

**SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**06 January, 2003**

(18:05 - 20:39)

**Present:** Councillor Smith (Chair), Councillors Barnes, Ms Bishop, Mrs Holiday, Jones, Coleman, Mrs Hale, Mrs Ledoux, Morris, Mrs Regan, Seacome, Stennett, Wheeler, Mrs Hale, Coleman.

Mr. Howard (Youth Council) and Mr. Sygerycz.

**Also**

**attended:** Chris Huckle, Tim Evans, George Rowlinson, Trevor Gladding, Paul Jones, Sonia Phillips, Rita Baker, Richard Gibson, Councillor Stuart-Smith, Mr Phillip Bernays and Mr Gillespie, for item 6

1. **Apologies** Councillors Mrs Driver and Mrs Moreton, Mr Moore-Scott and Mr. Bullingham (Tenants' Federation),
2. **Declarations of Interest**  
Councillor Mrs Regan agenda item 9
3. **Minutes**  
The minutes of the meeting held on 02 December, 2002 were approved as a correct record with the exception of agenda item 7. The interest declared by Councillor Barnes had not been recorded.
4. **Public Questions and Petitions**  
No public questions or petitions had been received.
5. **Matters referred to Committee**
  - (a) **By Council** - No items received.
  - (b) **By Cabinet**  
**2003-2004 interim budget proposals**
  - (c) **By Area Committee** - No items received.

**The Chair advised the committee that Councillor Stuart-Smith who was due to present item 5(b) had been delayed and he recommended that the order of the agenda be changed. The Committee agreed.**

6. **Oral progress report by Sonia Phillips the Assistant Director Health and Well Being. Recreation Centre Management report**  
The Assistant Director Health and Well Being gave an update of progress to the committee and circulated an indicative programme which is attached to these minutes as Appendix A. She advised that the handover from Leisure Connection to council control was on target. Lucy Cape had been appointed as the project manager and would attend future meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide updates against the formal project plan.  
  
Councillor Stennett asked the Assistant Director if there were any penalty clause claims likely from suppliers resulting from the change over from Leisure Connection to council control, and whether there would there be any problems with insurance of the buildings and other liabilities.

Sonia Phillips advised that all third party arrangements were being audited, to identify the most cost-effective arrangements for the council from 31 March 2003.

The council was not party to any contractual arrangements between Leisure Connection and third parties and no legal obligation on the council could arise from them. She did not foresee any problems with the transfer of responsibility for insurance to the council.

The Chair asked if there was anything from the transfer of control that might affect the council's financial position.

The Assistant Director stated that there were none identified to date, but support had been requested from the Contract Manager of Leisure Connection to assist in the handover.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director Heath and Well Being for her contribution.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Stuart-Smith to the meeting and asked him to present agenda item 5 to the committee.

## **7. Interim Budget 2003-2004**

Councillor Stuart-Smith the Deputy for Exchequer, advised that he would present an overview to the committee of this previously circulated Cabinet consultation document. In addition he advised that there were three other Cabinet Deputies in attendance to take comments and questions from the committee.

To assist in the process the Cabinet had prepared an interim budget consultation document to provide a framework within which discussions could begin. Changes would be made to the interim budget as a result of the consultation process, and any other information received over the next four weeks. Comments from the consultation process for General Fund services would need to be received by the 20 January and for services funded from the Housing Revenue Account by 24 January to enable Cabinet to consider fully their implications and to allow time to make final recommendations to the council tax setting meeting on 21 February.

Growth bids had been assessed with officers and overview and scrutiny committees using three criteria:

- the aims of the council's strategic plan, Our town, Our Future, using a point scoring system (although the cabinet had reservations about the relevance of this scoring system)
- the council's statutory obligations
- the aims of the current political administration

Internal costs had been trimmed as far as possible.

The Deputy for Exchequer explained the cabinet's response to the "wish list" of the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee item by item and minuted questions from the committee.

Councillor Mrs Regan asked how the Cabinet proposed to inform the public so that they could take part in the consultation discussion, and expressed her concern at the lack of publicity.

In response the Deputy for Exchequer stated he would investigate further, as the views of the residents of Cheltenham would be invaluable. Apart from the council's website the only publicity so far had been an article in the Echo advising people to collect the consultation document from the main reception desk at the Municipal Offices.

Councillor Morris asked for clarification on the funding for the night time economy initiatives.

The Deputy for Exchequer advised that there were two bids in the wish list, one for revenue and another for capital. The capital sum allocated to CCTV could be used for something other than panic points.

The Chair asked for clarification of the cabinet's concerns about the Our town, Our Future evaluation scheme.

The Deputy for Exchequer explained that the scoring system was out of date had not been consistently applied, and that therefore its results should be ignored.

