Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 29th February, 2012
6.05 - 8.28 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Penny Hall (Chair), Ian Bickerton, Nigel Britter, Jacky Fletcher, Rob Garnham, Diane Hibbert, Sandra Holliday, Helena McCloskey and Paul Wheeldon
Also in attendance:	Geoff Beer (Principal Engineer), Richard Gibson (Strategy and Engagement Manager), Gill Morris (Climate Change and Sustainability Officer), Martin Quantock (Cheltenham Business Partnership Manager), Councillor John Rawson (Cabinet Member Built Environment), Councillor Diggory Seacome and Councillor Roger Whyborn (Cabinet Member Sustainability)

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Councillor Stewart had given his apologies.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

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 18 January 2012 be agreed and signed as an accurate record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

5. MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

Council had referred a motion to the committee;

This council is fully committed to reduce its output of greenhouse gases and therefore resolves that;

Our current target of a 30% reduction by 2015 should be brought in line with other public bodies and changed to a 40% reduction target by 2020 subject to consideration by scrutiny.

The Chair proposed that this matter should be discussed as part of Agenda Item 10 (Climate Change Working Group). Members agreed.

6. CABINET MEMBER BRIEFING

The Cabinet Member Built Environment was not in a position to be able to update Members regarding the financial discussions that were currently ongoing

in relation to the North Place and Portland Street development, but was able to provide information relating to the pre-application process. He assured Members that the feedback received during the public consultation had given rise to further consideration to aspects of the planned development, including the number of parking spaces and the style of buildings. The aim being to improve the plans before a formal plan emerged. The Cabinet Member Built Environment acknowledged the concern raised in regard to parking during the development works at North Place and Portland Street and agreed to meet with Councillor Wheeldon, ward Councillor for St. Paul's and a representative from the University of Gloucestershire to discuss the possibility of using the Prince of Wales Stadium.

An upshot of the Portas report into the future of the High Street was that Government were making monies available through the Local Economic Partnerships for local high streets. Consideration was currently being given to whether there were any schemes within the report that could be pioneered in Cheltenham, though he was not entirely convinced that any funding application for Cheltenham would be unproblematic in comparison to applications by other towns and/or cities.

The Managing Director of Cheltenham Development Task Force would be asked to circulate a detailed summary of information to Members regarding the part time bus routes at Boots Corner. The Cabinet Member was aware of the concerns raised by the Chamber of Commerce in relation to this issue.

The road markings identifying the area opposite RBS as disabled parking had been removed when the road had been resurfaced and were yet to be reinstated and whilst he was confident that they would be, he would need to check this with Highways before providing misinformation. He would email Members following a discussion with Highways.

In relation to the event submissions item which featured later on the agenda, the aim was to improve an existing process. Expo 2012 threw up limited problems compared to the street racing planned until 2013-14, which would require an Act of Parliament. Events such as these involved a number of authorities, all of which had to work together and be clear about Councillor and public views. It was only after these views had been captured through consultation that any problems could be mitigated or a proposal deemed impractical.

He considered the incident in which a pedestrian was injured by a rising bollard to be an isolated one, though admittedly when they were first installed there were cases where vehicles tailgating buses had been damaged. He would monitor the issue and clearly, were there any similar occurrences the bollards would need to be reconsidered.

The Cabinet Member Built Environment was aware that there had been discussions between the Mayor Elect, Councillor C. Hay and the Lord Lieutenant regarding an event for the Jubilee but was not privy to any details. The Strategy and Engagement Manager was able to confirm that there were initial plans to hold a joint Beacon event with the Explorer Scouts and another approach of the Council would be to work with community groups who wanted to hold their own events.

The Cabinet Member Sustainability confirmed that the Imperial Gardens planning application working group had met for the first time and had included a considerable number of people. The meeting had been a positive one, which had set the scene of the evaluation process that would be undertaken after each event and the subsequent report to the Planning Committee after 12 months. The Cabinet Member, in response to a question from a member of the committee, confirmed that the evaluations would happen at two levels, Members of the Working Group would visit the site during events and Officers would undertake more official site visits before, during and after. There were no other significant issues relating to parks and gardens since the Expo organisers had indicated they had no plans to use the gardens in 2012.

