

Minutes of: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 13 June 2023

Present: Councillor D Vernon (in the Chair)
Councillors R Bernstein, C Birchmore, A Arif, D Green,
T Pilkington, E Moss, M Rubinstein, G Marsden, G Staples-
Jones and S Thorpe

Also in attendance: Councillor R Brown, Councillor C Morris, Councillor E O'Brien
(Leader and Cabinet Member Strategic Growth) and Councillor
J Rydeheard

Crispian Logue, Assistant Director (Strategy, Planning &
Regulation)
Donna Ball, Executive Director of Operations
Dave Wiggins, Unit Manager: Development Planning • Business
Growth and Infrastructure
Jacqui Dennis, Director of Law and Democratic Services
Chloe Ashworth, Senior Scrutiny Officer

Public Attendance: No members of the public were present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor N Bayley and Councillor N Boroda

OSC.1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Bayley and Boroda.

Councillors Staples-Jones and Thorpe attended as substitutes.

OSC.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Birchmore, Bernstein and Thorpe declared a personal interest in relation to the Prestwich Forum as they had all attended the meetings and advised on Prestwich Regeneration.

Councillor Birchmore declared a personal interest as she is involved in Philips Community Centre Committee

Councillor Birchmore and Marsden also declared a personal interest as they have been involved in Radcliffe Carnival.

OSC.3 MINUTES

It was agreed:

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd March 2023 be approved

OSC.4 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions.

OSC.5 CULTURAL STRATEGY

Councillor Morris, Cabinet Member Culture, Economy and Skills provided an overview of the Cultural Strategy. This is the first time Bury has produced a Cultural strategy and Bury has a great culture offer.

Councillor Vernon opened to questions from members of the Committee.

Councillor Birchmore asked questions regarding the cost and production of the Cultural Strategy brochure. In response Councillor Morris, Cabinet Member for Culture Economy and Skills advised that the Council worked with an external partner to produce the strategy which was inclusive of the production of the brochure. In addition, Councillor Morris asked if there are any concerns regarding disability accessibility to inform her and these can be amended to ensure full access in the strategies online presence.

Councillor Bernstein questioned if there is the inhouse resource to deliver the strategy and how will the effectiveness be measured. In response Councillor Morris advised the Council have secured around £0.5million from the UK prosperity fund which will contribute in part to the delivery of the strategy. Some of the funding will secure the inhouse capacity and the other part will go onto the events and planning. There are key performance indicators attached on how the funding is used, for example, a certain number of events must be delivered and they must reach a specific number of visitors.

Councillor Vernon, requested an update on the recommendation from last years Committee regarding exploring funding options for the Art Museum. Councillor Morris advised that the budget included a savings target related to Bury Art Museum and this is to be achieved through greater utilisation. It has been considered as a function room and advisor are looking at the space and market testing the offer of the Art Museum. Donna Ball, Executive Director of Operations advised that Cultural Services will be amalgamated more into other commercial services. There are fortnightly meetings with officers, three-weekly meetings with portfolio holders and milestones and progress are regularly monitored.

Councillor Birchmore questioned if funds are available for community led projects and to localise events in local community centre. In response Councillor Morris advised there is funding available but there are caveats.

Councillor Bernstein questioned how sport plays a part in the Culture Strategy. Councillor Morris advised culture makes places pleasant places to live and agreed that structural internal changes are to bring leisure services closure to other services as it is important.

Councillor Pilkington raised questions regarding funding through other avenues and highlighted some key issues that arose in Ramsbottom post covid.

Councillor Birchmore questioned what the fourteen thousand pounds was spent on for the coronation's celebrations. In response Councillor Morris advised it was spent on an art competition with local schools and artists supported this competition. Councillor Morris advised she will send across further information to Councillor Birchmore.

Councillor Thorpe questioned how the strategy balances the heritage of bury and the vibrant future. Councillor Morris advised heritage is a key aspect to Bury and a clear action plan of how this is developed needs to be established.

It was agreed:

1. Councillor Vernon thanked Councillor Morris and Donna Ball for their attendance and update.
2. Members note the Cultural Strategy.

OSC.6 TELECOMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

Councillor O'Brien provided a brief overview of the report and opened to questions from members of the Committee.