The Chair asked why bids for services which appeared to be statutory obligations were prioritised below others.

The Deputy for Exchequer explained that the Cabinet had distinguished between bids which were essential to the delivery of statutory duties, and those which would enable a better quality of service to be provided but which could not be described as essential to meet statutory obligations.

The Deputy for Exchequer thanked the committee for their feedback on the consultation document and invited any member or group to submit views to him.

The Chair urged all members to submit individual / group views in the absence of a formal response from the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee by the deadlines.

#### **Everyman Theatre presentation**

Phillip Bernays, Chief Executive of the Everyman Theatre and Edward Gillespie, Chairman of the Everyman Board advised the committee of the important role of the Everyman Theatre for the community and explained its strategic plan for the future. Documentation relating to the presentation was circulated to members of the committee.

Mr Bernays advised that the theatre was built in 1891 and was of national historical importance. There were nearly 200,000 attendances in the year to 31 March 2002. Turnover was £2.4 million and 78% of income was earned directly by the Everyman.

There were 408 Performances in the main auditorium and the other Space studio theatre, and a further 1500 sessions over 88 projects took place across the county with youth, education and community groups, involving 30,000 people.

The reason for the Everyman's success was the breadth and quality of the programmes it attracted because directors of shows knew that the theatre could deliver the audiences.

Work was carried out with many of the county's service providers, such as education, libraries and museums, social services and the health service on a wide range of community and education arts projects. Activity in the community ranged from pre-school to university with performances directly linked to the National Curriculum for primary and secondary schools. Those who were socially or economically disadvantaged were also targeted. Work with young people in libraries had achieved national recognition.

Main funding partners were South West Arts Council, Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucestershire County Council.

There were 28 full time employees, 16 part time employees for both the Everyman and the catering company, with an extra 100 casual frontline staff as ushers and bar staff.

A number of improvements had taken place recently with the help of the council, including the installation of new seats and air conditioning.

Mr Bernays advised that the Everyman had five strategic objectives -

- Strengthen the work presented
- Develop lifelong learning processes
- Refurbishment of the building
- Increasing turnover and margins
- Supporting the employees with Investor in People and an effective use of human resources

Mr Bernays added that one other new and topical objective was to persuade the Council not to make the proposed reduction of £20,000 in the grant to the Everyman. Funding was of critical importance to enable the Everyman to deliver quality productions which encouraged audiences to spend in the town and contribute to the local economy.

The Chair asked for questions from the committee:

Councillor Morris congratulated the Everyman for the improvements they had made in such a short time, but sought clarification on the Arts Council's intention to increase funding by 55%. In addition he asked whether schools contributed to the Reach Out programme.

Mr Bernays stated that the Arts Council increase was £124,500 of which £75,000 was funded in April 2002 with the balance due in April 2003. The Reach Out programmes had made a net loss of £75,000 in the previous year so were still in need of further funding.

Councillor Mrs Regan asked what action was being taken to encourage audiences from low income and disadvantaged groups who appeared to be excluded because of high ticket prices other than in cramped seating, especially in the balcony where there were column obstructions. The Roses Theatre in Tewkesbury offered prices as low as £7 per seat. Mr Bernays advised that 55% of the tickets sold were concessions with discounts for groups. The highest ticket price was £23.50 and the lowest price was £11. Seating in the balcony was restricted by the structure of the building and was at present the best that could be provided.

Councillor Mrs Hale asked if it was possible to increase the number of matinees to use the facilities throughout the day and attract more income.

Mr Bernays advised that on occasions where there was a set with stage restrictions it was not always practical to use the main auditorium during the day. However where possible matinees were produced to match demand, and corporate business events were being encouraged. The Everyman was investigating staging a 'Cheltenham Experience' attraction detailing the history of Cheltenham for local residents and tourists to attend when the auditorium was not in use during the day.

Councillor Seacome asked how successful the 'name a seat' campaign had been in raising sponsorship funding and whether the car parking problems in the Regent Arcade previously reported to other committees had been resolved to improve customer service.

Mr Bernays reported that approximately 250 seats have been sponsored to date and these are still being taken up on average at one per week, with further advertising promotions planned to encourage further uptake. Car parking problems had eased in the evenings with recent changes made to exiting, with further improvements planned for February 2003. Over the Christmas period there had been difficulties gaining access to the car park but this was due to the sheer volume of traffic in the town and limited available spaces.

Councillor Stennett asked if any road shows had been planned to encourage funding from other Gloucestershire districts since 53% of people attending were from the other districts, especially people in Bishop's Cleeve who consider the Everyman to be their nearest theatre.

