

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 12th September, 2016

6.05 - 8.40 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Tim Harman (Chair), Jon Walklett (Vice-Chair), Mike Collins, Colin Hay, Sandra Holliday, Chris Mason, Helena McCloskey, John Payne and Max Wilkinson
Also in attendance:	Councillor Adam Lillywhite, Councillor Steve Jordan, Councillor Chris Coleman, Councillor Paul McCloskey, Councillor Dennis Parsons and Councillor Roger Whyborn Blackadder (Cheltenham Business Improvement District) and Mark Sheldon (Director of Corporate Resources and Projects)

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

No apologies had been received but Councillor Holliday had advised that she would be late and subsequently arrived at 6.45pm.

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 27 June 2016 be agreed and signed as an accurate record.

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

None were submitted.

5. MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

No matters were referred to the committee.

6. ACCESS ISSUES FOR THOSE WITH DISABILITIES

The Chairman explained that earlier in the year, he and other members, including the Police and Crime Commissioner and local MP, had taken part in the Wheelchair Challenge, which had provided a genuine insight into some of the difficulties wheelchair users face on a daily basis. At that time, he had also attended a talk on by the ladies that would be speaking to the committee this evening and was keen that the committee hear it and give some thought as to if and how the council could provide any solutions.

Bille-Jane had lived independently for 19 years and Nicola Bates who had lived independently for 8 years, stressed the importance of disabled toilets on their wellbeing, not just their availability, but their accessibility, as for some, this could often mean the difference between being able to go out and not.

They proceeded to outline some of the many issues that users often encountered when using disabled toilets:

- Some disabled toilets weren't big enough to accommodate modern, battery powered wheelchairs, let alone the carer(s) that the wheelchair user may need to have assist them, depending on the severity of their disability.
- Some of the toilets were set on plinths and in some cases this meant that they were too high for wheelchair users to be able to manoeuvre themselves onto.
- Panic alarms could be activated by accident where the cords were wrapped around the bar.
- It was often the case that disabled toilets were used as storage areas for highchairs and whilst this undoubtedly posed an accessibility issue for wheelchair users and it also raised hygiene concerns.
- It was also important for the rails and bars to be correctly fitted. Nicola had recently had an experience where the bar had come away from the wall and she had fallen to the floor and bumped her head.

The best example of a disabled toilet in Cheltenham had been in the Beechwood Arcade, though this had closed since John Lewis had taken over the building. Another good example was the toilet at the Brewery (located next to the cash points), this was a really large space but it didn't have a hoist or changing bed.

Billie-Jane and Nicola felt that when considering the layout and facilities for new disabled toilets, they should be consulting those people that will be using the toilet: people with disabilities, wheelchair users and carers, so that the result is a facility that works.

They then talked through some of the issues faced when trying to use buses;

- Much of the space was only large enough to accommodate a manual wheelchair, rather than powered chairs which were much bigger.
- Wheelchair users were expected to position the back of their chairs against the window but this necessitated a certain amount of manoeuvring and this was often impeded by the position of some of the poles.
- A lack of straps meant that there were occasions when the weight of the chair would cause it to move as buses took corners.
- Both had experiences of bus drivers refusing to lower the ramp.
- Often, the vehicle would start moving off before the wheelchair was in position, which made an already quite stressful experience, even more so. Put simply, they were not able to get into and use the space in the way that they were expected to.

Billie-Jane and Nicola gave the following responses to member questions:

- Both had their own radar keys and felt that this was the best option, rather than leaving disabled toilets open or having to seek someone out to permit access.
- There was a minimum standard which developers had to meet, but this standard resulted in many facilities falling short of many people's needs.
- The suggestion was that Cheltenham should have 1 or 2 fully equipped disabled toilets and that these would need to be readily accessible. Obviously any such facility within John Lewis would only be available during store opening hours.
- John Lewis had been contacted upon closure of the Beechwood Arcade to enquire about the future of the disabled toilet facility but no response had been received. This was a well sized toilet which included a hoist and a changing bed with safety rails on and it was hoped that this would be retained.

The Cabinet Member Clean and Green addressed the committee, explaining that responsibility for public toilets fell within his portfolio and as part of the Pittville Play Area he had become aware of Changing Places. Having reviewed Cheltenham's provision of disabled toilets and in view of the fact that many buildings in Cheltenham were considered to be of architectural and historical interest and as such, were listed, two sites that had been identified were Pittville and Montpellier gardens. Installation of facilities at Pittville Park alone would cost around £60k and the Council did not have the funds to both, but one option being explored was that of raising the funds. The Cabinet Member had also spoken with a senior member of staff at John Lewis about retaining and/or improving the current provision and it was considered that this would be beneficial to John Lewis if the facility was promoted on the Changing Places map. He hoped that gave assurances that this was something the Council was aware of and was giving serious consideration to.

