



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

WESTMINSTER SCRUTINY COMMISSION

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the Westminster Scrutiny Commission held on Tuesday 20th March 2012 at 7.00pm in Committee Rooms 5, 6 & 7, 17th floor, City Hall, Victoria Street, London, SW1 6QP

Present: Councillors Sarah Richardson (Chairman), Ian Adams, Alan Bradley, Angela Harvey, Andrew Havery, Audrey Lewis and Barrie Taylor

Also present: Councillor Philippa Roe

1. MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 There were no changes to the membership.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. MINUTES

- 3.1 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2011 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. LEADER OF THE COUNCIL QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

- 4.1 The Chairman congratulated Councillor Roe on her election and thanked her for attending and providing an outline of her key priorities for the forthcoming year.
- 4.2 Councillor Roe responded to questions from Commissioners. She explained that since her election she had been meeting as many partners and stakeholders as possible. These had included the Mayor for London, Boris Johnson, Eric Pickles, Secretary of State and the Leaders of several other London Boroughs.

- 4.3 In respect of unemployment the Leader acknowledged that this impacted on all ages. It was harder to get adults back into work than younger people so it was important that young people had the skills in order to avoid becoming the long term unemployed.
- 4.4 Councillor Roe responded to questions about the Taxicard process from Councillor Barrie Taylor. Councillor Roe stated that she understood the issue and would look at the matter quickly before deciding if anything required attention.
- 4.5 Councillor Roe also responded to Councillor Taylor's question relating to transport for 18 to 25 year old age groups to college. Councillor Taylor explained that from 1 April this group were due to have their travel allowance withdrawn which may mean that some of this group won't be able to attend college. Councillor Roe undertook to investigate and respond in writing.
- 4.6 Councillor Taylor raised the issue of the private nursery in Church Street.
- 4.7 The Leader and the Chief Executive both explained that the nursery had to comply with legal requirements. The Council had written to the nursery again to offer support and to raise concerns.

Councillor Richardson observed that parents had a loyalty to the nursery and often used Ofsted performance data when making choices.

- 4.8 Councillor Andrew Havery asked the Leader questions relating to funding of schemes following the Olympics; the impact of the Dilmot Report on Social Services and the failure of the previous Leader to reach his savings targets.
- 4.9 Firstly, the Leader advised that following the Olympics she expected construction costs to go down, and in some cases the construction work which had been delayed to commence. In respect of the Dilmot report it was not clear when the related financial modelling proposals would be forthcoming. When available a report would be submitted. In respect of the savings allocated to the Leader the Chief Executive advised that these savings had been held centrally and not specifically allocated. In the event it had not been necessary to allocate the savings.
- 4.10 Councillor Sarah Richardson asked the Leader why she had separated public health and other aspects of health when allocating the new Cabinet portfolios. Councillor Roe explained that these issues cut across most portfolios. For example, the responsibility for Chairing the Health and Wellbeing Board sat with her, but that it was hoped that Councillor D'Souza would be able to do so. The Chief Executive was currently checking the position.
- 4.11 In response to a further question from Councillor Richardson regarding levels of poverty, for example, in Churchill Gardens Estate, the Leader explained that in her view the link was about job creation and then progressing people into better paid employment.

- 4.12 Councillor Audrey Lewis asked with which Cabinet Member the remit for the West End Commission sat. The Leader advised that it was with the Cabinet Member for Business. The appointment of the Commission would be subject of a formal decision.
- 4.13 Finally, the Leader undertook, via her Support Officer to review the dissemination of papers from the LGA and London Councils.

5. TRI-BOROUGH RISK MANAGEMENT (see report of the Chief Executive)

- 5.1 The Chief Executive introduced the report. He confirmed that all the senior posts had largely been made. The savings had been verified as £33.5m with the potential for further savings of £7m by 2015/16 from Corporate Services.
- 5.2 The Chief Executive advised that the Staff Survey was showing that staff were broadly in favour with some saying that services would improve as a result of Tri-Borough and improved career opportunities also anticipated. Staff at Westminster and at Hammersmith and Fulham were more positive than those at Kensington and Chelsea. This was thought to be because K&C had not previously undergone the amount of change that the other two boroughs had. The Chief Executive confirmed that all Corporate Services including HR were being considered as part of Project Athena.
- 5.3 The Chief Executive confirmed that a Council wide Risk Register did exist and he was willing to make it available to Policy and Scrutiny Committees upon request.
- 5.4 Councillor Ian Adams asked that the Tri-Borough Risk Register in relation to Children's Services and Community Protection be presented to his June meeting.
- 5.5 In response to a question from Councillor Havery, the Chief Executive advised that IT budgets had not increased. Work was currently being undertaken.

Resolved: (1) That the Risk Register be noted; (2) That the actions set out above be endorsed.

6. POPULATION AND FINANCE

- 6.1 Damian Highwood introduced the report. He explained that the results of the 2011 Census were expected from July onwards.
- 6.2 Following discussion it was agreed that it would be necessary to see early results before knowing if a campaign was necessary. Accordingly, a further position report was requested to be submitted to the July meeting.
- 6.3 **Resolved:** (1) That a further report be submitted to the next meeting to consider if any lobbying is necessary; (2) That the Commission agree to hold a second cross-departmental deliberative event with central Government, the ONS and other stakeholders to review the new methodology, its possible use in replacing or supplementing the Census and to examine its limitation in complex hyper-diverse environments.

7. ENHANCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF POLICY AND SCRUTINY (see report of the Head of Members' Services)

- 7.1 The Commission welcomed the report and noted the tight timetable if changes were to be in place for agreement at the Annual Council meeting in May.
- 7.2 The Commission asked that consultation be undertaken by each Committee Chairman with their respective Committee Members and feed these responses back to Mark Ewbank.

RESOLVED: That the consultation exercise outlined above be endorsed.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

- 8.1 Noted that in addition to the items agreed tonight the Work Programme for the next meeting be developed in consultation with the Chairman.

9. TERMINATION OF MEETING

- 9.1 The meeting ended at 9.02pm.

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____