

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

BIRMINGHAM ECONOMY, SKILLS AND SUSTAINABILITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 15 JANUARY 2016

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BIRMINGHAM ECONOMY, SKILLS AND SUSTAINABILITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON FRIDAY, 15 JANUARY 2016 AT 1000 HOURS IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 3&4, COUNCIL HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM

PRESENT: - Councillor O'Shea in the Chair; Councillors Badley, Barrie, Evans, Hughes, Huxtable, Jenkins, Jones, O'Shea, Rehman and Spencer

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Penny Holbrook, Cabinet Member for Skills, Learning and Culture
Baseema Begum - Research & Policy Officer
Dominic Moore, Land and Planning, Severn Trent Water
Jane Newman, Employment Development Manager
Sarah Jayne O'Kane, Public Relations Manager, Severn Trent Water
Errol Wilson – Committee Manager
Benita Wishart - Overview and Scrutiny Manager

NOTICE OF RECORDING

- 49 The Chairman advised and it was noted that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site (www.birminghamnewsroom.com) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs.

The whole of the meeting would be filmed except where there were confidential or exempt items.

APOLOGIES

- 50 An apology for non-attendance was submitted on behalf of Councillor Quinn.
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MINUTES

Councillor Huxtable referred to Minute no. 45 on page 75, the Business Improvement District (BID) and commented that at the last meeting the Deputy Leader, Councillor Ian Ward and the Cabinet Member for Development Transport and the Economy, Councillor Tahir Ali were unable to attend the meeting and they were going to try and procure their attendance at this meeting. He enquired whether the Chairman could inform the Committee whether this was successful and if not that he wished to express his disappointment that the Cabinet Members were yet again unable to attend this meeting to talk about BIDs in general and noting Councillor Rehman's enquiry concerning Sparkbrook and Springfield BID process and where they were with that.

The Chairman advised that the Cabinet Members were lacking in their presence today and that he share Councillor Huxtable's concern. He added that it was hoped to see Councillor Ali at the previous meeting and that it was disappointing that the Committee did not have one of them here today. He highlighted that he understand that Councillor Ali had confirmed that he would be attending the Committee meeting in February 2016 and that it was hoped that they would be able to ask Councillor Ali questions concerning the BIDs.

(The Chairman declared his non-pecuniary interest as a member for the Acocks Green BID).

Councillor Huxtable referred to the Work Programme and stated that he noted that Councillor Quinn was going to draft a letter to the Cabinet Member for Development and Transport and the Economy, Councillor Ali regarding the Transportation and Highways Capital programme in terms of the decision slipping, given that this was for the Municipal Year 2015/16 and here they were on the 15 January 2016 and still no decision appeared to be made. It was noted from the Work Programme that this was due to go to Cabinet on the 26 January 2016. He enquired whether this would still be progressed to that Cabinet meeting and whether the letter as set out in the minutes had been drafted and sent.

The Chairman stated that the Scrutiny Officers had advised that the letter had been drafted, but had not yet been sent as they were waiting for the Chairman (Cllr Quinn) to sign off on it.

51 **RESOLVED: -**

That the minutes of the meetings held on the 11 December 2015 having been previously circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

DRAFT SKILLS INVESTMENT PLAN

- 52 Councillor Penny Holbrook, Cabinet Member for Skills, Learning and Culture and Jane Newman, Employment Development Manager presented the item.

Councillor Holbrook advised that the Skills and investment Plan was in its draft form and that the Committee was invited to feedback any changes to the draft Plan that they required. She stated that this was a strategic document that had commissioned with partners in the Further Education (FE) sector which was designed to map the future economic growth in Birmingham in terms of jobs and the years they would come on stream and to back fill this in terms of what the skills gap would then be.

The intention was that this would sit outside of the local authority and owned by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area to drive investment so that when people spent money on commissioning skills in Birmingham whether this be the FE, private providers or the third sector, they do so based on intelligence where the future jobs in Birmingham were going to be. This would help to rationalise some of the provisions they had in Birmingham and should also help drive the skills agenda to ensure they were closing those gaps and that the courses that were available for the young people to do were relevant to the world of work.

