

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CORPORATE RESOURCES AND GOVERNANCE O&S

COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING

1030 hours on 5th April 2017, Committee Room 2 – Action Notes

Present:

Councillor Mohammed Aikhlaq (Chair)

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

Also Present:

Cllr Tristan Chatfield, Cabinet Member, Transparency, Openness and Equality

Cllr Majid Mahmood, Cabinet Member, Value for Money and Efficiency

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 David Barrie and Quinnen.

The committee noted the sad passing of Cllr Ray Hassall, and passed on their condolences to the family.

The Committee then agreed to vary the order of the agenda.

3. CABINET MEMBER FOR VALUE FOR MONEY AND EFFICIENCY UPDATE

(See document No 2)

The Cabinet Member introduced his report, including a suggestion that the committee visit City Serve, which has just won an MJ award. The ensuing discussion included the following points:

- The Birmingham Business Charter for Social Responsibility has enabled the creation of 1000 jobs in addition to work placements and apprenticeships. These are in the supply chain;
- The Commercialism Board was set up to advise Cabinet, and the Cabinet Member is happy for scrutiny members to make suggestions as to what the Board should look at;
- Regarding reports coming through with signatures, this was welcomed as it makes clear which is the final report;
- Income generation – there was difficulty in getting this off the ground. A report was requested on the Commercialism Board to see what is being considered, and examples of income generation would be welcomed. The Cabinet Member will consider whether, if ideas are generated by ward councillors, some of the income could go back into that ward;
- The Find it in Birmingham growth and breakfast meetings were welcomed, these are well attended by contractors and is a good opportunity for members to talk them;
- City Serve formerly served all Birmingham schools and this is no longer the case; we need to make the proposition sharper and more attractive. The intention is to keep City Serve in-house as it is generating income to reinvest in children's services. The Cabinet Member suggested members may like to visit the service;
- Advice sessions for members – it would be good if members were reminded of when these are occurring;
- There was still unhappiness about the level of delegations, which are thought to be too high. The Cabinet Member reminded the committee that there is the provision for Cabinet Members to ask for matters to come to Cabinet if appropriate;
- There are still a high number of contracts that are extended, and it was questioned whether we are getting value for money.
- The Commissioning Strategy does not have provisions to support the third sector, and has using a framework contract approach led to more larger firms being engaged, rather than smaller, more local, firms. The Cabinet Member agreed to look at this.

4. CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPARENCY, OPENESS AND EQUALITY UPDATE

The Cabinet Member set out that he would work with the committee on how the relationship will work. He also noted that his portfolio was covered by two committees, this one and Housing and Homes O&S Committee.

He set out his priorities as customer-focused services; better use of open data; transparency on budgets and what we spend money on; publishing Freedom of Information Act enquiries (for transparency and cost reasons); enhance use of plain English in all documents (changing the culture); moving to “paperless” working; realising the recommendations of the Child Poverty Commission; looking at a new model for neighbourhood advice; digital inclusion services and the smart agenda.

Questions from the committee included the following points:

- There are two key elements: one is about how citizens interact with the City Council and the community cohesion, where we need to broaden the range of people the City Council engages with;
- There are many that are not computer-literate or do not have access to computers, this should not prevent people engaging with the City Council;
- Transparency amongst colleagues and the Executive should also be looked at and the Cabinet Member agreed to sit down with committee members to discuss this;
- Concerns were expressed at the lack of resource to respond to community cohesion issues. The Community Cohesion has to be corporately owned with a collaborative approach to implement;
- For the council to go “paperless”, the equipment provided to councillors needs to be re-considered.

5. CORPORATE RESOURCES & GOVERNANCE: ACTION NOTES JANUARY 2017

(See document No 1)

Cllr Aikhlaq thanked Cllr Brew for chairing the last meeting.

RESOLVED:-

To note the action notes

6. WORK PROGRAMME

Cllr Pocock presented a short summary of the work of the Future Council working group, which has included consideration of the Future Operating Model, which will be a huge change and is of critical importance to the City Council.

Cllr Brew referred to the decision to set up a sub-group to look at senior officer recruitment and retention, and asked for an update.

RESOLVED:-

To note the work programme.

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

None

8. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

Cllr Brew noted that this is the last meeting of the municipal year, and asked that thanks are recorded to Emma Williamson and Iram Choudry for their support to the committee.

He also thanked the Chair for his excellent chairmanship, recognising that members had been able to ask a range of questions.

Cllr Aikhlaq thanked the committee and noted the full discussions that had been had over the year.

9. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

Agreed

The meeting finished at 1250 hours.