



### 3 Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 Cllr Brett declared a non-prejudicial interest in relation to item 6. The Member explained his employment responsibilities included campaigning on public engagement in the devolution process and could in the future involve consultation for local authorities on public engagement in devolution.

### 4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 4.1 Minutes from the meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2016 were approved.

<b>RESOLVED</b>	Minutes were approved.
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- 4.2 Matters Arising

- 4.2.1 Members requested for the Assistant Director ICT to return to the Commission (G&R) in April 2016 with an update on the ICT transformation projects.

<b>ACTION</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Officer to request for an update on the ICT transformation projects in April 2016.
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### 5 Budget Scrutiny Task Groups

- 5.1 Budget Scrutiny Task Groups (BSTGs) reviewed budget savings proposals and service redesign proposals scheduled for implementation in 2016/17. Each BSTG was requested to endorse the proposals presented or suggest alternative solutions. BSTGs were set up by the Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission (G&R) and the Terms of Reference (TOR) outlining the scope of their work was agreed by G&R in September 2015.
- 5.2 G&R agreed to evaluate this process and invited Members of the BSTGs to give feedback about the process and their experience.
- 5.3 The Chair welcomed Councillors: Caroline Selman, Chris Kennedy, Clare Potter and Emma Plouviez to the meeting.
- 5.4 The discussion centred around Members experience of the following:
- The information received and their ability to make an informed decision
  - The ability to pursue the lines of enquiry set out in the TOR
  - What worked well, what did not, also any suggestions for improvement either with the process or the work of the BSTG.
- 5.5 The Chair highlighted the Commission was interested in hearing about officer support, their ability to feed into the Council's budget setting process,

recommendations made to Members and the information received to enable Members to make recommendations. Members were also asked to discuss the continuation of BSTGs.

- 5.6 Cllr Selman Chair of the Enforcement BSTG outlined the following main points from her experience:
- Savings targets originally indicated for the group to review totalled £1.3 million but by the end of the process the BSTG was presented with saving proposals to the value of £65,000 for the 2016/17 budget.
  - Members found the process frustrating. Equally officers were constrained because the proposals were still going through the Council's internal governance processes. For the BSTG it became clear the cross cutting enforcement programme was not at the stage where it was ready to be scrutinised and there were no outcomes to review.
  - The Enforcement programme was a combination of service delivery changes and budget savings.
  - Scrutiny officers worked with officer to obtain information for Members of BSTG.
  - The time to complete the process was short and did not factor in time for Members to clarify the scope of their work. For the Enforcement BSTG once the scope was agreed the information presented was very good.
  - Members needed to state clearly from the outset the type of budget scrutiny task group work they would be completing. Cllr Selman highlighted the TOR was not explicit and asked for the new TOR to define more clearly is they would be conducting budget scrutiny on service redesign or specific savings targets. Members should clarify this at the start of the scrutiny process.
- 5.7 Cllr Rennison Chair of Customer Service BSTG outlined the following main points from her experience:
- The customer service BSTG was assigned a directorate rather than a cross cutting theme – all proposals for customer services related to one directorate.
  - Two sets of savings proposals were presented but one proposal was at implementation stage. The driver for the latter proposal was driven by service change needs rather than austerity / budget cuts.
  - The saving proposals presented by library services was more of an iterative process and evolved through the budget scrutiny process. The BSTG scrutinised the proposals prior to the decisions being made and looked over the decision as they developed. This process was helped by the offer of voluntary redundancy to staff, which provided the service area with more time for consultation (with both staff and local residents) about proposals for a new service delivery model.
- 5.8 Cllr Kennedy a member of the customer service BSTG advised it was difficult to say if their comments changed or influenced the savings proposals presented.
- 5.9 Cllr Plouviez Chair of Adult Social Care and Children Social Care BSTG outlined the following main points from her experience:

**Monday, 18th January, 2016**

- The BSTG received information about the service area's current work and planned work. Members with no prior knowledge about adult and children's social care found this very useful.
- The BSTG provided Members with no prior knowledge with information about a service area they might not be exposed to.
- The BSTG did not disagree with the proposals presented but supported the decision and changes outlined.

5.10 In reference to Councillors comments about their experience the Chair informed Members about his experience and the work of the Public Realm BSTG. He outlined the following main points:

- Public realm had a clear steer and made recommendations to support the proposals put forward by officers.
- The process helped to change his view point and after dialogue with officers (about the proposals and recommendations) he felt more assured about the decisions being made.
- The BSTG provided challenge to the proposals presented and supported the recommendation to bring forward integration of cleansing services for Hackney Homes and Hackney Council. The BSTG expressed a desire to see the integration work implemented sooner than offered. This provided the Cabinet Member for Housing with a strong mandate about progression of the estate cleansing integration.
- For Public Realm BSTG, there were clear timescales, information and tangible outcomes to discuss.

5.11 Member of Public Realm BSTG (present at the meeting) were of the view, as a result of their dialogue with officers, they were able to help shape the proposals presented and provide a strong mandate for early implementation of integration for cleansing services.

