

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 3rd April, 2014

6.00 - 8.05 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Barbara Driver (Chair), Klara Sudbury (Vice-Chair), Andrew Chard, Nigel Britter, Colin Hay, Chris Ryder, Charles Stewart and Rob Reid (Reserve)
Also in attendance:	Councillor Penny Hall, Councillor Anne Regan, Councillor Jon Walklett, Shirin Wotherspoon, Councillor Steve Jordan, Councillor Rowena Hay, Councillor Peter Jeffries, Councillor Roger Whyborn and Councillor Chris Coleman

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Sandra Holliday and Helena McCloskey. Councillor Rob Reid attended the meeting as a substitute

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd March 2014 were agreed as a true record of that meeting.

4. PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS, CALLS FOR ACTIONS AND PETITIONS

None received.

5. MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

None received.

6. FEEDBACK FROM OTHER SCRUTINY MEETINGS ATTENDED

Councillor Penny Hall provided feedback from the Health, Community and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 4th March. The HCOSC continues to monitor the provision of emergency and urgent care following the changes at Cheltenham General Hospital (CGH). A full report was given by the Clinical Director for Emergency Services who gave a presentation setting out the reasons for the change. There had been considerable difficulties in recruiting middle grade A & E Doctors to supervise junior doctors and this impacted on the training requirements that came into force on 29/7/2013. The challenges of recruiting middle grade A&E doctors still persist and is a nationwide issue.

The A & E department remains open between 8 pm and 8 am for walk in Patients and those referred by their GP and is staffed by nurse practitioners.

The GP Out of Hours Service is co-located with the Emergency Department at CGH overnight and there are criteria which determine whether a patient could still be "Blue Lighted" to CGH if necessary.

"Healthwatch Glos" have been invited by the Gloucestershire Care Commissioning Group to be part of the review which considers both the data and at the "patient experience ". The evidence does not indicate any increase in patient complaints but it is important to ensure that accurate information is gathered.

Councillor Hall reported that the Deputy Director Delivery for South Western Ambulance Services was confident that the service was not detrimental to patients. All ambulance crews were now clear as to which patients could be taken to CGH within the new Criteria. Ambulance waiting times have improved.

Further guidance from the National Review of Urgent Care led by Professor Bruce Keogh which aims to improve quality and minimise unnecessary demand on hospitals is due in summer this year & GCCG & the Health Community will bring reports to HCOSC on the local implications.

Councillor Hall raised the question of public perception surrounding the changes at CGH; many people felt that the future of the hospital was in question and that its A & E department may be downgraded to a Minor Injuries Unit. Professor Clair Chilvers reassured the committee that there was no intention to downgrade CGH. She stated that it was clear that it was not possible to fit a "mega" department on just one site whether it was Cheltenham or Gloucester. She also informed members that the Hospitals Trust took the view that the reconfiguration of the service had improved the service,

The next review will take place in July.

7. CABINET BRIEFING

Councillor Steve Jordan presented an update as outlined in the Briefing Paper circulated with the agenda. He confirmed that the extended period of consultation on the Sexual Entertainment Venues Policy would commence in mid-April and run for twelve weeks.

8. UPDATE FROM UBICO ON ANNUAL PERFORMANCE

The Chair welcomed Rob Bell, Managing Director of UBICO, to the meeting to give an update on the company's annual performance. Rob Bell reminded the meeting that UBICO was set up as an arms-length company by Cheltenham Borough Council in partnership with Cotswold District Council following consultations to determine the most efficient and cost effective way to deliver environmental services. An Annual Report was available to members detailing the company's performance but, in summary, its performance had exceeded its financial targets. The business case set a target of £503,000 savings for its first year whereas the actual savings were £1.29 million over both authorities. Cheltenham Borough Council had made savings of £700,000, some of which is being held in reserve for future development.

The company is still awaiting its final figures for the financial year which has just ended but it would appear that Cheltenham Borough Council has made an additional £92,000 saving with £200,000 efficiency savings; the cumulative

savings of the two year period to Cheltenham Borough Council is over £1 million and the company is on target to deliver £5 million savings across the partnership within 5 years.