A compost bin sale had been arranged for Saturday 21 April, whereby the bins would be available at significantly subsidised prices. The bag service, available to residents for whom it had not been possible to include in the brown bin garden waste scheme because of the logistical issues of the streets in which they resided, had been launched a few days prior and to date 35 people had signed up. A briefing would be circulated to Members outlining the subscription renewals for the brown bin scheme in due course.

The plastic bag recommendations made by the committee at its last meeting had been accepted by Cabinet and whilst it would be premature to provide specific details at this time, he confirmed that there had already been expressions of interest from one School, at least, in being involved in any related initiatives and a local business offering sponsorship of the bag design proposal. Whilst it was early days, he was fairly confident that something could be done and would provide an update to Members once more significant progress had been made.

The Chair, having reviewed minutes of previous meetings, raised some queries with the Cabinet Member Sustainability who gave the following responses;

- Whilst there were no plans at present, he was unable to provide assurances that there would be no future licensing applications for Sandford Park. Lessons had been learnt however, and rather than a blanket approach, any future application would apply to a smaller, more specific area only.
- It appeared that the web pages relating to street cleansing had gone from containing out of date information, to none. He would raise this with the relevant Officers and request that brief guidelines were included.

The Chair thanked both Cabinet Members for their attendance at this and all past meetings.

7. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CORPORATE STRATEGY 2012-13

The Strategy and Engagement Manager introduced the draft Corporate Strategy action plan 2012-13 which was the second annual update of the Corporate Strategy.

He offered some context to how the document had been prepared. The Senior Leadership Team had introduced a change to last year's strategy with the addition of value for money as a core objective running across all outcomes. Given the intensity of work centred on commissioning reviews the strategy

recognised that commissioning should help define outcomes and the strategy reflected the commissioner/provider split. The final piece of context was partnership working. The new partnership structure was now in place and partners had identified 6 areas for collaborative work towards improvement actions. He acknowledged that these actions mostly related to the remit of the Social and Community overview and scrutiny committee.

This had led to proposed improvement actions and whilst there were a number of these improvement actions, this reflected where the Council was as an organisation. Many were longer term commitments and he hoped that Members would be familiar with them. He was acutely aware of the resource implications associated with the delivery of these actions and had identified services where this would pose a particular strain (HR, Built Environment and Commissioning) and this identification had put the relevant Directors at ease.

This was an ambitious agenda and he did not propose to go through it in detail, Social and Community had considered an initial draft in January, EBI would consider it next week and Cabinet the week after, with final sign off by Council in March. Members were assured that there was still an opportunity for them to have influence.

The following responses were given by the Strategy and Engagement Manager to questions from members of the committee;

- The action plan reflected a prioritised list of activities and the resource checks had offered a degree of confidence that it was deliverable.
- He welcomed and accepted the comments regarding older people and confirmed that the partnership acknowledged that this should be an area of focus, especially given the number of old people that live in the borough and the challenges of enabling older people to lead independent lives. There was also some work to do in relation to inclusion and he would feed this back to the partnership.
- The issue of affordable housing provision was something that would need to be looked at in detail and it may be something that the new scrutiny committee would wish to take forward.
- The point about missing references to links with the Police Commissioner was welcomed as it was appreciated that this could offer a commissioning opportunity that Cheltenham should not miss.
- Support and advice for local business had proved very popular and he was keen that something be provided but having a contract in place by 2012 could be overly ambitious and the timescale could change before the draft plan was approved.
- The new partnership structures are looking to align partnership resources to support the new partnership priorities. . He said that it was not about new money as the resources were there but it is about making better linkages and that this was slowly starting to happen.
- The baseline for the ‘enhancing and protecting our environment’ indicators had only recently been established, though identification of the targets was for the Director of Built Environment to do. This was why it had been left blank.

The Chair thanked the Strategy and Engagement Manager for his presentation of what she considered to be an excellent document and voiced how pleased she was that value for money had been given such significance.

8. EVENT SUBMISSIONS

The Chair advised the Committee and members of the public, that this item had been added to the agenda at her request and in response to the level of public concern regarding events in the town, specifically, Expo 2012 and proposals for motor racing events in the town centre in 2013 and 2014. These events however, were not open to discussion, the paper aimed to explain the 'Event Submission' Framework so that Members could glean a greater understanding of the process, no specifics would be discussed. She proposed that Members may like to suggest amendments or add to it.

