

**SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
12TH SEPTEMBER 2005****MINUTES
(18.00 – 20.00 PM)**

PRESENT Councillor Mrs Driver (in the Chair), Councillors Allen,
Mrs Hale, Mrs Ledoux and Nicholson
Mrs Kitchin and Mr Sygerycz

APOLOGIES Councillors Forbes and Mrs Regan
Deputy (Health, Well being and Economy)
Mr Howard

RELEVANT DEPUTIES IN ATTENDANCE:
Deputy (Public and Environmental Protection)
Deputy (Green Environment and Licensing)
Deputy (Neighbourhood and Community)

1. INTRODUCTION

At the start of the meeting, the Chairman, on behalf of the Committee wished the Deputy (Health, Wellbeing and Economy) a speedy recovery following a recent operation on her shoulder.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Mrs Kitchin declared a personal interest in agenda item 9A, as she was the Chairman of Cheltenham Art Club and a member of the Executive Committee of Cheltenham Arts Council. Councillors Mrs Hale and Mrs Ledoux declared an interest in agenda item 9B as they were both members of the Licensing Committee.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 11th July 2005 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:-

- All three local Regeneration Area Partnerships are being better co-ordinated now through the Regeneration Partnership (Cheltenham), which reports to the Cheltenham Strategic Partnership (CSP). Bernice Thompson has been seconded for a year to act as the co-ordinator and there is a part time administrator who also works for Hesters Way Partnership. He indicated that the Regeneration Partnership (Cheltenham) is funded for one year by and reports to the CSP. The aim of the partnership which is based in the Lower High Street is maximising the potential for funding, developing a regeneration framework, identifying new projects and bringing together skills and expertise to support the three existing regeneration partnerships.
- The Draft Housing Strategies for Vulnerable People 2005-08 considered by Cabinet on 19th July 2005 had now been finalised and endorsed by the Deputy under delegated authority and sent to Government Office South West
- The recent audit of Supporting People identified a clear improvement since the 2004 audit although the final report had not yet been produced. Unfortunately this improvement would not make available any additional funding.

The Chairman thanked the Deputy (Neighbourhood and Community) for his briefing and asked him to explain his recent comments to Cabinet about the future of the ALMO. In response, the Deputy confirmed that the future of the ALMO was still unclear and without legislative and fiscal changes the options remained limited. Current legislation constrained Local Authorities from building new social housing. Over recent years the Government had promoted Housing Associations as the bodies to build and provide social housing for people on the waiting list and the Council had to negotiate allocations. The Council's housing stock was gradually depleting through the Right to Buy process and it had been estimated that locally 3200 social housing units were required so the Council was facing a future problem. Under the circumstances there was a need for the Government to issue clear guidance about the future of affordable housing sooner rather than later.

The Chairman explained that the Deputy (Public and Environmental Protection) and Deputy (Green Environment and Licensing) had indicated that they had no specific briefings on this occasion however had attended in case Members wished to ask any questions relating to their portfolios. No questions were raised by Members of the Committee.

7. SPORTS FACILITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (Agenda item 7)

In introducing this item the Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) reminded the Committee that it had instigated this review at the end of 2004 and a number of regular updates had subsequently been presented to the Committee. The Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) and the Sports Development Co-ordinator provided a detailed presentation on the results of the questionnaire which had been sent to young people in the town to seek their views on the level and range of sports facilities available to them. The questionnaire had previously been circulated to Members of the Committee for comments and discussed at its meeting held on 11th June 2005.

A hand-out containing the initial findings and an update were also circulated to Members and the Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) drew particular attention to the following key issues:-

- 474 responses had been received across a number of the local education authority schools and from other sources eg Leisure@ Schools Out Summer Project
- Unfortunately the delay in the timetable meant that the Youth Centres and MAD were closed for summer recess
- From the key findings a number of issues and actions had been highlighted
- There was opportunity for further results through:-
 - Review of the Youth Strategy by recently appointed Healthy Communities Partnership Manager, consultation yet to be undertaken
 - Youth Service, detached youth workers for St Paul's and Whaddon area
 - MAD Young People's Council – reconvened following summer recess

The Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) provided the following responses to Member's comments and questions:-

- Private schools had not been targeted because the Council currently held no comparative data, however their inclusion would be considered for any future exercise.
- Some engagement with young people with special needs had taken place through Gloucestershire Youth Games and the School Sports Co-ordinator
- Due to the timing of the questionnaire very little or no teacher guidance had taken place in the completion of the form
- Feedback to the schools participating would be through the School Sports Co-ordinator
- She acknowledged that the results were not fully comprehensive, however officers had been focussing on this review over the past eight months and there came a point when research had to stop and the results analysed in order to start implementing the actions arising.

