

**MINUTES OF
SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

09 September 2002

Present: Councillor Smith (Chairman), Councillors Barnes, Mrs. Driver, Mrs. Holliday, Mrs Hale, Jones, Mrs. Ledoux, Mrs. Moreton, Morris, Mrs. Regan, Seacome, Lloyd, Greg Howard - Youth Council, Mike Tyrrell representing the Tenants Federation on behalf of Mr Claude Bullingham,

Officers: Chris Huckle, Nick Hatton, Tim Evans, Rita Baker, Sonia Phillips, Richard Levett, Debbie Christie, Grenville Hague,

Also attended: Maurice Savory - Treasurer of Friends of Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum.

The chairman Cllr Duncan Smith welcomed everyone, outlined the purpose of the committee and reminded all present of its limited decision making process.

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Councillors Bishop and Stennett, and Mr Claude Bullingham.

Cllr Mrs Driver left the meeting at 18:50

Cllr D Smith left the meeting at 20:00

2. Declarations of Interest

Item 7 - The solicitor advised all ALMO shadow board members to declare a personal, non-prejudicial interest in any discussions about the ALMO. He also confirmed that Cllr Mrs Hale should declare a personal, non-prejudicial interest resulting from her husband's membership of the shadow board.

Cllr John Morris also declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 2002, were circulated and approved as a correct record with the exception of incorrect spelling of Mr Tony Sygervez, and that Councillor Holliday had resigned from the Best Value Review of Sports Facilities and Development and had been replaced by Cllr Jan Ledoux

4. Public Questions and Petitions

None received

5. Matters referred to the Committee

(a) by Council - none received

(b) by Cabinet - to be covered by the Agenda items 7 and 10

(c) by Area Committee - none received

6. CVS presentation - by Andrew Banfield (Manager of Cheltenham CAB)

Andrew Banfield reported that the CAB had taken over management of the CVS in April, membership had grown significantly. It was hoped to secure additional funding with the continued support of the work of CVS from Council members.

The CVS had managed to secured a one-off grant of £10,000 from the government and now employed a part-time training support officer and had recently appointed a development officer who was due to commence employment on 01 October 2002.

The CVS would prefer to remain in their current office in the Sandford Park premises because of its facilities and a training room rather than moving to the CAB premises in Royal Crescent which was already fully used.

After the presentation members were given the opportunity to ask questions - Councillor Morris asked how members of CVS were recruited, what they paid and what benefits they received. Andrew was unable to answer the question in full without referring to his office records but was able to confirm that members received reduced rates for training, access to information, staff and development time. Andrew thanked members for the Council's ongoing financial support to the CVS despite its earlier operating problems.

The Chairman thanked Andrew, and suggested that the Cabinet Deputy discuss the lease issue of Sandford Park premises with the CBC Property Manager.

7. ALMO Communications Strategy
Cllr Lloyd reported on the ALMO communications strategy -

Cllr Lloyd explained that the creation of the ALMO did not require a ballot of all tenants because ownership of the stock would remain with the Council, but did need to show that tenants supported the initiative. The report outlined a 6 week programme of activities from a media launch to the survey of all tenants around the end of October 2002.

There would be different audiences for these communications, including tenants, staff, councillors and external bodies. In addition to newsletters there would be focus groups, roadshows and doorknocking. All information needed to be fair and balanced.

Cllr Lloyd sought the Committee's views on the Communications Strategy.

Cllr Mrs Regan asked whether consideration within the strategy had been made for those staff who did not wish to transfer to the ALMO.

In response Cllr Lloyd stated that TUPE regulations would apply, so terms of employment for transferring staff would remain the same. New employees to ALMO could have different conditions of employment.

Cllr Mrs Regan asked would those staff not happy to transfer to ALMO be offered redundancy.

The Group Director Social and Community in response stated that the statutory process would be followed for the transfer of approximately 130 staff to the new organisation. Consultation and negotiation with staff and trade unions was about to start and that it would be inappropriate to go into detail at this stage.

Cllr Smith asked who would be conducting face to face interviews with tenants. In response Cllr Lloyd stated that consultants Ernst and Young would be involved, but in the main staff would conduct the interviews.

Cllr Smith further commented that he hoped that the safety of staff conducting out of hours interviews had been considered.

The Committee endorsed the strategy and referred it back to Cabinet for implementation.

Before this item was discussed, the Solicitor advised members to avoid discussing the planning application, relating to the proposed development.

8. Proposed Development of the Art Gallery and Museum

This report was presented by George Breeze and Maurice Savory - Treasurer of Friends of Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum.

The report sought to identify the funding necessary to take the project forward and notes the cost of not doing so.

The Council would need to appoint a design team to have responsibility for taking the project through the design and construction stage to final completion.

Due to the value of the scheme the Council would need to comply with EU (OJEC) procurement regulations to appoint a design team and contractor.

There was a need to appoint a Development Officer to act as an intermediary between the Council and the successful contractor.

It was hoped that the Heritage Lottery Fund would aid the project to fifty percent of eligible costs, the balance would need to be found from a combination of Council sources and external funding.

The Friends of Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum had approved the establishing of a fund-raising sub-committee but would also require the Council as owners to provide some of the financial support.

Therefore, it was suggested that funding of the 50% not funded by the HLF should be shared equally between the Friends of Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum and the Council. Funding for the post of Development Officer would also need to be met by the Council.

The Museum management team fully endorsed this report by George Breeze, and the Committee were invited to raise any queries.

