

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 14 JULY 2015

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY, 14 JULY 2015 AT
1400 HOURS IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, COUNCIL HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM**

PRESENT:-

Councillor Zaffar in the Chair;

Councillors Brew, Bridle, Chatfield, Hunt, C Khan, Kooner, Lal, Mosquito, Sambrook and Wood.

ALSO PRESENT

Ms P Buckley – Assistant Director, Customer Services Centre
Mr C Gibbs – Service Director, Customer Services
Mr S Haque – Citizens UK
Ms T Morris – Senior HR Practitioner
Miss V Williams – Committee Manager
Miss E Williamson – Head of Scrutiny Services

NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

1

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.

APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE , CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR

2

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the resolution of the City Council appointing the Committee and Chair, with membership set out below for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the City Council in May 2016 be noted:-

Labour Group

Councillors Bridle, Chatfield, Gregson, C Khan, Kooner, Lal, Mosquito and Zaffar (Chair)

Conservative Group

Councillors Brew, Sambrook and Wood

Liberal Democrat Group

Councillor Hunt

- (ii) that Councillor Kooner be elected Deputy Chair, for the purpose of substitution for the Chair if absent, for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the Council in 2016.

APOLOGIES

3

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor Gregson.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

4

Members were reminded that they must declare all relevant pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests relating to any items of business to be discussed at this meeting. If a pecuniary interest was declared a Member must not speak or take part in that agenda item. Any declarations would be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The following schedule was submitted:-

(See document No 1)

5

RESOLVED:-

That the Terms of Reference be noted.

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

The following report was submitted:-

(See document No 2)

Ms T Morris, Senior HR Practitioner, and Ms E Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services, introduced the report and, in response to questions, the following were amongst the points made:-

1. Member development was ongoing and it was intended to draw up a programme for the remainder of the municipal year.
2. The findings of the Kerslake Report were still being addressed and issues raised would continue to evolve.
3. An improvement plan had been drawn up, as referred to in appendix 1 of the report, together with a development programme for Members as set out in appendix 2.
4. Sessions for Ward Committee Chairs were due to take place in September 2015.
5. A portal, which could be accessed at any time, offered online learning resources for Members and was especially useful for those who might find it difficult to attend training sessions.
6. Officers had been liaising with the Local Government Association regarding training programmes.
7. Not all Members had access to laptops and other IT equipment. However, this was being addressed.

Members made the following suggestions:-

1. It was important to ensure that all Councillors were included in the development programme.
2. A better understanding of scrutiny, especially at a district level, was required.
3. Induction should be available for new Members as soon as possible. A Councillor appointed as a result of a by-election often did not receive any training until the following May when the local elections usually took place.
4. Information about the planning, licensing and education admission appeals processes, housing allocations and the constitution was requested.

5. Learning resources could be improved, including specific training regarding the 'new way of working'.
6. Peer training with fellow Councillors was recognised as a possible method of learning.
7. Holding informal meetings for Members was considered a good way of providing training, information and development.
8. A glossary of the different acronyms often used in reports was requested.

At this point, Mr S Haque, Citizens UK, explained the purpose of the association including organizing communities to act together for power, social justice and the common good. Citizens UK developed the leadership capacity of its members to enable them to hold politicians and other decision-makers to account on the issues that they considered mattered.

Mr Haque, in response to questions, advised that there were different models used for developing leadership and it was important to have conversations in order to establish on what particular issues an assembly wished to focus. Recognizing the importance of communication and relationships was essential.

The Chairman thanked Ms Morris and Mr Haque for attending the meeting.

6

RESOLVED:-

That the report be noted and that member development be reviewed at six monthly intervals.

CUSTOMER SERVICES UPDATE

The following briefing note and the report of the Service Director, Customer Services were submitted:-

(See documents Nos 3 and 4)

Miss E Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services, introduced the briefing note.

Mr C Gibbs, Service Director, Customer Services, and Ms P Buckley, Assistant Director Customer Services Centre, introduced the report.

Members made the following suggestions:-

1. Further investigative work regarding housing and environmental services, particularly relating to fleet and waste management, be carried out.
2. Telephone or postal customer surveys should be conducted as not all residents had a computer.
3. A single point of contact at call centres was suggested although it was recognised that, with an ever decreasing workforce and reduced budgets, this might be difficult to achieve.

Mr Gibbs and Ms Buckley responded to Members' questions and the following were amongst the points made:-

1. Customers often left anonymous comments and 'cold calling' by telephone was not considered a popular method of communication.
2. The telephone message that people heard when they contacted the call centre was currently being reviewed.
3. Appendix C of the report provided details of the most recent Your Views Directorate Learning Summary.
4. It was necessary to consider the most appropriate ways for dealing with enquiries received from Members on behalf of local residents and it was an aspiration of the Council to identify a way of reporting issues in the future.
5. Call centre staff liaised as necessary with outside organisations, such as Severn Trent Water and Amey, regarding complaints received and always asked residents how they wished to be updated on a situation.

Mr Gibbs undertook to provide the following information:-

1. Data on lost calls and waiting times;
2. Statistical details in numbers as well as percentages;
3. The complaints procedure and the role of the Ombudsman;
4. District level data.

The Chairman thanked Mr Gibbs and Ms Buckley for attending the meeting.

7

RESOLVED:-

That the briefing note and 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 advised that he hoped to invite the Deputy Leader to a future meeting, possibly in October 2015, to focus on human resources and financial issues. In view of the difficulty in arranging a meeting on a Tuesday, the Chairman sought alternative days from Members and Mondays or Wednesdays were suggested.

In referring to the items to be scheduled, Councillor Wood requested that Birmingham Highways and Amey – Contract Performance Update be included in the work programme.

Councillor Brew requested that the Committee investigate the way the Council was governed, comparing the cabinet and committee systems. The Chairman suggested that this could perhaps be considered at the April 2016 meeting.

Councillor Sambrook considered that the policy statement was submitted too late in the municipal year and suggested that it be brought forward. The Chairman agreed to add it as a 'to be scheduled' item.

The Chairman suggested that a finance training session for Members, including information on the Service Birmingham contract, be held as an informal meeting prior to a Committee meeting.

It was noted that some Members had volunteered to carry out a piece of work regarding the Golden Square and also the zero hours' contract.

8 **RESOLVED:-**

That the work programme be noted.

DATES OF MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

9 **RESOLVED:-**

- (i) That the Committee meets on the following Tuesdays at 1400 hours in the Council House:-

<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
8 September	19 January
27 October	9 February
10 November	8 March
8 December	12 April

- (ii) that approval be given to Tuesdays at 1400 hours (excluding City Council where possible) as a suitable day and time each week for any additional meetings required to consider 'requests for call in' which may be lodged in respect of Executive decisions.
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REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)

- 10 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

- 11 No other urgent business was raised.
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AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

- 12 **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 1608 hours.

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CHAIRMAN