

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CORPORATE RESOURCES AND GOVERNANCE O&S

COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING

1030 hours on 4th January 2017, Committee Room 2 – Action Notes

Present:

Councillor Mohammed Aikhlaq (Chair)

Councillors Muhammad Afzal, Randal Brew, Changese Khan, Chaman Lal, , Yvonne Mosquito, Rob Pocock, Hendrina Quinnen and Sybil Spence

Also Present:

Councillor John Clancy, Leader of the Council

Councillors Marge Bridle, Tony Kennedy, Narinder Kooner, Assistant Leaders

Councillor Ian Ward, Deputy Leader

Geoff Coleman, Chief of Staff

Jon Warlow, Strategic Director, Finance & Legal

Iram Choudry, Research & Policy Officer, Scrutiny Office

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chairman advised the meeting to note that this meeting will be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site (www.birminghamnewsroom.com) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllrs Ray Hassall, Ewan Mackey.

The Committee recorded their congratulations to the Chair on receiving an MBE in the New Year Honours' List.

3. CORPORATE RESOURCES & GOVERNANCE: ACTION NOTES 02 NOVEMBER AND 05 DECEMBER 2016

(See document No 1)

RESOLVED:-

To note the action notes

4. LEADER – UPDATE ON PRIORITIES

(See document No 2)

In his opening remarks, the Leader noted the four key priorities for the year ahead and the importance of the City Council being involved in creating inclusive economic growth in the city. He also noted the Improvement Panel's comments on Assistant Leaders, and the progress on the Combined Authority.

In response to questions, the Leader said:

- With regards to inclusive economic growth, it is important that people feel they are contributing to and benefiting from growth, but there are those who are willing to contribute but are held back by lack of skills, so skills and training are key;
- It is important that the city sees itself as a series of places, not just the city centre, and that all areas of the city can contribute;
- The Assistant Leader team have worked together quickly, efficiently and with vigour; what pleased him most is that they hit the ground running and are challenging all parts of the organisation, including the leader and the Chief Executive. In terms of individual responsibilities, that is not appropriate at this stage and will evolve;
- The Government's decision to give the go ahead to the Birmingham Development Plan potentially faces a judicial review, but this would be of the Secretary of State's decision;
- The establishment of parish and town councils is one way in which local areas can take more local control but it is very much up to local areas to decide on a model that would work for them
- The agreement with the Chinese property development company, Country Garden, is a statement of investment intent and there will be something more specific coming forward very soon. Cllr Brew asked for a copy of the agreement to be shared with the opposition.
- In response to a question about the report on the budget being too short and not addressing why savings were not delivered this year, the Leader responded that the submission to the Improvement Panel was full and "warts and all". The independent finance review was jointly commissioned by the council and the Birmingham Independent Improvement panel, and has to be published jointly. This

year's budget will have been reviewed by the finance review, as well as have plans for deliverability;

- Bereavement Services: The leader agreed that better co-ordination was needed but things were moving in the right direction. A member briefing was in the process of being organised.
- Concerns were raised about the cost of burials and timescales for the release of bodies. The leader was happy to follow this up on behalf of the committee.
- Concerns were also raised about the health and wellbeing of staff within the organisation

5. ASSISTANT LEADERS

(See document No 3)

The Assistant Leaders' introduced the four measures of success and stated that there will be an 18 month road map with a manifesto for action, which will be published in March. The District Committee system has not worked, so the Assistant Leaders are looking at what should happen at the local level.

CLlr Bridle outlined the proposals for neighbourhood co-ordinators; for a co-production session for elected councillors (in January) to thrash out the thorny issues; and for a session on community councils and community development trusts to showcase where this is already working.

In response to questions, the following points were made:

- In terms of responsibilities, the 71 wards have been divided between the Assistant Leaders but they are not grouped geographically; in addition each has a lead on a council priority. They will meet with opposition leaders to move to appropriate clusters of wards.
- A city wide approach is needed, not based on priority areas;
- There is some resistance to devolution, and there are obstructions. They have spoken to the Leader and Chief Executive to get support, but also need all members to participate – as in the co-production session – to take this forward step by step.
- The Place Managers have not worked, some are very good, but we are determined to get the right skills and right approach for Neighbourhood co-ordinators; it is about re-purposing roles not new money but re-organising how we use our people so should be cost neutral.
- A pack for members will be put together to outline the resources in each areas; it is currently being piloted.
- One of the problems in the past has been the lack of a political driver and that is now in place

6. DEPUTY LEADER – BUDGET CONSULTATION, GRANT SETTLEMENT AND BUDGET MONITORING

(See documents No 4, 5, 6 and 7)

The Deputy Leader opened by saying that the controllable budget is £835m and a total of £78m of savings are required; £51m are new savings which are out to consultation at the moment.

The objective to deliver a sustainable budget; 2017/18 is a transition year, so use is made of reserves.

The consultation is on-going but so far only 607 responses have been received on the website, which is disappointing. Most interest is in services for older and disabled people, children, mental health, parks and families.

The Deputy Leader also stated that he has strengthened governance to oversee savings and established a Budget Big Ticket Board to look at main savings.

In response to questions, the Deputy Leader and Jon Warlow, Strategic Director, made the following points:

- A lot of work has gone on to ensure the proposals are robust and deliverable, hence the big ticket board. What went wrong this year was that savings in relation to joint savings with the NHS did not materialise, primarily cos of financial in the health service.
- The budget “star chamber” will continue, and there will be accountability in directorates for delivering the numbers.
- Since 2012, apart from 2016/17, the administration has a very good track record on delivering a balanced budget.
- There has been an independent financial review, over the last working month, which is approaching completion.
- Consultation has to be genuine and the Deputy Leader said there may well be changes to the budget as a result of the current consultation.
- The annual exercise of consultation ought to be more continuous over the year, the low response rate so far shows it has not been very engaging. There is one public meeting, and will be one more in January. This committee could have a look at consultation in the future.
- The finance review panel have conducted a number of interviews and have given some verbal feedback to officers and cabinet members, and the final report will be published. It is not on the agenda for Tuesday’s council; it is for Council Business Management committee to consider if it goes to the next meeting.
- There will be Senior Responsible Officers for each big ticket item.

On the local government finance settlement, this was announced on the 15th December and included the provision for the additional adult care precept. This may not continue beyond 2018/19. There is an overall increase of £3.4m for the council,

but as £3.1m is from the increase in council tax for adult social care, it will be spent in this area and will not cover the increased cost (including additional demand and living wage increases).

The Annual Audit letter is included in the papers, and the council is recommended to accept the recommendation at the City Council meeting next week.

The changes to the schools formula will have a negative effect on the majority of schools in Birmingham.

Human resources are another large part of the Deputy Leader's portfolio and the workforce has reduced by over a third.

The Deputy Leader offered to meet with the chair of the committee to discuss how budgets and HR issues might be considered by the committee in the future.

Any further comments on the budget could be submitted to the Deputy Leader in writing.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

It was confirmed that the next session would focus on bereavement services and related matters.

Cllr Mosquito stated that she had evidence of bullying in the council and the committee should consider that.

It was agreed that a session focused on HR, including bullying, staff morale, sickness, how we recognise good performance, should be arranged.

RESOLVED:-

To note the work programme and that the above items be added.

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

None

9. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None

10. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

Agreed

The meeting finished at 1300 hours.