

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

01 March 2010

MINUTES
(18.00 – 19:40)

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| PRESENT: | Councillor Duncan Smith (Chairman), Wendy Flynn, Les Godwin, David Hall, Paul McLain, John Rawson, Chris Ryder and Charles Stewart |
| | Co-opted members James Harrison and Karl Hemming |
| ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: | Grahame Lewis, Kath Chamberlain, Richard Gibson, Cabinet Member Finance and Community Development |

1. APOLOGIES

Councillors Sandra Holliday and Lydia Bishop and co-opted member Jackie Sallis.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 JANUARY 2010

RESOLVED THAT: the minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2010 be approved by the Committee as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

None received.

5. MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

No matters referred to Committee.

6. COMMUNITY INVESTMENT GRANT WORKING GROUP

The Head of Service – Stronger Communities introduced her paper and she apologised for it being late.

The paper informed members that the Community Grant Investments (CIG), which provide funding to support voluntary and community organisations with their development and governance, are now required to be reviewed.

It detailed the process as well as the timetable for undertaking the review and the need for three Overview and Scrutiny representatives to be elected to support the review. These representatives would need to be agreed and elected at the next meeting (7 June 2010).

The group would be looking at the organisations in their third year of the three year grant, which would end on 31 March 2011, rather than looking retrospectively over the entire three years. They would need to have compiled feedback in time for the July meeting of this committee and the recommendations would then be taken to Cabinet in September.

The following answers were given in response to member questions;

- The role of Cheltenham Voluntary and Community Action was to develop and support voluntary organisations in Cheltenham in order that they could go on and deliver frontline services.

- The three grants listed were the only grants that the Community Services division were responsible for. Other grants were the responsibility of the Wellbeing and Culture division. She would pass the agreed process to the relevant Officer(s).

The Chairman thanked the Head of Service – Stronger Communities for her attendance.

RESOLVED THAT: representatives for the Arts and Culture CIG's review group be agreed and elected at the next meeting (7 June 2010).

7. DRAFT CORPORATE STRATEGY

The Policy and Partnerships Manager introduced his paper and reminded members that he had attended the January meeting of this committee, where he had been asked to come back with the revised Corporate Strategy.

He explained that there were four things the committee needed to consider this evening;

- The committee raised some issues at the last meeting, were they happy with the responses?
- In January, thirteen outcomes were being proposed, this had since reduced to eleven since some outcomes were dependent on other organisations/agencies.
- The draft strategy was out to consultation until 26 January 2010 and there had been six responses.
- There had been two specific changes since circulation of the meeting papers, references to safeguarding had been strengthened and the wording around a retirement village had been replaced with “extra care”.

The following answers were given in response to member questions, with the help of the Head of Service – Stronger Communities, where required;

- Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) would not be able to guarantee resources for a retirement village, the decision was made to reference “extra care”, as a partnership goal, rather than prescribing an outcome. Extra care was preventative and would allow the aging population to live as independently for as long as possible.
- The target for affordable homes built in Cheltenham was 32 (the definition of which was a self contained dwelling, which could be 1 of 32 flats within a block). Whilst this was something that could be discussed with Cheltenham Borough Homes who would deliver some of this affordable housing on behalf of CBC, this was a planning issue. It was felt that the Joint Core Strategy would help with this issue.
- According to Southwest Homes, mortgages are available, though the rates are an issue of concern. The major concern of CBC is employment and whether mortgages are sustainable for people.
- The Southwark Judgement (recent case law on how District and County Councils deal with housing needs of 16-17 year olds) had proved challenging. The six districts were working together due to the increased strain on the County Council and new protocols were being developed. Whilst this did result in young people being given priority within the Choice Based Letting system, they always had been given priority, but that didn't mean to say that they were all assessed as having the same needs.
- The creation of an Entertainment Forum would be picked up by the Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Culture.

- With regards to homelessness and the loss of funding in 2011, the Head of Service – Stronger Communities, would come back to the committee in the summer of 2010 to discuss a way forward.
- The short answer was, young people with mental health issues had always and continued to get priority with regards to housing.