Ms Newman emphasised that the Plan was not just about young people, but that it talked about the skills levels of all people, i.e. young people who were at school, young people who were out of work and people who were also in work. It was about raising the skills levels across the piece generally.

In response to questions from Members, Councillor Holbrook and Ms Newman made the following statements:-

- I. In terms of the Digital Solution, the Committee was informed at the previous meeting of something that was already in development in relation to the digital access point. It was developed in consultation with schools and other providers to the point where it had been tested in schools and it was hoped that this would be the solution.
- II. They were aware that other people were developing skills and they would continue to develop. A strategic direction in terms of how this was provided was needed. The funding was always problematic regarding the digital solutions as people would come to the City Council for money and they were trying to solve some of the situations they had now. They needed to be clear of the solutions in this situation and this was what they did when they developed the digital access points.
- III. Schools had a requirement to provide quality careers advice and guidance and the City Council was aware that this was probably not currently being delivered to the level that was required. The Council needed to consult the schools in terms of this as they were aware that they were probably not resourced to deliver quality careers advice and guidance. It was about how they could bring about a solution with regard to how they were linking with employers; how they were linking with providing a database which would be useful and to look at the providers who were already out there delivering and working with schools and the business community and other projects to see how they could help and support. It was not about putting something different in its place, but aligning what was already there.

- IV. In terms of recruitment in Birmingham, for a number of years they had touched on things like the procurement policy for jobs and skills, the Business Charter and a fair amount of work was being done with Grand Central which was a large project. High Speed 2 (HS2) was coming on line in 2026 and the City Council had secured the National College for High Speed Rail which would be opened in 2017. They were doing work with the FE sector providers to provide that pathway for Birmingham people to access that provision which was high level provision when this opens. A HS2 Growth Strategy was in place which include employment skills running through that and they were keen to develop this as part of the wider Combined Authority brief and the LEP brief.
- V. In terms of advanced manufacturing, there was growth areas regarding advanced manufacturing and skills that were changing, but there would still be on-going needs for higher level skills than probably existed in the advanced manufacturing.
- VI. In terms of skills training for the unemployed, they had a strong partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), where they work with the DWP to provide the skills for the people who they could identify or who were ready for work by providing a set of skills for work based training for them. They had a project currently running which was called Project 20,000 which enabled them to provide pre-employment training.
- VII. It was difficult to predict where those jobs were going to be and they had to ensure that the provisions that came through DWP and other providers was ready and available for when those jobs come on line. Timing was important, hence the relationship they had with the DWP. There were a number of initiatives that were available and this was the purpose of the Plan which was to try and align those that were there. There were the FE provisions, work programme provisions and they needed to ensure that these were working in the same directions. Maybe what they should be looking at was a set of indicators and common objectives which would ensure that they were all working in the same direction.
- VIII. The report itself would be a live report as even though it was a fluid situation, things and data changes. It was written and developed in a way that it had live links to other sources and information. There was work to be done in terms of actually looking at how this worked for the people it was going to be used by such as schools, providers, teachers, parents to see if it was in a form they could use. The planning was part of a wider context in terms of the LEP and the wider Combined Authority and this was the reason it was important to make those links to keep the data there and all relevant information.
- IX. In relation to the connection with the Digital and the on-line service being developed for the Skills Investment Plan, the reason for procuring the on-line service was because it did not exist. There were things like the National Careers Advice site where they could get advice on careers generally, but there was nothing that would build a young person's journey or pathways. The technology they had put in would do that and they would go out and look

for all the opportunities that exist and put them in one place and build the policy on that block.

