

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

CORPORATE RESOURCES AND GOVERNANCE O&S

COMMITTEE

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

Present:

Councillor Mohammed Aikhlaq (Chair)

Councillors Mohammed Afzal, Randal Brew, Changese Khan, Ewan Mackey, Yvonne Mosquito, Rob Pocock, Sybil Spence, Paul Tilsley

Also Present:

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

Chris Gibbs, Service Director Customer Services

Ken Lyon, Head of Commercialism

Tim Savill, Assistant Director Revenue and Benefits

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 Councillor Waseem Zaffar

3. CORPORATE RESOURCES & GOVERNANCE – ACTION NOTES

RESOLVED

(See document No 1)

The action notes from September 2017 were agreed.

4. CABINET MEMBER FOR VALUE FOR MONEY AND EFFICIENCY

(See document No 2)

The Cabinet Member outlined his key responsibilities and priorities. In response to questions from Members, the CM made the following points:

- With regards to proposals to have cross party membership on the Commercialism Board, the CM stressed this was an advisory board with no authority to make decisions. Any ideas generated via the Board formed the basis of reports to Cabinet but he would take the Committees suggestion back to the Board.
- In terms of wider membership of the Board, Members felt it required people with a strong commercial background and not just public sector experience. They felt this was lacking at present.
- Apprenticeships: Currently there are 60 live projects across Birmingham, and the Cabinet Member said he always insisted on an apprenticeship element to any contracts he comes across and he was confident they would achieve the target listed within the report.
- Members raised a number of concerns about the ability of small local firms to access city contracts via the BCC procurement process.
- The Cabinet Member suggested that the committee may want to undertake a piece of work exploring how BCC could support more Small Medium Enterprises (SME's) to successfully bid for and secure contracts with the City Council.
- The Cabinet Member also requested input from the committee on the draft report attached to the committee papers "Birmingham City Councils approach to Commercialism".
- Given the recent success of Cityserve the Cabinet Member suggested a cross scrutiny visit to their new offices.
- The Cabinet Member praised the work of Shellforce, now a viable and successful manufacturing business and a good example of a social/ commercial partnership delivering both employment to local people and financial benefits to the council.

Resolved

A cross scrutiny committee visit to Cityserve and Shellforce to be organised.

5. WELFARE REFORM UPDATE

Tim Savill, Assistant Director for Revenue and Benefits made the following key points:

- Preparations were being made for the introduction of Universal credit from November 2017.
- Out of the 12 Job centres in Birmingham, 6 were preparing to introduce the full service from November with a further 6 to roll this out in December
- There are approximately 42000 Households for which BCC is the landlord that would be eligible for Universal credit. From November, housing benefit will be paid directly to tenants and not the Council.

In response to questions from Members the following points were made:

- Implied consent: Most benefits operate under a model of “implicit consent” which allows Councillors to help claimants without the need for written consent. This is no longer the case with Universal credit. The Council are working closely with the Department of Work and pensions (DWP) to come up with a solution to this as some form of “authority” will be required for all inquiries received,
- Waiting times: The initial waiting period to receive the benefit is approx. 6 weeks but the council is trying to influence where they can. There is provision for advance payments in the form of a loan, off- set against repayments over 6 months.
- In terms of IT skills and digital access, there would be facilities within the Job centre to make telephone claims. There are IT facilities for use in the libraries.
- The Council would be publishing all available information regarding access points in order to support its residents. It was suggested that voluntary organisations should also be contacted to help in circulating this information more widely.
- The Directorate would be organising workshops for members closer to the roll out.
- The Cabinet Member for Transparency, Openness and Equality is writing to the government to express serious concern about how vulnerable people will be affected.

RESOLVED

Members to be provided with figures relating to the number of working age people entitled to Universal Credit.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

The Interim Leader would be attending the November committee to provide members with an update on his priorities for the Council.

A further session for the overview of the procurement strategy for design and facilities management services would be held on 24th October, 2017

The HR briefing was scheduled for November 2nd 2017 @ 11.30am

The draft report of the Parish Council report would be discussed informally at the next meeting of committee.

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

None

9. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS

Agreed

The meeting finished at 1235 hours.