. The current search facility was very poor and needed to be improved.
5. The number of links to access information should be reduced.
6. There should be prominence given to information on refuse collection, street lighting and roads, which tended to be the most popular issues raised by members of the public.
7. An A to Z of all services should be included.
8. A special folder to access all types of request forms etc would be useful.
9. It was important to include all different services covered by the Council and ensure training was given to staff, dealing with customer queries, on where to find information.

The Chairman thanked officers for attending the meeting.

The Committee returned to the original agenda order.

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

The following work programme was submitted:-

(See document No 4)

The Chairman introduced the document and outlined the items due to be considered at the meeting scheduled to take place on 12 April 2016.

Councillor Brew advised that he hoped a report on the findings of the working group set up to consider the performance of the property portfolio would also be available.

79 **RESOLVED:-**

That the work programme be noted.

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

80 The Chairman advised that there had been no requests for call in/councillor call for action/petitions received.

OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

81 There were no other issues of urgent business raised.

AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

82 **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.

The meeting ended at 1627 hours.

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CHAIRMAN