

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10th June 2009

MINUTES

(18.00 – 20.20)

PRESENT Councillor Duncan Smith (in the Chair), Councillors Lydia Bishop, Martin Dunne, Les Godwin, David Hall) Sandra Holliday and Paul McLain, Chris Ryder
Karl Hemming and Hazel Kitchin

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE Cabinet Member (Community Development and Housing)
Councillor Penny Hall

1. At the start of the meeting the Committee stood up and held one minutes silence in memory of Cllr Tina Franklin who had passed away recently. The Chairman paid tribute to her valuable contribution to the work of this Committee and the Council.

2. **APOLOGIES** Councillor Wendy Flynn
Jackie Sallis

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Dunne declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 Leaseholder major works repayment policy and item 10 The Future of Tenant Participation in Cheltenham – progress report as a Board Member of Cheltenham Borough Homes.

Mr Hemming also declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 as a member of Cheltenham Tenant and Leaseholder Voice.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6th April 2009.

Cllr Godwin referred to item 16 on page 7 and indicated that he had also said that there were too many items on the agenda and therefore the Committee were unable to do justice to all of them. The number of presentations only added to the problem, in my his view.

Cllr Godwin hoped that these comments would be considered by the Committee when setting the workprogramme for 2009/10 (agenda item 12)

The Chairman commented that although the agenda for the current meeting was quite long he felt that the items could be dealt with fairly quickly. However, if the agenda overran it would be taken on board in future agenda setting.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 6th April 2009 be approved by the Committee, subject to the above amendment and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

None

6. DEVELOPMENT OF A MARKETING AND TOURISM STRATEGY (agenda item 6)

The Chairman explained that himself and the Chairman of E&BI Overview and Scrutiny Committee had expressed an interest in assisting the council to produce a marketing and tourism strategy for Cheltenham, from different perspectives. It was therefore proposed that a joint working group be established to work with officers to develop the strategy which was due to be presented to Cabinet in September 2009.

In response to a question from Cllr Holliday, the Chairman indicated that meetings of the working group would be set-up around the availability of Members.

Cllr Holliday put herself forward providing the meetings were held in the evening.

RESOLVED that Councillors Holliday, Ryder and Karl Hemming be appointed to represent the Committee on the Tourism and Marketing Strategy joint working group.

7. LEASEHOLDER MAJOR WORKS REPAYMENT POLICY (agenda item 7)

The Assistant Director (Community Services) introduced this report which had been circulated with the agenda. He explained that the Decent Homes work may have some impact on properties occupied by leaseholders. There was currently no policy in place to support leaseholders who have difficulty in repaying the council where the amounts involved are significant. The report set out a policy to support leaseholders who find themselves in this situation. The Leaseholders Forum had been consulted as part of the process and had accepted the policy.

Councillor Ryder commented that reference to the policy should be highlighted in the Leaseholders Handbook.

The Chairman referred to recommendation 1.2.2 of the report and suggested that delegated authority to determine applications might be given to the Assistant Director Community Services in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member, however this would be for the Cabinet to determine at its meeting on 23rd June 2009.

The Committee noted the report.

8. THE FUTURE FOR TENANT PARTICIPATION IN CHELTENHAM – PROGRESS REPORT (agenda item 10)

The Cabinet Member (Community Development and Housing) introduced this report which had been circulated with the agenda. He explained that the report outlined the progress made with tenant and leaseholder representatives to attempt to develop a new and more robust representative organisation. He indicated that despite efforts by CBH to encourage participation at a number of different levels the interim sub group had failed to attract, recruit or retain many new members. The report recommended a number of options for the future for tenant participation in Cheltenham and he asked for the views of the Committee to feedback to the Cabinet when it considered the report on 23rd June 2009.

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

- £20k budget was available from the Housing Revenue Account in 2009/10 to facilitate the first stages of this work.

The following comments were also made:-

- The budget would be better spent on dedicated consultation through surveys and newsletters. The surveys previously undertaken on behalf of CBH by external sources had seen a fairly good response rate.
- There was apathy amongst most tenants that the organisation would be a 'talking shop' and nothing would actually get done.

The Cabinet Member (Community Development and Housing) commented that it was important to have an autonomous tenant organisation if possible in order to be able to hold CBH and the Council to account. With the delivery of Decent Homes work tenants main concerns over rent and repairs were now in the past and replaced with new issues such as the cleaning of communal areas, tackling anti-social behaviour and environmental works. This was the last opportunity to establish an independent tenant group.

In response to a question from the Chairman, it was confirmed that in terms of the Housing Inspectorate it was important for CBH and the council to be able to evidence that everything had been done to establish an autonomous body, even if all efforts had been unsuccessful.

RESOLVED that the Committee recommends option 4.1 to the Cabinet.