Billie-Jane suggested that the Cabinet Member may like to speak to Scott Lahive at Regents Arcade as he had indicated that they would be reviewing their disabled toilet facilities.

A member highlighted that a 24hr public disabled toilet had been opened in Kidderminster and felt sure that if Kidderminster Town and Worcestershire County Council could install a facility of this standard, Cheltenham and Gloucestershire could do the same. Another member queried whether there was any Licensing legislation which would allow the authority to ensure that disabled toilets were not used for storage.

Members were reminded that Gloucestershire County Council were responsible for public bus services and therefore any issues should be raised at that level.

A mobile disabled toilet which came complete with a hoist was available to hire and this was something that should be considered for use at various events and perhaps this should be raised with the Trust.

The Chairman thanked Billie-Jane and Nicola for providing insight into an area which not all would be familiar and also thanked the Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment for the update that he had provided. He confirmed that the Lead Members for this committee would put together a list of issues raised as

part of this discussion and decide how those issues would be taken forward. He also took the opportunity to thank the Phoenix Centre for allowing us to use their facility.

Billie-Jane and Nicola thanked the committee for giving them the opportunity to share their experiences and views.

7. FEEDBACK FROM OTHER SCRUTINY MEETINGS ATTENDED

Councillor P McCloskey provided a verbal update on the recent meeting of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He explained that the committee were responsible for reviewing the decisions of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee, and the overall impact and delivery outcomes of the Gloucestershire Strategic Economic Plan, as well as making recommendations to the Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Community Interest Company (Gfirst) and Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee on issues and improvements.

At a recent meeting the committee had considered the following:

The Low Carbon Economy of Gloucestershire, its value and potential: Stroud District had proposed that be added to the Scrutiny Committee Work Plan. Once the standard template had been completed, it would be sent to the committee for ratification.

Tourism: the committee received a presentation from Cotswolds Tourism and Forest of Dean Association which covered what they do, economic benefits, as well as the benefits of working in partnership. Both Cotswolds Tourism and Forest of Dean Association had been keen for Cheltenham & Gloucester to join the partnership. The rationale being that they already interacted with trade shows for foreign tour operators and could encourage more visitors to the UK to visit Gloucestershire. They presented figures from 2015 which demonstrated the economic benefits, including;

Gloucestershire welcomes over 18 million day visitors a year
2 million staying visitor trips (equating to 6.2 million visitor nights)

Total visitor related spend of £1 billion

An estimated actual employment of 25,250

8% of all employment

Economic impact to the local economy - £1.5 billion (an increase of 7% from 2014)

They quoted figures that £1 spent by them on tourism marketing generated £43 for the local economy. One of the key strategies was 'Destination Management Plans' which were a means of ensuring each destination presented itself in the best way to visitors. A Tourism Task Group would be established and a pdf of the presentation would be sent to members by email.

Pub is The Hub: The task group that had been established a couple of years ago, led by Barry Kirby and had worked across the 4 rural districts (i.e. excluding Cheltenham & Gloucester) and had now produced a final report. The next stage was to identify two or three possible locations that might benefit and run a pilot. 'Pub is a Hub' was a not-for-profit organisation that had expanded across the country over the last 15 years.

2050 Vision Workshop: The committee had decided to have a review of the impact of Brexit on Gloucestershire. A workshop had been arranged for the 30 September 2016 which Councillor Steve Jordan would attend as Leader of the Council, but Councillor McCloskey questioned how other members could get involved.

The Chairman thanked Councillor P McCloskey for his update. He too was a new member on the group, though in his capacity as a County Councillor and despite having a very large remit, he felt the group did some very important work.

Councillor Hay, as the second County Council rep on this group, explained that he had previously chaired, what was at the time, Gloucestershire Tourism, when Gloucestershire was included in the 'Heart of England'. When the regions had become more important, the decision was taken to move Gloucestershire into the South West as it was seen as a gateway to the South West and ultimately we moved away from regions and focussed on destinations. The Cotswolds was an internationally recognised brand, as was the Forest of Dean, but this had caused tensions and Cheltenham and Gloucester had competed with one another, which had not been helpful. Following the presentation by the two DMOs it was clear that everyone was on board with an integrated approach, which would attract not just tourists but students and employers.

