Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 27th April, 2015
6.00 - 7.05 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Tim Harman (Chair), Colin Hay (Vice-Chair), Nigel Britter, Chris Mason, Sandra Holliday, Helena McCloskey, John Payne, Max Wilkinson and Rob Reid (Reserve)
Also in attendance:	Councillor Steve Jordan and Councillor Flo Clucas

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Councillors Murch and Ryder had given their apologies. Councillor Reid attended as a substitute for Councillor Murch.

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 2 March 2015 be agreed and signed as an accurate record.

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

None had been received.

5. MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

None had been referred.

6. FEEDBACK FROM OTHER SCRUTINY MEETINGS ATTENDED

Councillor Clucas provided a brief update on recent meetings of the Health Community Care O&S Committee and Gloucestershire Economic Growth O&S Committee.

She confirmed that she had fed back comments from the last meeting of this committee at the 3 March meeting of the HCC O&S Committee; relating to alcohol and difficulties getting those responsible for the administration of the Trust to attend a meeting. Cheltenham was a top locality for alcohol and alcohol related crime and members of the HCC were happy to discuss how we could work together to tackle this issue. The committee were advised that senior officials from the Trust already met with senior officials from Cheltenham Borough Council but there was a suggestion that if they were approached at

another time, they would be more open to attending. The HCC had also discussed:

Transient Ischemic Attacks (TIAs): of those patients who present at Doctors with TIAs prior to a stroke, fewer than 60% were being put through the system. The hospitals saw over 1000 cases a year, but there were no specialists between Friday p.m. and Monday a.m. There were plans to employ weekend specialists but she was not sure that this would apply to all hospitals.

GP contracts: the Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust budgets (£17m dental, £18m pharmacy, etc.) were significant sums of money and members were assured that Doctors being able to award themselves contracts was not a problem.

The committee had started planning for 2015-16 scrutiny arrangements and domiciliary care would be a key focus in relation to drug and alcohol services, with the suggestion being that this might be something that this committee wanted to look at. Other areas included respiratory care and mental health, and some workshops had been arranged, a review of the suicide prevention strategy (June/July) and end of life care which would be tied in with the review of respiratory care.

A member pointed out that work was being done locally to address alcohol issues by partnerships and that they must be included if any scrutiny work was to be undertaken in Cheltenham.

In relation to the Gloucestershire Economic Growth O&S Committee which met on the 18 March, she advised that concerns had been raised regarding economic development, what was being done in Gloucestershire and what this meant in terms of governance and devolution. In considering devolution the committee had looked at Manchester. Her personal view was that the future of economic development was dependant on devolution and that everyone should be involved in a discussion about what should and will happen at a local level.

An update from Councillor McCloskey on the 2 April meeting of the Police and Crime Panel had been circulated with the agenda. This included details of an investment to save initiative, which would see police being provided with Samsung Galaxy phones and enabling them to undertake a number of tasks without having to return to their base. This would result in a saving of £4m pa and the loss (through retirement and resignations) of approximately 80 officers. There would also be some changes to the estate. It was still the intention to leave Lansdown Road and find another location in the town centre and have another in Whaddon. Grants for projects relating to the police and crime plan had reached 146 and 88 projects were under consideration for the latest bidding round. Both the chair and vice-chair of the Police and Crime Panel were standing down on the 7 May elections and there were likely to be other changes to the membership for the next meeting on the 16 July.

Members were reminded that Martin Surl, the Police Commissioner for Gloucestershire was scheduled to attend the next meeting of the committee (29 June) and referred members to the pro-forma at the back of the agenda.

7. CABINET BRIEFING

The Leader referred members to the briefing which had been circulated with the agenda. The briefing focussed on the issue of devolution and the need for Gloucestershire to be ready to take part in whatever devolution happens after the General Elections. Cabinet were of the opinion that there first needed to be a broader debate on what the vision was for Gloucestershire and then consider what powers could be devolved down from government, but not exclude changes to improve service provision locally (including highways where many people were concerned that the current arrangements were not working as well as they could).

Some members voiced their support for a unitary solution and the efficiencies that this offered. The Leader felt that there was little value in having the unitary debate again but stated that unlike 18 months ago, everything was on the agenda rather than off. One member felt that with increased money being devolved would come the need for improved democracy to ensure that its use was properly overseen and managed.