9. PLAY BUILDER CAPITAL FUNDING ALLOCATION (agenda item 8)

Craig Mortiboys, Healthy Communities Partnership Manager gave a presentation covering the following issues:-

- Background - £1.1m allocated to Gloucestershire County Council to fund improvements to a minimum of 22 play spaces between April 2009 and March 2011, with a particular focus on areas of deprivation. Gloucestershire Play Partnership to oversee the project and districts asked to identify priority sites.
- Cheltenham Approach – 20 potential sites which were scored against a locally developed criteria.
- Cheltenham Sites – Resulted in 7 shortlisted sites that were fed back to GCC, along with approx 25 from the other districts.
- GCC decision Year 1 – Agreed to award up to £84k to each district to fund the top two priorities which for Cheltenham are Agg Gardner and Springfield Park.
- GCC decision Year 2 – Not yet known whether year 2 funding for Cheltenham will be enough to fund 2,3,4 or even 5 sites. Would need to justify any changes to the original shortlist of 7 sites on the basis of deprivation/need.

The following responses were provided to Members' questions and comments:-

- King George V site had been ranked 8th and narrowly missed the shortlisting. This was mainly because the scope of improvement was limited whilst the current level of pitch provision was maintained. This was the most used borough playing pitch site and development of an inclusive space was less feasible than other sites.

- Play spaces must offer natural, creative and challenging opportunities that are attractive to children aged 8–13, moving away from the more traditional play equipment of swing, slide and climbing frame to zip wires, climbing walls etc.
- Breakthrough projects were required to enable 8–13 year olds to play in harmony together and be sustainable in the long term.
- An internal officer group consisting of representatives from Wellbeing and Culture (Craig Mortiboys), Green Environment (Adam Reynolds) and Policy and Partnerships (Tracy Brown) divisions overviewed the scoring process to develop a ranked list of priority sites.
- It was anticipated that future funding would likely be available after 2011 as play continued to be high on the Government agenda to reduce childhood obesity, health inequalities and promoting healthy communities.
- The projects could be new sites or could be enhancements to existing sites.
- The funding for year 2 was to be allocated by Gloucestershire County Council to individual districts based on the following criteria;
 - levels of need and deprivation
 - number of children and young people who will be able to access the facility
 - ensuring access for children and young people with disabilities
 - creating opportunities to improve healthy living
 - projects which have synergy and will maximise the impact of other programmes
 - improved access to rural areas
- The draft designs for the two projects will be developed in close consultation with local children, young people and local partners.
- There had been limited consultation with the police as part of the process and no direct engagement to date, although this was acknowledged to be required as designs took shape.

The Healthy Communities Partnerships Manager agreed to bring back details relating to the costs of on-going maintenance of the two projects and whether there were any plans to refocus allocation of CBC funding in light of the GGC funding.

RESOLVED that the Committee receives a further report in October 2009 regarding Year 2 funding and the projects proposed. This should include on-going revenue implications for CBC, existing capital budget and any match funding available.

10. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2008/09 (agenda item 9)

The Policy and Partnerships Manager introduced this report which had been circulated with the agenda. He explained that whilst a full annual report will be taken to Council on 29th June, this report highlighted particular performance issues of interest and relevance to this Committee.

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

- The report set out performance information relating to the delivery of corporate priorities in 2008/09. It was recognised that a lot of good work had been undertaken in the area of arts and culture, however there were no specific milestones within the Business Plan relating to these activities.

Cllr Hall asked whether there was a cap on the number of disabled facility grants that the council allocated per year as the annual target seemed to be a consistent 115 and

never seemed to rise. The Policy and Partnerships Manager agreed to find out and get back to Members of the Committee outside of the meeting.

Cllr McLain asked what the position was in respect of the council's progress on the Play Space and Amenity Space Supplementary Planning Document. It was agreed that an update would be emailed to Members of the Committee following the meeting.

A briefing note was also requested about information requests referred to in section 9.2 of the report and what kind of information the public were interested in. The Policy and Partnerships Manager confirmed that the categories DPA, EIR and FOI stood for Data Protection Act, Environmental Information Regulations and Freedom of Information respectively.

The Committee noted the report.

11. BRIEFING FROM CABINET MEMBERS

The Cabinet Member Community Development and Housing provided a briefing on the following:-

- A year ago CBH had taken over the contract to clean communal areas of council owned properties from CBC Environmental Services. The contract was going well but as there were over 400 blocks of flats in Cheltenham there was still a way to go. The areas requiring the most work were the priority. CBH encouraged tenants and leaseholders to report vandalism and other anti social behaviour and to take ownership of communal areas. Housing officers were working with the police to tackle vandalism.

In response to questions, the Cabinet Member indicated that known offenders had been targeted and radical action had been undertaken to set an example. He was pleased that tenants had become quite possessive of their upgraded homes and were ready to complain knowing that something would be done about it. He indicated that any new build would not be designed in this way as it was not adequate for families.

- Positive progress was being made in St Paul's between tenants and the architect design company and a planning application was due to be submitted later this year. It was anticipated that commencement of new build would be in April/May next year.

