

Council

Monday, 24th June, 2013
2.30 - 4.25 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Wendy Flynn (Chair), Simon Wheeler (Vice-Chair), Andrew Chard, Garth Barnes, Ian Bickerton, Nigel Britter, Chris Coleman, Barbara Driver, Bernard Fisher, Rob Garnham, Les Godwin, Penny Hall, Tim Harman, Colin Hay, Rowena Hay, Sandra Holliday, Peter Jeffries, Steve Jordan, Andrew Lansley, Paul Massey, Helena McCloskey, Andrew McKinlay, Paul McLain, David Prince, John Rawson, Anne Regan, Rob Reid, Chris Ryder, Diggory Seacome, Duncan Smith, Malcolm Stennett, Charles Stewart, Klara Sudbury, Pat Thornton, Jon Walklett, Roger Whyborn and Suzanne Williams

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were given on behalf of Councillors Fletcher, Hibbert, Smith and Wall. Councillor Smith subsequently arrived at the meeting at 14.40.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ryder declared a personal interest in agenda item 8 as she has an interest in potential development land.

Councillor Garnham declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 8 as through his business he is promoting a site for development that is identified in the JCS. However, as this is only a Council Performance Report, he indicated he would stay in the chamber for the debate. He also declared a personal interest in agenda item 10 as both his wife and son are employees of the Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

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

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2013 be agreed and signed as an accurate record subject to Councillor Reid's apologies being recorded.

4. COMMUNICATIONS BY THE MAYOR

The Mayor thanked members who had attended her charity launch at the weekend. She encouraged members to attend the Real Ale Trail to be held on 5 July in aid of the Mayor's charities and to support the Rotary Club's Poliomyelitis Challenge on 21 September in Montpellier Gardens.

She congratulated Saira Malin from Democratic Services and her husband on the recent birth of their son.

The Mayor advised members that she had removed the moment of reflection from the Council agenda which she hoped would enable everybody to attend from the start of the meeting. She indicated that the Cambray room would be available for half an hour prior to the Council meeting for any members who wish to have some quiet time for reflection.

5. COMMUNICATIONS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader encouraged members to attend the Midsummer Fiesta to be held on 6 July. This had to be cancelled in 2012 because of bad weather so he hoped for a fine day this year.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None received.

7. MEMBER QUESTIONS

1.	Question from Councillor Tim Harman to Cabinet Member Corporate Services, Councillor Jon Walklett
	Will the Cabinet Member include in his deliberations with Forest of Dean District Council concerning Members IT facilities, a consideration of the far superior services provided by the County Council to its Members?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>In February 2013, the council agreed £1.3m of funding for the ICT infrastructure upgrade strategy. The sequence for this investment is firstly to bring our core systems up to date which will then provide the platform for supporting iPad's, iPhones, wifi and more resilient remote access.</p> <p>We are aware of the ICT provision provided by Gloucestershire County council and members at the FOD already use similar technologies.</p> <p>It is our intention to provide the same level of member ICT support here as soon as is possible.</p> <p>In a supplementary question, Councillor Harman asked for a reminder on why the Forest of Dean had been chosen as the council's ICT partner.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member advised that the original list of 11 options had been narrowed down to 3. These were to continue with the current service, outsource to a commercial organisation or share the service with another council or councils. The Forest of Dean had been through a similar process and had some of the most go-ahead systems in the county and therefore were in a place where this council aspired to be. The link with the Forest meant that ICT resources, including the ICT manager, were shared across the two councils. He hoped that this would provide a</p>

	potential basis for expanding the service in future to other GO partners.
2.	Question from Councillor Rob Garnham to Cabinet Member Corporate Services, Councillor Jon Walklett
	Does the Cabinet Member agree with me that there are serious and deep rooted problems with the ability of this Council to provide a reliable IT service both to members of the public and to Councillors. Can the Cabinet Member reassure this Council that his administration is tackling this situation as a matter of urgency and that the resources needed to fix the problems will be provided?
	Response from Cabinet Member
	<p>The problems we are currently experiencing are the result of lack in investment in ICT. This was identified and addressed in the Infrastructure upgrade strategy which formed part of the work undertaken in creating the shared ICT service between the CBC and Forest of Dean District Councils.</p> <p>The £1.3m investment programme will address this lack of investment in both ICT Staff and infrastructure and will bring our ICT infrastructure and systems up to date so that we can provide a reliable, resilient and more business focused service to both members and officers.</p> <p>As a result of recent problems we are looking to accelerate elements of this programme to implement improvements sooner and deliver some quick fixes.</p> <p>In a supplementary question, Councillor Garnham asked the Cabinet Member whether he considered it satisfactory that one member has to catch a bus into the municipal offices to enable her to read her e-mails and that some councillors still had council provided laptops whilst others did not have this facility.</p> <p>In response, the Cabinet Member agreed that this was an appalling situation. He reminded members that a collective decision had been made regarding the provision of laptops in May 2012. It was considered that replenishing laptops was unviable and that facilities would be available for members to access council systems using their own equipment. The option of bringing forward a portion of their members' allowance was available to any member who wished to purchase new equipment. He acknowledged that all members were currently very frustrated with the Citrix service but steps were being taken to address this as part of the improvements to the ICT infrastructure. This 3 year project was started in February with a budget of £1.3 M and it was now only day 85. On that basis it would be premature to give any dates but he encouraged members to attend the ICT member seminar next week so they could get a clearer picture of what was being planned. In the mean time he would be happy to give a bimonthly update to members either verbally or in writing or to the O&S committee.</p>

