

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
2 December 2004

MINUTES
(18.00 – 20.15)

PRESENT Councillor Mrs Driver (in the Chair), Councillors Allen,
Mrs Hale, Nicholson and Mrs Regan
Messrs Ball, Howard, and Moore-Scott

RELEVANT DEPUTIES IN ATTENDANCE:

Deputy (Neighbourhood and Community), Deputy (Health, Wellbeing
and Economy), Deputy (Green Environment and Licensing) and
Deputy (Public and Environmental Protection)

APOLOGIES : Councillor Forbes, Mrs Holliday, Mrs Ledoux and Wheeler
Mr T Sygerycz

1. INTRODUCTION

Councillor Mrs Driver (Chairman) welcomed everyone to the meeting. She asked members present whether there was any news with regard to Councillor Mrs Ledoux. The Deputy (Public and Environmental Protection) indicated that all being well she was due to be discharged from hospital on 10th December. The Committee requested that its best wishes be passed on to Councillor Mrs Ledoux.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 18th October be approved
as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions or petitions had been received.

5. MATTERS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE

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

6. BRIEFING FROM CABINET DEPUTIES (Agenda item 6)

The Deputy (Neighbourhood and Community) reported on the following:-

- Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) – he had presented a joint report on behalf of himself and the General Manager of CBH to Cabinet on 30th November, on the Strategic Partnership arrangement for major repairs and improvements to council homes. The recently gained 2* status had accessed £31.5 Million from the Government which, with ongoing Housing Revenue Account funding, produced a total investment of £63 million to bring the council housing stock up to the Government's Decent Homes Standard by 2010. In view of the scale of the contract, Cabinet had recommended the report to Council on 6th December 2004 which would be supported by a presentation by FDP Savills.
- Opening of Sochi Court - Phase 4 of Hesters Way regeneration included 51 new homes for rent and 11 for shared ownership. The scheme was one of five regeneration projects shortlisted under 'Best Regeneration' category of the 2004 UK Housing Awards. The next phase of the regeneration was the redevelopment of India and Pakistan Houses.
- St Paul's initiative –in partnership with Cheltenham Community Projects it was planned to establish a 'Community House' to tackle social issues in the area. A Planning for Real Day had been arranged on 18th December to involve the local community.

The Chairman commented that borough council tenants received the "Lifeline" service without charge, whilst other tenants/owners had to pay for the service. Former CBC tenants who had transferred to Housing Associations to assist with regeneration schemes now paid for Lifeline. In response, the Deputy (Neighbourhood and Community) explained that the charges for CBC tenants were met from the Housing Revenue Account. This did not apply to Housing Associations unless they operated the same scheme. He agreed to check the details with officers and report back at the next meeting.

The Deputy (Green Environment and Licensing) indicated that the Licensing Policy Statement was due to be considered by the Committee later in the agenda. In commending the document she highlighted the links to the Council's Business Plan and Corporate Objectives as reducing crime and disorder and the fear of crime in our communities is a top priority. There were however concerns regarding licensing income levels with the adoption of national charging structure.

The Chairman commented that some licensees were concerned because they were not clear how the policy would affect them. She had therefore arranged a meeting with an officer from the Licensing section. The Assistant Director (Public Protection) indicated that there was information on all key issues relating to the policy and the licensing process in general on the Council's website (www.cheltenham.gov.uk under licensing in the A-Z of council services)

The Deputy (Public and Environmental Protection) reported on the following:-

- The National Conference for tackling drug use was held on 17th November 2004. The Community Safety unit and the Cheltenham Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership were leading the field in this area of work.
- A morning session had been arranged on 7th December 2004 to discuss the Crime Reduction Strategy for the coming period and any comments were welcomed (through the Deputy)

The Deputy (Health, Wellbeing and Economy) reported on the following:-

- Art Gallery and Museum

- the Big Draw event held in October had attracted 548 visitors compared with the Saturday average of approximately 250
- is taking part in 'Arts Ambassadors' a new word-of-mouth marketing scheme in Gloucestershire. The aim is to recruit local people to arts organisations in the county.

In response to a question from Mr Moore-Scott, the Deputy (Health, Wellbeing and Economy) explained that pending the outcome of the current budget setting process vacancies at the Art Gallery and Museum were not being filled

Mr Howard informed the Committee that MAD Youth Council had collected £144 for Children in Need.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Deputies for their briefings.

7. CO-OPTION (Agenda item 7)

The Chairman informed the committee that Mr T Moore-Scott was standing down from the committee. The Arts Council had nominated Mrs Hazel Kitchin as a replacement representative.

Councillor Mrs Regan commented that she had enjoyed working with Mr Moore-Scott and his contributions to the work of the Committee would be missed. Mr Moore-Scott indicated that it had been a great privilege to work on the Committee; however he had every confidence in his proposed successor.

The Chairman thanked Mr Moore-Scott on behalf of the Committee.

