

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

05 March 2003

(18:00 - 21:55)

Present: Councillors Morris (Chairman), Mrs Holliday, Jones, Coleman, Seacome, Stennett, Mrs Hale, Mrs Driver, Mrs Regan, Ms Bishop, Mrs Moreton, Councillor Barnes (left at 20:05 hours) Councillor Mrs Thornton (substitute, left at 20:13 hours), Mr Sygerycz, and Mr Moore-Scott,

Also attended: Chris Huckle, Tim Evans, Sonia Phillips, Rita Baker, Lucy Cape, Jane Grunert, George Rowlinson, Pat Holroyd

Also present: Councillors Mrs Hay, Lloyd, McKinlay, Surgenor

1. Apologies

Councillors Smith, Mrs Ledoux and Wheeler.
Mr Bullingham and Mr Howard

2. Declarations of Interest

All those that sit on Licensing Committee declared a personal interest
Councillor Seacome for item 8
Mr Moore-Scott also declared a personal interest

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 03 February, 2003 were approved as a correct record.

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

The Cabinet had established a working party to investigate alternative means of securing improved Art Gallery and Museum facilities and had invited two members of the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee to sit on the working party.

In response to questions about the future of the library and the additional space needed for exhibition of the Art Gallery and Museum collection, the Deputy Health Wellbeing and Economy stated that any possible use of the library would be looked at with the County Council. The working party would work with the museum curators to identify the shortfall in exhibition space.

Councillors Jones, Mrs Hale and Terry Moore-Scott were nominated to sit on the Art Gallery and Museum working party, but Terry Moore-Scott withdrew in favour of the members. The committee therefore agreed to nominate Councillors Jones and Mrs Hale to the working group.

(c) By Area Committee - No items received.

6. Cheltenham Strategic Partnership - Draft Community Strategy for consultation

This report was presented by Jane Grunert, Assistant Director for Policy and Public Relations.

The committee was asked to consider the draft strategy and identify whether there were any changes they wanted to recommend to the Cheltenham Strategic Partnership Executive for consideration along with other responses received during the consultation exercise.

Councillor Stennett stated that the plan was town centre orientated and there was no mention of the parishes or the rural parts of Cheltenham. He expressed concern that the parish councils were not represented on the executive.

He also questioned the adequacy of references to the impact the night time economy had upon the town, and requested that those should be strengthened. It was important that everyone could use the town safely.

There was very little about the impact of an ageing population, nor was there much about what support there should be for older people, especially when 20% of the local population was over 65 years of age.

He commented that there had been a lot of consultation but very little action. Consultation raised expectations and we needed to be clear about what could and couldn't be achieved.

Councillor Stennett was also concerned by the implication of moving cars out of the town centre, and what impact this might have on trade and on those with mobility problems.

Mr Sygerycz stated that it was important that transport proposals did not exclude those in most need, such as the disabled and infirm. He raised concern about the influence the regional and national agenda may have on the community plan and felt that the plan should be more explicit about national and regional targets.

Mr Terry Moore-Scott asked why the plan did not make a stronger reference to cultural activities and the importance these have on the town, not just socially but economically.

The Chairman asked about the section on the voluntary sector. In the plan it implied that the voluntary sector may end up delivering services in areas where statutory agencies had failed.

Councillor Mrs Driver questioned the costs of consultation. Jane Grunert agreed to let her have a note of the costs. Jane responded to all the points raised and agreed to take them back to the LSP Executive.

The Chairman asked whether a further document would be submitted to the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny committee.

The Assistant Director Policy and Public Relations advised the committee that the final version of the plan would be submitted to full council in April.

The Chairman thanked the Assistant Director for her report and contribution to the meeting.

7. Licensing Bill

This report was presented by George Rowlinson, Assistant Director Public Protection
The Assistant Director advised that the presentation was an overview of the key points and content of the Bill.

He advised that the key points were -

- A balanced package of freedoms and safeguards - clamping down on the crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour perpetrated by a minority whilst giving the responsible majority more freedom and choice about how they spend their leisure time.
- Giving the public a greater say in the licensing process than ever before.
- Responsible deregulation, cutting down on red tape, leading to savings for industry.
- A more civilised and responsible approach to alcohol consumption.

The benefits that the Bill would bring will included tough measures to tackle alcohol related crime, disorder and anti social behaviour. Flexible opening hours for licensed premises with the potential for up to 24 hour opening 7 days per week were also proposed ion the bill.

Liquor Licenses would be granted by local authorities and the views of local residents would be taken into account in deciding applications.

Councillor Mrs Driver asked whether the Licensing Bill would give the council more or less powers in the town.

The Assistant Director advised that it would give greater influence to the community in developing licensing policy but that any controls would have to be exercised within the parameters of licensing legislation.

Councillor Mrs Regan asked if a contribution to street cleaning could be set as part of the policy.