8. REPORT OF THE COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE AT END OF 2012-13

Councillor Jon Walklett, Cabinet Member Corporate Services introduced the report which had been circulated with the agenda. The report set out information and data taken from the council's performance management system to enable Council to review the corporate performance of the organisation at the end of the financial year 2012-13.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services explained that the report was a realistic appraisal of the corporate strategy performance targets set out at the end of previous financial year. The report tracked 78 milestones which had been identified in the 2012-13 action plan. Out of these, 56 (72%) milestones were completed at the end of the year, 16 milestones were classed as being amber as there are plans for the completion within a reasonable timeframe and 6 milestones are red as they will not be achieved within a reasonable time frame. The six milestones all related to the JCS programme or the Community Governance Review. The 2012-13 action plan also identified 52 key performance indicators to track the council's progress. 32 of these were indicators which CBC is directly accountable for and of these 81% had been met and there were positive initiatives in place to address the remaining three.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services said that 2012-13 had been a difficult year for most local authorities due to ever decreasing funding and he congratulated the Cabinet Member Finance for making funding streams available for projects in these difficult circumstances. He went on to highlight some of the positive achievements of the council including the work of the Participation and Engagement team with the police to reduce crime and the council's work with CBH to address the shortage of affordable and social housing. Finally, he referred members to the update on two further indicators which had been circulated at the start of the meeting.

Councillor Garnham, as the leader of the Conservative group, was happy to support the report as he felt it shone a light on the weaknesses of the current administration and held it to account. He acknowledged that the council had performed well in areas of partnership working such as tackling crime and affordable housing. By contrast, he felt the council had failed to meet targets on its own services and he highlighted waste and recycling, ICT, the Olympic legacy, the democratic accountability of Ubico and NEETs. He felt these were all areas where the council could do better.

Another member asked for reassurance that staffing levels within the new Art Gallery and Museum and tourist information centre would still enable the best possible services to be delivered. In response, the Cabinet Member Sport and Leisure, confirmed that a full restructure was under way at the Art Gallery to ensure it was fit for purpose and staffing levels were set at appropriate levels to deliver the service required. In response to the comment about the Olympic legacy, she had seen benefits in her local ward and she would be happy to supply Councillor Garnham a more detailed note on this matter.

Another member congratulated the council on the very positive work it had achieved with partners particularly in the areas of sport, safeguarding and supporting people. However he felt the council needed to be looking beyond the scope of working with other districts and look ahead to the time when it may no

longer exist as a district council. He was concerned about the axing of the free garden waste collection, the number of unused brown bins at the depot and the increase in general waste and suggested that the closed bin policy had been implemented primarily for financial reasons.

In response, the Cabinet Member Sustainability, acknowledge that the waste targets may have been too ambitious but the council's recycling rates were some of the most improved in the country. Resources were overstretched but the council continued to look for improvements and extend the range of what could be recycled. He considered that ensuring side waste was not left on the street was a significant improvement from a health and safety point of view.

The Leader expressed his disappointment at some of the points being made. He emphasised that it was the nature of the performance report to highlight things which had been unsuccessful and members should not forget the high level of achievement on both performance indicators and milestones. The council prides itself on its work with partners and he believed the current administration had been responsible for huge changes in waste and recycling. Other achievements included new business start-ups including shops, the North Place and St Paul's developments and the new Art Gallery & Museum with its contribution to the town's tourism offer. The Olympic torch relay had been very successful with significant staff effort to set this up and it was not true to say that there was no Olympic legacy in the town.

The Cabinet Member Finance highlighted that resources continue to be stretched with the current ongoing financial cuts, but the council was still maintaining and improving council services. This was at a time when many other authorities up and down the country were being forced to close their services.