Mr Bernays stated that no road shows were planned. There had been funding partnerships with the districts a number of years previously but these were for small amounts in the region of £500 to £1,000. Now the only direct funding was from the Borough and the County. Road shows would not be cost effective to run for the amount of funding generated and the districts preferred to give to their own local theatres.

Councillor Barnes asked how attendance at the Everyman compared with other theatres.

Mr Bernays confirmed that the audience trend was up and constantly improving, but there was no significant growth this year. It had been hard to attract audiences between June and September 2002 due to other attractions such as World Cup football. The Everyman generally attracted more quality shows than most other theatres because it had a reputation for delivering the audiences.

Three areas of Stroud, Gloucester and Forest of Dean have been targeted for the Reach Out programme where there was the most social deprivation.

The Chair thanked Phillip Bernays and Edward Gillespie for their contribution.

**7. Progress on Section 17, Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

Trevor Gladding Community Safety Manager, presented this report to provide members with an update on progress regarding the awareness and implementation of Section 17 within the council. The Crime and Disorder Improvement Plan had been agreed and approved as a result of the best value review carried out during 2001 and 2002.

The Community Safety Manager advised the committee that the Cheltenham Crime and Disorder Partnership had obtained funding for Section 17, and action plan training was currently being carried out. Two training days for the Council and partners including magistrates had been arranged for 20<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> March 2003.

Members were asked to note section 3.3 of the report where significant progress had been made in 'joined up' working with the police and other interested agencies. This progress included an improvement in the flow of information between police headquarters and the council with PC Bob Packer being based at the Municipal Offices in the Community Safety Division.

The Community Safety Manager therefore recommended that the contents of the report be noted by members of the committee.

The Chair asked for questions from the committee:

Councillor Mrs Regan asked if the awareness training on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> March was for both members and officers.

The Community and safety Manager confirmed that these training days were for members, officers and partnership members.

The Chair asked if there were any financial implications of section 3.2 of the report relating to the development of current policies and procedures serving as a baseline to identify additional activities required.

The Community Safety Manager confirmed that the Home Office had funded the partnership and this funding would be exhausted by the end of the training days. He was confident that more streams of funding would become available.

The Chair asked whether any additional costs to the council should be built into the budget. In response George Rowlinson, Assistant Director Public Protection advised that there may be extra costs, but at this stage it was difficult to estimate, and in any event would not impact on 2003-2004 financial year.

Councillor Morris asked for a briefing note on one side of A4 to be sent out to members and officers to raise member awareness.

The Community Safety Manager confirmed that a briefing note had been circulated to members previously and this could be repeated.

The Chair invited Nick Hatton, Best Value Manager to join the Community Safety Manager to present agenda item 8 as this also covered Crime and Disorder.

**8. Best value review update, Crime and Disorder**

This report was presented by Nick Hatton, Best Value Manager to provide members with an update on progress with the improvement plan.

The Best Value Manager advised the committee that the best value review had been very useful in developing the Crime and Disorder Partnership and the community safety division had benefited from extra resources. Visits to beacon councils identified other issues to consider including neighbourhood wardens, panic points and moveable CCTV. Overall, progress had been good.

The Chair asked for questions from the committee:

Councillor Morris asked for clarification on recommendation numbers 25 and 26 of the report where ongoing work was required by the council to determine what people were looking for from the scheme as he was concerned that the public were not being given the opportunity to comment.

The Community Safety Manager referred the committee to recommendation 12 of the report and advised that the partnership would pursue these issues. A Home Office funded Project Officer was appointed in January 2003 to assist in this area and the county crime and disorder unit was also helping with extra resources.

The Assistant Director Public Protection stated that the timescale for this had been held up by the council's reorganisation, and he had taken on extra work to relieve the Community Safety Manager's workload. A significant amount of work had been undertaken and a great deal of progress made to date.

Councillor Mrs Regan requested clarification on the use of mobile CCTV vans and match day surveillance of travelling football fans.

The Community Safety Manager confirmed that two mobile CCTV police vans were operational under the Streetsafe initiative, and that the council had mobile CCTV already in use.

The Chair thanked the Community Safety Manager, Best Value Manager and the Assistant Director Public Protection for their contribution.

**9. Skateboarding and Wheeled Sport Policy and Programme - review of progress**

This item was presented by John Crowther, Assistant Director Green Environment to report on progress to date and future actions for the improvement and further development of skateboarding and wheeled sports facilities within the town following the adoption by Cabinet of a policy for these sports on 30 April 2002.

The committee were asked to note an amendment on page three of the report, under Accountability. This should read Cabinet Deputy for Environmental and Public Protection.