Cllr Regan asked what would happen to the old staircase in the AG&M.

Mr Breeze in response stated that the proposal was to remove the staircase.

Cllr Seacome asked whether the AG&M would have to close completely whilst work was in progress.

Mr Breeze in response stated that it may be possible to keep some areas open, but this would need clarification during design and construction stages.

Cllr Driver asked whether there would be more exhibits about the history of Cheltenham's relationships with India.

Mr Breeze in response stated that the plan was to concentrate on arts and crafts and the history of Cheltenham.

Cllr Barnes asked if there were any terms of reference for the post of Development Officer.

Mr Breeze in response stated that the intention was for this post to be totally focused upon this development. No job description has been written yet and believed the cost may be part funded by the HLF.

The Chairman invited Mr Savory to outline the Friends of Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum approach to fund- raising.

Mr Savory stated that there were 480 households who were Friends and the intention was to ask them to pledge £20.00 per annum for 3 years which would raise about £30,000. Current activities raised £7,000 over 3 years and the Friends already had £25,000 in the bank.

In addition the Friends would be discussing with the executors the use of the bequest of approximately £250,000 to fund the development.

If the Friends fund-raising was successful, there would be a need for a clear commitment by CBC to provide at least the same amount as the Friends planned to raise. The Friends were also concerned that a Member or Officer of the Council needed to be the 'face' of this development.

Suggestions had been made that sponsors could be found to sponsor a room or stair.

Cllr Barnes thanked the Friends for their efforts and asked whether any thought had been made to capitalise on redundant collections.

Mr Breeze in response stated that it was virtually impossible to do this due to the Museum's registration conditions and the terms of past requests.

Cllr Mrs Moreton referred to 2.8 of the report and asked whether the proposals for redevelopment make St Mary's Church redundant.

Mr Breeze in response thought the church setting could be enhanced by the development and pointed out that a window on the main first floor landing would provide a viewpoint over the churchyard for visitors to the Museum.

The chairman invited the Group Director to comment on press coverage of the organisation's restructure with regard to the AG&M.

The Group Director explained that Government expectations of Local Government as enshrined in the Local Government Act 2000 envisaged a growing emphasis on community leadership, public accessibility and "joined up" services.

The new management structure was a reflection of the new Cabinet structure which itself had been designed to deliver the new agenda. The Cabinet included a Deputy with responsibility for Health and Well-being, covering all work areas serviced by the Art Gallery and Museum, the Sport and Play Division, and Youth issues.

The Cabinet Deputy would be seen as the political champion of the proposed Art Gallery and Museum development. Following the retirement of George Breeze, Sonia Phillips would become the Assistant Director of Health and Well-being, and would provide corporate and strategic leadership for the portfolio. Professional leadership of the Art Gallery and Museum would be provided by the three existing managers; Steven Blake, Mary Greenstead and Helen Brown.

Sonia's experience of a successful lottery bid for the Recreation Centre redevelopment would be invaluable to the next phase of the Art Gallery and Museum development project.

The Group Director stressed that George Breeze fully supported the proposed changes and believed that they would assist the Art Gallery and Museum to play a full role in the new agenda, with particular enthusiasm for the creation of a new post of Arts Development Officer and the potential synergy of the various component parts of

the new portfolio, in addressing issues of lifelong learning, health promotion and social inclusion.

The chairman thanked George Breeze for his dedicated service of 21 years at CBC and for all his hard work and contributions.

9. BT pay phones

The Group Director, Social and Community reported that BT had declined an offer to attend this meeting. He explained that in most cases single phone boxes that were being removed were one of a block of boxes and were mostly card phones. The justification for removing a small number of single boxes was generally when another box was located within a comfortable walking distance. It should be noted that there seemed to have been very little public reaction to this policy.

Members comments -

Cllr Barnes thought there had been insufficient consultation, and that CBC should have been involved, and wanted this to be fed back to a BT responsible officer.

Cllr Mrs Regan stated that in her ward BT had removed two coin phones leaving one card phone.

Cllr Mrs Moreton stated that she was particularly concerned about the elderly, as she felt BT had let them down.

Cllr Morris stated that the elderly and those on low income would be most affected.

The Group Director stated that he will write to BT to make known all the Council's concerns.

The committee at 7.20pm broke into three working groups for three best value reviews from which the press and public were excluded.

The three working groups were -

Best value review of housing management

Best value review of sports facility and development

Funding of external Bodies

The meeting reconvened at 8.00pm and Cllr Morris took over the Chair of the Committee as Cllr Smith had to leave the meeting. Each of the three working groups was invited to feedback to the Committee.

10. Best Value Review of Managing Council Housing

The group had reviewed the housing management report of the Best Value Manager which was approved by the Cabinet on 24 July 2002.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee was asked to endorse the action plan.

The working group recommended the committee to do so.

Cllr Mrs Holiday stated that the report should have been considered by the whole committee.

Cllr Mrs Regan agreed and added that the whole committee should be able to debate any item of the agenda.

The Vice Chairman asked that this be minuted for discussion with the chairman Cllr Smith.

The report and improvement plan were accepted.

11a Best Value Review of sports facility and development

The feedback from the working group was noted and a final report is expected at the next meeting on 03 October 2002, with a view to reporting to Cabinet on 29 October 2002.

11b Funding of external bodies

The sub-group agreed a priority order for the reviews, but did not wish the presentation by an external body at the beginning of each meeting to be directly linked to the work of the sub-group.

Meeting closed 20:15

**Duncan J. Smith
Chairman**