Members made the following general comments:-

- As part of a further review it was suggested information be obtained as to why young people ceased to use activities. This would also provide useful information to develop future activities
- Officers should investigate the provision of ice-skating rink/roller skating rink even if on a temporary basis, suitable venues suggested included the race course, Pittville Pump Room and Leisure@Cheltenham
- It was pointed out that not all young people that attend schools in Cheltenham live in Cheltenham so this needed to be taken into account in the analysis
- In order to inform the future development and provision of facilities in Cheltenham, further analysis of responses would be required eg did the activity 'Football' mean generally kicking a ball around or in some cases was it more organised than this. Similarly with the activity 'Cycling' did this simply mean to and from a venue or as a regular pastime. It was a good start but further work was required.

The Chairman thanked the Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) and the Sports Development Co-ordinator for their hard work and the interesting presentation. She commented that the timing of the survey was unfortunate and that the findings needed to be taken much further. The Council had a duty to make sports facilities accessible to all young people and therefore needed to identify and address any barriers highlighted by the survey eg transport issues or money. She suggested that it would be interesting to compare the results of this survey with the one previously undertaken and the Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) agreed to bring a fuller report to a future meeting.

Councillor Mrs Hale indicated that she was very impressed with the work carried out so far, but suggested that the Committee required more time to analyse the data in order to determine the focus of possible future work. In response to her question the Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) agreed to clarify the definitions used in Question 1 of the survey and circulate the graphs to members of the Committee for discussion at the next meeting.

RESOLVED that the Committee receives copies of the graphs from the presentation for discussion as to the way forward at the next meeting and a further report comparing these findings with the previous survey be submitted to a future meeting.

8. PROJECT BRIEF: LOCAL DEMOCRACY IN CHELTENHAM – YOUNG PEOPLE'S INVOLVEMENT (Agenda item 8)

The Assistant Director (Policy and Public Relations) introduced this report which had been circulated with the agenda. She explained that a small project team consisting of Councillors Forbes, Mrs Hale and Mrs Regan had met to carry out some initial scoping of the 'elections and citizenship' project resulting in the project brief to the report. She indicated that at the scoping session it had been decided that, whilst there were real challenges around democracy which faced many groups in Cheltenham (including BME communities, disabled people and socially-excluded people), it would be more realistic in terms of available resources to focus on one group at a time, starting with young people. There were also clear links between this review and the children and young people's young services review and there may be possible areas for joint working to avoid unnecessary duplication.

The Chairman acknowledged the importance of developing young people's involvement in Local Democracy. However she stressed the existing role of all elected members in encouraging constituents to vote. In her view the council needed to listen to the public and gain their trust. The recent low attendance at Committee meetings would not encourage public participation.

Councillor Allen commented that the encouragement of young people to participate could possibly stimulate debate at home resulting in the parents voting. He indicated that it was important to get the message across well in advance of any election campaign.

RESOLVED that the Committee:-

- i) approves the scope of the local democracy project brief as set out at Appendix A of the report
- ii) approves the membership of the working group consisting of Councillors Forbes, Mrs Hale and Mrs Regan)

9. POSSIBLE FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS (Agenda item 9)

A) Art Gallery – Review of temporary exhibitions policy

Mrs Kitchin introduced the scrutiny topic registration form which she had completed for consideration by the Committee as a possible new topic for inclusion in the current work programme. She referred to the response of the Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) and indicated that the facts outlined in her own original statement were correct. It was known within the arts fraternity that Cheltenham Arts Council had been dissatisfied with the temporary exhibitions policy approved by the Council, which in her opinion was a fait accompli without consultation with local interested groups. The Camera Club who had traditionally exhibited at the

Art Gallery and Museum had recently been allocated space at the Pittville Pump Room, taking it outside of the town centre which was not an ideal situation. The availability of exhibition space for visual art was deteriorating and needed to be reviewed in line with the Council's policy of supporting and promoting the cultural fabric of the town.

In response, the Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) indicated that the appropriate research had been undertaken and apologised if the information was felt to be incorrect. She confirmed that a lift had now been installed at the Pittville Pump Room, and the use of the venue was currently being reviewed with the view to expanding business as part of developing Festivals and Entertainments and the ongoing Cultural Review. She indicated that exhibition space remained a key issue at the Art Gallery and Museum, with demand outweighing supply. However, following the recent sale of the Axiom Centre, plans to increase the exhibition space at the site should come to fruition and she recommended that the current exhibitions policy be reviewed at that time and not before.