All the talk with regard to devolution had centred on cities and this posed the risk that all power would go to Bristol and Cheltenham would miss out on something better for the future and become almost irrelevant. Cabinet wanted to work to make sure that this was not the case.

A member stressed that instead of Government coming up with a blueprint they were instead, inviting suitable plans which made sense for a particular area.

The Leader was concerned that there seemed to be an expectation that there would be decision on this matter in June, which he did not envisage as being achievable with having elections in May.

8. PROJECT INITIATION DOCUMENT: RECYCLING MATERIALS SALES AND BULKING

Scott Williams, from the Joint Waste Team at GCC and Richard Coole, the Performance Officer for Ubico, introduced the Project Initiation Document for the recycling materials bulking and sales project. Scott explained that the purpose of the project was for Ubico and the Joint Waste Team to assume responsibility for bulking and sales of recycling materials (collected from kerbside, bring sites and the Swindon Road household recycling centre). This was currently contracted to Printwaste to whom an operating profit and handling fee were payable. He then talked through the Executive Summary, as circulated with the agenda, which set out the objectives, project management arrangements and progress to date, for the project.

The following responses were given to member questions;

- Printwaste had made it clear that they would be willing to extend the contract to October and beyond if required.
- Negotiations regarding equipment were ongoing with Printwaste. There would be a cost to Printwaste associated with removal of the equipment which was fairly embedded in the fabric of the building. A valuation and condition survey had been undertaken and any recommendation to go

ahead and purchase the equipment from Printwaste would be dependent on another satisfactory condition survey.

- There was a risk associated with any material sales but an expert had been commissioned to work on the project and his advice was that achieving the best price was very much based on relationships with the processors. Ultimately, the material that was being collected was very clean and as such, an attractive option for processors.
- Printwaste did have another site and discussions were ongoing with them and other processors in the area regarding being able to use their sites as an alternative to Swindon Road for the sake of business continuity. Again, Ubico were in a strong position given the clean kerbside source of the recyclables.
- The Eunomia evaluation was done some time ago and had been based on a number of assumptions made by Ubico, resulting in the £71k figure. These assumptions had since been revisited by Ubico and the figures revised accordingly; up to £92k.
- The Cabinet Member was not a member of the Project Board and as such, did not attend its meetings. The Cabinet Member received monthly highlight reports and seemed comfortable with this arrangement.

Members supported the use of recyclables as a commodity and the ability to take advantage of fluctuations in the market to achieve a larger profit and felt that this would result in a greater incentive to increase recycling levels.

The committee asked to see updates following each gate review and a copy of the final report.

9. DOG FOULING SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS

As the report author was not in attendance at the meeting, the Democracy Officer explained that the paper set out progress against the recommendations of the STG which had been taken to Cabinet in April 2014.

Members acknowledged that progress had been hindered by a lack of resources and voiced concerns that it appeared that one individual had been tasked with taking all of the recommendations forward, though nobody was present that could validate this. A member was able to sympathise with those members of the public who felt antagonised by stencilling and would rather that resources were used to clear the faeces.

Councillor Payne advised that the report had been considered at a meeting of the C5 group on the 1 April and overall, members had been disappointed at the fact that only 7 of the 13 recommendations had actually been progressed. They accepted that this was largely due to a lack of resources and feedback included; the wording of posters was too polite, some parishes were happy to undertake stencilling themselves, the council should be providing dog waste bags, more bins were required and couldn't bag dispensers be fitted to bins.

The committee then talked through paragraph 4 of the paper; next steps, and commented as necessary:

- Members wanted the Director of Environmental and Regulatory Services to explain exactly how recommendations 1, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12 and 13, were being picked up as part of the REST project.
- Rec 2. Members acknowledged that stickers had been deployed which explained that dog faeces could be disposed of in litter bins in any bag but felt that there was a need to install additional bins or relocate existing bins in areas with a dog fouling issue.
- Rec 3. Members accepted that the stencilling had proved effective in reducing dog fouling but felt that the faeces should also be cleared and if it were not, then stencilling should no longer take place.
- Rec 4. Members welcomed the policy change by which dog faeces could be disposed of in litter bins and in any bag.
- Rec 8. Members queried whether the issue of resources would be picked up and addressed as part of the REST project.
- Members accepted the reasons given for why specific dog-fouling multi-agency patrols were unlikely to occur.

The feedback of the committee would be passed to the relevant officers and their responses would, in turn, be reported back to the committee.

