

Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 23rd November, 2011
6.00 - 8.15 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Penny Hall (Chair), Ian Bickerton, Nigel Britter, Jacky Fletcher, Rob Garnham, Helena McCloskey, Charles Stewart and Paul Wheeldon
Also in attendance:	Rob Bell (Director of Operations), Beth Boughton (Waste & Recycling Manager), Gill Morris (Climate Change & Sustainability Officer), Owen Parry (Head of Integrated Transport & Sustainability), Councillor Rawson (Cabinet Member Built Environment) and Councillor Whyborn (Cabinet Member Sustainability)

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Holliday.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

3. AGREEMENT OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THE 14 SEPTEMBER 2011

The minutes of the last meeting had been circulated with the agenda.

Upon a vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 14 September 2011 be agreed and signed as an accurate record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions were received.

5. MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

There were no matters referred to the committee.

6. CABINET MEMBER BRIEFING

The Cabinet Member Sustainability would not be raising any matters covered later on the agenda but did refer Members to the Pittville Bridge briefing note.

The bridge was being fabricated and should be ready for installation next month (December) and though he could give no guarantees, he did assure Members that in his opinion it would be worth the wait, having seen the bridge in construction. The decision for the authority to project manage the bridge construction in individual work packages was taken as the most cost effective approach, as the tenders received in 2010 had far exceeded the original

budget. He felt that this was the right decision but admittedly there was always a risk that this approach would cause delay, which it had and for which he apologised. A scrutiny request had been submitted by Councillor Cooper in relation to the perceived failings in management of this project and the Cabinet Member was at this stage, unclear as to whether this would be considered by this scrutiny committee or Economy & Business Improvement (EBI).

Members felt that the issue raised by Councillor Cooper related to a business process and therefore, should be considered by EBI. The Chair moved that a formal recommendation be made to EBI and upon a vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the Environment O&S Committee formally recommend that the Economy and Business Improvement O&S Committee consider the project management process of the Pittville Community Bridge.

The Cabinet Member Sustainability gave the following responses to questions from Members;

- Replacement of street trees was a responsibility of the County Council but the work was delegated to the Borough Council under a cost sharing agreement. The issue raised by Councillor Garnham in relation to a tree that had been planted in Bourneside Road, died shortly after and had yet to be replaced, would be raised with the appropriate Officers.
- Sponsors of roundabouts paid an annual amount but had signed a 3 year contract.
- The repairs to Imperial Gardens following the Literature Festival had been completed and the repairs to Montpellier were in progress.

The Chair took the opportunity to comment on how she, on attending events at the Literature Festival, had felt that the new flowerbeds in Imperial Gardens had enhanced the festival experience beautifully and congratulated everyone involved. She also commended the use of notices to keep the public informed.

The Cabinet Member Built Environment hoped that exchange of contracts for North Place and Portland Street would be in mid December. Detailed plans were already being considered with a view to being in a position to go forward with a planning application in Spring 2012 and despite reports to the contrary, the plan was not a 'done deal' and there had in fact been a number of changes as a result of the public consultation.

During the difficulties last winter the Council had supplemented the efforts made by Gloucestershire Highways by helping to clear and grit town centre streets, but capacity issues had limited this to the town centre and could not extend to Trading areas. There was a proposal this year to develop a snow warden scheme, which would see traders across Cheltenham provided with training and snow clearing equipment to keep these areas clear of snow and ice. He felt this was a positive way of dealing with what could be another difficult winter and achieving a lot of good with very little money.

Some time ago the maintenance of the Municipal Offices moved to a health & safety only approach. This was no longer considered tenable and he was pleased to advise Members that there would now be a departure from this position. Property Services were considering what form the maintenance programme would take, though there would not be a high level of investment.

Members welcomed the news about the maintenance of the Municipal Offices, which they felt needed to be kept in good condition.

In response to a question from a Member of the committee, the Cabinet Member Built Environment accepted the reputational, energy and financial issues surrounding, heating the Municipal Offices and opening windows when it gets too warm. He would investigate how the heating system was operated and what means of temperature control were available.

The Chair thanked both Cabinet Members for their attendance.

7. CHELTENHAM CAR PARKING STRATEGY

The Head of Integrated Transport and Sustainability introduced the paper as circulated with the agenda and as an introduction provided a brief overview of recent discussions.