- X. In relation to schools and careers advice, it was the schools responsibility to deliver this. The vast majority of schools deliver careers advice, but with the Council's partners in education, they had appointed Julie Young, an Assistant Director for post 14 skills.
- XI. One of the things they were doing with schools was that they were starting to embed this into the school's improvement plan so that schools that needed more support and schools that needed to make that shift towards a higher set of results and better outcomes for young people, they were starting to stress test their careers advice effectively – going to schools, see what their career offers were, if it was brilliant great, if it was not, support them so that they could make a better offer around careers advice.
- XII. It was more than careers advice and was about showcasing the world of work and a number of partners were visiting the community. They were now encouraging schools to partner with these partners where they could provide people from the world of work in schools on a regular basis so that young people could see the variety of jobs that were available.
- XIII. Regarding whether they could make more of the jobs that came to Birmingham be given to Birmingham people, they had worked better with regeneration now than they had done previously. The East Birmingham Corridor Development Plan sat alongside the Skills Plan and nothing would be created in East Birmingham in terms of job creation without the Council knowing whether the population had the skills to feed those jobs so that they were not just building lots of jobs on the edge of Solihull that people were coming in to fill.
- XIV. The vast majority of employers recruit from within Birmingham if they could get the skills that they need within Birmingham, but for a number of employers this was difficult. HSBC was moving to Birmingham, but were struggling to find enough people with a background in banking to fill the jobs they were bringing.
- XV. In relation to the partnership with the DWP, the DWP used the model that the Council had started to adopt which was called *Any Job a Better Job and A Career*. It was important that they used the *Any Job a Better Job and A Career* in the career model as the simple act of going to work to get a job would change someone's outcome. They needed to continue to work with people to start to see a career path and then they could move out of that into a career they aspire to do.
- XVI. The thing that was embedded in the Skills and Investment Plan was the principle that you would not close Birmingham's skills gap just by dealing with people who were yet to move into the world of work. An element of this that they had not touched in Birmingham was the need to continue to up skill the existing workforce. If they did not up skill the people who were already at

work they would not create any room for people who need to move into the world of work.

- XVII. People who were already employed were often closer to the skills set that employers needed rather than trying to fulfil all of the high specification jobs with people who were currently out of the labour market. The model used in Birmingham was now being applied across the country in terms of co-locating staff for joint target for the reduction of unemployment both post 25 and pre 25.
- XVIII. With regard to the self-employment element, this was a valid point that was being feedback through to them from such places like the Chamber of Commerce and the Institute of Directors. This would be picked up with David Simmons, Director of the Institute of Social Inclusion. The challenge was how they make it easy for people who were self-employed and were often busy to be engage in the skills agenda.
- XIX. Some universities were developing some interesting on-line learning, currently known as the *Virtual Polytechnic*. There were some options around self-referral for learning and the skills people could build as part of their learning – example the legal garage – that came to Birmingham. What they were offering was an opportunity to improve business and to get an opportunity for the best on-line presence they could. It upskilled people's digital ability so that people could get a skill for their company, but also gave a different set of skills which was transferrable.
- XX. In relation to the experience of visiting a jobcentre, it was not felt that this would be an initial choice in the near future. What was interesting was that the vast majority of the rest of the countries in Europe were moving away from a joint benefit and job advice as this did not work and had become a punitive rather than a positive experience for people. What was interesting was locally and in the Region their partners in the jobcentres were trying to move outside of those spaces and were looking for community venues that they could deliver job matching. There was a specific benefit and they were thinking of themselves much more of a jobcentre where people could go and get a job.
- XXI. In terms of ESA, one of the challenges they had was supporting people who might be claiming ESA into work, not necessarily back into full time work nor forcing them into any job, but putting them into the world of work temporarily, part-time jobs to improve their wellbeing and make their experience better. The issue with ESA claimants, Income Credit claimants, lone parents etc., was that they were not required to present at the jobcentre. Getting to them and supporting them and being able to offer them that advice was quite difficult and was part of the agenda why they wanted to be in the community, in the children's centre and libraries etc., trying to support people so that the process of the work becomes a positive one and not a sanction.
- XXII. With regard to *Lifelong Learning*, it was important to retain this for people enjoy learning as a pleasure and this would ensure that this would not change. They were not suggesting what the Skills Plan would or would not do to ensure that the only provision for learning available was matched to the

jobs market. People who goes through education and higher education do so rather than a future job. What they had was a situation where the provision that was available in Birmingham, there was a number of provision that would not matched the future jobs market and was wasteful of public money. A better variety and better matching was needed.