RESOLVED that Mrs Hazel Kitchin be co-opted onto the Committee as representative of the Cheltenham Arts Council

8. PUBLIC ART STRATEGY (Agenda item 8)

The Assistant Director (Health and Well-being) indicated that the Deputy (Health, Wellbeing and Economy) had specifically asked the Committee to be involved in the development of this strategy. A small, time-limited working group of members and officers had been established to produce the document prior to presentation to Cabinet for approval. The strategy, which was to be presented to Cabinet on 14th December, looked at ways that public art could enhance Cheltenham's environment. It outlined current provision and set out clear objectives and priorities to make best use of the available resources. The Assistant Director (Health and Well-being) thanked Councillor Mrs Regan and Mr Moore-Scott for their valuable contribution to the working group.

The Assistant Director (Health and Well-being) introduced Mr Paul McKee, the Arts Development Officer who had worked closely with the existing Public Art Panel, the working group and Public Art South West to produce the document. The Arts Development Officer explained each section of the strategy, highlighting the key issues.

Mr Moore-Scott welcomed the emphasis the strategy placed on the proactive role of the Public Art Panel which would be responsible for providing appropriate direction and advice relating to funding received via the Section 106 process 'percent for art'. In response to his questions, the Arts Development Officer confirmed that public art in Cheltenham was not exclusive to the Public Art Panel. The panel would be able to offer guidance and support to projects containing

elements of public art within the borough and encourage wider community involvement. The Arts Development Officer indicated that budget constraints limited the options to exploring ways of funding a part-time public art officer to work on a shared and cross-district basis.

The Arts Development Officer provided the following responses to further question and comments made by the Committee:-

- the council would be involving the community including schools and churches in order to make art projects as attractive, accessible and interactive as possible
- public art projects were being integrated within wider regeneration schemes and developments therefore the environmental benefits were wider than the town centre
- he acknowledged the importance of enhancing the environment particularly in built up areas through public art, open space and play areas. He was already working closely with the planning division and attended meetings of the Urban Design team in order to achieve this.

As a member of the Public Art Panel, Councillor Mrs Hale welcomed the Strategy and explained about the public art project currently being undertaken as part of Hesters Way regeneration which involved the local community and was interactive.

Councillor Mrs Regan commented that it was very important to lift the profile of public art in Cheltenham which would help to attract visitors.

The Chairman thanked the Arts Development Officer for his report.

RESOLVED that the Public Art Strategy is recommended for adoption by the Cabinet

9. POSSIBLE BUDGET REVIEWS FOR INCLUSION IN THE COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda item 9)

In introducing this item the Group Director (Social and Community) reminded members that at the last meeting the Committee had been asked to identify cost centres or areas of expenditure within the Committee's remit which could be discussed at the next meeting and built into the work programme to be reviewed over the coming year. It had been suggested by the Budget Process Review Group that the best forum for these reviews were informal member/officer working groups reporting back to the Committee.

Areas identified for review:-

- Housing Grants H22300
- Homelessness H22400

Members requested that the 'net cost of services' table be produced in a more informative format (ie without asset rents etc). The Group Director (Social and Community) indicated that the Accountancy team were currently heavily involved in preparing the budget for 2005/06, however this would be looked at after budget setting had taken place on 25th February 2005.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director (Public Protection) indicated that if the Government introduced the proposed national charging rates the Licensing service would operate at an ongoing deficit.

10. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE (Agenda item 10)

Kath Chamberlain, the Community Partnerships Manager introduced Trevor Gladding, Community Safety Officer and Gill Thayer, the project co-ordinator of Gloucestershire Domestic Violence Intervention Project (GDVIP) to the Committee.

Gill Thayer explained that incidents of domestic violence in Gloucestershire involved a number of agencies working together under the Gloucestershire Co-ordinated Community response to Domestic Violence (CCR) of which CBC was a partner. The GDVIP is responsible for co-ordinating, facilitating and monitoring the effectiveness of CCR agencies.

Gill Thayer gave a presentation on domestic violence including the facts and myths, its impact on society, the aims of GDVIP and the five core principles of intervention that have been adopted. During the presentation an information pack produced by the CCR was also distributed. (A copy of the slides and the information pack are available from Democratic Services).

The following responses were provided to members questions:-

- Gill Thayer explained that the service providers at the first point of contact were predominantly women. Kath Chamberlain indicated that within housing services in CBH and CBC, a female officer would always be available if requested.
- Gill Thayer advised that the lack of children's facilities was due to insufficient funding. Some crisis support for children was currently provided by Survivors of Child Abuse Gloucestershire (SOCA), however children's services would be a top priority for GDVIP in 2005/06.

The Chairman was concerned that Social Services was low down on the table which indicated the source of referrals. Kath Chamberlain explained that victims often preferred to contact outside agencies as there was a perceived fear of losing control. The Chairman felt that in respect of children, social services and the schools should be firmly intervening when there were signs of any distress.