The Cheltenham Business Partnership Manager introduced the paper in the absence of the author of the paper, the Head of Integrated Transport & Sustainability and echoed the comments of the Chair that he was unable to formally comment on any matters relating to specific events. The paper focussed on the process event organisers should follow if an event will impact the environment of the town, wherever that may be.

He had himself, considered the paper and identified some omissions. There were no timescales, which should be an important part of any submission, nor was there any criteria by which a 'major' event was identifiable. He felt that it was equally important that event organisers were aware of what was expected of them. The process that was being proposed, suggested that;

- Organisers of major events collate a detailed proposal which is submitted to an Officer (it was yet to be determined who this would/should be).
- The Officer then circulates the proposal to relevant departments and stakeholders inviting their input. The Officer responsible for circulating the proposal would collate all responses.
- The proposal, including any responses would be passed back to the event organiser, who would be asked to answer any questions and address any concerns before submitting a formal proposal.
- Relevant departments, agencies and stakeholders would then meet to consider the final proposal, having satisfied them selves that all interested parties had been involved in discussions.

The following comments were made by Members of the Committee;

- An issue regarding events had arisen in the last 6 months at Pittville Park and Councillor Hibbert, as Ward Councillor, was not convinced that the outline process being proposed would have resolved the issue. She felt that it was for the Council to undertake consultation in relation to such events, in order that it be thorough, given that event organisers could be selective, whether this was intentional or not. She proposed that the event organiser should pay a fee for the Council to undertake such work and most importantly, the Ward Councillors must be made aware of any such consultations.
- Whilst it was not for scrutiny to micromanage, it must ensure that any process is working effectively and the suggestion was that at present, it

was not. The document must contain criteria and timescales and a question was raised about the broader issue of whether decisions to fund events should be made before permissions were sought.
- Ward Members should be involved in assessing the impact of an event on residents and agreeing an approach.
- Criteria must be developed in order that there was a clear distinction between an event and a major event to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy. A balanced approach was required, Cheltenham was an events town and such events benefited the town economically by attracting visitors to and creating jobs within the town, but this should not be at the expense of residents and/or other people being able to enjoy what Cheltenham has to offer.
- Any process should demonstrate that the Council takes decisions transparently and not behind closed doors.

Councillor Seacome, Ward Councillor for Lansdown, was permitted to speak. He felt that the process could incorporate Licensing and Planning elements.

The Cabinet Member Sustainability suggested that a possible definition of a major event should be where it cut across a number of Council departments or other authorities. Perhaps events at the other end of the spectrum to major events should only require a simple pro-forma application.

Upon a vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED that;

1. **A task & finish group be formed to consider the event submissions process for major events in the town.**

2. **Because it is not simply an environmental issue Members of the Economy & Business Improvement and Social & Community Overview and Scrutiny Committees be invited to form part of the working group.**

9. FLOOD PROTECTION UPDATE

The need for Councillor Wheeldon to depart by 8pm necessitated this item being taken after Agenda Item 10 (Climate Change Working Group).

The Principal Engineer (Land Drainage) introduced the discussion paper which offered Members an update on flood risk activities since the matter was last reviewed by the Committee in September 2011.

He highlighted some of the schemes which had been completed since the last update, detailing the number of properties that had benefited and explaining how. He also talked through some of the schemes which were in progress, how many properties were at risk and what options were being considered to alleviate the risk of flooding.

The Chair thought back to the floods in 2007 and took comfort from the knowledge that such works were being undertaken.

The Principal Engineer provided the following responses to questions from Members of the committee;

- The rainfall in Cheltenham in June 2007 was not a 100 year event, but the July 2007 was, only just and this was not an exact science.
- He imagined the water that pooled around Neptune's fountain and at the rear of the Municipal Offices was due to inefficient road gulleys and he would raise this with Gloucestershire Highways.
- The issue of Hatherley Brook had already been highlighted and though it was suggested that the consequences of any issue in this area would be very small, the matter would be addressed.

Councillor Garnham advised Members of his upcoming visit to Oxford University, where he had been invited to speak on education of Councillors about flooding.

The Chair thanked the Principal Engineer (Land Drainage) for his patience and for all of the work that had been done.

10. CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

The need for Councillor Wheeldon to depart by 8pm necessitated this item being taken before Agenda Item 9 (Flood Protection Update).