The Policy and Partnerships Manager asked for confirmation that the committee were happy with the amendments to this document, given that they specifically raised retirement villages for inclusion. The committee agreed to the change to extra care.

The Chairman thanked the Policy and Partnerships Manager for his attendance and the Head of Service – Stronger Communities, for her assistance in answering questions from the committee.

8. EQUALITIES ACTION PLAN

The Policy and Partnerships Manager introduced his paper which he felt was a timely reminder as it was in March 2008 (exactly two years ago) that the Corporate Equality and Diversity policy and associated action plan were approved by Cabinet.

The paper highlighted what had been achieved, as well as issues which remained a challenge for Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC).

The Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Capacity Worker introduced Appendix B, which offered some background information about why the post was created and detailed some of the work that has been done to date.

She noted that in some respects she had been a victim of her own success, as she now found herself inundated with requests, but was confident that the work that had been undertaken could be used as a model for any community, not just BME communities.

Councillor Ryder commended the BME Capacity Worker as a real asset to CBC.

Councillor Rawson congratulated CBC and the BME Capacity Worker as having done very good work to engage with BME communities.

The following answers were given in response to member questions,

- Without knowing who isn't accessing the services provided by CBC, we wouldn't know what was stopping them from doing so. At a grass roots level, the Community Ambassadors would be rolled out in other areas and this often identified people that were not accessing services. Specialist software was available to assist with the collection of personal data, however this was costly.
- The Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Hate Crime Group had been set up to reflect the Police structure but no figures were available in order to compare it to other groups in the area or Country.
- The Community Ambassadors represent people from Chinese, Bangladeshi, Polish, English, Pakistani and Arab communities.
- The work of the BME Capacity Officer supported the 'prevent agenda' (which aims to prevent radicalisation and terrorism), by bringing together different communities within the Muslim community in Cheltenham, in order that they could discuss issues.
- It was accepted that elected members in Cheltenham were all white and mostly males. BAME (black, Asian and minority ethnic) Women Councillors' Taskforce, which had been set up to help make local councils more representative of the community. Their aim was to encourage women, particularly those from minority

communities to become more involved in local decision-making process. As part of this, 22 women from different cultures in Cheltenham had a tour of Parliament followed by a question and answers session with the Government equalities team in the House of Lords.

- The title of the post aside (BME Capacity Worker), it sat within the Community Development Team and as such the work was integrated and targeted all communities.

The Chairman thanked both the Policy and Partnerships Manager and BME Capacity Officer for their attendance.

In closing he suggested that there were two strands to the success of the work carried out by the BME Capacity Worker. Firstly, that it gave communities a voice and confidence to engage and secondly that, it offered others a greater understanding and knowledge of other cultures.

9. DRAFT TOURISM AND MARKETING STRATEGY

The Assistant Director – Culture and Wellbeing introduced the paper which reminded members that a small, time limited working group had been tasked with developing a marketing and tourism strategy for Cheltenham.

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis was undertaken which formed the basis of the draft strategy (Appendix 1). Feedback from the committee would be taken back to the working group.

Councillor John Rawson accepted the fact that this strategy was being developed in parallel to the Corporate Strategy and this caused some confusion.

He summarised the information contained in the draft strategy, how important visitors were to Cheltenham's economy and why people came to Cheltenham. The strategy indicated that people underestimated what Cheltenham had to offer and as such, more could be done to promote what was on offer, especially to families.

The group had been mindful of the current economic climate and resources and took the decision to avoid recommending costly changes. Recommendations included opportunities to increase revenue, efficiency savings and closer working with business, providers and neighbouring authorities.

Discussions had taken place with a range of cultural providers, and this would now move to formal consultation with a wider range of organisations from across the town. The opportunity would be taken to undertake this in the run up to the elections, with a view to taking a redraft of the strategy to Cabinet in April or May.

The Chairman paid thanks to colleagues for getting involved in the working group and invited members to ask questions.

