

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 16TH OCTOBER 2006

MINUTES (18.00 – 19.40)

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

RELEVANT DEPUTIES IN ATTENDANCE:

Leader (Councillor Smith)
Cabinet Member Quality of Life (Councillor Mrs Ryder)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Miss Hall declared a personal interest in item 10 possible future agenda items as she was the Council's appointed representative on GCVS (Cheltenham) and Cheltenham and District CAB Management Committee.

Councillor Mrs Driver declared a personal interest in item 7 Cheltenham Borough Homes – Annual Report because she was a Board Member of CBH.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 11th September 2006 be approved as a correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

Councillor Webster indicated that he had not yet received a response from the Cabinet Member Stronger and Safer Communities to his question outlined on the bottom of page 2 of the minutes and requested a reply within ten working days. The Chairman asked that a copy of the response also be circulated to all Committee Members for their information.

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 Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

At the suggestion of the Chairman of Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting on 18th September the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee had raised no objection to Shopmobility being transferred to Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee to further meet its remit regarding disability issues.

The Chairman suggested that Mr David Phelps of Shopmobility be invited to the next meeting of the Committee to outline current service provision, what should be done to make Shopmobility the service it should be and is needed in Cheltenham and how Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny can help him in this endeavour.

RESOLVED that shopmobility be transferred to the remit of Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that Mr David Phelps be invited to address the Committee at its next meeting.

6. URBAN GULL CONTROL IN CHELTENHAM - (Agenda item 9)

The Pollution Control Manager introduced this information/discussion paper which had been requested by the Chairman and had been circulated with the agenda. He outlined the current situation, and options for further urban gull control in Cheltenham if additional resources were made available. These included: increased egg oiling, greater publicity to residents about bird proofing, or a programme to cull adult birds.

The Pollution Control Manager provided the following responses to members' comments and questions:-

- In view of the limited resources available, the focus for best effect had been the use of the cherrypicker truck in the Kingsditch industrial area which had had an impact on the overall population of gulls. The residential areas had been treated to a lesser extent as they were unfortunately much less accessible with trees, parked cars, and overhead telegraph wires in the way.
- Culling involved shooting the adult bird with an air gun and retrieving the body in line with the treatment licence's requirements. Practical considerations included the safe use of air weapons in town, access to bird nesting/roosting sites and management of local (or national) public interest. Additionally, culling birds creates a vacuum that would probably be filled by neighbouring birds relocating to Cheltenham.
- Treatment including culling is legally authorised by a general licence from Defra that permits the council to control specific pest gull species to 'preserve public health or public safety'. The pest control officers currently employed by the council have the experience to carry out the culling if required so no additional expertise would be required. Land owners can apply for a general licence from Defra to authorise the carrying out of culling themselves or hire the council's services.

The Committee did not support culling. The Chairman commented that some good work had been undertaken but there was more to be done. Certain business premises in town had established gull populations on their roofs and as these businesses benefited from the towns economy they should be willing to take steps to reduce the problem. More Council advice and

assistance should be directed towards the residential block of flats in the problem areas. She acknowledged the lack of resources but suggested that the costs could be met if the Cabinet considered cutting the refreshments budget in respect of meetings held at the Municipal Offices.

RESOLVED that the Committee supports options 1 and 2 as outlined below and recommends to Cabinet that additional funding be made available to address urban gull control in Cheltenham.

- 1) Increased egg oiling (budget bid submitted for £1.5k for 2007/08. This would increase the rental period of the cherrypicker truck from two to four days)
- 2) Greater publicity to residents about bird proofing, responsible bird feeding and securing waste.

7. BRIEFING FROM CABINET MEMBERS (Agenda item 6)

The Cabinet Member Quality of Life reported on the following:-

Leisure@

- Pool pipe work rupture - an insurance claim for £8k has been made against the original pipe work manufacturer/supplier
- Flood damage – Loss adjusters have agreed a claim of £15k for the flood damage which resulted in the closure of the cricket hall
- Customer Forum Meeting – a positive meeting had taken place on October 4th which reflected the improved performance standards on the site in respect of service quality. A recent complainant to the Echo regarding cleaning standards had attended the meeting and been invited to become a regular member of the Forum.
- Disability issues – since the O & S Committee had met at Leisure@ and raised a number of issues some further improvements had been completed including; carparks and pavements have been resurfaced to remove trip hazards and uneven walkways, larger directional signage around the centre, a moveable hoist in changing rooms to assist wheel chair users and a site map in the reception area amongst others.

Housing issues at St Pauls

- Junior Wardens – the partnership work between CBH and Cheltenham in Bloom is progressing well
- Older Peoples Coffee mornings, very well attended and a valuable social activity at the Community House
- Youth Forum – two very successful ‘meet the decision maker sessions’ had taken place, one with CBH and the other with herself as the relevant Cabinet Member

In response to a question from Councillor Webster, the Cabinet Member Quality of Life acknowledged the excellent work of CBH and indicated that the council would do everything it could to support its bid to attain a three star rating. She explained that a report on the future of Housing Arms Length Management Organisations post 2010 based on the long awaited guidance from the Department of Communities and Local Government was due to be considered by the Cabinet on 7th November 2006. The Leader explained that the Cabinet could not give any guarantees as to the outcome of the review to be undertaken but any decision would be in the best interest of tenants who would be fully consulted as part of the process.