Councillor Wheeldon, Chair of the Climate Change Working Group, introduced the discussion paper, which summarised the work undertaken by the working group. Council had agreed a motion that recommended the purchase of zero carbon electricity from a green energy provider be a major consideration when choosing the new supplier and this contract was due to be awarded tomorrow (1 March). Members of the working group had been invited to attend and based on evidence from Bristol City Council who had undertaken a similar exercise, prices were shown to be more comparable with current costs. The voltage optimisation device that had been fitted at Leisure@ was incompatible with the combined heat and power unit and had therefore been removed and installed at the Town Hall. Two replacement cremators had been installed, these were far more efficient than the last and given that the crematorium used such a large quantity of gas, this would achieve a substantial impact. A late addition to the working group agenda had been the issue of air quality after Cheltenham was declared an Air Quality Management Area, which directly related to Climate Change as it was a result of car emissions. Climate change and the resulting extreme weather events had affected Cheltenham and were likely to again and he was therefore pleased that climate change adaptation would be considered by Officers as part of the commissioning process.

In addition to this he had proposed a motion to Council, who had in turn, referred the matter to scrutiny for consideration;

This council is fully committed to reduce its output of greenhouse gases and therefore resolves that;

Our current target of a 30% reduction by 2015 should be brought in line with other public bodies and changed to a 40% reduction target by 2020 subject to consideration by scrutiny.

Other authorities had adopted the target that was being proposed and this would allow for comparisons to be more easily drawn. It would also be inextricably linked with long term revenue savings as any reduction in energy consumption would result in lower energy bills. There was a question about what return was sought for initiatives which required capital funding. Other authorities aimed to achieve an 8-10% return but no such figure had been set for this Council and he felt this needed to be done as a priority.

Councillor Wheeldon offered the following responses to questions from Members of the Committee;

- Capacity issues with regard to the Smarter Travel Plan related specifically to the ability of Officers to undertake and complete the work involved in its development.
- Just as the working group had decided to go ahead with solar panels, Government had cut the scheme, but the cost of solar panels had since come down by approximately 30%. It was likely that costs would fall further over the next 12 months and, once an acceptable payback period could be established, the working group could go ahead and make recommendations.
- Initiatives such as the procurement of a green electricity supplier would require capital but linked with a reduction in usage of electricity would reduce this cost.

Councillor Garnham had no problem accepting the revised target but needed to be sure monies that the council did not have, would be required for this target to be achievable.

The Cabinet Member Sustainability had welcomed the motion despite the short notice he was given and it was because of this that he was unable to provide a response to the query raised by Councillor Garnham. He agreed that before the commitment was made, a business case would need to be considered but felt that the revised target was achievable in principal. He had discussed the issue with officers and asked them to compile a list of scenarios (e.g. office move, etc) that would enable a 40% reduction by 2020 and outline the costs and savings associated with each option. The policy on acceptable returns on investments was not highly developed given that there were limited funds available in addition to invest to save. Initiatives would need to be considered on an individual basis. In relation to solar panels, he was awaiting further announcements from Government.

In response to a query raised by the Chair, he explained that the 40% target had been included in the Corporate Strategy on the assumption that the motion would be accepted by Council and since it was not, the text would be amended to read, subject to the business case.

Councillor Bickerton suggested that some of the achievements discussed should be promoted on the website. Members agreed.

The Chair thanked the Members of the working group for their hard work and hoped that it would be permitted to continue under the new scrutiny arrangements.

11. WORK PLANNING 2012-2013 - GOING FORWARD TO THE NEW SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair explained that whilst this was the last meeting of the committee before the new scrutiny arrangements were put in place, the existing committees would remain and have all the functions as set out in the constitution until May, when the new scrutiny committee was appointed. Until that time, should there be a need to call-in any decision or any urgent matter, existing committees would deal with them and the current chairs should be the first point of contact.

A discussion paper had been circulated last week, which invited members to give their thoughts on the regular and outstanding items from the Environment work plan and how they should be dealt with in the future. The options would be for them to be considered by the new overview and scrutiny committee, to be the subject of a scrutiny task group or a potential item for a member seminar or briefing.

Members talked through each of the regular and outstanding items listed on the work plan that had been circulated and the issues raised throughout the meeting and agreed the recommendations to the new scrutiny committee (see attached).