Councillor Hay explained that 'Pub is the Hub' had previously focussed on rural areas and he and others had long been championing urban areas. 'Pub is the Hub' were now happy to look at urban areas and pilot something so that details could be passed to local planners about how these assets could be protected. Unfortunately listing as a community asset was not always the best option and it was important to start considering these different options when a pub was still buoyant.

Councillor Hay reiterated that he and Councillor Harman attended these meetings as County Councillors, though they did provide a Cheltenham perspective at times, but Councillor P McCloskey's role was also important.

Councillor H McCloskey, the council representative on the Police and Crime Panel gave a verbal update to the committee.

She had taken part in interviews for the independent member of the PCP. The Panel were required to have two and each could serve for a maximum of 4 years but could be appointed for a second term. Four candidates were interviewed and the successful candidate was the retiring member, Martin Smith, though the Panel had been very impressed with another candidate and had enquired about whether they could appoint a third, but were advised that this was not permitted. Martin Smith's appointment would be officially confirmed by the Panel at their meeting on the 20 September.

Confirmatory hearings for two appointments made by the PCC had been held on the 9 September. The first, Chris Brierley, formerly a journalist with the BBC, as Deputy PCC and whilst the appointment was confirmed by the Panel, they expressed their disappointment that legislation relating to this appointment, did not require the normally accepted methods of selection to be followed. It was

highlighted that the role of the Deputy would automatically cease at the end of the term of office of the PCC.

The second hearing concerned the appointment of a new Finance Officer. The PCC and Chief Constable had agreed that, as with the Monitoring Officer, this role could be shared and as such, the existing Police Finance Officer was appointed. The Panel were assured that the shared Monitoring Officer had worked well for some time and that there was no conflict of interest, and as such, the Panel confirmed this appointment also.

Councillor H McCloskey provided the following responses to questions from the committee:

- Chris Brierley would no longer be working as a journalist, which some felt was a brave decision given that the role of Deputy would come to end when the PCCs term did. There was no job description for the role of the Deputy PCC and even if there were, the Panel had been advised that under the legislation, they had no right to scrutinise the Deputy.
- When asked by the Panel about why he felt the need to appoint a Deputy, the PCC explained that he found that he was only able to accept 2 out of 5 invitations to events and meetings and that by appointing a Deputy, the office of the PCC could be represented xxx.
- The decision to share a Monitoring Officer and Finance Officer was largely based on the fact that the PC allocated 98% of his budget to the constabulary.
- The Panel had to formally write to the PCC and confirm the appointments and planned to highlight their concerns about the process and they also planned to write to the Home Office and express concerns that the legislation would permit this.

Members were uncomfortable with the fact that the legislation, as it stood, allowed for the appointment of the Deputy to circumnavigate the usual selection processes and agreed that the Panel should convey the concerns to the Home Office. There was a suggestion from a member that it was issues such as this that made the proposition of a directly elected Mayor unattractive to some authorities.

The Chairman explained that the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee were not scheduled to meet until the 13 September and as such, there was no update for this meeting. He thanked Councillors P McCloskey and H McCloskey for the updates they had provided.

8. CABINET BRIEFING

The Leader, as a continuation from Councillor McCloskey's update, advised that there had been a lot of activity over the last week: the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee and Leadership Gloucestershire. In relation to devolution, he suggested the Gloucestershire Strategic economic plan would be a useful document for members to look at. KPMG had concluded a three month piece of work looking at the devolution bid as it stands and how to could be moved forward and whilst he had not yet seen the final report, nobody was yet certain about the position on Government Policy on this. There was a case for having dedicated resources looking at defining the Gloucestershire vision and broadening it as necessary and there was a chance that this could be funded through the business pool. 20/50 vision was being run in parallel by the

Local Enterprise Partnership, who had bought in external experts to look at it. The LGA, as part of Leading Places, were looking at how to improve and build communities and the Leader suggested that these four threads would need to be pulled together at some point. He enquired as to how the committee wanted to be kept informed on all of these developments and the committee agreed that a Member Seminar should be arranged, as well as a meeting of the Devolution STG, at a stage when there was something more to share with them on the Devolution bid. The Leader acknowledged the increase in reported Hate Crime in Gloucestershire, following Brexit and confirmed that a strategy was being drafted. At this stage, he had no news on the parliamentary boundary review.

The Chairman introduced the Cabinet Member Corporate Services. He had been invited to answer questions from the committee in reference to 2020, following his announcement that Revenues and Benefits and Customer Services would not be included in the shared arrangement. The Chairman confirmed that rather than asking the Cabinet Member to produce a written report, the committee would instead be given the opportunity to question the Cabinet Member directly.