The Cheltenham Parking Board had agreed to the development of the Cheltenham Local Car Parking Strategy with the aim that it be included within the county wide parking strategy as set out in the Local Transport Plan 3. Developing a localised plan would require broad engagement and consultation with a number of key stakeholders and adjoining authorities.

Recent discussions, like the session held at the Town Hall, demonstrated that there were a number of on and off street parking needs to be considered within the borough and there could be no standardised approach, though there needed to be some, efficiencies and management. This was a new approach and coupled with the period of changes in relation to enforcement this would be somewhat of a learning curve.

There were also challenging times ahead with the development of North Place and Portland Street, traffic modelling and consideration of the impact was ongoing. Importantly, the County Council had resubmitted their bid to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, which was primarily aimed at supporting economic growth (linking with Cheltenham Civic Pride and Gloucester Regeneration projects) and reducing carbon emissions from travel by implementing various improvements.

Work was ongoing to determine the impact of new on-street parking schemes. There appeared to have been a lot of displacement but there was no clear indication as to where to and Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology could be used to establish this.

The following responses were given by the Head of Integrated Transport and Sustainability to questions from Members. He noted that some questions deserved further explanation and more detailed responses and this would be provided outside of the meeting;

- The proposed on-street parking scheme in Montpellier had been endorsed, as amended, by Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucestershire County Council. The introduction of new parking schemes formed part of the consultation.

- TRO was enforceable 24 hours, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and job descriptions were being drafted to reflect this with a view to ensuring that late nights and public holidays could be resourced.
- The mobility of parking enforcement across Cheltenham was being addressed as part of the restructure of the service area. This could include the use of bicycles and stagecoach buses by members of staff and would enable a town-wide approach.
- Gloucestershire University had a policy that all first year students are in residence and do not have a car, but after their first year, many became residents of Cheltenham and paid Council Tax. Discussions had been ongoing in relation to a possible car share scheme.
- The Smarter Travel Plan did need to be revised, but this required commitment of resources that were currently not available given the number of conflicting priorities. There had been discussions with GCHQ in relation to learning/tweaking of their fairly recent Travel Plan.
- The location of car parks could not be considered in isolation, account needed to be taken of the road network Cheltenham had inherited. The ring road system had long been a source of frustration to residents and visitors. The NCP was a purpose built car park and was therefore very different to some of the sites which were never envisaged as long term parking solutions e.g. Grosvenor Terrace. There were however, some title constraints on some sites across Cheltenham. At some point in time there would need to be 2 more park and ride locations in Cheltenham.
- Using technology to collect data would enable understanding and intelligence as to where enforcement was required and when.
- A Project Officer was currently working with the Web Team to develop a means by which members of the public could report any parking issues.
- Admittedly there were a number of parking zones throughout the town with a large number of spaces during the day and consideration needed to be given to why this was.

Parking was a highly emotive subject but the strategy needed to be clear and to achieve this, matters would need to be debated and then discussions moved on.

The Chair thanked the Head of Integrated Transport and Sustainability for his attendance and expressed how vital she felt it was that Cheltenham developed a parking strategy of its own.

8. REVIEW OF GARDEN WASTE SCHEME

The Director of Operations introduced the paper, highlighting that the garden waste scheme was just one part of a package of measures to divert waste from landfill. The scheme had been in operation for 9 months and as such a review of the scheme was considered timely.

Take-up of the new scheme had been lower than anticipated based on the experiences of other authorities, with currently, just over 11,000 households having subscribed to the service and an average of 30 new orders being received each week since August. There was an expectation that more householders would subscribe in spring 2012, but forecasting the level of

subscriptions had proved difficult. Importantly, whilst the income received was less than anticipated, the running costs were lower than budgeted.

As part of the review of the scheme Officers had surveyed 281 householders and obtained their views on the garden waste recycling service and potential alternatives. He talked Members through some of the results set out in the paper.

In response to concerns about price, it was felt that it would be reasonable and affordable to offer a discount for a fixed period to existing customers upon renewing their subscription or as an incentive to new customers. Other authorities who had offered a small discount believed that this had a positive impact.

There was potential for a bag service in addition to the wheeled bins, but the waste would have to be separated as the bagged waste needed to be treated via a more expensive process and as such it would be less cost effective. As a result the service would be limited to the streets listed in Appendix A, the hard to access areas with limited storage. Using 75 litres compostable paper sacks, provided on a pay as you go basis and available for purchase at the Municipal Offices and the Depot or could be delivered for a charge. The new or revised scheme would be publicised directly to those households to whom it would be available by a leaflet drop.