- XXIII. Concerning the Business Charter, and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), Councillor Holbrook undertook to speak with Councillor Stacey regarding the issue of who manages the Business Charter as this was an important point. It was surprising how little the City Council require people to provide jobs for people in Birmingham as they rarely make this a part of the planning objective. It was rarely made a condition. What they tended to do was to work with employers in a positive way – example Grand Central.
- XXIV. There was no requirement to state that they would only employ people from within Birmingham. What they did was to support those businesses and those companies to find the right people with the right skills to match those jobs and they make this a positive experience. Employers were not interested and they would not come to Birmingham if the argument was that they would be required to employ 50% of their employees from within a specified geographical area. What they would do was if they were being offered a service to say that the City Council would help you to find the right people for that job, they would find this a more positive experience which would be easier to encourage investment in that way.
- XXV. In terms of looking for a community outreach centre, DWP had undertaken to do a market testing with some of the local groups being established throughout the Districts to see what they could do to make jobcentres more approachable. Some were shocked that people did not want to go in there and there was a will to look at what they deliver so that they could sat alongside and were taking it to the wider areas.
- XXVI. Councillor Holbrook noted Councillor Huxtable's comments concerning the Midland Engine, transportation connectivity, District jobs and Skills Plan, GSLEP and other LEPs and Science Technology and Engineering Manufacturing (STEM) and advised that the report had been written by the Institute for Social Inclusion by an expert called David Simmonds.
- XXVII. Some of the references were not in the report, particularly around transport and connectivity as this was a local authority responsibility driven agenda. Just as important, and fundamental, but perhaps not quite the same as the Skills Investment Plan, it was about trying to inform where people spent most of their skills provision. The transport pieces were fundamental, but perhaps sat alongside it rather than being a part of the report and needed to be referenced more.
- XXVIII. With regard to the Midlands Engine, perhaps elements that were covered in the report, but was not badged as that and they needed to pick that up and have that conversation with Mr Simmonds. They would also picked the

conversation up with Mr Simmonds concerning STEM and make this more prominent.

- XXIX. Concerning the District Jobs and Skills Plan and the relationship with the wider LEPs they were interconnected with the District Plans. The District jobs and Skills Plan would be tied up with the local planning agreement objectives. If they did not, they should have done as they had involved their Regeneration colleagues in the writing of the original documents which should have been to District Committees by now. This would be taken on board and picked up with colleagues.
- XXX. In terms of the links with the wider LEPs in Worcestershire and Staffordshire, they were working closely with Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) and were doing this as an integral part of their Skills Growth Strategy and through the Combined Authority. It was recognised from what was stated that it did not expand into Worcestershire and Staffordshire and this would be picked up with colleagues as there were aware of where the works traffic were which were two way. They have had conversations with colleagues in the Black Country LEP and perhaps need to replicate that with the other surrounding LEPs.
- XXXI. Councillor Holbrook noted Councillor Jenkin's comments concerning self-employment and advised that self-employment needed to be more relevant and prevalent in the report. In relation to the issue concerning the role of the state, and how much they could influence the agenda of skill and employment, it was true that it was not the role of the state to create employment. If the view was taken that people acquire skills during the process of education, it was the state's job to provide education.
- XXXII. If the education being provided either at school, training providers, FE colleges and universities were not delivering the skills that people want to employ, they were failing. It was the role of the state to ensure those providers were delivering what they need. The Council's role was to ensure that people had the best chance and the best skills that matched the future economy. It was also about levelling the playing field and not everyone would come from a place where this would automatically give them the ability to self-drive.
- XXXIII. For the vast majority of people it was their responsibility and they were able to self-drive their career and their pathway, but if it was that simple, they would not have had 20 years of high employment in particular areas of Birmingham versus other areas. The City Council job was to address that and support those people who would need some help.
- XXXIV. Councillor Holbrook agreed that two weeks value of work experience they spoke of today was different. The work experience spoken of was that someone may be out of the labour market for a number of years and going once per week to be part of the labour market and part of the world of work would change how they feel about themselves and about entering the world of work. It was about an opportunity to try out whether you like a career or not.

