

## SOCAIL AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

9 November 2009

MINUTES  
(18.00 – 20.15)

PRESENT: Councillor Duncan Smith (in the Chair), Councillors Charles Stewart, Wendy Flynn, David Hall, Sandra Holliday, Paul McClain, John Rawson, Chris Ryder and Pat Thornton (substituting for Lydia Bishop)  
Karl Hemming

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Cabinet Member Finance and Community Development

1.	APOLOGIES
	Councillors Les Godwin and Councillor Lydia Bishop Cabinet Member Sport and Culture (Andrew McKinlay) Jackie Sallis
	The Chairman took this opportunity to acknowledge the sad passing of Hazel Kitchin, a co-opted member of this committee and a keen supporter of arts and culture in Cheltenham. All members stood for a one minute silence.
2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
	None declared.
3.	MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 <sup>th</sup> September 2009
	<b>RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2009 be approved by the Committee as a correct record.</b>
4.	PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS
	None received.
5.	MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE
	<b>RESOLVED: that Councillor Barbara Driver be nominated as the member and Councillor Tim Cooper as the deputy to join the Community Safety Scrutiny Committee.</b>
6.	2010/11 DRAFT BUDGET

	<p>The Cabinet Member Finance and Community Development explained that there were two objectives that needed to be achieved with next years budget;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close the £1million budget gap and protect front-line services as much as possible</li> <li>• Have a planned approach to address the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) over the next four years so as to avoid the annual budget panic</li> </ul> <p>He asked that all members be mindful of the cuts to public expenditure that would be inevitable following the General Election.</p> <p>A draft budget will go to Cabinet on 8 December 2009 and will identify more clearly, the budget deficit, where cuts could be made and what the impact of the decisions would be on the MTFS – at which point he would be happy to come back to this committee for further discussion.</p> <p>The Chairman explained that this committee would be unable to comment further until the cuts had been proposed.</p> <p>The following responses were provided to Members comments and questions:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whilst in theory, for example, cutting discretionary services seems obvious, in reality cutting e.g. arts and culture, would have a massive economic impact on the town.</li> <li>• Work towards ‘Bridging the Gap’ would continue as it was being looked at as a 5 year project and shared services would play a key part.</li> </ul> <p>The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for his update.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: that the Cabinet Member Finance and Community Development would detail proposed cuts for discussion by this Committee at the next meeting (11 January 2009).</b></p>
7.	CHOICE BASED LETTINGS UPDATE
	<p>The Head of Service – Stronger Communities presented her report and apologised for the delay to its distribution, which had been due to the ongoing launch and implementation of the scheme.</p> <p>The following responses were provided to the Members’ comments and questions:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new mechanism had not negatively impacted those that can’t read and write, any more than the old hard copy application form would have. The Dixert Plus function on the website enabled users to scroll over the text of the website, which would be read in audio. Great efforts had been made to make all service providers in the area aware of the changes in order that people could be signposted to support and advice.</li> <li>• The figure (698) referred to in 5.5 of the report, did relate to Cheltenham only.</li> <li>• Following the same questions being raised by numerous customers, a step by step guide had been developed and issues with the advertising process had been addressed straight away.</li> <li>• The County approach allowed people to express choice about where they wanted to live. It had offered economy of scale and resulted in one clear eligibility criteria and customers needing to register their details once rather than six times.</li> <li>• Automatic bidding ensured that customers with very complex needs, who may not be</li> </ul>