The Assistant Director in response stated that there was no provision for funding of street cleaning. The government would lay down framework guidelines and then consult to formulate views.

Councillor Mrs Moreton commented that there should be more tolerance of others in the community and more facilities for young people. If people lived in the town centre then they should be more tolerant of the noise and disruption.

Councillor Mrs Driver asked what would be the benefit of more public consultation as not much notice had been taken in the past.

The Assistant Director stated that objections would have to be relevant to licensing legislation as at present.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for his presentation and contribution.

8. Funding of external bodies - report of working group

Councillor Morris as the Chairman of the working group presented this item, and conveyed his thanks to all members of the working group and those in the voluntary sector who helped with the review into the funding for the 11 organisations that had a social and community remit.

Councillor Morris advised that some organisations had been recommended for a service level agreement for a period of three years, some for one year and one (Gloucestershire Race Equality Council (GlosREC) for termination of the agreement. He asked the committee to accept the recommendations of the report and invited any questions for the working group.

Councillor Stennett raised concern about the recommendation to award only a one year service level agreement for Cheltenham Community Transport (Cheltenham Volunteer Bureau) in view of the recent plan to curtail bus routes. The elderly relied on the services provided and he asked that funding be closely looked at in future.

Councillor Seacome explained that he was the Council's nominated representative on GlosREC's management committee and asked that the committee reconsider the withdrawal of their service level agreement in the light of subsequent information he had received. He stated that in October 2002 the director of GlosREC had been in hospital for major surgery and was still recovering on sick leave. The computer, fax and modem had also been stolen which had contained some of the information the working group had requested. This had meant that the information had not been presented until mid January 2003.

Councillor Seacome also reported that GlosREC had had only one officer at the time, but another officer had now been appointed and this would enable GlosREC to meet the requirements of the agreement. He stated that a schedule of recent activities showed that they had been working on one murder and 92 racist incidents during the most recent review period and he suggested that they should receive continued funding for the important work they did.

He asked that the committee reconsider their recommendation not to award a service level agreement to GlosREC based on this information.

The Chairman asked Mr Chawda, Chairman of GlosREC, if he would like to address the committee to add to Councillor Seacome's comments.

Mr Chawda thanked the Chair for this opportunity and apologised for the late submission of the information the working group had requested. He stated that they had experienced a problem with staff-sickness in October and November 2002 that could not have been perceived or addressed, and had tried to maintain the service despite staff-sickness. Meetings had been held quarterly with the officers of the Council to monitor GlosREC's performance against the service level agreement and asked the committee to reconsider the working group's decision.

Councillor Mrs Thornton asked if money could be redirected to Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Racist Incidents Group (CTRIG) for telephone line improvements to pick up the work of GlosREC until GlosREC was in a position to carry on the work.

Councillor Mrs Driver stated that the recommendation not to award a service level agreement to GlosREC had not been based on what had happened over two or three months, but on its performance over a period of two years or so. She stated that the Council had funded GlosREC to provide services and support ethnic minorities in Cheltenham, and the working group were of the opinion that it had not utilised the funding

to fulfill this objective. The working group's decision to withdraw funding for 2003-2004 had not been taken lightly.

The Chair reminded the committee of the history of the working party review and the information that was required from GlosREC and the timetable for Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make recommendations to Cabinet.

Councillor Stennett asked if it was possible for the committee to ask the working group to carry out a further review based on the information submitted by Councillor Seacome.

Councillor Mrs Hale stated that as a member of the working group the only issue mentioned of which she had been previously unaware was the theft of GlosREC's computer. She urged that the recommendation to withdraw GlosREC's funding and to redirect the money for the benefit of ethnic minorities be submitted to Cabinet.

The Council needed to be proactive and to take racism seriously and not hand out money without being satisfied that it would be applied to meet the Council's objectives. The council should also monitor fully all the organisations it supported. She considered that the recommendation should stand.

Councillor Seacome stated that he had a list of recent GlosREC casework of which two-thirds had been done in Cheltenham and one-third in Gloucester and again asked the committee to reconsider the recommendation.

Councillor Seacome moved an amendment that the Council should enter into a further one year service level agreement with GlosREC and amend the wording of the recommendation in (ii), however, no other member of the committee was prepared to second the proposed amendment, and the committee was, therefore, asked to vote on the printed recommendations.

