

BEST VALUE COMMISSIONERS

Governance Board

Wednesday 5th June 2024, 3:00pm – 5:00pm

Council House, Room 125

Board Members

John Biggs, Co-chair and Commissioner
John Coughlan, Co-chair and Commissioner
Graeme Betts, Acting Chief Executive
Rishi Shori, Acting Deputy Chief Executive
Amjeed Kabil, Projects and Change Manager
Deborah Carter-Hughes, Assistant Director, Legal
Julia Lynch, Assistant Director, Legal
Jennifer Grey, Political Assistant, Liberal Democrat Group
Sue Harrison, Strategic Director of Children & Families
Amerdip Kaur, Head of Special Projects
Marie Rosenthal, Interim Monitoring Officer
Councillor John Cotton, Leader of the Labour Party
Councillor Robert Alden, Leader of the Conservative Party
Councillor Morriam Jan, Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party
Councillor Sharon Thompson, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party
Max Caller, Lead Commissioner
Pam Parkes, Commissioner

Apologies

Tom Smith, Chief of Staff
Elizabeth Thomas, Chief of Staff
Councillor Roger Harmer, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party

1 Welcome & Introductions

1.1 John Biggs introduced the meeting and welcomed attendees.

2 Previous Minutes

2.1 Board members agreed the minutes from the last meeting.

3 Terms of Reference (ToRs)

3.1 ToRs were reviewed by the board. It was agreed that Councillor Rob Pocock should be added as a board member and invited to future meetings. With this addition, the ToRs are approved by the board.

4 Governance Stabilisation Plan Update

4.1 Amerdip Kaur updated the Board that the Council are now four months into the six Stabilisation Plan. It was highlighted that 3 activities are off-track and 7 activities are at risk of being off-track. Commissioners advised the Council that activities must continue over the summer and gather pace. There are various diagnostic activities to be progressed such as the work People Services are

The Undertaking on council culture and similar work within the directorates.

Max Caller CBE, John Coughlan CBE, Chris Tambini, Pam Parkes FCIPD, Jackie Belton, Myron Hrycyk, Lord John Hutton, John Biggs.

- 4.2 It was also noted that the stabilisation plan is only an interim measure which must translate into long term governance arrangements.
- 4.3 A new independent Chair of Audit is set to join the Council imminently. As such, there will be various business meetings and mandatory training sessions for members which will begin in June 2024. Councillor Robert Alden noted this approach is welcomed as previous member development within the Council has been “non-existent”.
- 4.4 **ACTION: Feedback on the first training session in June should be presented to the Board at the next Board meeting.**

5 Scrutiny Development (Scrutiny Blueprint Report)

- 5.1 Christian Scade presented the working programme and the Blueprint Report which sets out 7 tasks for deliver:
1. Clarifying scrutiny’s potential role, and future contribution, and how members’ leadership will be established and maintained
 2. Starting scrutiny work to baseline members’ understanding of the Council’s change and improvement plans
 3. Clarifying and agreeing the support that members will need in order to carry out their ongoing role
 4. Engaging with key actors on these issues
 5. Confirming a sustainable approach to information sharing/management which gives members confidence and certainty that they can maintain a “watching brief” over emerging issues
 6. Developing and agreeing a work programme which takes account of opportunities arising from new ways of working
 7. Learning, iterating and evaluating through 2024/25
- 5.2 These activities will allow scrutiny heads to have a more targeted work approach. The Blueprint is currently on hold, but the report was presented to the Corporate Leadership Team who were supportive of the work programme.
- 5.3 It was noted that the Council are not adequate at report drafting and there are issues surrounding presenting accurate information to members, including any risks. Members are making decisions with little information. However, the scrutiny of budget proposals was very positive, with members having solid understanding of the budget proposals.
- 5.4 **ACTION: This report is too broad and should be narrowed down to three or four areas where scrutiny can add value.**
- 5.5 John Coughlan commented that this report may be premature and addressing Cabinet and CLT should be carried out first. Furthermore, it would be valuable if similar work could be carried out looking at the function of Cabinet before this Blueprint is finalised.
- 5.6 John Biggs advised that care is needed in using a “Cabinet report template” as rote practice can diminish the usefulness and quality of reports.”

6 Risk Management

- 6.1 Anthony Farmer presented slides. There is currently no strategic risk register for Cabinet with the historic register being inadequate. As such, the Risk Management team is looking to rebuild this register focusing on three key themes. The themes are: articulation, process and procedure and recording and reporting. The Council have been partnered with KPMG for five months and have carried out 13 workshops with various directorates. KPMG will be providing detailed feedback on their observations of how risk is handled within the Council. The Risk Management platform is a long-term solution to a long-standing failure by the Council. The team have currently noticed approximately £405 million worth of risks and as such, this work is in the best interest of the Council. The team is also producing a Risk Maturity Model based on a standard industry model. This work was due to be commenced in the second year of the intervention, but the team has been unable to avoid finding identifiable risks. The register

will help to instil accountability within the Council as the register will highlight risks as either principle or corporate and there will be checks and balances for this.

7 Member Officer Protocol

- 7.1 Julia Lynch updated the board that group leaders have been engaged to help promote the value of providing feedback on the new protocol. Legal will be setting up a stall at the June full Council meeting to try to engage members as they attend the meeting. Councillor Morriam Jan suggested that the team may also wish to attend Group meetings and engage each group at a time.
- 7.2 **ACTION: Whips can be engaged to provide feedback from the Group meetings if they go ahead.**

8 Governance and Relationships Programme

- 8.1 Marie Rosenthal updated the board that the purpose of this item is to begin to think past the Stabilisation Plan and how the Council operates in the long-term. The Birmingham Governance Plan looks at five key areas: governance and decision making, culture wellbeing and safety, learning development, support for members and local leadership policies and procedures.

9 AOB

- 9.1 There is no other business.

