

## SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

9<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2007

**Present** Councillor Barbara Driver (Chair) Councillors Peter Allen, Penny Hall, Sandra Holliday, Alan Nicholson, Councillor John Morris attended as a substitute for Councillor John Webster, Councillor Lloyd Surgenor attended for Councillor Chris Coleman

Hazel Kitchin, Jackie Sallis and Lorna Steers

**Apologies:** Councillors Chris Coleman, Paul McLain and John Webster  
Cabinet Member (Stronger and Safer Communities) Councillor Anne Regan

**Relevant Deputies in Attendance:**

Cabinet Member (Art and Culture) Councillor Diggory Seacome

**2. Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Penny Hall declared a personal interest in agenda Item 8 - Update three year review of the 2005-2008 Conditional offers of grant arising from her appointment as the Council's representative on the Cheltenham Voluntary and Community Action Group.

Mrs Kitchin declared a personal interest in agenda Item 9 – Update on the progress of the Art Gallery and Museum Development Scheme as the Arts Council's representative on the Committee

**3. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2007 had been circulated. Councillor Nicholson pointed out that it was Councillor Ryder (Cabinet Member Quality of Life) who had attended the last meeting and not Councillor Regan.

**Resolved,** That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2007 as amended be approved and signed as a correct record.

**4. Public Questions and Petitions**

No public questions or petitions had been received.

**5. Matters Referred to Committee**

- a) By Council – none
- b) By Cabinet – none
- c) Other Committees – none

## 6. **Presentation by Hesters Way Neighbourhood Project**

Elaine Marriott, Chair of the Hesters Way Neighbourhood Project and Kevin Devaney, Business Manager gave a presentation on the role of the Neighbourhood Project.

Councillor Morris at the start of the presentation indicated an interest in this item as he was a Director of the Hesters Way Neighbourhood Project in his own right. Councillor Mrs Driver also indicated that she was the Council's appointee to the Hesters Way Neighbourhood Project.

The role of the Neighbourhood Project was to work with the community and to operate/administer the Resource Centre. The Vision Statement of the project was:

"To be a truly sustainable and professionally managed Neighbourhood Project that continually delivers and develops a range of high quality services and opportunities to meet the needs and aspirations of our neighbourhoods, and to substantially contribute to the socially economic wellbeing of the whole of Cheltenham".

Details of financial and funding performance were outlined. It was emphasised that the poor financial position in the recent years had been resolved and the Neighbourhood Project was looking to make a surplus in the financial year ending 31 March 2007. Reference was made to the various funding streams and in particular that Gloucestershire County Council was reducing its level of funding to the project. It was clarified that the sum received was to be used for training of volunteers and nothing was received toward the core operating costs.

Details of the services part funded and supported by Cheltenham Borough Council were given which had a total cost over the last 3 years of £150,000. The Committee was informed that an application for lottery funding had been made to support an extension to the youth work in the area. Mr Devaney responded to member questions arising from the presentation as follows.

- It was confirmed that the youth work operated by the County Youth Service would continue. The bid made was to extend a youth programme to age group 10-14 through the Park Ranger service.
- The Gloucestershire Neighbourhood Project role was changing. This had raised some areas of conflict within the Committee.
- If the Gloucestershire County Council funding of £7,000 was withdrawn this would limit service delivery but would not have much impact on the management of the Neighbourhood Project. It was further indicated that the Resource Centre was being well used and was on target to make a surplus.

In closing the presentation which had had to be curtailed because of time the Chairman (Elaine Marriott) thanked Cheltenham Borough Council for its continued support. She also extended an invitation to the Committee members to visit the project to find out more about the role the project played within the Hester Way Community.

## **7. Cheltenham Drugs Study Report**

The Drugs Study Review Group submitted a report which had been circulated with the agenda. The Committee was reminded that the Review Group had been set up following consideration by the Cabinet of a report from University of Gloucestershire "Drugs in Cheltenham" (April 2006).

The Chairman, who had also chaired the Drugs Review Group, indicated that alcohol use had been identified as a big problem in Cheltenham.

The Review Group had considered the University of Gloucestershire's report and discussed this with a range of external agencies. Many of the views of these agencies were now reflected in the recommendations of the Review Group (Appendix 1). The recommendations also contained measures that would enable the Council to be more proactive in both combating and alleviating drug problems and issues across the town. The Council's Lead Officers had considered each of the recommendations and their responses were set out in Appendix 1a.

In proposing its recommendations the Review Group felt the majority could be achieved within existing budgets. A small number would however require additional funding.

The Committee was also updated on the role of the Cheltenham Reduction of Alcohol Related Violence project. This was a project being run by the Community Safety Partnership in conjunction with Gloucestershire Police, with the support of the Government Office of South West.

The Committee welcomed the report of the Review Group. It was also suggested that support needed to be given to adopting planning measures that would help to design out crime. The view was also expressed that education regarding drugs/alcohol issues was a long term process which the Council could not achieve alone. It was felt the Cheltenham Strategic Partnership should be involved. The associated problem of begging was also mentioned. The Chairman in concluding discussions indicated her view that more needed to be done when re-housing offenders to ensure they were away from their original

environment and that tighter restrictions should be imposed by the Licensing Committee when considering the Licensing of premises. The Chairman indicated that the outcomes from the review was a good start to the process but it was recognised that full implementation would require partnerships to both enforce and provide interventions to address this important issue. She also suggested that the Council should consider working with D.A.R.E (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) a programme that provides recipients with the knowledge and life skills to resist harmful drugs including alcohol and tobacco.