#### 5.12 **Questions, Discussion and Answers**

Following the comments outlined above the points below were made in Members discussions:

- (i) Members were not always clear if they were required to endorse proposals or come up with their own proposal. If Members were required to provide alternative suggestions, this process needed more time to be built in. This would have allowed Members to explore alternative options. On a positive note Members agreed budget scrutiny was a good way to involve Members in the budget setting process. Member talked about including budget scrutiny into the scrutiny work programme and sharpening up the process. Members were of the view it was important to establish this process in principle as cross cutting groups covering medium term, long term and immediate budget decisions.
- (ii) There was an overlap between the scrutiny process and party political processes. Members agreed they needed to align the processes better.
- (iii) Members commented the process on occasions was more of an information exercise than decision making.

**Monday, 18th January, 2016**

- (iv) Members commented more thought needed to be given to their role in the budget setting process and to implementation of recommendations made that requested a change to the proposals.
- (v) The Public Realm Budget Scrutiny Task Group Members informed they had a dialogue with frontline officers and the process provided officers with challenge to their decisions. The BSTG Members commented their discussions influenced the timescale for the decision on integrating Hackney Homes and Hackney Council's cleansing services.
- (vi) Members suggested the Council's cross cutting programmes should be scrutinised by Overview and Scrutiny.
- (vii) Members remarked they should have an understanding of the change being presented to be able to agree the information. Therefore there should be clarity from the outset about the type of budget scrutiny being carried out e.g. service redesign or a review of specific budget savings.
- (viii) The Cabinet Member for Finance from London Borough of Hackney supported the budget scrutiny process and advised it would help the Council to make difficult decisions as austerity continues. The Cabinet Member for Finance pointed out there were two types of service change, operational and frontline (that impact the public). The Cabinet Member commented service changes directly impacting local residents should go through the scrutiny process. The Cabinet Member for Finance agreed with the division discussed by Member related to the types of budget scrutiny. It was noted that the Council had reached a point whereby proposals for service change would be affecting frontline service provision. The Cabinet Member for Finance agreed Members conducting budget scrutiny required information to understand the bigger picture, to be able to make informed decisions.
- (ix) Members discussed if BSTGs should continue and in what form. Comments from Members noted BSTGs previously held in 2010 were a short sharp exercise. Members needed no prior knowledge of the service area or the service provision to carry out budget scrutiny. Although some views were expressed that prior knowledge about the service area would be useful; it was not seen as a prerequisite to be able to carry out the work. The view was budget scrutiny should provide Members with background information alongside the current proposals to give an overall picture.
- (x) Member commented the BSTGs provide Members with an opportunity to get an overview of a service area they would not normally be involved with. The Chair of the Adult and Children's Social Care BSTG highlighted, Members were able to learn a lot in a short space of time about a service area. This was useful and enabled Members to see how a service area had developed and their current service development plans.
- (xi) Members discussed resource implications in relation to budget scrutiny. Members discussed continuing budget scrutiny and the impact of this on resources. The discussion centred on formalising budget scrutiny and making it part of the scrutiny function. It was suggested each scrutiny commission could make it part of their work programme. Members recommended discussing this as part of the Member led review; reviewing the scrutiny function.

**Monday, 18th January, 2016**

(xii) Members discussed being given information about the big issues, then deciding what specific areas to review. This would enable Members to make a decision about the task groups to set up and the type of budget scrutiny work they should conduct. Members expressed a desire to continue with cross cutting themes for BSTGs.

(xiii) **A Member enquired if the integration of services, like the one Public Realm BSTG reviewed, would be classified as a back office (operational) change.**

Members of the Public Realm BSTG informed the integration proposed had implications for the workforce. The rationale for bringing the change to scrutiny related to the implications for service standard and local resident experience. Members were of the view their role and responsibility was wider than just reviewing budget proposals that will impacted frontline services affecting residents.

(xiv) Members commented the reports and budget scrutiny to date had not given Members confirmation if the Council was facing severe financial challenge. Members were still uncertain if the Council had reached crisis point with its finances.

(xv) Members wanted clarity about where the BSTG work would fit in relation to the budget setting process. For example where the BSTG recommendations considered by officer, Cabinet etc.

(xvi) Members welcomed suggestions for BSTG areas for next round from Cabinet and officers.

(xvii) The Chair summaries the discussion and concluded the mains points of learning from this process were:

- Member involvement in the budget setting process was a good thing and they wanted to continue this type of work.
- This process gave Members a better understanding of the financial challenges.
- BSTGs worked well where officers entered into a dialogue with Councillors about the proposals before decisions were made. Members felt this provided a sounding board and useful challenge to officers.
- The cross cutting themes for the BSTGs were welcomed and this format provided breath of knowledge about the Council's services.
- The BSTG worked well where they had clarity about the scope of the work in advance of the first meeting.
- The timescales for phase 1 BSTGs was too short and lacked clarity about the scope of their work. They should clarify from the outset the timescales for the budget decision making process. Use this information to inform the start date for BSTGs.
- Clarify the type of budget scrutiny work the BSTGs will perform e.g. scrutiny of service redesign proposal with no specific savings attached or scrutiny of specific savings proposals with a definite monetary value.
- Proposals being presented to scrutiny should have cleared the Council's internal governance process first.