The Director of Operations gave the following responses to questions from Members;

- It had been anticipated that 20,000 subscriptions would be achieved in the first financial year, however there was currently a 9,000 shortfall. The monetary shortfall associated with lower subscriptions than forecast had been offset by increased recycling income.
- It was not expected that there would be a huge demand for the bag service given limited sized gardens in the streets to whom the service would be offered and as such smaller vehicles would be used in these hard to access areas.
- Consideration had been given to reducing the frequency of garden waste wheeled bin collections during the winter months but there was still a considerable demand and as such, it would be hard to justify this to all subscribers.
- The ability to charge for garden waste remained, despite the Localism Bill.
- Based on other authorities experiences it was originally felt that there would be little or no demand for a bag scheme. However, since the wheeled bin scheme had been launched, some residents had put forward requests for a bag alternative and this was now being considered.
- The wheeled bins had a 240 litre capacity, compared to the bags which had a capacity of 75 litres. Potentially requests for bags could come from areas that could have bins but overall the feedback on the wheeled bins had been positive. Members were given assurances that the income received covered the cost of providing the service but exact figures would be provided outside of the meeting.

- Admittedly there was little to stop someone purchasing a sack and putting it in a street from which it would be collected. Equally this would cost far too much to police to any further extent than monitoring who was purchasing the sacks.
- The Council had been actively promoting home composting for many years and to support this had made subsidised home compost bins available, which had been very successful and would be repeated again soon. However, the figure of 169 for the first 6 months did not take account of those people that were using other means of home composting and therefore could be a wild underestimate of the number of people actually doing this in Cheltenham.

The Chair thanked the Director of Operations for his attendance and asked that the comments of the committee be formally acknowledged by Cabinet when it considered the final report on the Garden Waste Scheme on the 6 December 2011.

9. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW WASTE AND RECYCLING SCHEME - REVIEW AND LESSONS LEARNED

The Waste and Recycling Manager offered a brief summary of the background to this item. To achieve the Council's target for reduction in household waste that went to landfill, in April 2011 a new kerbside waste and recycling scheme introduced the collection of refuse and food waste one week and recycling and food waste the next.

It was recognised that alternate weekly collections were not practical for some dwellings where there was little or no space available to store waste containers at either the front or rear of the property. As such, a small number of streets still received weekly refuse collections and in the town centre, some streets received twice weekly collections.

Overall, implementation of the new scheme had gone very well, with an increase of food waste diverted from landfill from an average of 250 tonnes to an average of 280 tonnes a month, in the first 6 months. There had been a significant increase in kerbside recycling, especially plastic bottles and in quarter one of 2011 the tonnage of household waste to landfill was down from 52kg to 37kg per household.

The increase in recycling had resulted in an unprecedented demand for kerbside recycling boxes and the council's stock of boxes ran out shortly after the scheme commenced. More boxes were ordered and the backlog was cleared quickly but the new stocks were soon depleted and as such box requests are currently being held and will be fulfilled as soon as more stocks are received.

Side waste was still problematic in some areas of the borough and this issue would be addressed by encouraging and educating people to use the scheme correctly, with enforcement being the last resort.

The Cabinet Member Sustainability had looked across the country at other similar urban authorities and a 50% recycling rate was very good and a great achievement. The new scheme had been managed successfully, people had been suitably encouraged to participate and Officers continued to monitor the

issue of black bags full of recyclable waste. These houses would be identified and he was confident that yet more household waste could be diverted from landfill.

The following responses were given to questions from Members;

- The County Council did offer incentives associated to reducing household waste to landfill and some significant sums if the targets were achieved.
- Income was generated from the sale of recyclable materials and in recent months the markets had been very buoyant but were volatile. Segregating waste enabled for the best price to be achieved and these products would be used in the UK and Europe, if the waste was not segregated it would achieve no income and could be sent to the far East.
- There had been unprecedented demand for kerbside recycling boxes but this was just one reason for the council having to make more multiple orders. Lack of storage space, lead in time and the initial budget, though the demand had justified the additional outlay.
- The Cabinet Member Sustainability said that the County Council aspired to achieve 70% of household waste diverted from landfill but had not yet said how this figure would be achieved. Cotswold District Council diverted 60% but they were a very different area to Cheltenham, historically, rural areas recycled more. 9 years ago Cheltenham's figure was 5% and as such 70% as a possible target was not necessarily unrealistic.
- Recyclables could be expanded in future to include mixed plastics but this posed a capacity issue for the vehicles.
- It was suggested that spillages were likely, the result of people using their own boxes without lids as a consequence of the stock shortage of the recycling boxes. The issue would be raised with the operatives.
- There was only one plant in Europe that recycled Tetrapak and given that it contained a number of components it wasn't possible to mix it with just cardboard, plastic, etc, so there were currently no plans to expand the service to include this material.
- Cheltenham's food waste was processed at a site in Newent and there had been no impact on bring sites across Cheltenham as they were so conveniently located.
- Unfortunately there were instances where operatives had missed some food waste containers and this was attributed to their colour and size which led to them being easily overlooked. It wasn't possible to get a message to the crew on the same day that the issue was reported and as such would be collected the following day. Officers would consider the approach for an issue reported on a Thursday or Friday, given that there were no weekend collections. Longer term there was an aspiration to get real time information to and from crews.

