

**SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
19TH FEBRUARY 2007**

**MINUTES
(18.00 – 20.40)**

PRESENT Councillor Barbara Driver (in the Chair), Councillors Peter Allen, Chris Coleman, Tina Franklin, Penny Hall, Alan Nicholson, Diggory Seacome and John Webster

Matthew Upton, Hazel Kitchin and Jackie Sallis)

APOLOGIES Councillor Sandra Holliday

RELEVANT DEPUTIES IN ATTENDANCE:

Leader (Duncan Smith)
Cabinet Member Quality of Life (Chris Ryder)
Cabinet Member Internal Performance and Service Improvement (agenda item 7)
(Andrew Wall)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Driver declared an interest in agenda item 6 Presentation by Whaddon, Lynworth and Priors Neighbourhood Project as the council's appointed representative on this particular outside body.

2. MINUTES

Mrs Kitchin referred to item 10 on page 6 of the minutes and indicated that in response to her suggestion, the Cabinet Member Finance and Economic Development had agreed to consult with Cheltenham Arts Council as part of the process.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 30th November 2006 be approved as a correct record, as amended.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions or petitions had been received.

4. MATTERS REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE

(a) By Council – None

(b) By Cabinet – One matter referred under agenda item 6 below

(c) Other Committees – None

5. PRESENTATION BY WHADDON, LYNWORTH AND PRIORS NEIGHBOURHOOD PROJECT (Agenda item 6)

The Chairman introduced Mr Kevin Potts (Manager) and Mr Claude Bullingham (Chair) to the Committee. In his introduction Mr Bullingham indicated that the neighbourhood project had welcomed this opportunity to update the Committee on its work and thank the Council for its invaluable support.

Mr Potts gave a presentation covering the following:-

- A brief history of the Neighbourhood Project
- Service provision in five key areas:-
 - Education
 - Advice
 - Health. The PCT adviser who holds a weekly session at the Health Resource Centre has been seconded out of the area and is not expected to be replaced.
 - Children and Young People
 - Timebanking (Fairshares)
- Project finances
- The Year ahead – the major task for this year is the preparation for the move towards the end of 2007 to the Community Resource Centre at Clyde Crescent which is being developed by the Council in partnership. On behalf of the staff and trustees of the Neighbourhood Project, Mr Potts took this opportunity to thank the Councillors and officers of CBC for everything that had been done to make this happen.

A copy of the handout produced by Mr Potts is available from Democratic Services on request.

Mr Bullingham commented that with no PCT surgeries in the area, the health of the local community is a concern and he hoped that the new Resource Centre might encourage GPs into the area.

In response to a question from Councillor Webster, Mr Bullingham indicated that he would be pleased to give members a guided tour of the facilities once the neighbourhood project was in residence.

Mr Potts provided the following responses to members' questions:-

- The PCT adviser provided a four hour session every Tuesday giving advice or signposting. As far as he was aware the last session had taken place in the previous week and although no reason had been given as to why the service had been withdrawn he felt it was a funding issue.
- The neighbourhood project did not hold health statistics but he indicated that they were available on the PCT website.
- The losses incurred in 2005/06 and 2006/07 have been covered by reserves and a balanced budget is expected in 2007/08.

The Chairman congratulated Mr Potts on the excellent work undertaken by the project since his appointment and commented that the Health Resource Centre was well used by the community. The Committee were concerned at the loss of the Health Advisor and asked the Cabinet Member Internal Performance and Service Improvement who was present to take these concerns back to the Cabinet.

The Chairman praised Mr Bullingham for his commitment in helping the youth in the area to divert them from the more negative lifestyle that some are drawn to.

6. CBC ELECTIONS – MOVING TO A FOUR YEAR ELECTION CYCLE (Agenda item 7)

The Cabinet Member Internal Performance and Service Improvement introduced this report which had been circulated with the agenda. He indicated that the Cabinet at its meeting on 23rd January 2007 endorsed the proposed shift from a two year cycle to a four year cycle, subject to wider consultation. He indicated that the results of the consultation will be considered by Cabinet to determine whether to proceed with a change in the election cycle. If accepted, Full Council debate and voting on the final recommendations from Cabinet will take place on 28th June 2007.

The Cabinet Member Internal Performance and Service Improvement provided the following responses to members' questions:-

- The consultation exercise included:-
 - the overview and scrutiny committees
 - Parish Councils within Cheltenham and the County Council
 - public consultation for four weeks (comment forms will be available in paper and online formats). There will also be some media coverage to encourage participation.
- The public consultation exercise will be facilitated by the Policy and Performance team and letters will be sent directly to the Parish Councils inviting feedback.