Members of the Committee made the following comments:-

- It was recognised that the Art Gallery and Museum was central and therefore popular, limited exhibition space needed to be managed well.
- The situation needed to be looked at now and Cheltenham as a whole should be considered not just the Art Gallery and Museum. Prime space for public art was gradually being lost to the increase of café culture, particularly on the Promenade and perhaps other venues could be considered such as the library or the leisure centre.

The Committee were very keen to commence the review of the temporary exhibitions policy as soon as possible and to get involved in some way. The Acting Managing Director indicated that if the item was to be included in the workplan it would more than likely be at the expense of something else in view of the time and resource constraints currently facing the Division. He welcomed the concept of a co-operative venture and the opportunity for some valuable input from members of the Committee and the relevant Deputy.

RESOLVED that the Assistant Director (Health and Wellbeing) come back to a future meeting with a proposal to review the temporary exhibitions policy.

B) Licensing Issues arising from Licensing Act 2003

In introducing this item, the Chairman indicated that in the light of the response of the Assistant Director (Public Protection) perhaps she should have explained the issues of her concern more clearly on the registration form. However, her point was that the Council should not take for granted that the public knew as much about the new Licensing Act as the Council does and communication was therefore very important. She was aware that in her own ward, Licensees were confused about the lengthy and complex application forms and some residents were scared because they were uncertain of the implications of the new licensing laws. Was there anything that the Committee could do to alleviate the situation?

In response the Assistant Director (Public Protection) indicated that the Council had no control over the new Licensing Act which had been imposed by the Government, including the contents and format of the application form. As a Licensing Authority (LA) requirements are placed upon the council by law regarding the process to be followed with all applications and in doing so the LA is required to take an unbiased approach to all parties ie applicants, responsible authorities and interested parties (residents and business). The LA works with all concerned, providing assistance and information is available through the Council's website including a public register of applications. He indicated that two weeks prior to the second appointed day (6th August) the

licensing section had received a last minute flood of 600 applications to be dealt with in the required statutory timescales, so the team were already under tremendous pressure. As a comparison the Planning Department on average dealt with about 2200 planning applications per annum. The Assistant Director (Public Protection) explained that the deadline for applications had now passed and suggested that as the operation of licenses within the provisions of the new regime had not started it was too soon to subject it to scrutiny. He indicated that more would be achieved by waiting 12 months from the date of its commencement on 24th November 2005.

Councillor Mrs Hale indicated that her experience sitting on Licensing Sub Committee was that the public were aware of applications and representations were being received. Taking everything into consideration all parties were being treated fairly.

Councillor Allen recognised the large amount of work the new legislation had imposed on officers and Members of the Licensing Committee over recent months. Whilst he acknowledged that the application forms were prescribed by the Government he suggested an 'Idiots Guide' be produced in future as it was important to ensure everything was communicated clearly including how to object.

The Licensing Manager indicated that the issue was under national scrutiny as a result of media coverage of the Licensing Act 2003 together with coverage of a more speculative nature about its impact upon binge drinking and the potential effects upon our communities. It was therefore important for Members to be aware of how the review process works and how interested parties can trigger that process. The key issue was for interested parties to know that the responsible authorities (Licensing Authority, Police, Fire and Rescue etc) were available to assist with complaints about individual premises or how the license review process can be used to good effect.

The Chairman expressed her view that more public relations work should be undertaken by the Council and more consideration should be made to the residents of the town centre who would be living amongst the changes to the licensing laws.

RESOLVED that at this time no further investigation into Licensing process arising from the Licensing Act 2003 was required.

C) Impact on disabled and the elderly of cycling policies in the pedestrianised area of the High Street, Cheltenham

In introducing this item the Chairman explained that she had received some comments and concerns from Mrs James on behalf of the Disability Forum regarding shared use of pedestrian facilities on the High Street by cyclists. She indicated that following discussion with the Acting Managing Director it had been agreed that the issue should more appropriately be referred to Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee which had recently considered a report of the Assistant Director (Integrated Transport) on the subject. The report had subsequently provoked a significant level of discussion and an extensive programme of public consultation was therefore planned.

The Chairman added that she had also recently received a similar concern from Mrs J France on behalf of a local blind association which would be forwarded onto the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

To be approved at the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 17th October 2005

During discussion of the topic it was clear that the majority of the Committee did not favour shared use of pedestrianised areas. However, Councillor Mrs Hale indicated that she supported shared use of pedestrian facilities by cyclists, in principle.

RESOLVED that the Committee refers the letters to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a request that the needs of the disabled, elderly and other vulnerable pedestrians are fully considered before any final decisions on the policy.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Monday 17th October 2005

COUNCILLOR MRS B DRIVER
Chairman