	<p>able to bid online, by phone or text, are contacted and offered the opportunity to bid for a suitable property.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customers would no longer be given points, they would be banded from Bronze to Emergency, which would be easier for people to understand. Time spent on the list would be used to distinguish between people on the same band.</li> <li>• Analysis and tracking of successful applicants showing what band they were in would be posted on the website.</li> </ul> <p>The Chairman thanked the Head of Service for her presentation, which had proved useful in allaying the concerns of this Committee. He suggested that perhaps an A4 fact sheet, in plain English, could be developed for councillor's that would answer any questions posed by their constituents.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: i) that the Head of Service – Stronger Communities would develop an A4 fact sheet, outlining the main principles of the scheme for councillors and ii) analysis/tracking data would be reported to this committee in six months time (07 June 2009).</b></p>
8.	PLAY BUILDER UPDATE
	<p>The Healthy Community Partnerships Manager introduced his report, which had been produced following concerns raised during an update to the committee in June 2009.</p> <p>The following responses were provided to the Members' comments and questions:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Owing to the fact that the two sites from last year were yet to be completed, reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the process was yet to be undertaken.</li> <li>• A report outlining proposals for the second year sites would be taken to the County Council in January and County Councillors, representing Cheltenham, would be kept informed.</li> <li>• The successful sites for year two would not deviate from the original seven, the remaining five;             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Moors/St. Peters;</li> <li>- Hesters Way Park ;</li> <li>- Queen Elizabeth II Battledown;</li> <li>- Benhall Park;</li> <li>- Priors Park, Oakley;</li> </ul>             would be prioritised and a decision then made. The prioritised list would be discussed at the next meeting of this committee           </li> <li>• Neighbours of proposed sites would be fully consulted and councillors will be included in that process.</li> <li>• People were not disadvantaged by not having easy access to the proposed sites and this would be assessed when the sites were prioritised. Full details of how the remaining 5 sites had been ranked would be included in the report to this committee in January 2010.</li> </ul> <p>The Chairman thanked the Healthy Community Partnerships Manager for the update on this project.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: that the report be noted and full details of the prioritisation of the remaining five sites be discussed at the next meeting of this committee (11 January 2010).</b></p>
9.	ST. PAULS UPDATE

	<p>Caroline Walker, Head of Community Services of Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) presented her report, which outlined the activities and developments during the period since the last update to this committee on 23 February 2009.</p> <p>The following responses were provided to the Members' comments and questions:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cars and car parking. The 'homezone' concept had been adopted in the design, where children, residents and cars all share the same space. This idea had worked exceptionally well in other areas of this country.</li> <li>• A great deal of effort went into creating a sympathetic but contemporary design and to further achieve integration, the proposal included improvements to the retained housing. Residents were involved in the entire process and accepted that design is a matter of taste.</li> <li>• Whilst there had been apprehension about the relocation of the community house, after discussion, the residents had now accepted the proposed, centrally located position.</li> <li>• Opposition by the residents to the inclusion of flats into the redevelopment had been overcome through discussions around the opportunities this offered their children to stay in the area.</li> <li>• Folly Lane will be considered in Phase Two.</li> <li>• Much advice has been taken with regard to trees and it is intended that mature trees will be planted, in beds that reduce future root issues.</li> <li>• The level of borrowing would be based on grant rates, which are very favourable at the moment and would result in low lending. Any borrowing would be made by Cheltenham Borough Council but repaid by CBH. This would be considered further in February 2010 following the decision on the planning application. The council would consider the risk of borrowing against the level of return.</li> <li>• Lighting has not yet been included in the design and CBH are mindful that this is very important and needs to be right.</li> <li>• Though every effort has been made to design out opportunities for crime this would never replace the need for Estate Management.</li> <li>• St. Pauls accounts for 50% of the arsons in Cheltenham, there are certain individuals that are known to CBH that are responsible in the main. Rubbish and fly-tipping remains a real issue in St. Pauls and to a certain extent proves unmanageable due to the fact that once cleared it would be replaced with more. Barriers have been broken down with residents and those responsible are being identified.</li> </ul> <p>The Chairman thanked Caroline for her presentation and the Committee were pleased with the progress being made.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: that the report be noted and progress reported at the March meeting of this committee (1 March 2010).</b></p>
10.	CHELTENHAM WEST END PARTNERSHIP
	<p>Bernice Thomson, Partnerships Manager of Cheltenham West End Partnership (CWEP) presented her report, which outlined the current priorities and projects/activities.</p> <p>The main project of late had been the development of a residents' forum and whilst CWEP had helped to establish these groups, their hope is that long term they will manage themselves and require minimal support.</p>