The Chair took the opportunity to say how much she had enjoyed her role as Chair and thanked each and every Member for their commitment and hard work and the Vice-Chair for his valued support. Thanks were also given to the Lead Officer, the Executive Director and the Democracy Officer for their outstanding efforts which had played such an important part in the successes over the last few years. She felt the Committee had undertaken some truly valuable work, but events over the last week had crystallized in her mind, the need for the new scrutiny arrangements.

Councillor Fletcher led Members in thanking the Chair for the way in which she had undertaken her role with such dedication; welcoming issues, encouraging debate and effectively overseeing meetings.

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

There were no urgent items for discussion.

Penny Hall
Chairman

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New Scrutiny Committee work plan proposals from Environment Committee

Item	Purpose	Outcome	What is required?	Lead Officer
PROPOSED WORK PLAN ITEMS				
Annual review of the Gloucestershire Airport – Green Policy	Scrutiny	Review of the Green Policy (3rd annual review)	16 July or 13 September 2012	Gill Morris, Climate Change and Sustainability Officer
Winter Weather Procedures	Scrutiny	Keeping the town/borough moving	13 September 2012	Officer, Gloucestershire County Council
Review arrangements of UBICO	Scrutiny	Consider delivery of services following new arrangements	13 September 2012	Rob Bell, Director - Operations
Final Budget consultation	Scrutiny	Review final budget proposals 2013-14 and comment	25 February 2013	Mark Sheldon, Director of Resources
DRAFT Corporate Strategy 2012-13	Scrutiny	Review DRAFT strategy prior to Cabinet	25 February 2013	Richard Gibson, Strategy and Engagement Manager
Annual review of the Gloucestershire Airport – Green Policy	Scrutiny	Review of the Green Policy (4th annual review)	29 July 2013	Gill Morris, Climate Change and Sustainability Officer
Green Travel Plan	Scrutiny	Awaiting confirmation re: relevance of item from Lead Officer	tbc	Owen Parry, Head of Integrated Transport and Sustainability
PROPOSED SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS				
Air Quality Management Order working group	Update	Review progress	Autumn 2012	Paul Scott, Contaminated Land Officer
Imperial Gardens	Scrutiny	Assess remedial works to Imperial Gardens after 2012 festival season	After 2012 Festival Season	Adam Reynolds, Green Space Development Manager
Event submissions	Scrutiny	Consider the draft event submissions process, amend and approve	Continue until xx 2012	tbc

New Scrutiny Committee work plan proposals from Environment Committee

Item	Purpose	Outcome	What is required?	Lead Officer
PROPOSED MEMBER BRIEFINGS				
Flood update	Update	Biannual update on flood prevention in Cheltenham	September 2012	Geoff Beer, Geoff Beer, Principal Engineer (Land Drainage)
PROPOSED WORKING GROUPS				
WORKING GROUP	**SCOPE / OUTCOME**		**MEMBERSHIP**	**LEAD OFFICER**
Sustainable Management of green spaces	Consider potential changes to design and maintenance and recommend sustainable management practices. Consider potential changes to all types of green space to encourage biodiversity.		Nigel Britter Diane Hibbert Paul Wheeldon Penny Hall Vacancy	Adam Reynolds
Climate Change	Consider a support carbon reduction plans including, options for renewable energy. Consider potential effects of climate change on Council operations. Work with established groups to influence other organisations and learn from their experience.		Ian Bickerton Helen McCloskey Paul Wheeldon Penny Hall	Jane Griffiths Gill Morris
Budget Scrutiny (joint working group)	Support and improve the budget scrutiny process		Nigel Britter (E) Diane Hibbert (E) Peter Jeffries (EB) Paul Massy (EB) Jon Walklett (S) Duncan Smith (S)	Mark Sheldon
Waste & Recycling (Cabinet working group)	Monitor implementation of the new waste & recycling scheme		Nigel Britter Jacky Fletcher Diggory Seacome Roger Whybron	Rob Bell
Built Environment Commissioning Review (Cabinet working group)	Support the development of an initial report on results of preliminary needs analysis and scoping and final report which will set out the strategic		Tim Cooper Barbara Driver Bernie Fisher	Grahame Lewis

New Scrutiny Committee work plan proposals from Environment Committee

Item	Purpose	Outcome	What is required?	Lead Officer
	direction for Built Environment services		Jacky Fletcher Peter Jeffries Helena McCloskey John Rawson Lloyd Surgenor	

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