The committee resolved to

- i) recommend that cabinet award three year service level agreements from 1st April 2003 to the following three organisations:**
 - **Cheltenham Community Support Centre - formerly known as Cheltenham Centre for Unemployed People (£67,600 for 2003/04 then inflation-matched increased thereafter)**
 - **Hesters Way Neighbourhood Project (£32,300 for 2003/04 then inflation-matched increased thereafter)**
 - **Whaddon, Lynworth and Priors Neighbourhood Project (£32,300 for 2003/04 then inflation-matched increased thereafter)**
- ii) recommend that the council does not enter into a new service level agreement with Gloucestershire Race Equality Council and instead, re-directs the funding (£10,600) to better meet the needs of Cheltenham's black and minority ethnic communities.**
- iii) recommend that cabinet notes the excellent work being undertaken by Care and Repair, our local home improvement agency, and awards the agency only a one year service level agreement, worth £33,300, due to present uncertainties governing the core funding of the organisation through the county's supporting people programme.**

- iv) **in the light of the concerns of the working group in relation to Cheltenham CVS, recommend that cabinet awards only a one year service level agreement, worth £32,000, to the organisation, and that cabinet explores other options to provide an improved service to the voluntary sector as part of a full review of progress by the end of September 2003.**
- v) **support the working group in carrying out more detailed reviews with the following organisations:**
 - **Cheltenham Housing Aid Centre**
 - **Cheltenham Community Projects**
 - **Citizens Advice Bureau**
 - **Cheltenham Community Transport (Cheltenham Volunteer Bureau)**
 - **Severn Wye Energy Agency**
- vi) **as the reviews will not be complete by April 2003, ask cabinet to approve rolling one year service level agreements for those detailed in (v) above to ensure continuity of funding and that these be at the same funding level as this year. The review group will continue to meet and will carry out the remaining reviews in the forthcoming months.**
- vii) **recognise the importance of creating a robust monitoring structure in order that members and officers can continually review the progress of our voluntary sector partners. The working group will develop a monitoring system in conjunction with officers for implementation from April 2003 onwards.**

The Chairman asked for a vote on the recommendations in the report, and they were approved on a majority vote.

The Chairman asked the committee if the membership of the working group should remain unchanged. All members agreed that the existing members should continue and no other nominations were made to join the working group.

The Chairman thanked the working group for their contribution.

9. Sex establishment licensing policy

This report was presented by George Rowlinson, Assistant Director Public Protection.

The report contained background information on the council's past and current position regarding sex establishment licensing policy together with a recommendation for the future. To assist the committee in its deliberations he provided a summary of basic licensing principles and an opinion from an independent expert.

He explained that it was not in the remit of the committee to set policy as this was a matter for full Council. The committee could, however, make recommendations to Council.

Two options were open to the Committee:

1. If considered to be both relevant and appropriate for the council to have a set sex establishment licensing policy, to undertake a full scale review of the council's district, on an area by area basis, setting the appropriate number of sex establishments for each area and recommending to Council accordingly; or
2. To recommend that no set policy should exist and for each application to be dealt with on its merits.

The Assistant Director asked the committee to approve his recommendation in 1.3 of the report, namely:

That the Committee recommend to the Council its position should be to not have a set sex establishment licensing policy but to deal with each application on its own merit.

Following a short debate, the Chairman asked for a vote on the recommendation in 1.3 of the report, this was approved by a unanimous vote.

The Chairman thanked the Assistant Director for his report and contribution to the meeting.

10. Leisure Management Contract update

This update report was provided as an enclosure circulated with the agenda by Sonia Phillips Assistant Director Health and Well Being, Lucy Cape, Sport and Leisure Development Manager and Pat Holroyd, HR Consultant.

The Chairman congratulated the Assistant Director and her team for their hard work and asked if she would convey this to all staff involved.

The Chairman asked if there were questions from the committee.

Councillor Mrs Regan added her congratulations to the team effort, and asked if the council would have more staff than Leisure Connections did to run the service.

The Assistant Director stated that when the transfer took place on 01 April 2003 the council would have enough staff, but this would be subject to an ongoing review leading up to the re-opening of the swimming pool.

Councillor Mrs Regan asked if the changeover would lead to a shortfall in membership, and queried whether existing members could have been contacted earlier to organise the change to direct debit payments.

In response the Development Manager advised that with any health club or sports club there was always a fall off in membership and she felt that they had done all that was practically possible to retain existing members.

Councillor Mrs Driver asked if any more had been done to provide bus services to the Recreation Centre as this was worthy of mention in the plan.

The Assistant Director advised that although not directly related to the contract-handover, this was still a consideration and she would be meeting with the Assistant Director Integrated Transport in the near future to explore this.

Councillor Seacome asked whether schools who had gone elsewhere for swimming facilities were likely to return to the recreation centre.

The Assistant Director advised that she would be writing to schools to remind them of the reopening in Spring 2004. This should not present a problem as most schools had asked when the pool would re-open and based on this she was confident that they would return.

The Chairman asked if there would be a final report from the project team.

The Assistant Director confirmed that a further report would be submitted after completion of the handover and that in future there would be regular reports on performance against operational and financial targets.

The Chairman thanked the team for their update, hard work and contribution to the meeting.

The Chairman thanked all for attending and closed the meeting at 21:55 hours.

Date of Next Meeting - 3 April 2003

**Councillor D Smith
Chairman**