The Committee made a number of suggestions about how to ensure the consultation exercise was thorough and inclusive eg advertising/posters, comment forms available in libraries, post offices and supermarkets, provision to be made for the visually impaired.

The Committee made the following comments:-

- the electorate need to be able to regularly call the council to account – four years is too long a period
- if a person is 17 in the year of an election they may have to wait up to four years before they are eligible to vote in a Borough council election.
- some concerns were raised that moving to a four year cycle was purely a cost saving exercise and not for the good of the residents of the town
- there was a potential that the experience of Councillors could be lost in an all out election, the existing two year cycle with half the Council up for election at one time allows for a degree of continuity. Councillors if unsuccessful would have to wait four year to be re-elected and may lose interest altogether.
- concerns were raised that the electronic feedback form could be open to abuse which could sway the poll either way

The Cabinet Member Internal Performance and Service Improvement provided the following responses:-

- Cheltenham would be doing nothing new in moving to a four year cycle, the existing electoral cycle of halves is rare in local government in England.
- the point raised about the 17 year old was valid but no different from the County Council or general election. It was about getting young people involved in the democratic process not just voting.
- the primary rationale behind the proposal is that a four year cycle will enable the council to adopt a more strategic approach to policy and decision making and provide better stability in Council affairs over the medium and longer term.
- the electronic feedback form had to be completed with a name and address so a verification system was in place.

The Chairman indicated that she could not support the proposal, the Council had only changed from elections in thirds a few years ago. This was a local council and the people of Cheltenham should be given the opportunity to exercise their right to vote and hold the council to account every two years. She also pointed out that the majority of residents were not covered by a Parish Council.

The Cabinet Member Internal Performance and Service Improvement thanked the Committee for their comments which will be reviewed by himself and the Monitoring Officer as part of the ongoing process.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes the report.

7. TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES AND YOUTH SPORTS DEVELOPMENT (Agenda item 8)

The Healthy Communities Partnership Manager and the Youth Sport Development Officer gave a presentation to support the report that had been circulated with the agenda. The presentation covered the following:-

- the progress of youth sport development over the past 12 months and some of the initiatives including:-
 - Gloucestershire Youth Games
 - Extended Schools Multi Sports Club
 - Wheelchair Football project
 - Sportshall Athletics Festival
 - Submission of a bid to become an Olympic Training Base for overseas athletes
- results of the Active People Survey and an overview of comparisons between Local Authorities in Gloucestershire
- plans for the next 12 months including:-
 - Summer of Sports Festival
 - Alternative Youth Games Event
 - An extended range of community outreach projects
 - Establishing a Community Sport & Physical Activity Network (CSPAN) to support the "Single System for Sport" model developed by Sport England
 - seeking to provide the justification for mainstreaming of the Youth Sport Development Officer post beyond June 2008 when Sport England matchfunding ends in order to build upon the successful sports development work to date

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

- The findings of the active people national survey were considered to be accurate and robust. The survey had been conducted by telephone over a 12 month period and recorded participation in any form of sport or recreational physical activity by adults over the age of 16.
- If the consortium is successful in its bid to become an Olympic Training Base, countries competing in the games could pay to bring their teams to prepare at sites such as Leisure@, Cheltenham College, Sandford Lido and Dean Close School in the run up to London 2012 Olympics. Whilst it was acknowledged that a successful bid would see elite athletes using local facilities, it was hoped that this would not be at the detriment of local grassroots sports clubs, who would also benefit significantly from the attraction of elite athletes into the local area.

The Leader indicated that in view of the difficult financial position facing the Council over the next few years the Cabinet had felt unable to justify recommending any additional funding and this decision had not been challenged as part of the budget consultation exercise. He stressed, however, that at its meeting held on 19th December the Cabinet had supported the proposals in principle subject to another source of funding being identified.

The Chairman thanked the Healthy Communities Partnership Manager and the Youth Sport Development Officer for their presentation. She acknowledged that further work was subject to additional funding but hoped that it could be extended to areas in which anti-social behaviour was a problem so that it might be reduced.

RESOLVED that the Committee:-

- i) notes the progress made in delivering Sports Development initiatives focussed on young people which make a positive contribution towards a reduction in levels of childhood obesity.
- ii) endorses the creation of a Community Sport and Physical Activity Network

9. LEISURE@CHELTENHAM (Agenda item 9)

The Commercial Manager presented this report which had been circulated separately from the agenda. He provided a brief overview of the performance for Leisure@Cheltenham for the period 1 April 2006 to 31 January 2007 and the financial outturn forecast for 2006/07.