The following answers were given in response to member questions;

- Representatives from businesses had been involved in some of the initial discussions and would be included in the formal consultation.
- £32,000 was spent on tourism through the Tourist Information Centre, but it is important to consider that other areas promote their own service with their own budget.
- There had been no direct consultation with the Playhouse Theatre to date but they would be invited to comment and any comments would be considered as

- part of the formal consultation.
- The issue of public conveniences (toilets) was raised during initial discussions and would be referred to the working group as part of the feedback from this committee.
- The Arts Council would be included in the consultation.
- The consultation would be open to all business and tourism stakeholders, a wide range of retail and hospitality organisations, the Chamber of Commerce, other cultural providers, as well as the Destination Management Organisation (DMO), who it was felt could provide useful input.
- Internally, Officers would be asked to indicate key consultees and members were told that any suggestions would be gratefully received.
- The issue of disabled access at the Racecourse would be referred to the working group for further discussion.

Councillor Ryder stressed that the aspirations of those involved in the working group had been high, but consideration had been taken of current resources. The one issue that continued to be raised was signage and her plea was that Gloucestershire County Council should assist CBC with signage.

In closing, the Chairman made the following comments;

- Signage was a key issue, especially for drivers that didn't know the town centre.
- Cheltenham Town Football Club and the different things that they have to offer ought to be included.
- The Leisure@ summary could be boosted by the inclusion of references to highlights including the European Table Tennis Championships that were held at the facility.
- He felt that the various marketing budgets should be pooled.
- He asked that the title of Item 7 on Page 3 be changed, 'What market sectors do we want to appeal to?'
- The business community may want something more defined, what will be done, by whom, when and who will pay.
- There was no reference to different channels of promotion and marketing, how we would send the message (Twitter, etc).

Councillor Rawson wished to thank Officers within the Assistant Directors team for their significant input.

The Assistant Director – Culture and Wellbeing in turn, thanked members of the committee for their engagement and looked forward to a similar reception at the Economic and Business Improvement Overview and Scrutiny committee.

10. NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Cabinet Member – Finance and Community Development introduced his paper which presented his views on the consultation responses and the proposed way forward.

Gloucestershire Constabulary wished to keep the 14 police areas as the amalgamation may have confused communities and failed to meet the existing neighbourhood policing requirements.

The plans had to be reviewed as there was a risk that there would not be sufficient resources or capacity to support all 14 areas and there was a mixed response from the 8 proposed host organisations.

As such, a compromise had been reached which took consideration of the views of the different groups. The three regeneration partnerships would co-ordinate and extend the NCG meetings, which would cover a broader agenda than just crime and disorder. Whilst the rest (with the possible exception of Charlton Kings and Up Hatherley Parish Councils) would continue as standard NCG meetings.

The following answers were given in response to member questions;

- There were still some discussions to be had, but once agreed it could be taken forward ASAP, dependent on the group, but hoped that it would be by the summer.
- He accepted that the populations of these areas were very different but the issue that they are faced with is that they are the operational units of the Police and changing them would be very difficult.
- The Parish Councils had queried whether the meetings would add value rather than raised concerns about resources and funding, which he felt was a missed opportunity.
- The issue of logistics and elected members was raised two years ago when this was first suggested. Ultimately the Police weren't willing to compromise, so CBC had to.
- Yes, the responses of this committee would be added to the list of responses to date.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member – Finance and Community Development for his attendance. He reiterated his concerns about the way in which the political areas had been split and in particular the imbalance of populations, he queried how, in such circumstances, priorities and funding would be weighted.

11. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The Chairman summarised the items scheduled on the work-plan for the next meeting to be held on the 7 June and confirmed that 'homelessness – future plans' would be added to work-plan and scheduled for the September meeting of this committee.

He asked whether there was anything specific that members would like to add to the work-plan for the meeting on 12 July and if so, could they send details in the next week so that Officers could be provided sufficient time to prepare.

RESOLVED THAT: 'homelessness – the future' be added to the committee work-plan and scheduled for 6 September 2010.

12. COMMITTEE FEEDBACK SESSION

The Chairman referred members to the Youth Café briefing note which had been circulated and confirmed that this item was scheduled for discussion at the next meeting.

He thanked everyone for their attendance and confirmed the date of the next meeting.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 7 June 2010.

Councillor Duncan Smith
Chairman