Councillor Massey, as the chair of the Audit Committee, referred to comments made by the Head of Audit Cotswold, at their last meeting that he had never seen so much change in an organisation in a 12 month period. In that context, Councillor Massey considered it was remarkable that the council had continued to achieve 81% of its performance indicators and was a credit to the council and its officers.

Another member spoke in support of the report and welcomed the fact that in this council it came to full Council for a debate. He was concerned that the criticism made during the meeting may appear to be more criticism of staff running the service rather than the administration.

In his summing up, Councillor Walklett emphasised that the report gave an appraisal of how the council had performed in the last financial year and helped to formulate plans for the year to come.

Upon the vote it was unanimously

Resolved that the review of annual performance for 2012/3 be approved.

9. APPOINTMENT TO THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE HEALTH, COMMUNITY AND CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services introduced the report. He explained that Gloucestershire County Council is responsible for setting up a Health, Community and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee and each of the district councils is entitled to appoint a member to the committee. At Selection Council on 14 May 2012, Council nominated Councillor Klara Sudbury to the committee and Councillor Colin Hay as a substitute. Following her election to the County Council in May 2013, Councillor Sudbury was now a county councillor member of the committee and as she cannot perform two roles, there was a vacancy for the district member. The County Council had confirmed that the district nomination can be any member provided they are not a member of the authority's Executive. Group Leaders were requested to consider their nominations by the end of May and Councillor Penny Hall was nominated by Councillor Rob Garnham. No other nominations were received and Group leaders had indicated their support for this nomination.

Upon a vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED that Councillor Penny Hall be nominated to the Gloucestershire Health, Community and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

10. NOTICES OF MOTION

Councillor Sudbury, seconded by Councillor Coleman, proposed the following notice of motion.

This Council is dismayed at the decision taken by the NHS community in Gloucestershire to permanently divert ambulances overnight between 8pm and 8am from Cheltenham General Hospital to Gloucestershire Royal Hospital.

We are particularly concerned about the potential for increased mortality rates of patients being taken further across the county for emergency care, alongside the impact on waiting times at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital and on ambulance response times. We are also concerned that measures to mitigate access issues for Cheltenham patients being discharged from Gloucester remain uncertain.

In the light of the national review of urgent and emergency care, published on 17th June, this Council agrees to write formally to the Board of the Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group to ask that the decision to downgrade Cheltenham A&E should only be temporary to:

a) allow more time for local and national workforce issues to be addressed and

b) allow the impact of the downgrading to be properly understood by the health community and the County's Health, Community and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

In introducing the motion, Councillor Sudbury, highlighted her concerns with the proposals which would result in 16 patients per night being transferred by

ambulance to Gloucester. She referred to the recent meeting of the Gloucestershire Health, Community and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) she had attended as a county member and had submitted an amendment. After considering the proposals and the results of the consultation, the HOSC had given a green light to the NHS proposals. It had been suggested that the low number of people responding to the consultation was as a result of the public not caring about the A&E service. However she argued that the poor response was due to a badly timed consultation and confusion caused by the changes being made to the PCT at the time. She had been disappointed in the way the HOSC meeting had been managed and felt members had been prevented from asking questions of the health professionals present at the meeting. She acknowledged that there were difficulties in recruiting the necessary consultants to ensure the safety and supervision of trainees in A&E. However she felt it would be a mistake to make a permanent change whilst trying to resolve these resource issues. Finally she referred to research made available by Martin Horwood MP where consultants had reported concerns about the potential impact of several minutes delay on cases needing the A&E service.

A member acknowledged it was a difficult area. He felt it was appropriate to challenge and seek reassurance on the proposed changes and monitor future performance. However he suggested that the temporary solution proposed in the motion may provide staff with more uncertainty and potentially make recruitment more difficult. For that reason his gut feeling was that the proposal for a centre of excellence was the way to go in order to optimise patient care.

Another member felt that more work needed to be done on the wording of the motion as it was currently too weak to make any real impact. Another member suggested that the phrase "mitigate access issues" needed more clarification.

Several members expressed concerns about the changes being made to A&E and applauded the sentiments behind the motion.

Although well-intentioned and picking up concerns from the community, another member felt the motion was futile in what it could achieve. Council members were not experts and should acknowledge that HOSC had received a detailed presentation on this matter and were generally much more informed about health issues. He added that he had attended a consultation event and his initial dismay at the proposals had been allayed. He had concluded that although the proposals were not ideal, they would increase survival rates over the current arrangements, not to say that the current arrangements could not be improved. He concluded that it would take at least five to seven years to enable the shortage of consultants to be addressed and this could not be classed as "temporary". A preferable approach for the Council would be to call on the ambulance service to make adequate provision to support the new proposals. Far more important than the additional eight minutes for an A&E case to be taken to Gloucester, was that the patient should be directed to the appropriate specialist unit at the hospital when they arrived.