UBICO's general performance is closely monitored and no major issues have been identified over the last year. There are inevitably some problems that arise but these are relatively few and the company works quickly to remedy them.

In response to questions from members, Rob Bell informed the meeting that UBICO is constantly planning how best to use its resources to meet local needs. He undertook to discuss any particular issues raised by members with his Operations Manager.

A member suggested that UBICO should consider the use of smaller vehicles for ease of access to some areas,

The council operates a kerbside sorting scheme. Although this is a slower process and has higher collection costs, the council is able to sell the waste at a higher price than unsorted material; the Joint Waste Team is reviewing this practice. The recycled material is currently sold within a fixed contract and the Joint Waste Team will consider the viability of selling it on the open market to maximise revenue. It is a strategic objective to pool material from a number of authorities to increase the volume of material to sell.

Unlike Tewkesbury Borough Council, Cheltenham does not accept tetrapaks in its kerbside collections but they are accepted at bring sites. The council, Joint Waste Team and Ubico are considering expanding the number of items that will be collected. The bring sites, especially that at Bath Road, are closely monitored and UBICO works closely with the Public Protection Team to enforce any unauthorised deposits.

UBICO receives any complaints or comments from the public via the Municipal Offices. At present 99.8% of all collections are made on time. Rob Bell informed the meeting that although the weather has not been severe this winter, UBICO has reviewed its practices following the extreme weather in 2013 and has held exercises to test its contingency plans. The service ran smoothly during the very wet period earlier this year.

Several members expressed concern over the efficacy of UBICO's street cleaning operations. Rob Bell explained that UBICO worked closely with individual communities, was flexible in what days it undertook its cleaning operations and, since street clearances to facilitate thorough cleaning is not part of its routine service, it deals with requests to deep clean areas on a priority basis.

The chair thanked Rob Bell and it was agreed that he would be invited to attend the Committee in Autumn to provide a further update.

9. PUBLIC PROTECTION AND PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING COMMISSIONING REVIEW

Councillor Peter Jefferies, Cabinet Member for Housing and Safety, informed the meeting that the review of public protection and private sector housing was one of a range of commissioning reviews which have been undertaken by the

council. It covered the full range of services undertaken by the public protection team and the built environment enforcement team including environmental health, community safety, licensing, private sector housing, enforcement, lifelines and disabled facilities grants.

and the review had formulated a range of possible outcomes that will be presented in a report to Cabinet.

A member steering group had been set up to assist with the review and to provide a sounding board to himself as Cabinet Member. The project team had to work to very challenging timescales and take in a lot of information and he thanked members of the working group and officers for their hard work.

There were overlaps between this commissioning review and two scrutiny task groups looking at dog fouling and deprivation. He advised that currently 1700 vulnerable people were housed in the private sector.

A range of outcomes were identified building on outcomes from previous reviews as well as new outcomes based on specific needs. The review then assessed two delivery models; a shared service with our GO Shared Service partners and an in-house proposal.

Having completed the assessment of the two proposals, the project team concluded that neither the shared service nor the in-house proposal would best meet our outcomes at this current time.

Instead, the review team has concluded that a much wider in-house proposal be developed that would bring into scope all the services under the Environmental and Regulatory Services Division – as originally agreed by Council in July 2013.

A member asked what had been the underlying aims of the commissioning process – was it service enhancement, resilience or cost savings.

Jane Griffiths, Director of Commissioning, informed the meeting that the reviews had initially considered how best to achieve financial savings but had also conducted a needs analysis and had taken into account what the members had felt to be important. The following issues were identified as priorities: reducing the number of unsuitable private sector premises, ensuring that older tenants had suitable accommodation, managing the night-time economy, ensuring visible enforcement using officers with local knowledge and to protect the town's resources.

It was noted that the report would be going to Cabinet on 15 April 2014.

10. UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS

An update on progress of all the scrutiny task groups had been circulated with the papers.

(A) JCS Planning and Liaison

A written update was circulated to members with the agenda. Councillor Tim Harman was not at the meeting and no further information was available.

Councillor Nigel Britter, chairman of the s106 Scrutiny Task Group and Councillor Hay, who has proposed a task group to consider the protection of

public houses, both felt that it was important to review the terms of reference of all those task groups whose work contributes to the development of the Local Plan to ensure the most efficient use of resources and to reduce any possible overlap.

