

**SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
11TH SEPTEMBER 2006**

**MINUTES
(18.00 – 19.40)**

PRESENT Councillor Mrs Driver (in the Chair), Councillors Allen, Miss Hall, Nicholson, Seacome and Webster
Mr Boyes, Mrs Kitchin, Mrs Steers and Mrs Sallis

APOLOGIES Councillors Mrs Franklin and Mrs Holliday

RELEVANT DEPUTIES IN ATTENDANCE:

Deputy Stronger and Safer Communities (Councillor Mrs Regan)
Deputy Finance and Economic Development (Councillor McLain)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Miss Hall declared a personal interest in item 8 Gloucestershire compact with the voluntary and community sector and item 9 possible work plan items as she was the Council's appointed representative on GCVS (Cheltenham) and Cheltenham and District CAB Management Committee.

Mrs Kitchin declared a personal interest in item 8 Gloucestershire compact with the voluntary and community sector as she was a member of Cheltenham Arts Council

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10th July 2006 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

5. PRESENTATION BY STONHAM – THE CARE AND SUPPORT DIVISION OF HOME GROUP LTD (Agenda item 6)

The Chairman introduced Mary Allen Area Business Manager and Helen Smith from Stonham to the Committee. Mary Allen gave a short presentation on delivering responsive

and value for money services which covered the following key areas:-

- Stonham's aspirations for their role in Cheltenham
- Ownership and management of housing stock
- Service user involvement and consultation
- Working with other agencies
- Support needs and levels of support offered
- The future - Stonham in Cheltenham

(A copy of the presentation is available from Democratic Services on request).

The following responses were provided in respect of members' questions and comments:-

- referral of a person to Stonham could be through the police, local refuge, refuges on-line, other support agencies or self referral.
- the reduction in Government funding through the Supporting People Initiative was a concern however Stonham were looking for new funding streams and encouraging partnership working with the Health Service particularly in view of the recent proposed changes to NHS services. The organisation had recently been restructured and it would now be looking to remodel many of the current services provided to meet the need.
- An accredited support planning system is in plan is available to tenants and support plans are produced by the project staff for each individual case. The casework is monitored by Service Managers to ensure that needs are being met and that there are no problems locally as a result of the placement.

The Chairman indicated that she was aware of a number of problems experienced by service users since the restructure of the service in Cheltenham. Mary Allen welcomed the opportunity to discuss specific cases outside of the meeting.

The Committee acknowledged that Stonham provided services to the most vulnerable people in the town and did a good job. Members were concerned about the future stability of the organisation in view of the reliance on external funding and hoped that Stonham would secure proper funding before services were expanded or developed further.

Councillor Webster pointed out that there was currently no Member representative on the Supporting People Board and it was important that someone was appointed as soon as possible.

The Chairman thanked Stonham for attending the meeting and for an interesting presentation.

6. BRIEFING FROM CABINET DEPUTIES (Agenda item 7)

The Deputy Stronger and Safer Communities reported on the following:-

- the success of the summer play schemes and their extension into Hatherley and Charlton Kings.
- £10,000 lottery funding for Hesters Way Park

Councillor Webster asked what policy initiatives the Deputy had launched since being in post. In response the Deputy indicated that she was not in a position to provide a detailed answer at this point but would get back to him following the meeting.

In response to a question from the Chairman, the Deputy explained that there had been no play scheme available at Montpellier due to the modernisation work currently being carried out as part of the successful heritage lottery bid to restore Montpellier Gardens. It was hoped that this work would be completed in time to allow a play scheme to take place there next year.

The Chairman raised concerns about the increase of on-street trading particularly in the High Street and questioned whether this trading was all legitimate. The Deputy shared these concerns and undertook to raise the issue with the appropriate officers in Licensing and report back to a future meeting. Councillor Allen also highlighted the increase of selling cars from grass verges. The Deputy Finance and Economic Development acknowledged his concerns and agreed to pursue the issue to see what could be done about it.

The Deputy Finance and Economic Development reported on the following:-

- an exciting project for the art gallery and museum to include state of the art 'green' technology. A project brief was due to be submitted for Cabinet consideration in due course.
- Refurbishment of the Pump Room and Town Hall.
- The Deputy was due to meet with the Playhouse to discuss its Business Plan and a report would be coming back to Cabinet in due course with a view to progressing grant funding from the capital receipt of the Axiom.
- The Public Arts Panel had met and reviewed its membership to ensure greater community participation which now included representation from Civic Society, Cheltenham Business Partnership, Glos Media, Parish Council, Resident Associations and Ward Members.
- Screenwriters Festival. This event was introduced last year as a result of work instigated by former Councillor Rowena Hay, planning meetings were underway for a follow up event later this year.
- CBC Members had withdrawn from the Board of Cheltenham Festival on advice to enable this organisation to claim VAT exemption resulting in significant financial benefits. However the funding agreement would continue to be reviewed by Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of the annual review of conditional offers of grants.