**Resolved**, that the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree the recommendations proposed by the Review Group together with the Officers' responses as set out in Appendices 1 and 1a and that these be presented to Cabinet for further consideration and adoption by the Council.

#### **8. Update 3 Year review of the 2005-2008 Conditional Offers of Grant**

The Community Development Service Manager reminded the Committee that the Council's 3 year funded conditional offers of grant awarded by the Social and Community Group were now in their final year and therefore subject to a final review which the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee had agreed it would coordinate. The process for the review had been approved by Cabinet in January 2005. It was now necessary for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to agree the membership of its review group together with the review timetable. A copy of the proposed timetable was circulated.

It was proposed that given the possible introduction of a Single Advice Contract covering housing and advice services the current review be limited to only those organisations which had not been part of this process. It was felt that the Cheltenham, Cirencester and Tewkesbury Citizens Advice Bureau; Cheltenham Community Support Centre; Cheltenham Community Projects and Cheltenham Housing Aid Centre had undergone a separate review as a part of the build up to the possible Single Advice Contract. It was not therefore appropriate to undertake further reviews at this time.

Councillor Webster was proposed as a member of the working group. The point was also made that these organisations provided important services and had an impact over many areas of the community.

It was acknowledged that the four groups that might be impacted by an introduction of a New Single Advice Contract should be excluded from these reviews provided the decision of the Cabinet on 18 July 2007 was to proceed with a New Single Advice Contract. If Cabinet was not

to determine to proceed then these four groups should be subject to the review.

Councillor Penny Hall indicated that she would be prepared to be a part of the review group but would need to seek advice about being a part of the group when considering the Cheltenham Voluntary and Community Action Group.

The Deputy Chief Executive reminded the Committee of the importance of the role of the working group and stressed that it was not possible to delay appointing a third member.

The Chairman (Councillor Barbara Driver) agreed to be a member of the review group.

- Resolved,**
1. That the conditional offer of Grant Review group would comprise of Councillors Barbara Driver, Penny Hall and John Webster, together with the relevant Cabinet member and suitable officer support.
  2. That the Review timetable be agreed
  3. That the four advice agencies should not be subject to a review provided Cabinet were to determine to proceed with the proposed introduction of a New Single Advice Contract.

## **9. Update on the progress of the Art Gallery and Museum Development Scheme**

The Museum and Arts Manager presented a report that updated the Committee on progress towards a development scheme for the Art Gallery and Museum. Of particular note was that a RIBA open competition had been launched on Friday 22 June 2007. A Fund Raising officer was now in post and a pre application had been sent to the Heritage Lottery Fund for phase 1 of the development.

The Museum and Arts Manager in responding to questions confirmed that money from the sale of the Axiom Centre had been ring fenced and that space for temporary exhibitions would be included within the new development. It would also be sufficiently flexible to enable larger national exhibitions to be staged.

- It was confirmed that the Art Gallery and Museum budget would meet the costs of the Fund Raiser.
- It was confirmed that the voluntary sector would be involved through focus groups in any design solution achieved through the RIBA open competition.
- It was also confirmed that the £1.25 million bid from the Heritage Lottery Funds was based on advice given.

The view was expressed that the current Art Gallery and Museum site may not be the best site development, and that perhaps it should be based upon the Pump Room. However any proposal to open up the Art Gallery and Museum site toward the Parish Church would provide a major facility for the town centre. It was also hoped that there would be an opportunity to include a Young Arts centre within the overall development.

The general enthusiasm was to be welcomed. However, there needed to be some realism injected as to whether the scheme would be achievable in the long term.

It was confirmed that the Heritage Lottery Fund would need to be matched and that it would be for the Fund Raiser to raise the remainder.

The view was proposed that Cheltenham, given its heritage with international festivals would benefit from an enhanced Art Gallery and Museum facility.

The Chairman in concluding discussions suggested that touch/feel exhibits should be included to benefit the blind and partially sighted and also to be made children friendly. Account should also be taken in any publicity of the fact that not all target audience would have access to the website. The improved facilities for the Art Gallery and Museum were to be welcomed particularly with the opportunity to open storage areas to public visit which would enable more of the collection to be viewed.

**Resolved,** That the progress with the Art Gallery and Museum Development be noted.

## **10. Briefing from Cabinet Member Arts and Culture**

### **Public Protection**

The Committee was informed that the new smoking regulations were now in force. From initial visits to town centre premises there appeared to be good awareness of the new legislation.

The Cabinet Member updated the Committee of the commissioning of Fund-raising consultants for the Everyman Theatre, and that plans had now been published for potential development at the town hall.

With regard to the Pump Room this had returned to Council management for the foreseeable future. The current catering contract was to be extended for one year.

A member questioned the enforcement of smoking regulations in premises such as care homes and the Cabinet member undertook to provide a response to members outside the meeting.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet member Arts and Culture for his briefing.

**11. Possible Future Agenda Item**

The Chairman following an approach from interested organisations had proposed that a future scrutiny topic would be Homelessness.

The Deputy Chief Executive indicated that normally the process of introducing a scrutiny topic would be to give a considered response at the following meeting. On this occasion however he suggested that the matter be considered in connection with the Housing Options Strategy review that was soon to be undertaken was suggested that officers should discuss the scrutiny topic with the Chairman and if necessary other interested organisations and to include this within the Housing Options Strategy review.

**12. Date of Next Meeting**

Committee was reminded that a special joint meeting with Economy and Business Improvement overview and Scrutiny Committee would be held at Pittville Pump room on Tuesday 31 July 2007.

The date of the next scheduled meeting was Monday 10 September 2007.

**Councillor Barbara Driver  
Chair**