A number of Members applauded the performance and achievements of the new service and the work of Officers.

The Chair thanked the Waste & Recycling Manager for her attendance.

10. CLIMATE CHANGE MEMBER WORKING GROUP

Councillor Wheeldon introduced the paper as Chairman of the Climate Change Member Working Group and talked through some specific highlights;

- The council's carbon emissions reduction target of 30% by 2015 and had already achieved a 10%.
- Since the Government had slashed feed-in-tariffs, installation of solar panels was no longer feasible. A motion to Council in June recommending the purchase of zero carbon electricity from a green energy provider be a major consideration when choosing the new supplier had achieved unanimous support and this would now be critical in order that the target reduction could be achieved.
- The working group had taken a strong position on the replacement of the Mayors car and asked Officers to consider a whole range of options from a standard car, electric car and a hybrid. In addition they had asked Officers to ensure that a comparison of fuel costs over the period of the lease be made against the cost of running an electric car and that the comparison not be limited to capital cost only. Linked to this was, public charging points for electric cars, Cheltenham had none and the group felt that the council should take a lead on this.
- The working group would be receiving an impact assessment report of climate change on the operations of the council in view of the most recent winter weather and the 2007 floods suffered by the town.
- A number of other small scale projects were ongoing which would also contribute to the reduction target.

Councillor Wheeldon gave thanks to the Climate Change & Sustainability Officer and Building Services Manager for their hard work and support.

The Chair addressed the committee as the newest Member of the working group and described how impressed she had been by the work being done by the group. She also felt that the smaller steps being taken towards reducing emissions were just as important as the larger scale projects.

Councillor Garnham asked that the matter of the Mayors car be given due consideration and that it not be forsaken on principle, but rather, a sensible decision be reached. From personal experience he knew the benefits and value of having the car.

The Chair advised Members that Cheltenham was formally designated as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) on the 18th November, too late for inclusion in the paper circulated in advance of the meeting. As a result of the AQMA the authority was required to carry out further assessment of existing and likely future air quality within 12 months and produce an Action Plan. Members were invited to form part of a steering group being established by the relevant Officer, though the Chair felt that the invitation should be extended to all Members.

Relevant information and clear details as to what the Steering Group were being asked to do would be circulated to all Members.

The Cabinet Member Sustainability felt that with the reduction in feed-in tariffs, the focus would now be on energy reduction. The current reduction of 10.3% was fantastic, but there were other projects for which he hoped there would be

funding available and included the installation of energy saving lighting at the Town Hall and Pittville Pump Rooms. There was also the server room at the Municipal Offices to consider, there was an enormous amount of heat generated and gains could be made by using this heat elsewhere or cooling it more efficiently.

11. ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORK PLAN 2011-12

The Chair took the opportunity to highlight that all Members had the right to ask for an item, relevant to the functions of the Committee, to be added to the agenda. Such a request needed to be given to the Proper Officer (Saira Malin in regard to this committee) no later than 10am on the seventh working day before the day of the meeting. The request would then be included on the agenda for the next available meeting.

The Chair referred members to the work plan as circulated with the agenda, namely the items scheduled for the next meeting. She explained that the Winter Weather Procedures had not been scheduled for the next meeting as it was not considered timely enough. This would, instead, be listed under 'items to be added at a future date', with a view to scheduling it for September 2012, so that the winter weather procedures for 2012 could be scrutinised.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIRMAN DETERMINES TO BE URGENT AND WHICH REQUIRES A DECISION

There were no urgent items for discussion.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 18 January 2012.

Penny Hall
Chairman