- XXXV. It was known that particularly around unemployment, this worked and that there was a much higher turn around with people into work if they were given a work experience opportunity. Over 50% of people who had a work experience opportunity would then enter a job.
- XXXVI. In terms of work experience, they had a project running with DWP to get 10,000 extra work experience places. This data should be coming to the position where they could review it and look at the effectiveness of this programme. The anecdotal evidence had shown that the additional work experience could be anything up to 18 weeks for someone who was in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance had tipped the balance of moving people into employment through confidence.
- XXXVII. Councillor Holbrook noted Councillor Islam's comments concerning the Destination Work and the work being done around Grand Central. She stated that she had raised the issue in Cabinet and with colleagues that nothing should be built without a Skills Plan. Development and regeneration job creation was huge in Birmingham, but it was no point in doing it unless consideration was given to how people's outcome could be changed who was living in Birmingham.
- XXXVIII. Grand Central was a great model, the model about knowing it was coming and going into areas and working with people who were from the labour market. 700 plus people out of a 1000 jobs came from unemployment into a job. This was the first time in Birmingham they had demonstrated that they did not just created jobs that people were able to move into, but the Council created jobs that they were able to change unemployment figures. This was what the City Council was working on around HS2 and all the major developments that would come to Birmingham. When people wanted to invest in Birmingham and relocate their businesses here, the thing that attracted them was the fact that they could work with people about the future planning of their workforce.
- XXXIX. There had always been agreement in relation to the role of adult skills and post 25. The local authority only had responsibility for the under 25s, but that relationship with the DWP was important as the Council did not had the resource around skills other than the Adult Education budget.
- XL. The role of the Council was to influence others and this was the point of the Skills Investment Plan. Whether the funding sat with the Combined Authority or as it was at present (where the vast majority sat with the Skills Funding Agency (SFA); the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and the Enterprise Zones (EZ)), the intention behind the Skills Investment Plan was that instead of all those organisations investing as they individually saw fit, or saw the need to be, it was supposed to be an intelligence led document that allows anybody who was investing in skills in Birmingham, whatever money comes into Birmingham, to ensure that it would be spent intelligently and alongside what was needed rather than perhaps the way it had been spent previously. The City Council was committed to changing the outcome of people's lives in Birmingham.

- XLI. With regard to the Enterprise Zones, it had always been the intention through the Enterprise Zone Implementation Plan to use some of the resources to address the unemployment skills. This was delayed as a result of the delay in getting the resources on board. They were now in active discussion with the Design Board on how they deploy that and how they potentially use that money to draw down additional European funds given where they were with the LEP opt out situation. This was on-going and it was hoped that something would be agreed by the end of this financial year.
- XLII. In relation to the Business Improvement Districts (BID), this would be taken back as BIDs were important and created a number of jobs. The vast majority of employment comes from SMEs, micro and small businesses. They would come back and speak to the Committee about the Employer Support Unit which was a piece of work that was being done which sat within the Youth Employment Initiatives.
- XLIII. In terms of the difference that local Jobs and Skills Plan could have and things like BIDs, what was happening in the District Jobs and Skills Plan was because the majority of Birmingham had significant skills issues all the focuses of the District Jobs and Skills Plan was about how they change the agenda and how they get people into work. The story in Sutton Coldfield was slightly different although they do have unemployment, but the District Committee had taken the view that what they would like to focus on was how they look at their neighbouring districts and how they make those jobs in Sutton Coldfield more available to people who live on the boundary of Sutton Coldfield.
- XLIV. A report would be submitted to Cabinet in February 2016 with the intention to take it to Full City Council for discussion.

The Chairman commented that it was hoped that the Cabinet Member would come back to a future meeting to give an update on the Plan.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Holbrook and Jane Newman for attending the meeting and presenting the information.

SEVERN TRENT WATER – BIRMINGHAM RESILIENCE PROJECT

53

Sarah Jayne O’Kane, Public Relations Manager, Severn Trent Water and Dominic Moore, Land and Planning, Severn Trent Water attended the meeting. A video presentation was shown to the Committee concerning Severn Trent Water - Birmingham Resilience Project.

(See document No 2)

In response to questions from the Members, Ms O’Kane and Mr Moore made the following statements: -

- a. With regard to water meters they agreed that water meters were great for small families or people living alone, but not so much for people with larger

families. Severn Trent would install water meters free of cost and would put these in for two years. People now had the option to have the water meters removed after two years if they were not working or if they were delivering the benefits that they wanted. They would not be pushing everybody to have a water meter nor would they enforce this.