	<p>Less work has been done in St. Pauls as Cheltenham Borough Homes and other partners are so active in the area, though CWEP do co-ordinate the newly established St. Pauls Stakeholder Group, which enables a joined up approach and prevents duplication.</p> <p>CWEP are eager to do more work with the residents of the Moors but at present there are not the resources to do this.</p> <p>The following responses were provided to the Members' comments and questions:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CWEP appreciate that that their support would be welcomed by residents of the Moors and confirmed that they would be happy to assist at a point where they had the resources to do so.</li> <li>• CWEP were under the impression that all European Funding had to go through the County Council, but were happy to look in to that as an option.</li> <li>• Work would continue to track down landlords of buildings that required refurbishment and the Lower High Street would be included in the empty shop scheme in Cheltenham.</li> </ul> <p>The Chairman thanked Bernice for her in depth update and congratulated the partnership for their success with traders where others have failed.</p>
11.	<p>AGREEMENT OF 'CHELTENHAM FESTIVALS JOINT SCRUTINY WORK GROUP' TERMS OF REFERENCE</p>
	<p>The Chairman confirmed that the working group had been established and introduced the proposed terms of reference.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: that the terms of reference be agreed.</b></p>
12.	<p>CABINET MEMBER BRIEFING</p>
	<p>The Cabinet Member Finance and Community Development provided an update on Neighbourhood Management. The report was agreed by Cabinet on 27 October 2009 and would be out for formal public consultation for 12 weeks from the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2009.</p> <p>Current Neighbourhood Co-ordination (NCG) groups focus on 3 issues and try to resolve them, but owing to the fact that they are led by the Police, they've tended to focus on policing issues.</p> <p>The suggestion was to reduce the number of NCGs from 14 to 8 and widen involvement, by engaging with existing organisations such as Parish Council's and Regeneration Partnerships.</p> <p>Response to date has been mixed, some felt it undermines them, some, that it would be too much work or that they were already doing it. If the NCGs were unwilling to extend their role, it can't be forced upon them, however, it is hoped that this would actually result in a reduction in bureaucracy.</p> <p>The consultation period was extended to take account of the Christmas period and will run until the end of February 2010.</p> <p>The following responses were provided to the Members' comments and questions:-</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation runs until the end of February 2010 and will provide everyone with an opportunity to share their opinions and/or comments.</li> <li>• The Cabinet Member felt that this could be achieved with relatively small costs and whilst £40k has been made available for the first year, he was confident that that before long they would run themselves.</li> <li>• He would be happy to come back to this committee and report on progress but was unable to commit to being ready to do this in March 2010.</li> </ul> <p>Some members raised concerns regarding a letter sent to the Policy and Partnerships Manager by the Chairman, in which he had summarised comments at the last meeting. The Chairman offered the following responses;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following the meeting the Chairman had confirmed with the Policy and Partnerships Manager that a letter would be acceptable.</li> <li>• The Chairman had sent the letter in his capacity as the Chairman of this committee as agreed at the last meeting.</li> <li>• The Chairman felt he had been more than clear about the fact that the comments represented those made by Conservative members of this committee and not the committee as a whole.</li> </ul> <p><b>RESOLVED: that i) the consultation period for Neighbourhood Management would commence on Monday 23 November and finish at the end of February 2010. ii) The Cabinet Member Finance and Community Development would report back to this committee in March or June 2010.</b></p>
13.	FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS
	<p>January 2010</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Half yearly monitoring report / standard O&amp;S update</li> <li>• Playbuilders / prioritised list of 5 remaining sites</li> <li>• Youth Café / progress update</li> <li>• Business Pride Grants / what has been funded and what are the outcomes</li> <li>• Everyman Theatre / Lottery bid update</li> </ul> <p>March 2010</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism and Marketing Strategy / update on progress</li> <li>• Neighbourhood Management / outcome of consultation - tbc</li> </ul> <p>June 2010</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choice Based Lettings / analysis and tracking data of successful applicants in Cheltenham</li> </ul>
14.	COMMITTEE FEEDBACK SESSION
	The Chairman thanked all attendees for their time.
15.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING
	<b>Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2010</b>
	Councillor D Smith Chair

To be approved at the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 11 January 2010