Councillor Webster referred to the Budget monitoring report to be considered by Cabinet on 7th November and asked the Cabinet Member Quality of Life to confirm whether the private sector

housing grant allocation of £740k is one-off or recurring. The Cabinet Member was unable to answer this question at that time but agreed to get a response to all members of the Committee within 10 working days.

The Leader provided an update on the consultation that had been undertaken with residents in respect of the proposed regeneration options for St Pauls. He indicated that the results and the formal report prepared by the consultants were due to be considered by Cabinet at the end of November 2006. He indicated that a number of questions had been raised by residents during the action group meetings and these would be answered through the newsletter.

The Leader also reported on the key messages from the Cheltenham 2020 comprehensive consultation programme which had been undertaken to inform the Community Plan 2007-10 and the Local Development Framework. The top priorities emerging had been:-

- Feeling safe during the day and at night
- Locally provided health services
- Waste and recycling
- Roads and pavements
- Cleansing and maintenance
- Green and sustainable innovation

The results were to be discussed by Group Leaders on Wednesday and then subject of a large scale community event to be held at the Town Hall on November 18th.

In response to a question from Councillor Webster, the Leader explained that following discussion with Chris Huckle, Peter Woolley and Mike Redman it had been decided that whilst the portfolios of Councillors Mrs Regan and Mrs Ryder overlapped in some areas it was considered more appropriate for Supporting People to fall within the portfolio of the Cabinet Member Stronger and Safer Communities. As such Councillor Mrs Regan would be the Cabinet's appointed representative on the Supporting People Partnership Board with Councillor Mrs Ryder as substitute. He indicated that with good communication and team work across the portfolios he was sure that there would not be a problem with this arrangement but he would be happy to review the appointment if it became necessary.

In response to questions from the Chairman, the Leader indicated that unfortunately the council was not in a position to do much about the vandalism at Montpellier Gardens apart from continuing to raise awareness to the police and working with them to try to tackle the problem. With regard to the future regeneration of St Paul's, he explained that until a decision was made no discussions had yet taken place on an operational level. However, a detailed action plan would be drawn up to address the implications on a personal level and provide support over 5 – 8 years.

The Leader suggested that if members required detailed technical or operational responses, then questions should be submitted to Cabinet Members in advance to enable an accurate response to be prepared.

The Chairman thanked the Deputies for their briefings.

8. CHELTENHAM BOROUGH HOMES – ANNUAL REPORT (Agenda item 7)

Mike Tyrrell, Chairman of the CBH Board introduced this report which had been circulated with the agenda. He explained that he was a tenant member of the Board and very proud of the work undertaken by CBH since April 2003, improving housing services for people who live in the

homes they manage. He indicated that CBH were to be inspected again in January 2007 and it was hoped to attain a three star rating in order to secure additional funding and flexibilities.

Paul Davies, Chief Executive of CBH provided some background to this non profit making company which had been set up to create decent homes and manage the councils housing stock. He explained that it had been successful in securing £31 million government funding and had already improved half the housing stock and were on target to complete the rest by the end of 2008, two years sooner than originally planned. He indicated that preparation for the inspection had already commenced and thanked the council for its support.

In response to a question from Councillor Webster, Paul Davies explained that the Council could assist CBH to achieve three star rating by continuing to work co-operatively as Members and officers would be involved in the inspection process. If the Council was successful in increasing its CPA assessment this would also bring greater freedoms and flexibilities to CBH.

Lorna Steers, representing the Tenants and Leaseholders Federation on the Committee commented that it was a pleasure seeing the before and after effect of the improvement programme currently being undertaken by CBH.

The Chairman thanked CBH for their report and for the incredibly good job they were doing.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes the CBH Annual Report and Accounts for the year to 31st March 2006

8. SINGLE REGENERATION COMPANY – ORAL UPDATE (Agenda item 8)

Councillor Allen updated the Committee on progress of the working group since the last meeting of the Committee. An external consultant had now been appointed following income from second homes funding to test and challenge the four option appraisals. It was anticipated that this work would be completed and presented to all partners and stakeholders during the first week of February 2007. This will then allow the five company boards (and two neighbourhood projects) to make a final decision before the end of the financial year.

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Leader indicated that the imminent Local Government White Paper may well change the whole approach to regeneration companies and suggested it would be worth the working group monitoring the situation in parallel to the review.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes the progress of the Single Regeneration Company, Member Working Group

9. POSSIBLE FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS – PRESENTATIONS BY VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS IN RECEIPT OF GRANT FUNDING FROM THE COUNCIL (Agenda item 10)

The Committee discussed the order in which voluntary groups currently in receipt of conditional offers of grant would be invited to give presentations at future meetings.

RESOLVED that the Committee delegates authority to the Chairman to decide the order in which the voluntary groups are invited, in consultation with the Vice-Chairman and Chris Huckle.

10. COMMITTEE FEEDBACK SESSION (Agenda item 11)

Councillor Webster suggested that the Deputy Briefing Session should be expanded as it provided an opportunity for the Committee to hold the Executive to account and scrutinise the decisions being made.

Councillor Mrs Franklin commented that she would like the Committee to look at the problems associated with 'Boy Racers' at a future meeting and agreed to complete and submit a scrutiny topic form for consideration.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Thursday 30th November 2006

**Councillor Mrs B Driver
Chairman**