The Commercial Manager provided the following responses to members' questions:-

- The projected income shortfall is primarily linked to health and fitness which is the core business at Leisure@. The fitness business is particularly vulnerable to private sector competition combined with a national trend of declining health and fitness market reported by Deloitte. The management were therefore looking for alternative ways of getting people 'active' which were affordable and accessible. There were a number of exciting business opportunities which were currently being considered as business growth was the preferred option rather than increasing charges.
- As far as he was aware there was no future policy directive to introduce car park charges
- It was anticipated that the entrance sign will be illuminated by the end of the month
- Keeping on top of cleaning in communal areas was particularly difficult because of the volume of people passing through. As soon as the area is cleaned it can become dirty again within a few minutes. The outside cleaning contractor had been replaced with CBC staff and at times temporary workers, enabling a more tailored approach particularly at peak times.

Councillor Coleman indicated that the provision of municipal facilities were essential and thanked the Commercial Manager for his report which he felt was positive. He had a couple of concerns about incidents of staff shortages and agreed to provide details of individual cases outside the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed the purchase of the new hoist to allow disabled access to the pools and suggested that the Disabled Forum Newsletter could be used to advertise this facility and potentially increase the usage. She was also pleased that the cafeteria will be

reopening indicating that it was an important area for socialising.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes the report.

10. GROUP PERFORMANCE AT THE THIRD QUARTER (Agenda item 10)

The Performance Manager introduced this report which had been circulated with the agenda. He explained that the figures covered the period October to December 2006 and were reported by exception ie only those performance indicators and business plan actions which were outside their agreed tolerance levels feature. He was pleased to report that the Social and Community Group had provided timely performance information and the overall position statement was positive.

Councillor Coleman commented that some of the BVPIs particularly relating to crime statistics were difficult to interpret – eg Domestic burglaries per 1,000 households – below target. In response the Performance Manager indicated that the BVPIs are statutory indicators and the results have to be read in conjunction with the definition which is accessible via a link to TEN on the home page of the intranet. The definitions had previously been included with the performance report but in response to feedback from members the definitions had been removed to provide a more concise document. He encouraged Members to explore the TEN system and use it to monitor ongoing performance.

In response to questions, the Performance Manager confirmed that no date had been set for the TEN system to be made available on the Council website in order that the information could be accessed from home, although this was the intention. Although the Council had no direct control over the crime related BVPIs it had some influence through the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership which was currently high profile on the council agenda.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes the report and the high-level performance issues raised.

10. BRIEFING FROM CABINET MEMBERS

The Leader reported on the following:-

- Changes to the structure for CDRP from April 2007. A presentation will be made at the Cabinet Meeting on 6th March 2007 by the Chief Inspector of the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Police Division.
- He confirmed that there were no intentions by the Cabinet to charge for parking at Leisure@ although it had been considered as part of the budget setting process with the conclusion that there was currently no financial case.
- St Paul's Regeneration – communication with residents affected by the proposals was ongoing including daily surgeries, and individual visits to assess support needs. A newsletter had gone out in January and another one was due out next week. It was anticipated that the draft implementation plan would be brought back to Cabinet in April 2007. CBC and CBH were working in partnership on a joint communication strategy to ensure a consistent message is being sent out to residents and used in

media handling. In response to a question from Councillor Webster, the Leader indicated that the design plans in respect of Crabtree Place were nowhere near completion yet but as soon as available the Committee would have the opportunity to comment on them.

Councillor Coleman referred to a recent article in the Echo and asked the Leader for clarification on the council's policy with regard to housing allocations to severely disabled young people. What support and advice is available and were there any plans in relation to the housing stock to meet special needs cases, either new or renovations? The Leader agreed to provide a briefing note before the next meeting.

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

- The CBH Housing Inspection had taken place in January 2007. St Pauls had played a key role in the inspection process which seemed to go very well, thanks to staff and residents involved. The result of the inspection was anticipated in mid March.
- Letters had been sent out to tenants in Midwinter/Elmfield area regarding the Cornish dwellings which are to be brought up to the decent homes standard and re-let.
- Security lighting and flooring improvements had been made in the main hall at Leisure@. She praised the management team for doing everything it could to overcome difficulties regarding staff shortages due to sickness recently.

11. POSSIBLE FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

- **Christmas Lights in Cheltenham**
The Committee considered the request submitted by Councillor Coleman and circulated with the agenda. In response to the officer implications section which had been completed by the Assistant Director Entertainment and Tourism, Councillor Coleman felt that the Council could do better and suggested that a small working group be set up to look into the matter particularly the ability/willingness of the Business Community to make a contribution.

RESOLVED that the Committee establish a Christmas Lights in Cheltenham working group consisting of Councillors Coleman, Driver and Franklin.

12. COMMITTEE FEEDBACK SESSION

The Chairman asked the Committee to email any comments they might have in respect of the meeting that had taken place that evening or any other issues they wished to raise.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Monday 2nd April

Councillor Mrs B Driver
Chair