

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
27th November 2003

MINUTES

(18.00 – 18.40)

Present: Councillors Mrs Ledoux (in the Chair), Barnes, Coleman, Mrs Driver, Mrs Hale, Jones, MacDonald, Morris, Seacome, and Wheeler
Messrs Howard, Moore-Scott and Sygerycz.

Apologies: Councillors Mrs Holliday, and Councillor Regan (Chairman), Forbes, Smith, Stennett, Group Director (Social and Community) and Mr C Bullingham

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Mrs Driver, Morris and Mrs Hale declared their interest in Item 8 as directors of Cheltenham Borough Homes, or (in Mrs Hale's case) as the wife of a director of Cheltenham Borough Homes.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20th October 2003 be approved as a correct record.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions or petitions had been received.

4. MATTERS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE

- (a) By Council - None
- (b) By Cabinet - None
- (c) By Area Committee – None

5. HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE – RESULTS OF NON-USER SURVEY

The Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) introduced this report which provided information in respect of a non-user survey carried out with regard to children's and young peoples' activities during the summer holiday period. She reminded the Committee that this was a follow up report to the overview of the current levels of activity provision for children and young people, presented at the previous meeting.

The Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) indicated that a survey of 1800 children and young people was conducted throughout September and October. Working with schools, MAD, the school sports co-ordinators programme, and the library service, questionnaires and

focus groups were used to investigate the major factors which contributed to the non-attendance of children and young people on the provision offered throughout the Summer. The Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) referred to Appendix 1 of the report which contained the full details and results of the feedback received and drew particular attention to the following key issues identified:-

- Awareness & information
- Image and peer pressure
- Price and access

In summing up, the Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) indicated that the results of the user and non-user survey had identified gaps in the existing user profile, and highlighted a number of factors which contributed to the provision not being accessible and available to the wider public. She advised that these were now being considered and appropriate improvements made to ensure the continued improvement and development of the service.

Councillor Morris referred to the other options being considered by officers for the development of increased provision, including increasing charges generally, or specifically for non-residents and asked whether a report would be brought back to the Committee. In response the Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) confirmed that this had not been the intention. Councillor Morris felt that member input was particularly important in the event of any proposed increases above the rate of inflation.

Councillor Morris also stressed the importance of ensuring that the spread of service provision was equal across the whole of the Borough.

Councillor Barnes referred to the results of the survey and was surprised that 47% did not know that the services were provided and that 67% required information through schools. He asked what method the Council currently used and what could be done to improve these statistics. In response the Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) confirmed that information was already sent to schools, however the key was targeting the right departments. Councillor Barnes suggested it was dangerous to send information directly to Head Teachers as they received so much paperwork it would not be effective marketing. He also suggested attending school assemblies just before the end of the school year. The Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) confirmed that the Division was now working more closely with the Youth Council to assist in targeting the right areas.

Councillor MacDonald commented that advertising and marketing was very important. He suggested that 'Why people did not take part in our Summer Provisions' was also key, particularly comments about image and because their friends do not use them. He appreciated that whilst suggestions like archery, rock climbing and skateboarding were minority sports, ideas were changing and the provision of activities needed to be up to date with current trends, as far as was possible. The Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) advised that the Youth Council had been consulted for the first time as part of the review and they would continue to be a regular consultee with regard to this service.

Councillor Mrs Driver asked whether the activities were advertised on the internet and if so suggested the creation of a youth zone which would possibly be more appealing to young people than accessing through the CBC Website. The Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) confirmed that the activities were advertised on the Council's website and through the youth project 'Massive' who had their own website. She advised that future marketing through mobile phones and text messaging was also being considered.

Councillor Seacome suggested using the results of the non-user survey to target those people who do not use the service and encourage them to do so.

Councillor Mrs Ledoux thanked the Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) for her report.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes the results of the non-user survey in respect of summer holiday provision for children and young people.

6. ARTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

In presenting this report the Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) informed the Committee that the draft council workplan, due to be considered by Council on 1st December, included an action to produce an arts development strategy for approval by Cabinet in March 2004. She advised that Councillor Hay, Cabinet Deputy (Health, Wellbeing and Economy) had indicated that she would be pleased if the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee could be involved in the development of the strategy prior to next March. The Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) indicated that following discussions between the Cabinet Deputy and the Chair of this Committee it had been suggested that 3 to 4 volunteers were required to establish a time-limited working group.

After a short discussion Councillors Mrs Driver, Jones and Seacome volunteered to work with officers to produce a draft arts development strategy. Councillor Mrs Hale commented that whilst she was very interested in the arts, she was already a member of the Public Art Panel and would be able to make representations through this route, thus freeing up the opportunity for other members of the Committee to make a contribution.

RESOLVED that the Committee establish a small time-limited working group consisting of Councillors Mrs Driver, Jones and Seacome to work with officers to produce a draft arts development strategy in time for its presentation to Cabinet in March 2004.

7. COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT - UPDATE

The Community Partnerships Manager introduced this report which updated members on the progress of the CPA and in particular the two housing diagnostics: balancing the housing market and decent home standards. She drew particular attention to the following issues from the report:-

- CPA Corporate Assessment – as part of the inspection process the Council is asked to submit a corporate self-assessment.
- The list of strengths and areas for improvement identified by the CPA corporate project team during consultation exercises with staff, members and partners.
- Improvement and Development Agency (I&DeA) Review Exercise – the first drafts of the corporate assessment and the two housing diagnostics formed the base information for a recent 2 day review exercise undertaken by the I&DeA. Formal feedback had yet to be assessed but the comments at the conclusion of the exercise indicated that the Council was very self-aware in identifying its strengths and the areas in need of improvement. Planned or commenced improvement action now needed to be progressed. The view was also expressed that the council undersells its achievements and needs to emphasise these more when it has the opportunity to do so but also by proactively self promoting.

The Community Partnerships Manager advised that should Cheltenham Borough Homes be awarded its 2 Star rating as a result of the recent Housing Inspectorate review, the council will be assessed only on the balancing housing market assessment, with the decent homes standards assessment being used as simply supporting evidence. Draft versions of both assessment documents were attached to the report, and in order to give members a feel for the shape of the final versions, examples were attached from Exeter City Council who were rated excellent in their CPA score. The Community Partnerships Manager introduced

Duncan Edwards, the CPA Manager to the Committee and welcomed any questions from members.

In response to a question from Councillor MacDonald, the Community Partnerships Manager clarified that the light-touch inspection undertaken by the I&DeA was a completely separate exercise to the recent inspection by the Housing Inspectorate, the results of which were still awaited.

Councillor Morris commented that Local Government was renowned for not promoting itself. He raised concern regarding the likely cost to the council of the CPA process, however acknowledged that it was a statutory requirement and the Council therefore had little control if it was to be successful. With regard to meeting the Council's social and affordable housing objectives, Councillor Morris stressed the importance of getting the right mix across the whole of the Borough. The Community Partnerships Manager agreed to feed this back to the planning officers.

Councillor Mrs Driver raised some concern regarding the coverage within the Balancing Housing Markets document relating to the most vulnerable sectors in the Cheltenham community including the homeless. She pointed out that the council's responsibility for vulnerable people did not stop at providing a home, it was important where they were placed and the provision of on-going support and counselling. In response, the Community Partnerships Manager explained that it was extremely difficult to include all the evidence within the allocated space. However she pointed out that the highlighted text within the document linked to other documents which provided more detailed information. Councillor Mrs Driver suggested that the council's duty should also extend to those people placed with Housing Associations not just the council's own housing stock.

Councillor Mrs Hale commented that the documents were much easier to read in portrait, rather than the current landscape style which also took up a lot of valuable space.

With regard to balancing the housing market Mr Sygercyz raised the issue of space standards for new dwellings. He explained that the current design of the properties meant that access to and within the property was either difficult or impossible for people with mobility issues and wheelchair users. The Community Partnerships Manager was unable to answer in any detail at that time but agreed to send further information regarding lifetime homes standards and other such initiatives that specifically addressed these issues direct to Mr Sygercyz in due course.

Councillor Mrs Ledoux (Chair) thanked the Community Partnerships Manager for her report and the CPA Manager for attending for any questions relating to the corporate CPA,

RESOLVED that the committee:-

- i) notes the progress made to date on the two housing diagnostic assessments**
- ii) receives a progress report at a future meeting**

8. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF ELECTIONS AND CITIZENSHIP

In briefly introducing this report Councillor Mrs Ledoux read out a short note from Mrs Regan, Chairman of the Committee who was unable to attend the meeting, supporting the revised project brief and vision statement and congratulating the officers for their dedication in producing the report.

The Assistant Director (Policy and Public Relations) reminded the Committee that at the last meeting the approval of the project brief and vision statement had been deferred pending further amendments to address the concerns raised by the Committee during the meeting. She advised that the report previously circulated as part of the agenda had subsequently been amended to reflect some further concerns raised by Councilor Morris and had been circulated separately. She referred to the revised report and the briefing note that gave members of the committee some additional information regarding the work that the project group had already undertaken in developing the project brief and vision for the review of elections and citizenship. The Assistant Director (Policy and Public Relations) drew particular attention to the amendments made to the report as follows:-

Page 4 – the timetable had been updated to reflect the work already undertaken and to indicate the role this Committee will have in shaping the review and final report.

Page 6 – the consultation details had been amended to reflect the role this committee will have in shaping the review and report.

Councillor Morris confirmed that his subsequent meeting with the Assistant Director (Policy and Public Relations) had proved useful and the briefing note clearly demonstrated the quantity of work already undertaken to arrive at the report. He felt that the contents of the report had improved significantly and he was now satisfied that the Committee's previous concerns had been addressed. He suggested that, as the schools appeared so enthusiastic with regard to citizenship, it would be useful if the Assistant Director (Policy and Public Relations) could provide contact details so that Members could liaise with them directly, if they should so wish. The Assistant Director (Policy and Public Relations) agreed that this information would be made available to all ward councilors.

Mr Howard pointed out that Kim Gibbon was the co-ordinator for MAD and not Massive as stated under the Project Team listed in the report.

Councillor Mrs Ledoux thanked the Assistant Director (Policy and Public Relations) for her report

RESOLVED that the Committee approves the project brief and the vision statement in respect of the Best Value Review of 'Elections and Citizenship'

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 12th January 2003

Chairman