The Chairman indicated that she was aware of some very good work currently being carried out by the Playhouse, Art Gallery and the Everyman. She particularly congratulated the Everyman for the work they are doing with the visually impaired to enable them to enjoy the atmosphere and listen to the performance. The Chairman expressed the view that whilst elements of public art had their place, the use of natural elements such as trees and gardens should not be overlooked.

The Chairman thanked the Deputies for their briefings.

7. GLOUCESTERSHIRE COMPACT WITH THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR (Agenda item 8)

The Community Development Manager introduced this report which had been circulated with the agenda. He highlighted the background behind the government's development of the national Compact with the Voluntary and Community Sector and the government's commitment that all government departments, local government and other public bodies adopt the Compact principles when working with, and in partnership with the voluntary and community sector.

The Community Development Manager explained that in Gloucestershire it had been decided that all of the counties local authorities would work in partnership with the voluntary and community sector, along with a number of other statutory agencies, to develop a countywide Compact for Gloucestershire rather than to each work in isolation. In line with the Government's code of good practice and following considerable consultation between both public sector agencies and a large number of voluntary sector representatives, the codes had been finalised and were attached to the report for consideration by the Committee prior to adoption by Cabinet. The Community Development Manager indicated that following adoption, the council will be required to produce action plans, within six months to show how each Group and Division will gradually become compliant with these codes and adopt a 'Compact way of working' to underpin their relationships with the voluntary sector.

Mrs Kitchin welcomed the content of the Compact particularly the intention of improving the working relationship between the Borough Council and the voluntary and community sector.

Councillor Webster welcomed the report but indicated that members needed to be aware of the indirect costs or support costs to the council in the long term which may ultimately impact upon the council's funding of voluntary and community organisations. In response to his question, the Community Development Manager acknowledged that the completion of action plans for the implementation of the Compact requirements within six months was ambitious. However the process would be 'championed' by himself and the Deputy Stronger and Safer Communities to encourage the adoption of the intent of the Compact in order to demonstrate a commitment to improving relationships to be developed over time.

The Chairman congratulated the Community Development Manager and the steering for their work and requested that a report on progress be submitted to the Committee in six months time.

RESOLVED that the Committee recommends to Cabinet:-

- i) that the council adopts the six codes of practice which have now been developed, to underpin this Compact, which will guide CBC in its relationship with this sector.
- ii) the appointment of the Deputy Stronger and Safer Communities as the council's corporate Compact Champion.
- iii) the requirement of Groups and divisions within the authority to produce action plans for their implementation of the Compact requirements for their areas of work, within six months of the adoption of the codes of practice (see Section 2.7)

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Committee receives a progress report in six months time.

8. COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2006/07 (Agenda item 8)

The Committee considered four scrutiny topic forms for possible inclusion in the Work Plan for 2006/07 as follows:-

- The Citizens Advice Bureau
The Committee was interested to know how much funding the other Districts contributed to CAB and whether CBC was getting value for money in return for the significant contribution it made. The Committee requested that the CAB be asked to provide a presentation in January 2007 and that a working group be set up if subsequently

deemed necessary to look at the issues identified in further detail. The Committee indicated that it would also like to receive presentations in due course from the other voluntary and community organisations in receipt of grant funding within the social and community remit to see how the money was being spent.

- **St Pauls Regeneration**
In view of the importance of this issue the Committee requested that a special joint meeting with Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee be arranged to look at the preferred regeneration options in February 07.
- **Crime and Disorder**
The Committee requested that the meeting scheduled for April 07 be dedicated to Crime and Disorder and that a presentation be prepared in response to the issues identified in the scrutiny topic form. The Committee also requested an update from the Drugs Working Group as part of this meeting.
- **Control of Seagulls**
The Committee requested an Information/Discussion paper for the next meeting to outline the work being done to control Seagulls in view of increasing problems reported in Kingsditch, Lansdown, Park and College. The Chairman was keen to raise the profile of what was being done by possibly setting up a public meeting in the community in December/January 07.

RESOLVED that the Committee agrees the work plan attached at Appendix B of the report subject to the inclusion of the additional items outlined above.

9. GLOUCESTERSHIRE NHS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Agenda item 10)

Councillor Miss Hall, the council's representative of GOSC provided an oral update on the latest developments with regard to the consultation on NHS proposed savings and changes to services.

The Chairman thanked the hard work of the working group in preparing responses on behalf of the council.

10. COMMITTEE FEEDBACK SESSION (Agenda item 11)

The Chairman explained that this was to be a regular item on the agenda in future, to give members the opportunity to give feedback as to how they felt the meeting had gone and ideas for future improvements.

The Chairman updated the Committee on a useful meeting she had had recently with David Phelps of Shopmobility. She indicated that in order for this Committee to fully meet its remit regarding disability issues it would be beneficial if Shopmobility was included within the remit of the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee rather than Environment. She had discussed this with the Chairman of Environment O & S Committee who was fully supportive and had agreed to put it to the next meeting of Environment O & S Committee.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Monday 16th October

**Councillor Mrs B Driver
Chairman**