It was suggested that when a tenancy is taken up the hand book should encourage the upkeep of communal areas.

The Chairman requested an update on St Paul's Regeneration in September 2009. He also asked for a briefing note on how problems with decent homes work have been dealt and the scale of the problem.

12. UPDATE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE HELD ON 24TH APRIL (agenda item 13)

The Cabinet Member (Community Development and Housing) introduced this report which had been circulated with the agenda. He indicated that the next step was to identify the most appropriate geographical areas around which a Neighbourhood

Management network can be organised and consultation will be taking place with Parish Councils and the regeneration areas. Tackling service delivery issues in these areas was the vehicle for community development and this was where the Ward Councillor has an important role.

The following responses were provided to Members' questions and comments:-

- Reports will go to the Stronger Communities Partnership in the next couple of months and to Cabinet in October 2009.
- Local organisations will have to build capacity in order to set up meetings, provide administrative support and work together to resolve local issues.
- A good cross section of Members, voluntary sector and parish council representatives had attended the conference. Interestingly the council view of Cheltenham had been very different from the individual parish council view.

The Chairman requested that the Committee be given the opportunity to comment on the proposals for neighbourhood management prior to Cabinet on 7th September, if at all possible.

13. APPROVAL OF WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10 (agenda item 12)

The Strategic Director (Environment) introduced this report which had been circulated with the agenda. He asked Members to consider the questions outlined in section 1.3 and make any comments.

- Have presentations by external agencies funded by the Council been helpful?

Comments

- The presentations were often one sided and did not provide a good basis for effective scrutiny. It would be useful to receive a briefing note or a copy of the presentation in advance of the meeting so relevant questions can be raised.
- Is it constructive to devote most of the meeting to a single issue eg Children and Young People in April 2009?

Comments

- A themed meeting around older people's services would be useful in the future
- Did the budget and business planning sessions add value?

Comments

- This provided the Committee with an opportunity to contribute in advance of Cabinet and Council decisions so both useful sessions

- Would it be helpful to receive regular updates from the County Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on which Cllr Penny Hall represents the Council?
- Reports back on the work of HOSC were very useful

- Has the use of external venues been effective?

Comments

- If the venue is topic related then it tends to work well eg taking the meeting out to Leisure@ when St @Paul's Regeneration was on the agenda. Otherwise external meetings do not appear to increase public participation. People who are interested in council business will come to the municipal offices.
- Taking the meeting out to the Playhouse did pick up issues regarding the lease and brought it back on to the council's agenda.
- The reason behind taking meetings out into the community was to demonstrate that the council are open and accountable and to provide an opportunity for public engagement.

The Chairman suggested that the effectiveness of external venues would continue to be reviewed periodically. As it had worked well previously the update on St Paul's in September 2009 would again be taken out to Leisure@. The Chairman requested that the Committee be given the opportunity to contribute to policy development and review and asked the Cabinet Member Community Development to take this back to the Cabinet to consider issues that the Committee could add some value to.

14. REPORTS BACK FROM OUTSIDE BODIES (agenda item 14)

- A) **St Marks & Hestersway Community Association**
Both reports submitted by the representatives (Cllrs Holliday and Bishop) indicated that they did not feel it was a good use of their time. As the Cabinet Member (Community Development and Housing) also attended on a regular basis the council was over represented.
- B) **St Paul's Resident Association**
The report submitted by Cllr Paul Wheeldon indicated that there were a number of resident associations but no single one for the whole area. The Chairman indicated that himself and Cllr Ryder had represented the council on this group previously and the Cabinet Member (Community Development and Housing) agreed to clarify the issue with Cllr Wheeldon.
- C) **Whaddon Youth Club Advisory Committee**
Cllr Dunne gave a verbal update indicating that the meetings were a good use of his time.

15. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS (agenda item 16)

Cllr Ryder requested a briefing note on the proposed vacant garage site developments

so that Members know where they are located.

Cllr Dunne requested a future item on Community Policing and their aims and objectives.

The Chairman reminded the Committee of the completion of the scrutiny topic request form to provide a clear brief of Member's expectations.

16. COMMITTEE FEEDBACK SESSION (agenda item 17)

Members referred to the briefing note which had been produced by Cllr Penny Hall and which had been circulated with the agenda. It was suggested that the HOSC agenda be circulated to Members of the Committee so that comments could be fed back to Cllr Hall in advance of the meeting. The Democratic Services Officer agreed to organise this.

Cllr Holliday referred to the briefing note which had been circulated with the agenda regarding Gloucestershire Home Safety Check Scheme Management Committee and expressed her disappointment in the contents. She was aware that the organisation was still operational and agreed to supply the contact details following the meeting. The Strategic Director (Environment) agreed to take the issue up with Mark Nelson.

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 13th July 2009
Oakley Resource Centre, Clyde Crescent

Councillor D Smith
Chair