



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

WESTMINSTER SCRUTINY COMMISSION

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the Westminster Scrutiny Commission held on Tuesday 5th July 2011 at 5.00pm in Committee Rooms 5, 6 & 7, 17th floor, City Hall, Victoria Street, SW1 6QP

Present: Councillors Ian Adams, Sarah Richardson, Angela Harvey, Andrew Havery, Audrey Lewis and Barrie Taylor

Also present: Mike More, Chief Executive

Apologies: Councillor Alan Bradley

1. MEMBERSHIP

1.1 There were no changes to the membership.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 Councillor Ian Adams declared a personal interest as main Board Director (Director of Communications, North West London NHS Cluster) at Westminster Primary Care Trust (NHS).

3. MINUTES

3.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meetings held on 9th November 2010, 15th March 2011 and 18th May 2011 be approved and signed by the Chairman as correct records.

4. SCRUTINY OF TRI-BOROUGH DEVELOPMENTS

4.1 The Commission heard from the Chief Executive on progress with tri-borough working. He commented that policy and scrutiny involvement in the plans had been welcomed by Cabinet. All three boroughs had now agreed the business plans for Children's Services, Environment Services (although these would have only limited initial impact), Adult Social Care, Libraries Services and elements of Corporate Services. The Chief Executive added that an important

addition to the Westminster recommendations regarding the requirement for a mandate for each service to be developed had also been agreed. A mandate for services which outlined the objectives and expectations for services as a form of contract between individual authorities and the service management would be produced by each Council. The Commission requested sight of these mandates when available. Work was now being undertaken on moving towards the implementation phase. Service area steering groups were being appointed and the Chief Executive had taken on the role of overseeing HR issues such as the appointment process and employment arrangements. A paper on accountability was being developed, which could be made available to the Commission when finished. Members were also informed that in order to help address the issue of differing organisational cultures, events were being held which brought together service groups from all three Councils.

- 4.2 Councillor Lewis asked for clarification of the Member steering group and was informed that each steering group would be made up from 2 members from each authority (one member being the relevant cabinet member and one non-executive member). The relevant Cabinet Members from all 3 boroughs had already been meeting informally to work through the business plans and would continue informal arrangements to shape progress. The Commission asked for further clarification on the membership and role of the member steering groups.
- 4.3 Councillor Angela Harvey raised importance of also considering NHS changes in tri-borough discussions. The Chief Executive agreed that public health and the role of local authorities warranted a separate discussion.
- 4.4 Councillor Ian Adams questioned the difference between the assured savings and the projected savings and asked whether it would be useful for the Commission to have a cross-cutting discussion on finance. The Chief Executive informed Members that the papers which went to the Cabinet meetings clearly set out difference between the assured savings, the projected savings and the possible savings figures. He gave his reassurance that Cabinet Members had to be satisfied that the savings figures were reliable and a sufficient amount for tri-borough working to be progressed. He understood the importance for Members to have assurance that the savings targets would be achieved and whilst individual P&S Committees could raise issues regarding their relevant service areas, a periodic progress report could also be made the Commission.
- 4.5 Councillor Adams also asked about HR processes. The Chief Executive commented that this was currently being considered on a service-by-service basis. Discussions on issues such as employment models and whether to second or TUPE staff were taking place.
- 4.6 Councillor Taylor commented that he felt there was a need for a proper channel for policy and scrutiny and that the position needed to be formalised. Councillor Lewis commented that she was conscious that the scrutiny process should not be overly bureaucratic and would not want to develop an all encompassing group. For example, the library service was relatively simple compared to the other service areas and it would not be appropriate to follow the same scrutiny processes for both services.

4.7 The Chief Executive offered to provide the Commission with a report which would cover project management arrangement, risk, accountability and cross-cutting view on finance for a meeting in September.

4.8 **Action points**

4.8.1 The Commission agreed to hold an additional meeting in September 2011 to consider a 'risk register' of cross-cutting issues such as HR, reversibility, sovereignty, accountability and quality assurance as well as a report on the project management arrangements and implementation costs.

4.8.2 The Commission also agreed to have a cross cutting discussion on finance.

4.8.3 The paper on accountability which was currently being developed would be made available to the Commission.

4.8.4 The Commission asked for further clarification on the membership and role of the steering groups.

4.9 **RESOLVED:** That the Commission notes the update report and an additional meeting be arranged to take place in September to consider the issues identified in the action points above.