Rosalind Reeves, Democratic Services Manager, and Shirin Wotherspoon, One Legal, agreed to look at resourcing of these task groups and discuss the matter further with officers from planning and the chairs of each task group. Proposals can then be brought back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in July for agreement on the revised terms of reference.

(B) Cemetery and Crematorium

Councillor Chris Ryder presented the Scrutiny Task Group's final report following a review set up by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in its meeting of 25th November 2013.

Councillor Ryder informed the members that a few matters contained in the report were still waiting resolution and hoped that the Cabinet would pursue those items in due course. She highlighted to members that although the cremators were working satisfactorily currently this was without the abatement system and clarity was needed on the implications if the council was to come out the CAMEO scheme.

She thanked her fellow task group members and Rosalind Reeves for her support to the group. The chair also thanked those involved for the excellent practice adopted.

Councillor Roger Whyborn, Cabinet Member, assured the meeting that Cabinet would review the recommendations contained in the report when he would provide his response to the task group report. In the meantime he said that the task group report had been very helpful in highlighting particular issues though there were one or two areas where he felt the task group had not fully understood how the procurement process works. Regarding the reference in the task group report to a Cabinet report in June he clarified that this would not be a report but a briefing paper on the way forward for the cremators.

RESOLVED THAT

The recommendations of the Cemetery and Crematorium Scrutiny Task Group be endorsed for onward recommendation to Cabinet in June.

(C) Events

Councillor Penny Hall reported on the Events Submission Scrutiny Task Group whose report had been considered by the Cabinet on 5/2/2013. The task group had been set up to scrutinise how Cheltenham Borough Council determined which events to approve and had recommended that an Event Consultative Group (ECG) be established. The ECG was set up in January 2013. The processes now in place for approving events has led to significant improvements although Councillor Hall acknowledged that there are occasions where things can still go wrong. The situation is monitored in order to improve the system.

She had written to all councillors asking for their feedback and some had responded that they had not been aware of any ECGs for their ward.

Councillor Hall referred to an e-mail she had received from the Business Support and Licensing Team Leader, Louis Krog, who confirmed that councillors had been attending but not every councillor would have had an ECG in their ward. As chair of the events consultative group his view was that the newly adopted events process had significantly improved the way the Council deals with events. In 2013 the Council was notified of 104 events via the new process and thus far in 2014 there has been 21. He advised that for the vast majority of events officers were able to deal with them informally with about 1 in 5 requiring an ECG meeting. The new procedure had also resulted in better managed/run events because the event organisers have the benefit of an audience with professional officers who can advise, answer questions and direct people. He concluded that the newly adopted events process had significantly improved the way the Council deals with events.

Councillor Hall echoed that view and thanked the members of the scrutiny task group for the successful conclusion of their work with officer support from Rosalind Reeves and Saira Malin.

(D) Section 106

Please see Agenda item 10 a)

(E) Hidden Deprivation in the town centre

Councillor Chris Coleman presented the latest report from the Task Group on the Hidden Deprivation in the Town Centre. There was a debate on whether this report was the Task Group's final one and if so, whether the recommendations should be considered for endorsement. It was felt that the task group had more work to do and Councillor Coleman requested that the group meet again to reconsider its recommendations and to determine if the group should also report on health and education matters.

This was agreed by the Committee.

11. REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The Committee reviewed the workplan and agreed that it would identify the task groups that are associated with the Joint Core Strategy. Rosalind Reeves undertook to do some preparatory work in advance of the meeting to identify resource requirements. She also informed the committee that she would include a session on effective scrutiny task groups as part of the member development programme.

Councillor Whyborn informed the meeting that he would consider the recommendations in the cemetery and crematorium report and report back on the procurement policy after that.

The chair informed the meeting that Severn Trent Water would be willing to give a presentation to all members in respect of its two year plan to update the drainage and sewerage systems. A member questioned why such a presentation should be restricted to the O&S committee. The chair advised that she had met the company in her capacity as chair of O&S and added that all members are welcome to attend O&S meetings.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will take place on 3rd July 2014.

The meeting closed at 8.10pm.

Barbara Driver
Chairman