Another member challenged the eight minutes as an underestimate of the time it would take, even for an emergency vehicle, to travel between Cheltenham and Gloucester. He emphasised that the thrust behind the motion was not to put in place a permanent solution whilst workforce issues were still being resolved.

Changes to A&E should be made on the basis of clinical excellence and not be driven by workforce issues. His particular concern was that after treatment, patients could be left in Gloucester in the middle of the night without any transport home.

Other members spoke in support of the motion and felt it was important that they gave voice to the concerns of their constituents. Gloucester A&E did not currently appear to have surplus capacity so the outcome of the proposals could be that patients transferring to Gloucester end up having a longer wait.

The Leader of the Council felt this was an important debate and certainly not futile. Any response was urgent and therefore there was no time to set up a working group to look more closely at the issue.

Councillor Hall, had attended the HOSC meeting as the borough council representative. She explained that she had worked for 10 years as a nurse in a minor injury unit and as a result she could reassure members that nurses in these units were highly trained in emergency techniques. Unfortunately in the hospital she had worked in, it had not been viable to maintain those skills and therefore the unit had been closed down. With regard to Cheltenham General, they would have nurse practitioners in place who are highly training in A&E techniques. She described the HOSC meeting as 'the nastiest meeting' where members of the committee had been "between a rock and hard place". Although no members had wanted to say yes to the proposals, the Hospitals Trust had been advised that from August 2013 it would no longer be able to utilise the junior doctors to fill the places of the middle grade doctors required on each rota. As the NHS had also informed the committee that it would take until 2020 to fill the additional consultants post, the committee felt they had no choice. For that reason members had felt their final resolution with the qualifications they added was the best that could be achieved in the circumstances. She was disappointed that Councillor Sudbury had not taken this motion asking for a temporary closure to the HOSC meeting. She felt she had already voted on Councillor's Sudbury's proposal at the HOSC meeting that the changes should be temporary for one year and on that basis would abstain from voting on the matter again.

As seconder of the motion, Councillor Coleman, urged members to keep a close eye on the proposals on behalf of their constituents. He repeated the figure previously stated that the proposals could mean as many as 6000 cases a year would have to travel to Gloucester. He too had attended the HOSC meeting and agreed with the sentiments expressed. He had been unhappy that important questions had not been answered and no assurances had been given by the health professionals that no lives would be lost as a result of proposals or that there would be no negative impact on patient care. In his view the proposals were not about improving medical care or providing a centre of excellence but were about staffing. For this reason and in order to reduce health inequalities across the town, he urged members to support the motion.

In her summing up, Councillor Sudbury responded to some of the points made by members during the debate. She felt a full calendar year would allow more time to recruit staff and address some of the resourcing issues. The "mitigate access issues" had been discussed at the HOSC meeting and referred to patients being potentially discharged in the middle of the night with no transport

home. Finally she was concerned that this was the start of a path of further specialisation across the two sites which could result in no A&E facilities at all in Cheltenham in 10 years time.

Upon a vote on the motion was CARRIED.
Voting : For 28, Against 1, Abstentions 5.

11. TO RECEIVE PETITIONS

None received.

**12. ANY OTHER ITEM THE MAYOR DETERMINES AS URGENT AND WHICH REQUIRES A DECISION
ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR OF PLANNING COMMITTEE**

The Mayor had agreed to an urgent item being considered by Council, namely the appointment of a new chair and vice-chair to Planning Committee and asked the Cabinet Member Corporate Services to introduce the item.

He explained that at Selection Council on 14 May 2012, Council resolved that all nominations for chairs and vice-chairs of committees should be made at that Council meeting rather than separate meetings of those committees immediately following Council which had been done in previous years. Councillor Helena McCloskey was duly elected as chair and Councillor Jacky Fletcher as vice-chair.

At Planning Committee on 20 June, Councillor McCloskey announced her intention to stand down as chair and similarly Councillor Fletcher had stood down as vice-chair. Councillor Chris Coleman had indicated he was prepared to stand as the chair of Planning Committee and Councillor Penny Hall as the vice-chair.

As these appointments were made by Council it now falls to Council to appoint the new chair and vice-chair.

Councillor McCloskey expressed her regret at having to step down as chair of Planning Committee but this was necessary because of her new commitments outside the council. Council wished to put down on record their thanks for her chairmanship.

Upon a vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED that Chris Coleman be appointed as Chair of Planning Committee and Councillor Penny Hall as vice-chair.

Wendy Flynn
Chair