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services gave the following responses to member questions;

- The Transition Funding was not predicated by a certain level of involvement and as such, was not considered to be in jeopardy.
- Admittedly members of the Cabinet Member working group were comfortable with the proposal to include Revenues and Benefits within 2020 but it was not always possible to provide these groups with all the information required to form a comprehensive understanding of every situation. As a council, a level of control had to be seeded to any joint committee or company and his political judgement was that it was appropriate for these services (Revs & Bens and Customer Services), which he considered to be sensitive in nature, to remain with the council, so that they could be directly responsible.
- The £159k saving that would have been generated from the inclusion of these services in 2020, whilst not an insignificant sum, was not insurmountable when compared to the other services that would be included (ICT and GOSS). These services were almost entirely back-office in nature and the costs associated with not sharing these services would be far larger. Cabinet were scheduled to meet tomorrow (13 Sept) to discuss the MTFS which was being developed and would follow the normal approval process.
- Alternative options were yet to be fully considered and these would include delivering some services within the REST area or indeed with partners, possibly to include CBH and there were also discussions ongoing about a single reception area, rather than continuing with the separate Planning reception. There was a lot of opportunity to take a far more holistic approach without having to look elsewhere.
- It was not envisaged that there would be any missed opportunities in relation to technology as a consequence of not including Customer Services in 2020, because ICT included telephony.

- There were limits to the savings that could be generated from shared services as with such arrangements, bureaucracy often grew. Income generation would be a key area for consideration.

Many members of the committee remained unsure about the strength of the arguments for not including these services in 2020 and unconvinced that any alternatives would provide the resilience and opportunities that the shared arrangements of 2020 would have offered. One member commented the balance of what the council would lose by not putting these services into 2020, was far greater than the £150k we would save. The suggestion was that the decision needed to be revisited.

The Cabinet Member noted the concerns that had been raised and commented that he felt it was unlikely that the partners would permit any kind of trial arrangements. Members were reminded that a Member Seminar had been arranged for the 6 October.

The chairman thanked the Leader and Cabinet Member Corporate Services for their attendance.

9. CHELTENHAM BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT - UPDATE

Kevan Blackadder, Business Improvement District (BID) Director of Cheltenham BID gave a short PowerPoint presentation (Appendix 1) which set out the progress that had been made to date in relation to the BID, future plans and how the success would be measured.

He gave the following answers to member questions;

- The BID was now keen to explore all options along with CBC. Improved Wi-Fi would allow for use of smarter footfall cameras.
- Tim Atkins, Director of Place and Economic Development at CBC was a member of the Shadow Board, which ensured a co-ordinated approach to Tourism.
- Town centre indicators would be used to measure the effectiveness of the BID which included sales performance, footfall and vacant unit levels and baselines were currently being developed.
- In relation to parking charges the BID would lobby GCC and CBC to incentivise people to visit the town centre on days, weeks and months when footfall was lower, by offering reduced parking charges at those times. Another initiative that could encourage more people into the town centre was if parking charges did not apply until later in the morning, perhaps from 10am instead of 8am.

The Chairman commended those involved in the BID for their hard work and thanked Kevan for his attendance.

The committee would look forward to receiving similar updates in the future.

There were no recommendations arising from this item.

10. BROADBAND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP INTERIM REPORT

Councillor Whyborn, as former Chairman of the Broadband STG, introduced the Task Group report which had been produced by the Democratic Services Manager on behalf of the task group. Councillor Whyborn referred members to paragraph 6.4 of the report, which set out two possible explanations as to why areas of high speed broadband deprivation have not been addressed: (1) that the relationship between Fastershire and BT is dysfunctional and that insufficient effort is being made to achieve workable solutions in the urban areas that have been identified, or; (2) the parameters set by central government make it impossible to legally disburse funding through Fastershire to upgrade the broadband infrastructure in urban areas of Cheltenham and Gloucester. Councillor Whyborn felt that Fastershire and Gloucestershire County Council needed to start being clear about why these issues hadn't, or indeed, couldn't be addressed.

Councillor Payne had attended meetings of the Parish Council with BT and Fastershire in the past and was left with the impression that Fastershire were intimidated by BT and therefore unable to assert themselves.