The Assistant Director Green Environment advised on the short-term progress of identifying and installing smaller satellite facilities across the town. The first of these sites was opened recently at Brizen Recreation Ground and had been well received by local groups. This particular site had been a good example of close partnership working between the Borough Council, Leckhampton Parish Council who both contributed funding, and the local ramp user group.

Further local consultation work was currently taking place in Charlton Kings and the Beeches Playing Field.

Improvements to the Pittville Park facility had been achieved considerably earlier than anticipated as a result of successful fund raising of £5,000 to enable the work to be completed.

The St Peters BMX track was still being appraised for suitability of the location and options in conjunction with the Ramp User Group.

The Montpellier Gardens enhancement was currently awaiting determination from the Heritage Lottery Fund, but the Heritage Lottery Fund would not fund play space provision. Local consultation had indicated that the Friends of Montpellier Gardens and Bandstand and local residents were not in favour of a skateboard facility. Opportunities still existed for a low key scheme for rollerblading and skating to take place.

The Midwinter site had been delayed due to the formulation of a comprehensive and integrated planning brief. This should now take place in spring 2003.

The long-term aim was to produce an integrated approach to outdoor recreational provision by a review of the Playing Pitch Strategy and by addressing the Comprehensive Performance Assessment theme: "inspection of public space, clean, green, safe and active".

The Chair asked for questions from the committee:

Councillor Mrs Regan stated that the facility at Brizen Recreation Ground had been very successful with large numbers of children using it, and hoped this partnership working could be mirrored across the town. The Cabinet meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2002 had identified the need for skateboarding facilities where funding was available for further sites to be built in 2004-2005 and asked what progress had been made.

The Assistant Director Green Environment stated that investigations were continuing to identify further sites and they would be implemented as funding became available. With Section 106 funding and further capital funding it might be possible to bring forward the programme.

Councillor Morris questioned the ramp funding in Centrepiece in Charlton Kings when funding had already been allocated to MAD for facilities in this area. In the areas of Springbank and St Marks there were no such facilities or play equipment generally. Facilities were desperately needed in these areas where young people had little to do.

The Assistant Director Green Environment referred to 3.4 of the report which stated that work was being carried out to identify what facilities were available, and needed and how they were used. A balanced program across the town was required with the right consultation before improvements were started.

Mr Howard asked what was being done to improve personal safety of young skaters at these facilities to protect them from intimidation, drug taking and theft of property  
The Assistant Director Green Environment advised that this was a cross cutting issue and was not just about play space provision. It was also the responsibility of other partners to protect users of the facilities and local residents.

Councillor Stennett asked if any consideration had been given to a facility in Cox's Meadow which appeared to be a suitable location with connecting cycle paths, but was not mentioned in the report.

The Assistant Director Green Environment agreed that the site had potential.  
The Environment Agency were investigating the Cox's Meadow site as a proposed flood alleviation scheme. Before proceeding with a facility officers would need more detail of their proposals.

The Chair asked for clarification to ascertain if the council had received a formal proposal from the Environment Agency.

The Assistant Director Green Environment stated that the council had been informed but no formal proposal had been received to date.

Councillor Mrs Regan commented that any personal safety issues at the Brizen Recreation Ground were addressed by contacting the mobile youth workers. This should be copied at other facilities across the town.

Councillor Jones stated that Swindon Village had disadvantaged areas and would welcome skateboarding facilities. The Midwinter site would also benefit young people in Wymans Brook who did not have sufficient play areas.

The Assistant Director Green Environment advised that when he had the baseline position he would be able to identify shortfalls and make inroads to provide the facilities needed.

The Chair referred to 3.4 of the report and asked if six months would be a reasonable timescale to complete the review of existing facilities and identify those required.  
The Assistant Director Green Environment confirmed that six months was a reasonable timescale to complete this analysis. It was important that the Play Policy produced by Sonia Phillips, Assistant Director Health and Well Being dovetailed properly.

The Chair asked when a decision on the BMX track was likely to come forward.  
The Assistant Director Green Environment advised that the Saracens club had proposed to close off open space which may make the site unsuitable for a BMX track, so the timescale could not be confirmed.

The Chair asked what interest had been generated by press coverage and whether the private sector had shown any further interest in helping with funding this type of facility.  
The Assistant Director Green Environment confirmed that interest had been generated and it had raised the profile of skateboarding and wheeled sports, but no funding or offers of support had been received. The Ramp User Group had asked the Council to consider the provision of indoor facilities for the future.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director Green Environment for his contribution.



The Chair advised members of the committee that member training will be conducted prior to the start of the next meeting.

Training would start at 18:00 hours for elected members only.

The meeting would follow to commence at 18:30 hours.

Meeting closed at 20:39 hours.

**Date of Next Meeting - 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2003**

**Councillor D. Smith  
Chairman**