

**SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
1ST DECEMBER 2005**

**MINUTES
(18.00 – 19.35 PM)**

PRESENT Councillor Mrs Driver (in the Chair), Councillors Allen,
Mrs Hale, Mrs Ledoux, Mrs Regan and Wheeler
Mrs Kitchin

APOLOGIES Councillors Mrs Holliday and Nicholson
Deputy (Neighbourhood and Community)
Deputy (Health, Wellbeing and Economy)
Mr G Howard

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

1. INTRODUCTION

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. She briefly introduced Ms Lorna Steers and Mr Steve Packer to the Committee and explained that they were housing tenants who had expressed an interest in the current vacancy for a co-opted member and were attending the meeting as observers.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17th October 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 (Public and Environmental Protection) indicated that he had no specific briefing on this occasion however had attended in case Members had any questions relating to his portfolio.

In response to a question from Councillor Mrs Regan, the Deputy (Public and Environmental Protection) advised that the garden waste recycling scheme was in the remit of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee and he would be providing an update on the scheme at the next meeting.

The Deputy (Green Environment and Licensing) provided an update on the number of applications waiting to be processed under the new licensing system and explained that the process was complex and therefore time consuming for officers. She indicated that a multi agency operation had taken place on the night of 25th November in Cheltenham Town Centre, to enforce the new licensing laws which had come into effect from 24th November 2005. She reported that extra officers had been brought in for the operation but had not been needed but it was still too early to make judgements in respect of the effects of the new licensing laws.

Councillor Mrs Hale raised a query about a service problem in the Licensing Section whereby forms were not available to transfer the personal license for the Everyman to a new manager and no-one knew what the fee would be. The Deputy (Green Environment and Licensing) agreed to investigate the matter and let her know the outcome in due course. The Chairman commented that she had raised concerns relating to the administration of the new licensing applications at a previous meeting and asked that it be looked into. In agreeing to do so the Deputy (Green Environment and Licensing) commented that due to the last minute flood of applications, temporary staff had been brought in to help with the additional workload and the complexity of the statutory forms had not helped matters. If the new licensing system had been introduced as part of the annual renewal process it would have been far easier for local authorities to roll out.

The Chairman raised questions for the Deputy (Health, Wellbeing and Economy) relating to charges for Cheltenham and District Sports Association for the Disabled for use of swimming facilities at Leisure@ (Appendix A). She also referred to the inability of the catering contract at the Town Hall and Pittville Pump Room to accommodate the use of these premises for holding Hindu weddings and asked for her comments. The Chairman suggested this was not in keeping with the Council's social inclusion policies and members also expressed their concerns about the potential loss of business, particularly in view of the impact of the 'Centaur' on these venues. As the Deputy had sent her apologies for the meeting, it was agreed that these questions be passed on to her for a response at the next meeting.

7. SECTION 106 MEMBER WORKING GROUP UPDATE (Agenda item 7)

Stacey Robins, the Senior Planning Officer introduced this report on behalf of the Assistant Director (Built Environment) who was unable to attend the meeting. He explained that owing to low Member attendance at the working group meetings it had been reluctantly agreed at the last meeting that it should be disbanded. The work that had been previously identified, specifically at local level and the information subsequently obtained would instead now be captured by the review of the community plan, and the local development framework processes planned to commence in the New Year. The Senior Planning Officer referred to the briefing note that had been prepared for the Committee and circulated at the start of the

meeting which outlined the Joint Programme of Consultation to take place throughout 2006, progress to date and next steps.

Councillor Allen was disappointed that as a member of the working group he would have liked to have seen the report prior to publication. He indicated that he had been the most vocal against the disbanding of the member working group as he felt that members were best placed to know the needs of their communities and it was therefore very important for all members to engage fully in the Consultation Programme proposed for 2006.

Councillor Mrs Hale indicated that the use of Section 106 contributions was widely misunderstood and bemoaned the fact that it was so tightly restricted. She indicated that whilst she had been on the working group, she felt that she had not been in a position to identify the needs of areas outside of her own ward and therefore wider member involvement was required to inform the Section 106 process.

The Chairman expressed her disappointment that Members on the working group had been unable to make time to attend the meetings or had found the work too onerous. She pointed out that Section 106 contributions involved significant amounts of money and it was only fair that elected Members offered guidance to officers as to how it was spent. Members owed it to their constituents to ensure that their needs were addressed.

Members commented that elected representation was very important in areas where there was no Parish Council or other consultative body particularly as the Council were no longer holding Area Committees. Members were looking for early information about how this suggested alternative process would work in practice.

The Chairman thanked all officers involved.

RESOLVED that the Section 106 member working party is disbanded and the processes which they had been planning to implement now be considered during the review of the community plan, and the local development framework consultation but with the proviso that local Members should be involved.

8. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S DRAFT PROJECT INITIATION DOCUMENT (PID) (Agenda item 8)

Councillor Mrs Regan introduced this item as the Project Sponsor of the Children and Young People Services Review. She reminded Members that the Committee had requested a review in June 2005 that could link up with the 2004 Children's Act 'Every Child Matters' (ECM). The partnership steering group had reviewed the project brief, the outcome of which was verbally reported to the last meeting of the Committee by the Community Partnerships Manager. A draft Project Initiation Document (PID) had subsequently been drafted for further consideration by the Committee and the project steering group to reflect discussions at both meetings and begin to define the detail of project management process.