- b. Severn Trent Water would promote the use of water meters as a way for people to save money and they had a calculator on their website that would show people whether this was the right option for them. They would ensure that they were saving as much water as possible and a full campaign for water efficiency were being pushed and there were free water efficiency packs for people and free audits for people in their homes.
- c. Severn Trent Water would visit people and look at how they were using water and suggest ways of reducing water. The water efficiency route was the way they were going at the moment and would promote this where it was the right thing for people. They would also tell people whether water meters were a good thing for them as a customer or not.
- d. As part of the Resilience Scheme they would be building a new pumping station at Lickey Hill. Inside that there would be 4 pumps, 3 would be used for when the water was pumped, which would be once every 24 months for 6 weeks and one would be on standby for the actual resilience to the pumping station itself. There would also be a separate power source for that station and a separate generator for the back-up.
- e. Currently the aqueduct was closed for 5 days at a time, but they did not tell anybody about this as their water was not affected during this time. At Frankley Reservoir, which had 5 days storage, it takes one day to drain the aqueduct down and a day to fill it up again which gives three days to do any assessment on the aqueduct and any maintenance work that needed to be done. The three days had kept them going for the last 100 years, but going forward they were going to be doing more than they could do in 3 days which was why they were doing this project.
- f. They did not tell anyone as they would not notice. Basically the reservoir at Frankley would be drained and when they turn the aqueduct back on it would be filled back up again and the customers would not notice any difference whilst this was being done.
- g. In terms of the discolouration notice, they could only apologise that the notice had been sent to customers, but it was just a warning. Whenever, they did any work on any of their pipes they move the water around the network in a different way to ensure that everyone's water stays on. Sometimes this meant putting water down a pipe the opposite way to the way it would normally go, or they might put it down faster and all of these things could lift up the sediments that were under the bottom of the pipe. This was harmless, and they were aware that it was not particularly nice and understand that people would not want to drink this discoloured water.

- h. The notice that customers would have had was just a possibility that this might happen as there was some work that Severn Trent Water was doing.
- i. The graduate programme was only just starting and they were still in the design stage and they were planning to submit their planning application this month. They had only just started that engagement with people and had one graduate who were with them. Going forward, as part of their plan was a full education programme. For primary schools, they had a Severn Trent Education Team who was all fully trained teachers and their sole jobs were to go into schools, colleges, universities and community groups and talk to people about water efficiency and not to flush certain things down the toilet etc.
- j. As part of the project, they had built an extra module on the end so that when the team was out talking to people they would also be talking to them about the project. They would be engaging with primary schools in this way and they had some books they were creating that would be issued free to schools. For secondary schools a lot more would be done such as Science Technology and Engineering Manufacturing (STEM) and the project and trying to get people engaged in STEM subjects based on what they were doing, get them out to look at what they were doing, site safety and engineering techniques. This would be the same for universities. They were encouraging everyone to be more involved in water and engineering projects.
- k. People would notice the difference in the water quality. Currently all of Birmingham's water supply comes from the Elan Valley, with a bit from the Severn River which they do use sometimes. It was reservoir water that people in Birmingham usually get. When the new pipe was in place, this would not bring the amount of water that was needed to supply Birmingham whilst the aqueduct was off. They had a number of other bits of the project that was happening and they would be bringing in water from South Staffordshire Water Company.
- l. They had an agreement with South Staffordshire Water Company stating that they could use some of their water coming in, which would come in from a reservoir and they had boreholes in Birmingham, some of which were existing or new bore holes some of which would be bringing in water from other parts of Severn Trent strategic grids from across the whole Midlands and they could move water around from Derby down to Gloucester etc. They could move it around to everyone.
- m. In Birmingham when they switch off the Elan Valley Aqueduct, there were 5 networks of pipes in Birmingham with 5 different distribution systems and they were not entirely sure at this point which blend of water customers would get. They were in the process of modelling this and within the next two months they would be able to say exactly on which street which customer would get what kind of water and then they would be able to tell what the difference was and would then be able to talk to people about what the difference would be.
- n. People would probably notice the difference. They would be talking to people about this and explain what was happening. They would be engaging with the

community doing drop-in sessions, taste test so that people could understand what was happening and see the difference before it happened.

