

**BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

**CO-ORDINATING O&S COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING**

**1000 hours on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2018, Committee Room 2 – Action Notes**

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**Present:**

Councillor John Cotton (Chair)

Councillors Aikhlaq, D Alden, Ali, Bore, D Clancy, Clements, M Khan and Pocock

**Also Present:**

Cllr Ian Ward, Leader

Jonathan Tew, Assistant Chief Executive

Jayne Power, Scrutiny Officer, Scrutiny Office

Emma Williamson, Head of Scrutiny Services

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**1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST**

The Chairman advised that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site ([www.civico.net/birmingham](http://www.civico.net/birmingham)) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Cornish, Harmer and Holbrook.

**3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

None.

**4. ACTION NOTES/ISSUES ARISING**

(See document No 1)

The action notes from the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2018 were agreed.

**5. LEADER'S UPDATE**

(See document No 2)

The Leader referred to the update report which had been circulated with the agenda and it was suggested that the update be taken in three parts – the Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel, the Review of Scrutiny and the Combined Authority.

The following were among the main points raised:

**Birmingham Independent Improvement Panel (BIIP)**

- The Leader told Members that there was now a more collaborative relationship with the BIIP helping the Council to address the remaining challenges around the Budget, Risk and Transparency;
- The expectation from the Panel, and the Council, is to set and deliver a balanced budget which is not reliant on the use of reserves;
- It is recognised that Birmingham is not the only local authority with risks around the budget and the Panel is keen to see awareness of the risks to deliver savings and how the risks with regard to the Commonwealth Games are being managed;
- Acknowledging that Birmingham is still not as transparent as some other local authorities, the Leader has been to Tower Hamlets to learn from best practice there and is intending to undertake a similar visit to Bristol;
- In terms of the lessons learnt from Tower Hamlets, they currently occupy a very expensive building and will be moving to the former Royal Hospital building as a base going forward, converting the other building and opening it up to the public to deliver services. We are about to embark on a refurbishment of the Council House and this is an opportunity to consider how the building could be used differently and how services could be delivered from here to the public;
- There is a need to engage with partners in a different, more collaborative way and some work is going to be done with Birmingham City University's STEAMhouse project to look at specific challenges, eg the Waste Service, and come up with ways of doing things differently;
- It was suggested that this could be extended with, for example, schools encouraging children to litter-pick and the Leader agreed that a combined effort is needed to encourage everyone to take ownership of the city;
- In response to a question around the previous LGA led finance review and the Kerslake report and how this relates to the current advice, the Leader confirmed that the plan we now have broadly addresses the recommendations in the Kerslake report but it has evolved and the Deputy Leader has done a lot of work with the Panel to identify issues which need to be addressed;
- In terms of timescales for achieving 'Green' status on the actions in the plan, although the Panel has not set a timeframe this cannot go on for years and there is a need to resolve the issues and move on;

- With regard to partnership and the need to ensure all parts of our diverse city are being reached, the Leader advised Members that a partnership summit had been held in January and there was a real willingness for people to get involved and see Birmingham succeed. There will be another meeting in September with the aim of getting nominations to sit on a City Board which would consider the strategic challenges the city faces going forward;
- One of the things which has helped people pull together is the success in winning the Commonwealth Games and all sectors want to play a part in that;
- The Leader went on to say that the scale of Birmingham affords a huge opportunity for the city to bring people together to address opportunities and challenges and this links back to the transparency issue.
- There is also a need to be more collaborative across political groups on the Council and to this end meetings are now being held between the Leaders and Deputy Leaders of the three main political groups which is a big step forward;
- With regard to involving communities and groups in the community cohesion consultation and also the Commonwealth Games, the Leader stressed the importance of engaging broadly with the right people and trying to build one Birmingham community with no silos;
- In response to a question around the improvement aim for a “true reflection of the city’s population in the governance of the council” the Leader told Members that the changes made to Cabinet were designed specifically to address those issues, with half the Cabinet now being female and better reflecting the ethnic make-up of the city. Whilst it is recognised that staff at the moment do not reflect the city’s population, it is difficult to make changes due to budget reductions and staffing being reduced, however the Council is seeking to use the apprenticeship programme to address issues of diversity and age profile;
- The City Board has also to reflect the city and currently a vision is being written for the Commonwealth Games which will be more specific to Birmingham as the host city and there is a need to ensure the local organising committee and staff reflect the make-up of the city;
- In response to questions around the level of savings, priority based budgeting and consultation with the public, the Leader advised Members that the new approach is moving away from “salami slicing” and will look at shaping the budget to deliver the priorities which have been set. The budget process has started earlier this year and the intention is that consultation with the public will start earlier but it was pointed out that this is not the only engagement with citizens, for example the Enablement Service re-design is currently being consulted on;
- The Chair asked about the tracking report process for the BIIP and suggested that monthly reports should be considered by this Committee to look at

corporate issues arising, with individual Chairs and Committees picking up relevant issues. Members agreed this should be taken forward.