10. DEPRIVATION SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chairman introduced the update as circulated with the agenda. He explained that the Deprivation STG had been established some time ago but the review had not been concluded. The decision was taken to table the report with Cabinet so as not to lose sight of the good work that had been done up to that point. The Democracy Officer explained that the update had been presented in the form of questions and answers as the recommendations of the STG had been quite far reaching and there was no one responsible officer and/or Cabinet Member.

Members were happy with the way in which the update had been presented and suggested that this approach should be adopted for 6 monthly updates on all future STGs.

In relation to the update which was being considered, members made the following comments;

- There were no timescales set out in the response to question 4. A request for this information would be made.
- The next update on progress would be scheduled for April 2016 to allow for the conclusion of the REST project.
- The next update should highlight how each recommendation fits into the budget so as to highlight where resources need to be allocated.

11. ECONOMIC STRATEGY

The Democracy Officer introduced the briefing as circulated with the agenda, which the Chairman had expected would be presented by the Leader.

Councillor Hay had raised this for consideration by the committee as he felt that economic development was a function which was key to the wellbeing of the town and its residents. He felt that the Athey report acknowledged that

Cheltenham was doing well but had raised issues that it felt should be addressed. He was aware that up to this point economic development had been taken forward as part of the Local Plan by the Planning Liaison Group, but suggested that the issue would benefit from an injection of fresh ideas by a different group of members. A member felt that as a town, we did not always demonstrate that we were open to change, and that developing the economy would rely upon developing the town and would, as such, require a change of mind-set. Another member wanted to see an increase in the monitoring of economic performance at the council. The committee agreed that a cross-party group should be established but that this should not necessarily take the form of a scrutiny task group and the group should include businesses but be extended beyond simply the Chamber of Commerce. Members agreed that work on the Local Plan would need to be concluded in the first instance, so that any linkages could be identified and hoped that Cabinet would be open to working with a cross-party group. The Leader would be contacted and his thoughts on the suggestion sought.

12. UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS

Members were referred to the scrutiny task group (STG) update which had been circulated with the agenda.

The Democracy Officer provided a brief update on the three active STGs;

The Members ICT Policy and Review of Public Art Governance STG recommendations had been to Cabinet and a progress review had been scheduled for 12 months. In view of earlier discussions by the committee, a 6 month update would be scheduled in addition to this.

The Cheltenham Spa Railway Station STG were working to conclude their review, first meeting with the Managing Director of Stagecoach West, before meeting with the Leader, Cabinet Member Development and Safety and Legal, to discuss the draft report and recommendations.

Councillor Wilkinson, as Chair of the Cycling and Walking STG advised that the group had received evidence from a number of different people and groups, and were scheduled to meet with a disability group the next evening (28/04). They were also researching examples of excellence elsewhere in the country, with a trip to Bristol in the pipeline and were starting to discuss any conclusions.

Pub Closures STG would be removed from the plan at the next meeting if no further action had been taken by Councillor Hay in the meantime.

The Chairman queried whether the committee would like to establish a task group to look at the issue of broadband, which was raised at the Council meeting. GCC's Fastshire broadband initiative was primarily focussed on providing improved broadband services in rural areas, but given that neither, Gloucester City or Cheltenham had benefitted from faster broadband courtesy of BT or Virgin (which suggested that these areas were not considered to be commercial areas) GCC were investigating whether it was possible to use the Fastshire subsidy to make improvements in these areas. The suggestion was that this group, which would extend an invitation to Gloucester City, could look at what and where the issues were and raise the profile of the issue to improve

the council's position in lobbying BT and Virgin and/or GCC. An invitation to Gloucester City would be extended in the first instance.

13. REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The work plan had been circulated with the agenda.

The 2015-16 meeting dates had been added and the work plan was in the process of being updated. Members were reminded that they could raise items for consideration as part of the work plan and were asked to contact Saira Malin in the first instance.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for the 29 June 2015. Members were reminded that the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire (Martin Surl) and Chief Executive of the Lido Trust (Julie Sergeant) were scheduled to attend the next meeting. A commitment in the Council's Scrutiny Witness Charter was to inform witnesses of the matters about which the scrutiny committee wished to speak to them and advise them of any documents which they wished to have produced, as well as providing reasonable notice of such requirements. The deadline for members of the committee to submit this information was **12 noon on Friday 5 June 2015**.

Tim Harman
Chairman