- o. They had asked the Environment Agency for a licence application and the plan was to do this for 50 days twice during every 5 years. During this 5 year, it would be in the winter months this would not affect the river and the water coming out of the river. They may not need 50 days as it was dependent on the type of work being done at the aqueduct as they could need fewer days to undertake the work. This was what they had permission for and the Environment Agency had stated that they were in agreement with this in principle.
- p. In terms of changing the taste of the water, there would be some blending of different sources of water, but it was uncertain what this would be like. They were doing some investigations at present to look at how they could use all of the different sources at their disposal to keep the people of Birmingham water supply on. It was always going to be of good quality, meet all the regulations they had on the existing water and there would not be anything wrong with the water, but it would taste slightly different. It was uncertain how much different the taste would be.
- q. There was some work in Kingsbury which started last week where normally they had reservoir water, but they were doing some maintenance work on one of the pipes there, which meant that they had to switch off the water and try and supply them from elsewhere. They were currently getting river water instead of reservoir water. When they get to the end of this work they would then speak to people to ascertain what difference they had notice with regard to the taste of the water. Has it made a difference to them and what was the difference so that they had some understanding so that they could then take this back to the people of Birmingham.
- r. The agreement they had with the Environment Agency was that they could only do this work in the winter months and they had to respect the *hands-off* levels that they were talking about. If the river levels get to a point where the level was too low they would cancel the maintenance work. It would not be anything that could not wait for the next time and they would do the work the following year.
- s. The changes would make it harder water in Birmingham and this was what they needed to work out to find out what that difference would be. As this would only be for a short time, it would not be enough for getting the kettle or washing machine build up with calcium.

The Chairman thanked Sarah Jayne O'Kane and Dominic Moore for attending the meeting and presenting the information.

**WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE ECONOMY, SKILLS AND SUSTAINABILITY
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2015/2016**

The following work programme was submitted:-

(See document No 3)

The Chairman advised that for the next meeting in February the Cabinet Member for Development, Transport and the Economy was scheduled to attend and that they would hopefully be looking at the *Local Centres*. They would also be looking at *Flood Risk Management* from the point of view of the City Council. There was a proposal if they could get both Cabinet Members to do the BIDs together and that an extra meeting may be arranged. He enquired what the view of the Committee was concerning the proposal.

Councillor Evans commented that there were only two meetings left on the schedule for the current Municipal Year and that it was hoped that they would give up the 15th April meeting. There was a number of interesting topics in the list of to be scheduled on the Work Programme. He enquired what the prospect was of having reports on those and examining those either in this session or the next Municipal Year as the Committee ought to be reviewing a number of these things.

The Chairman enquired whether the Committee wanted these things to be scheduled in for the vacant two meetings and whether there was anything particularly the Committee would like to look at.

Councillor Evans suggested that the Waste Strategy, Green Commission, Work Programme Providers and LEP were interesting topics in his view.

The Chairman stated that it appeared that these would be on the agendas for March/April Committee.

Councillor Huxtable stated that the Leader of the City Council, Councillor John Clancy had apologised for the gridlock in the City and the Cabinet Member in charge of Fleet and Waste Management, Councillor Lisa Trickett apologising for the *appalling service*, in that respect as both issues were covered by this Overview and Scrutiny Committee in terms of the commitment of both Cabinet Members talk of improving the services they were responsible for, should the Committee be looking at what measures they would take in place to *turn around* the gridlock and Fleet and Waste Management.

The Chairman stated that he had been advised that the operational side of Fleet and Waste Management falls under the Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee rather than the Economy, Skills and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Spencer declared her non-pecuniary interest in the Climate KICK project and advised that she would be interested in looking at how far the Combined Authority had come on as there was a clear authority to change low carbon sustainability agenda that underpins that regional work. She did not have a clear sense of where the Green Commission was on that. If the Committee was going to have the Green Commission, it would be useful to have them focus on this and how it was stepping up to a more regional piece of work they could get out of this. It was interesting to have an update from the Birmingham Regional Growth Hub, but given that the Combined Authority would be looking at the Black Country Growth Hub, it would be interesting to look at the two things side by side if they were allowed to look at the Black Country things.

(Councillor Huxtable declared his non-pecuniary interest as he was on the Board of Innovation).

The Chairman declared his non-pecuniary interest as a member for the Acocks Green BID).

54 **RESOLVED:-**

That the work programme be noted.

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

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

AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

56 **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 1150 hours.

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CHAIRMAN