In response to a member question, Councillor Whyborn reminded members of the motion that had been passed by Council in February 2015 which instructed officers to develop a policy such that future planning applications for new developments will have a requirement to access to an appropriate quality of broadband facilities at a minimal set-up cost to the householder. This has sent a message to developers that this was the direction of travel and would ultimately be incorporated into the local plan, and as such, the issue was not with new builds but rather existing properties. The group had been successful in extracting maps which made problem areas easily identifiable and the suggestion was these maps should be included in any future reports. The £350 for satellite vouchers was seen as a limited solution, albeit, a last resort for a small number of individual premises in hard to reach places in Cheltenham and Gloucester.

The committee were in agreement that Recommendation 3 represented the most appropriate form of action, but also that the wording needed to be amended so as to make a stronger statement.

Upon a vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED that a letter be written to the chair of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and be copied to Fastershire, BT and Virgin Media, and the wording of this letter would be agreed by email, outside of the meeting.

11. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

The Chairman introduced the Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report 2015-16. The report summarised some of the successes of the previous year and he took the opportunity to thank those members who had been involved in task groups and the officers that had supported them.

Upon a vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny 2015-16 be endorsed and forwarded to Council to be noted.

12. UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS

Members were referred to the update that had been circulated with the agenda.

This would be updated to reflect the decision by the committee to end the work of the Broadband task group and instead have this committee monitor the situation and encourage the Gloucestershire Economic Growth O&S Committee to scrutinise further developments. There were no further developments to be included at this stage.

The Democracy Officer referred members to the Scrutiny Topic Registration form which had also been circulated with the agenda. This form had been submitted by Councillor Mason and called for a review of the noise levels produced by some of the festivals that are held in Imperial and Montpellier Gardens and the potential long term damage to the ground and trees from such intense activities. Officer implications had been included on the reverse of the form and highlighted that Officers were of the view that the Gardens Forum Group and the already planned assessment of events, provided an existing mechanism for consideration of this issue and given that these groups involved many of the same Officers, it would prove difficult to support a third group in the form of a task group.

Councillor Mason, as proposer of the topic, reiterated that there was no suggestion that the Council should terminate its arrangement with the Festivals to hold events in the gardens. National noise guidelines stated that, in areas such as Montpellier Gardens, noise levels should not exceed 60dB and yet often did, particularly during the Jazz Festival. He questioned whether CBC, as the planning authority, should be allowing the Festivals to flout the national guidelines.

Members of the committee, who had attended meetings of the Gardens Forum in the past, suggested that representatives of the Festivals would often pay lip service to resident's concerns and would on occasion intimate that a new venue could be found and members were innately aware that this was a real possibility in the future.

Given the officer implications that had been set-out on the registration form, the committee were minded not to establish a task group and instead, take the opportunity to question the Festivals directly on the issues raised, at the next meeting of the committee (31 October), which the Festivals were already due to attend. The Democracy Officer would be contacting members in due course to invite questions in advance of the meeting and members should take this opportunity to raise particular issues.

13. REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The work plan had been circulated with the agenda and would be updated to include a future update on the BID.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for Monday 31 October 2016.

Tim Harman
Chairman



What is a Business Improvement District (BID)?

- A defined area where businesses decide how a significant budget is spent to improve their town
- An agreed levy is paid, which funds projects that can make a real difference
- A BID only goes ahead if the proposal is backed in a ballot of businesses
- All activities are in addition to services already being provided by local councils or other bodies
- There are more than 200 BIDs in the UK, many of which have been supported for a second five-year term



A Yes vote in the BID ballot

- The town's businesses voted 72 per cent in favour of the BID going ahead in a ballot in April
- BID zone covers the High Street, Promenade, Montpellier and The Brewery
- More than 600 businesses will pay an annual levy to the BID – based at 1.25% of Rateable Value for most
- This will generate around £450,000 per year - £2.1 million over five years
- The levy charged to CBC is under £8,500 per year for four buildings
- The key areas will be: town centre events, marketing & promotion, business support, parking & accessibility and public realm improvements



BID open for business

- BID company started trading on August 1 from offices in Wolseley Terrace
- BID board formed representing businesses of all kinds across the zone
- Has already agreed to jointly fund with CBC market research on visitor experience and visitor perception of Cheltenham as a place to visit
- Other projects coming soon - Ambassadors on street as the public face of the BID, discounted bus travel scheme



Assessing the effectiveness of the BID

- New town centre indicators will be used to measure our effectiveness – to include sales performance, footfall and vacant unit levels
- Ambassadors to support businesses and public. They will feedback information on a daily basis
- Regular e-bulletins and newsletters to businesses to highlight the work the BID is doing
- Annual Report and AGM for BID members to report on progress and develop future activities