**RESOLVED:-**

- That this Committee should consider on a monthly basis corporate issues arising with individual Chairs and Committees picking up relevant issues.

**Review of Scrutiny**

- The Leader apologised for the error in the first version of the report and confirmed that the review had been discussed at the Labour Group meeting in April;
- With regard to the recommendations for the Executive in the review, these had all been carried out with the exception of the allocation of scrutiny chairs to opposition groups;
- A discussion followed about how the decision was reached not to carry this out and the Leader explained that this had been discussed in the Labour Group and the decision had been taken that as they had won the election Labour members wanted to chair the scrutiny committees to help the Council as a whole to move forward and make things better in the city;
- He went on to say that the decision had been taken that the Deputy Chair positions should be held by the opposition parties but that they had not taken up that offer. The Leader said that he would encourage fresh thinking on this and had told both opposition group leaders that he was open to further discussion on this;
- The Chair said that with regard to tracking the recommendations, some will bear fruit in the autumn and therefore a further update report would be programmed for September or October.

**RESOLVED:-**

- That an update report be programmed for September or October.

**Combined Authority**

- The Leader told Members that this is working well, with the second devo deal in place; each of the Met Leaders has a portfolio and for Birmingham this is Economy, with responsibility for the emerging Industrial Strategy and Economic Plan;
- There had been some tension earlier in the year around the proposal for the Mayor to apply a council tax precept, which ultimately had not been agreed but this will be re-visited later this year; there was also a proposal for a supplementary business rate which requires a vote of businesses impacted and there is some work to be done here;

- It was suggested that the Mayor be invited to Scrutiny or Full Council and the Leader said that he would encourage Scrutiny to do this;
- The Leader would welcome a discussion about Scrutiny undertaking a review of how the Council meeting operates and this could include the Mayor reporting to Council maybe once a year;
- With regard to reviewing the Council meeting, the Leader said that one of the issues, which has now been addressed, is the lack of scrutiny reports going to Full Council due to having fewer committees; strategies should be taken through Council as well and there is an issue around motions being debated that have not really been the remit of the local authority; there is a need to look at the purpose, number, timing and length of the meetings and also to look at greater interaction with residents;
- The Chair suggested that the annual survey of councillors in October could provide a useful opportunity to pick up some of these issues and the Leader agreed that Scrutiny should be afforded the opportunity to input into the survey;
- Reference was made to the Combined Authority scrutiny workshop with comments around the lack of women and lack of diversity in everything to do with the Combined Authority (although it is intended to try and address this through Task & Finish groups); there is also no obvious scrutiny function for transport and in response to a question about how there could be more accountability on major transport projects, the Leader said he thought greater scrutiny of transport would be welcomed and he is sure there would be willingness for Transport for West Midlands to come to Scrutiny;
- The Chair added that there was a need to consider how scrutiny activity at the Combined Authority links in to scrutiny activity in Birmingham.

**RESOLVED:-**

- That the link between Combined Authority scrutiny and local scrutiny be considered;
- That the possibility of Transport for West Midlands coming to Scrutiny should be explored;
- That Scrutiny should be given the opportunity to input into the annual survey of Councillors in October.

**6. WORK PROGRAMME – JULY 2018**

(See document No 3)

The work programme was discussed and the following points were made:

- Three of the 2019 committee dates were incorrect on the work programme and these will be amended on the next version;

- Members discussed the mixed methodology of assessment in the BIIP stocktake report and suggested that Co-ordinating O&S Committee should receive monthly reports;
- Cllr Bore told Members that Resources O&S Committee is attempting to open up the processes with regard to financial monitoring;
- The Chair agreed there was a need to ensure this is happening and pointed out that the Deputy Leader would be attending in September and part of that session will be around performance measures.

**RESOLVED:-**

- The work programme was noted.

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

None.

**8. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

Cllr Bore requested Committee's agreement to the Resources O&S Committee undertaking a piece of work over the next three to four months around financial planning processes, which would include looking at best practice in other local authorities.

**RESOLVED:-**

- It was agreed that Resources O&S Committee should take this piece of work forward.

**9. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS**

**RESOLVED:-**

In an urgent situation between meetings, the Chairman jointly with the relevant Chief Officer has authority to act on behalf of the Committee

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The meeting ended at 1130 hours.