Members raised joint concerns regarding recent infrastructure for telecommunications in the Borough, the themes of discussion were:

- The process for granting permits to the firms and their financial resilience.
- Who can establish these companies and under what commercial basis.
- Are the companies reaching our most deprived and rural areas which are often the ones least digitally connected
- To have some direction or input into the location of the infrastructure
- Council's having more rigorous controls on if companies can use shared infrastructure.
- Elected Members had concerns that infrastructure can be placed within an area that slightly differs from its pin pointed position
- Committee members expressed concerns around the model of provider seeking permission to build the infrastructure (provider or selling on to other services)
- Members sought assurances on the Councils interactions with companies to address residents' concerns regarding locations
- Members suggested checking the validity of a 'cheaper contract promise' on contracts from the infrastructure.

Following discussions, it was agreed:

- Members to write to Ofcom setting out concerns raised in the meeting.
- Officers enhance the 'Frequently asked questions' to include clarity on the points raised.
- Councillor Marsden raised concerns regarding a particular site at which an infrastructure has been placed. Crispian Logue, Assistant Director (Strategy, Planning & Regulation) requested this is dealt with outside the meeting.

It was put forward by Councillor Bernstein and seconded by Councillor Moss and agreed unanimously that an all-party letter is sent to OFCOM setting out Members concerns that have been raised during the course of this meeting.

OSC.7 MEMBER QUESTION TIME

One question was received in advance of the meeting by Councillor Rydeheard.

"Can the Cabinet Member explain precisely why telecommunications poles and masts, which have received a large amount of media and local attention and triggered a lot of engagement between residents and local Councillors, are being considered by officers with little to no input or notification by ward members?"

Councillor O'Brien responded.

The Government grants automatic Planning Permission for a range of development works across England and Wales. This range of automatic consent covers many things from domestic extensions and changes of use. It also includes some telecommunications infrastructure.

These developments are termed Permitted Development and are designed to facilitate expediency and certainty in the process, where developments are considered to be either minor works or where they are considered to be acceptable in principle nationally.

The telecommunication poles that are currently being rolled out across the district are all considered to be Permitted Development and they therefore do not require any form of planning approval or consultation to be undertaken by the Council. The Council has received legal opinion on this.

Nevertheless, contact has been made with the provider and planning and highway officers have reviewed the proposals for the installation of the poles to ensure that they are appropriately sited. Consideration of the poles are limited to highway safety and whether any are located within a sensitive location such as a conservation area or within the setting of a Listed Building.

Officers have uploaded this position in a number of likely Frequently Asked Questions and these have been shared with all Members. Some Members have subsequently requested further clarity or have met with officers to flag specific concerns. Officers will continue to be available to respond to queries.

Essentially, however, the Council's role is limited under national legislation.

In supplementary to the original question Councillor Rydeheard stated he understands the commercial sensitivities and asked if the Committee would commit to a resolution obliging officers to correspond directly with ward Councillors in relation to any proposed preliminary decisions delegated or non-delegated masts, telegraph poles and any other telecommunications infrastructure.

In response members were advised by Crispian Logue, Assistant Director advised that officers could not disclose this information, but the company have advised they could share some information directly with ward Councillors in specific localities. In addition, Jacqui Dennis Monitoring Officer confirmed that further sharing of information would need to be on a case by case basis as it is dependent on what basis the Company has shared the information with the Council.

OSC.8 PROPOSED NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA AND FORUM FOR PRESTWICH

Councillor O'Brien, Leader provided a brief overview of the report provided. The decision made by Cabinet provides an avenue for those residents who are interested and engaged through the neighbourhood forum to be constituted with clearly defined boundaries of the neighbourhood area to work within and it is an important part of engaging with residents.

Councillor O'Brien invited any questions from members of the Committee.

Councillor O'Brien advised the Committee that the forum has been supported by Bury Council but is a grass roots forum that wished to be formally established. Other areas could establish this in each local area if they wished to.

Councillor O'Brien confirmed there is a cost in time and money to support the forum and there is not a budget currently set aside for this support. Therefore, it would appear as an overspend or need to be resourced differently.

It was agreed:

1. Councillor O'Brien be thanked for his attendance and update.

OSC.9 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PLAN

It was agreed:

1. The workplan be noted for information.

OSC.10 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

COUNCILLOR D VERNON
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.40 pm)