The Chairman thanked Gill Thayer for her interesting and informative presentation.

11. LICENSING POLICY STATEMENT (Agenda Item 11)

In presenting this item, the Assistant Director (Public Protection) indicated that whilst Councillor Smith, the Chairman of the Night Time Economy working group (NTEWG) had been unable to attend the meeting at short notice, the Licensing Policy Statement carried his full support.

The Assistant Director (Public Protection) explained that the draft Licensing Policy Statement approved by the Committee in September 2004 had been out to public consultation. The comments received which were generally positive were outlined in a schedule attached to the report. The (NTEWG) had considered all the comments and where appropriate had amended the draft policy as indicated in the document. The Licensing Policy Statement had also been considered by the lawyers, which was more about what the Council could lawfully do rather than what the Council, or others, would like to do.

In recommending the Licensing Policy Statement to the Committee, the Assistant Director (Public Protection) indicated that a robust document had been produced which apart from complying with the legal requirements would serve to support other Council strategies and policies particularly relating to the night time economy and crime and disorder.

The view was expressed that the town centre had already reached saturation point with pubs and clubs as a result of the growth in the night time economy. The Assistant Director (Public Protection) believed that the effects of the night time economy were not as unusual or exceptional as to call for the development of a special saturation policy. However, it was an area of particular concern and would be kept under close review along with the impacts of the Licensing Act 2003; ultimately it would be for Council to decide. The Licensing Services Manager explained that under the terms of the Act existing licensees may retain their current license terms and conditions so there was no scope to impact in this area. This was known as the “grandfather rights provisions”

In response to questions:-

- The Assistant Director (Public Protection) clarified that traffic management was not generally an issue for Licensing and was not included in the Licensing Policy Statement. The Licensing Services Manager added that the guidance was clear that Planning and Licensing were two separate regulatory functions and Licensing Committee should not be a re-run of Planning Committee.

RESOLVED that the Licensing Policy Statement is recommended for adoption by Council

12. Leisure@Cheltenham - Interim Report

The Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) presented this report which provided members with an overview of the performance and financial position of Leisure@Cheltenham since her last report of 18th October 2004. The report detailed management information with regard to service standards and utilisation statistics and she drew particular attention to the following:-

- Service standards - the marked decrease in complaints with regard to building maintenance and cleaning, following the implementation of action plans to improve service in these areas
- Utilisation statistics – a continued growth in casual swimming, badminton and the newly refurbished wet health spa.
- Financial performance – business is improving and moving in the right direction, officers have identified savings which will also help off-set the shortfall in income this year. The introduction of robust access controls and inspections had taken place on site to ensure that all users were paid up members or ‘pay and play’ customers.

The Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) indicated that the Customer Forum valued the Centre highly and were keen to continue to work with officers to ensure that the Centre is a success and promoted in a positive way.

The Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) informed the committee that a number of service reviews had taken place which would result in operational and service changes. These changes would maximise business opportunity and ensure the provision of quality services to meet the council’s objectives of improving the health and wellbeing of the community.

The Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) introduced Pat Holroyd who had been appointed as the Interim Manager at Leisure@Cheltenham during the continued absence of the General Manager.

The Committee was pleased that the position at Leisure@Cheltenham was now more positive and asked that its congratulations be extended to all staff concerned.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Mrs Hale, the Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) confirmed the kiosk at Central Cross Drive would not be open over the Christmas period. There were maintenance and repair works required before it could be re-opened, scheduled for March 2005.

The Chairman indicated that at a recent meeting of the Disability Forum, the question of whether a hoist could be installed in the disabled changing rooms had been raised. It had been suggested such a facility would benefit the current disabled users of Leisure@Cheltenham but also attract other disabled users, possibly from outside the borough. The Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) considered such a facility would be too expensive for the number of people that would use it; however she agreed to investigate the cost/benefit of installing a hoist.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

13. SPORT AND EXERCISE PROVISION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (Agenda item 13)

In introducing this item, the Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) reminded the Committee that at the September meeting it had considered a scrutiny topic registration form submitted by Councillor Mrs Regan regarding the provision of facilities for gymnastics in the town for young people. It was agreed that the Committee would consider this matter in the broader context of health and exercise of young people.

Subsequently, a meeting of representatives of the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee and officers was held in order to identify the scope of the proposed project and the resources required to deliver it. The briefing note which had been circulated provided members with information on the matters discussed and the agreed actions.

The Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) pointed out that in setting the action plan, Members and officers had been acutely aware that the issue did not address the council's corporate priorities and were mindful of the financial constraints facing the Council. However it was anticipated that with the assistance and support of Members, the actions could be delivered within existing resources. The outcomes would be reported back to the Committee, through briefing notes.

The Chairman indicated that the first meeting had been very positive and she had been contacted by a number of people interested in the topic who would like to get involved.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 12th January 2005

COUNCILLOR MRS B DRIVER
Chairman