In recommending the PID to the Committee, Councillor Mrs Regan indicated that it would be a far-reaching strategy to address any gaps in the ECM framework and to create a guide for future investment and to identify how best the Council can contribute to the delivery of ECM.

The Chairman supported the PID indicating that it was a very important piece of work.

RESOLVED that the Committee approves the Project Initiation Document and delegates authority to Councillor Mrs Regan, as Project Sponsor to endorse the final document following consideration of any further comments from the project steering group.

9. CO-OPTION AND MEETING LOCATION (Agenda item 9)

Prior to the introduction of this item the Chairman briefly showed the Committee a copy of the notice which had gone out in the newsletter to all housing tenants advertising the current vacancy for a non-voting housing tenant representative on the Committee. She thanked Mr Kevin Daws, the Development Officer of the Cheltenham Federation of Tenants and Leaseholders for his assistance in this matter.

In presenting this Information/Discussion paper the Group Director (Social and Community) explained that in light of the current vacancy referred to above, it had been considered timely to provide an early opportunity for the Committee to discuss the way forward with regard to co-option of members onto this Committee generally and possible alternative locations for some future meetings.

Councillor Mrs Hale strongly supported the appointment of one substitute per interest or organisation as it would help to provide continuity. She suggested that co-opted members and substitutes be provided training where relevant and that they be given some guidelines with regard to their roles and responsibilities as it was important that there was some formal feedback mechanism built into the process. It was confirmed that Democratic Services were currently producing some guidance. Councillor Mrs Hale commented that holding meetings out in the Community in the evenings during the Winter months could sometimes be a bit daunting but the Council could learn from what has worked for the Police Authority with regard to the neighbourhood policing. As Members were currently entitled to free parking in designated areas she felt that this should also apply to co-opted members.

Councillor Allen commented that there was not much information on the website about the role and work of each Committee and the opportunities for co-option, which would be useful for those interested in getting involved. He also suggested more joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings in future where appropriate. The Group Director (Social and Community) indicated that this was one aspect amongst others that the Improving Scrutiny Review Group would be looking at.

Mrs Kitchin indicated that if the Committee was to take meetings away from the Municipal Offices it should be careful not to repeat the mistakes of the Area Committees which had not been sufficiently promoted or advertised and therefore not well attended.

The Chairman indicated that it was not the intention for every meeting to be held away from the Municipal Offices but just occasionally when issues of local concern were to be discussed. The Municipal Offices were often considered formal buildings by the public and therefore could be quite intimidating. She explained that for some time she had been trying to encourage Members to put forward possible future agenda items to make the Committee more effective and raise public interest.

Councillor Mrs Regan accepted the principle of holding meetings away from the Municipal Offices but had reservations about the additional associated cost when there was currently no budget provision. She felt that Members should do more to engage with the public at a local level, through communication and feedback, particularly as this Committee had social support and health and wellbeing within its portfolio which were very important to the community.

The Group Director (Social and Community) commented that the recent meeting of the Economy and Business Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Cheltenham Town Football

Club had been well received and well attended because the agenda had been set around a targeted audience.

The Committee agreed that the existing co-optees representing the Arts Council and MAD should be retained but was of the opinion that the views of the disabled community could be more widely represented by the recently established and properly constituted disabled forum. The Committee agreed that this organisation be approached for a nomination at the appropriate time in the future.

Mrs Kitchin commented that the Arts Council was also interested in some areas of work undertaken by the Economy and Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee specifically relating to funding of the arts in Cheltenham. She explained that she continued to receive agendas and minutes of this Committee for information but asked that the Improving Scrutiny Review Group also consider on which Committee the Arts Council would be best represented.

The Committee suggested that given its proposed work plan included a sports element it would be appropriate to consider co-opting a representative from Cheltenham Sports Council. The Group Director (Social and Community) indicated that Council consent would be required to make this additional appointment.

The Committee also discussed the possible co-option of a black and minority ethnic representative on the Committee. The Community Partnerships Manager indicated that the Council had recently appointed Kelly Puleston, Community and Learning Development Worker whose remit included building Black and Minority Ethnic capacity locally. She suggested that after 6 – 12 months of networking in this sector, the council would be better informed as to which organisations would be best placed to represent the Black and Minority Ethnic communities in Cheltenham. Members were very interested in this work and asked that Kelly Puleston provide an update at a future meeting and report back to the Committee with any recommendations in 6 – 12 months time.

The Chairman thanked Members for a very useful discussion.

RESOLVED

- i) that the Disability Forum be invited to nominate a representative on the Committee for the Municipal Year 2006/07**
- ii) that Council be requested to approve the appointment of an additional co-opted member of Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

10. POSSIBLE FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:-

- Supporting black and minority ethnic communities in Cheltenham – update
- Update on housing stock investment eg India/Pakistan Houses, St Pauls Regeneration
- NHS Dentistry – update from Councillor Forbes
- Better Government for older people – letter received by Chairman to be circulated to consider if this is an appropriate topic for this Committee, to be discussed at the next meeting.
- Temporary Exhibitions Policy – post March 2006

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Wednesday 11th January 2006

To be approved at the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 11th January 2006

Councillor Mrs B Driver
Chairman