5. **BEYOND 2011: COUNTING THE POPULATION IN FUTURE YEARS**

5.1 Damian Highwood, Intelligence and Analysis Manager, presented a report which outlined the key points arising from discussions relating to what should replace or supplement the Census after 2011. The report set out of a number of recommendations for the Commission to consider as part of actively developing Westminster's policy on counting the population in future years.

5.2 The Commission noted that options for alternative data sources to the census such the use of administrative data were being explored. Administrative data was also used to quality assure census returns and there was therefore an opportunity show how Westminster's administrative data differed from the survey results. Administrative data had been found to be much further away from population figures. The importance of accurate figures for Westminster of not just permanent residents but visitor numbers and short term migrants was highlighted.

5.3 The Commission welcomed the opportunity to look at possible future alternative population counting methods and the potential impact on funding. Lobbying for a suitable alternative or supplement to the census was important as population data used to drive local government finances.

5.4 **Action points**

5.4.1 The Commission agreed that counting the population would be an annual agenda item.

5.5 **RESOLVED:** That 1) counting the population be an annual agenda item for the Commission; 2) it be recommended that the City Council be put forward as a pilot authority for the Beyond 2011 working group; 3) it be recommended that the Council leads on creating a Population Statistics Users Group supported by the ONS and UK Statistics Authority that will be an integral part of the quality assurance of the new methodology.

6. PROCUREMENT PROTOCOL FOR POLICY & SCRUTINY COMMITTEES & CONTRACT AWARDS

6.1 The Commission received a report which presented a revised protocol on the scrutiny of contract awards, as requested at its meeting on 9 November 2010. The revised protocol allowed the relevant Policy & Scrutiny Committee to be involved in the process at an earlier stage and incorporated a protocol on contract monitoring. The Chairman of the Audit & Performance Committee had been consulted on the draft.

6.2 It was noted that it was not necessary for appendix B to the report to be confidential as the information was already accessible to the public via the contracts register.

6.3 Melissa Thorpe, Group Procurement Manager, explained that a more comprehensive list of contracts which were due to expire over next 3 years would be sent to each P&S Committee as part of the work programme planning at the beginning of the next municipal year so Members could identify the contracts they would like to receive further information on. Officers would report back to the Commission on which contracts the P&S Committees had expressed an interest in, in order to allow the Commission to maintain oversight.

6.4 Councillor Havery suggested that it would be relevant to have a Member of the Audit and Performance Committee in attendance at each Commission meeting if procurement matters were being discussed. Councillor Harvey also suggested that it may be appropriate for the Cabinet Member for Customer Service and Transformation to attend the Committee meetings at which contracts were being considered.

6.5 Action points

6.5.1 The Commission requested that the list of contracts included the relevant P&S Committee.

6.5.2 The Chairman requested that a letter be sent on her behalf to the Chairman of the Audit & Performance Committee to ask whether he would be interested in attending a future meeting and outlining which items he may have an interest in.

6.5.3 The Chairman also requested that the dates of all Committees be forwarded to the Cabinet Member for Customers and Transformation.

- 6.5.4 A more comprehensive list of contracts which were due to expire over next 3 years would be sent to each P&S Committee as part of the work programme planning at the beginning of the next municipal year.
- 6.6 **RESOLVED:** That 1) the protocol as attached at appendix A to the report be approved; and 2) the Commission receive a presentation on procurement at a future meeting.

7. SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

7.1 The Committee received a copy of the final draft of the annual report which provided an accessible and interactive summary of the activities and impact of the scrutiny function over the 2010-11 municipal year. It was noted that the report was designed to be read online to save on printing costs and lessen the impact on the environment. The links embedded throughout the document provided extra information on particular topics. This enabled the report to be both concise and detailed as it acted as a hub to further information. Each committee chairman had been involved in and signed-off the content for their respective committee.

7.2 Action points

- 7.2.1 The Commission requested that the white text on dark backgrounds be amended and text be made larger to make the report Disability Discrimination Act compliant and that captions be added to the photographs.
- 7.2.2 Members requested that a printable version of the report be made available and that hard copies of the report be placed in libraries.
- 7.2.3 Officers were also asked to look into producing a 'statement of cost' for the policy and scrutiny function in future reports.
- 7.3 **RESOLVED:** That the Annual Report for 2010/11, subject to the amendments listed above, be approved.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 Councillor Angela Harvey queried why the Commission had not elected a Chairman for the current municipal year.

8.2 Action points

- 8.2.1 It was agreed that the election of Chairman would be added as an item on the agenda of the next meeting.

9. TERMINATION OF MEETING

9.1 The meeting ended at 20.30.

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____