- Members want to review proposals prior to formal Executive and officer decision making and implementation.
- To continue BSTGs Councillors agreed they needed clarity on the timescale, budget years they would review and how BSTGs fit into the Council's budget decision making process.

(xviii) Members agreed BSTGs were useful and this work should continue.

(xix) Members agreed a Chair's action, for the Chair of G&R to write to the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Corporate Director Finance and Resources about phase 2 of BSTGs and their review of budget savings proposals for 2017/18 and beyond.

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Chair's Action.</b> Cllr Muir to formally write to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Director Finance and Resources to inform them about the start of Budget Scrutiny Task Groups.
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## 6 Draft Terms of Reference Discussion for Devolution - The Prospects for Hackney

- 6.1 The Chair presented this item and advised the Commission would be undertaking a short focused review to explore Devolution for London and the implications for London Borough of Hackney.
- 6.2 The Chair referred to the draft terms of reference on pages 21-30 of the agenda and outlined the rationale for the review.
- Devolution for London would require local authorities to work in partnership at a regional, sub regional and local level. Councils will be working in partnership with organisation that have different accountability structures. G&R decided to conduct this review because the proposals would have constitutional implications for Hackney. The review would focus on accountability and governance arrangements.
  - Devolution presented both opportunities and risks. G&R wanted to explore the implications for Hackney and consider how the council could maximise opportunities and mitigate risks.
  - Through this review Members wanted to get an understanding of Hackney's view and the commitment the council would need to make in relation to the London Proposition document produced by London Councils.
- 6.3 The Chair started the discussion by referring to the core questions and asked Members to comment. Members discussed the draft TOR and the focus of the review.

#### 6.4 Questions, Discussion and Answers

- (i) Members agreed core questions 1 and 3 focused on governance but suggested core question 2 should be redefined because it was too broad. The suggestion was to ask: what is happening now and how has Hackney responded to these changes.
- (ii) The aim of this review was to give Members an understanding of the implications for Hackney and to provide Hackney's voice to help shape and influence the regional work and discussion.
- (iii) Members discussed the options for devolution in Hackney and making the following enquires:
  - What is happening and what position is Hackney in - Members want to identify the implications of London's devolution proposals for Hackney.
  - The future of the local authority – what is Hackney's view and what approach will be taken.
  - Does the Council have capacity to manage the devolution proposal and is the council equipped to manage the size of the financial challenge being presented with these devolution proposals.
  - How can the Council equip itself to manage areas and issues it is not experienced in managing for example running health services.
- (iv) The Cabinet Member for Finance from London Borough of Hackney highlighted, democratic accountability was not explored in London's devolution proposals. His concern was devolution is moving at pace and democratic accountability needed to be explored. It was also highlighted there are a number of operational working arrangements in different areas that do not report to democratically accountability bodies, a growth of this working practice could present challenges for councils.
- (v) Members discussed evidence sessions and witnesses. Members agreed to speak to the following:
  - London Borough of Hackney Cabinet Members and officers (working on devolution)
  - London Councils - to discuss the London Proposition document.
  - Centre for Public Scrutiny – information about the national debate, the options being explored by different area and any work they are doing with Manchester. The progress of local public accounts committees
  - A representative from Manchester – to discuss the progress of their devolution arrangements
  - Academics to provide a views about the implications of devolution on local government – Members suggested Professor Tony Travers from London School of Economics
  - Metro Dynamic
  - New Local Government Network
  - Local London (led by London Borough of Newham)
  - Central Forward (led by City of Westminster).



**Monday, 18th January, 2016**

- (vi) Members agreed to have the first session focusing on the emerging landscape of devolution for London and what it means. Followed by themed sessions looking at health, economy, education, skills and employment. Members were keen to explore if these areas would require regional or sub regional groupings and possible governance structures.

The Assistant Chief Executive informed Members the Council was currently reviewing potential alliances with various regional groups in relation to health, employment and education. It was pointed out traditionally East London would group together for joint working, but as the boroughs evolve the unions of work are likely to change too. Members were informed LBH was in discussion with Central Forward about their regional work on educations, skills and employment. At the same the Council was involved with Local London (led by London Borough of Newham) on some European funding work. Decisions will be made about working alliance as the devolution working streams develop. Members discussed including in their devolution work an update from LBH on the Council's strategies in relation to emerging sub regional working for the devolution work streams outlined in the London Proposition document.

## **7 Governance and Resources Scrutiny Commission - 2015/16 Work Programme**

- 7.1 The work programme for G&R on pages 31 – 38 of the agenda was noted for information.
- 7.2 Members were informed the next steering group meeting was on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2016 at 6pm. Members would be discussing performance information. The Chair reminded Members links and access to all the performance information held by the Council was circulated to Members for review prior to the meeting.

## **8 Any Other Business**

- 8.1 None.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00 - 8.30 pm