

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 28th November, 2016

6.00 - 8.15 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Tim Harman (Chair), Jon Walklett (Vice-Chair), Colin Hay, Sandra Holliday, Chris Mason, Helena McCloskey, Dan Murch, John Payne, Paul Baker and Max Wilkinson
Also in attendance:	Rupert Cox (Stagecoach), Richard Gibson (Strategy and Engagement Manager), Steve Jordan (Leader) and Mark Nelson (Enforcement Manager)

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Councillors Wilkinson, Holliday and Hay had advised that they would be late and subsequently arrived at 6.05pm, 6.35pm and 7.15pm respectively.

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 31 October 2016 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

Council had asked that Overview and Scrutiny review bus services in general and how they could be better provided in Cheltenham. This item featured later on the agenda.

6. FEEDBACK FROM OTHER SCRUTINY MEETINGS ATTENDED

Councillor Harvey had produced a written update on the recent meeting (15 November) of the Gloucestershire Health and Care O&S Committee. This had been circulated with the agenda and was taken as read. As a County representative on this committee, the Chairman advised that a special meeting had been arranged for the 15 December 2016 to discuss some of the issues raised in this update.

Councillor H McCloskey provided a verbal update on the recent meeting of the Police and Crime Panel. The Panel received a presentation on the new Operating Model. These changes were implemented in anticipation of further financial cuts in the coming years and to address the increase in computer enabled crime. As a result of the changes the organisation had become more resilient and flexible and had seen improvements in performance. National statistics showed that Gloucestershire now had the fourth lowest crime rate in the country, the lowest rate for violent crime and a significant increase in customer satisfaction. Further work was required on the Neighbourhood Policing model. PCSOs would still be assigned to particular communities but would be called out to other areas and would attend less community group and Parish Council meetings. The Panel recommended that local policing should be stabilised as a priority.

Discussions at Government level were on-going regarding possible changes to the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) role. These included the overseeing of fire services and certain aspects of the criminal justice system and could have a major impact on the PCC workload and potential revision of the Police and Crime Plan.

The Panel considered performance statistics for the 101 non-emergency number in comparison with other similar forces. Concern was expressed that only data up to March 2015 was available on the national website. Further data, although submitted, had not been audited and was therefore not available, which the panel found disappointing. However, the User Satisfaction Survey for the 12 months ending September 2016 showed 97.2% satisfaction rate with ease of contact with the Gloucestershire 101 service.

Councillor H McCloskey gave the following responses to member questions;

- The proposal that the PCC should oversee fire services had come from Government and the PCC for Gloucestershire was of the opinion that this should remain separate.
- Gloucestershire was ahead of the game somewhat and had identified Cyber Crime as a priority for the force 18 months to 2 years ago. A special unit was established, which employed computer experts and officers were given basic training, as the first point of contact for cyber crime.

Some members felt that it was self-defeating for Neighbourhood Policing teams not to attend community or Parish Council meetings as these were often effective as means of building relationships and trust or simply learning about local issues.

The Chairman reminded members that the PCC had attended a meeting earlier in the year and the committee agreed that another invitation should be extended to him, for 2017.

The Gloucestershire Economic Growth O&S Committee had not met since the last meeting of this committee, but were scheduled to meet on Wednesday (30 November) and an update would be provided at the January meeting of this committee.

7. CABINET BRIEFING

The Leader gave a verbal briefing to the committee. In view of the discussion just prior to his briefing in which members had discussed neighbourhood policing, the Leader explained that a number of PCSOs had been moved from Cheltenham to Gloucester to tackle ASB issues. The council had recently been approached with the suggestion of joint funding of ASB, though he was keen that Cheltenham PCSO's be reinstated first.

He referred members to the Place Strategy briefing note which had been circulated with the agenda. This provided an update on the Place Strategy as well as some context to Devolution. The Autumn Statement hadn't given much clarity on Devolution, but many of the civil servants who had been supporting it had been diverted to Brexit and this could demonstrate a reduced appetite for Devolution. He also felt that there was a preference for bids from authorities with a directly elected Mayor.

In relation to the JCS, members would be aware that Tewkesbury Borough Council did not approve the document for public consultation, though Cheltenham and Gloucester had. A further meeting at TBC had been arranged for the 31 January and as soon as he had confirmation that this date was definitely going ahead he would be contacting members about when we would have our debate. He noted that he was currently minded to schedule the debate for the 10 February (Budget setting) meeting, rather than arrange a third meeting in February, as he imagined it would be a relatively short debate, simply to affirm the debate that had been held at the previous meeting.

At their meeting in November, the Cabinet had considered an urgent item on the Crematorium development programme. Cabinet agreed to change the scope of the programme to develop the business case for a second new chapel and potential alternative access road options. This was taken as an urgent decision so as not to delay the programme to replace the existing cremators.

This council was not consulted prior to the A40 Bus Lane scheme being dropped, though, nor had it been advised that it was to be included in the first instance. In response to a member question, the Leader confirmed that the money for this project had come from the short lived Local Transport Board and as such, had gone back to the Local Enterprise Partnership rather than GCC. It may be that this council would be interested in bidding for some of this funding.

8. STAGECOACH

Council had referred the matter of Cheltenham's bus service and how it could be improved, to this committee. The Chairman explained that the Managing Director of Stagecoach (West) had been asked to prepare a PowerPoint presentation and reminded members that the focus of the debate would be the bus service in general, rather than individual services.

Rupert Cox, the Managing Director of Stagecoach (West) introduced the PowerPoint presentation (attached at Appendix 1). In addition to the slides, he explained;

- They employed 180 people based in Cheltenham, up from 140 10 years ago.

- The depot at Lansdown Industrial Estate could accommodate 65 buses. The fleet currently totalled 63, so this represented a future constraint.
- 35 new buses were introduced 2 years ago and only 10 days ago, new 94 buses had been introduced. The average age of the fleet was 4.7 years compared to the national average of 8.5 years.
- According to the DfT only 1 in 9 counties was seeing passenger growth. Cheltenham was at 2% growth; 30% since 2005. This did not apply to all routes however, some of the letter services had seen a 1-2% decline and he felt that cheaper fuel prices were impacting these local/shorter services. This reduction was on all categories of passenger free/child/single/concession). At the moment, the £2 daily fare for under 19's was showing growth of 30% plus.
- Transport Focus were finalising the 2016 surveys. Overall satisfaction with the service was at 90% in 2014 and rose to 91% in 2015. The national average was 83%. Value for Money, whilst ahead of the national average, was the lowest scoring at 69%. Each year approximately 1000 passengers were surveyed and 30% said that the bus represented better value than their car.
- In 2014 Stagecoach undertook an exercise with GCC surveying people about why they had come to Cheltenham. Over a 1 week period 1400 people were surveyed (the target was 1000) and of those 1400 people, 40% had travelled to the town by bus. Whilst on average bus users were spending less on each visit, they were making more journeys to the town and so spend more across a typical year. He therefore considered it a myth that getting people to journey to town in their car was better for the economy. 42% of those that had driven to town on the day of the survey said that they had used the bus at some point.
- In support of Small Business Saturday and some of the highstreets in Gloucestershire, a special fare of £2 was being offered.
- If only 2% of those that drove to the town centre used a bus it would help to ease congestion.
- Zurich paid for their staff to travel to and from work for free. A new service was introduced which stopped outside the terminal building at Gloucestershire Airport and which is seeing growing usage. Stagecoach had a good relationship with the Racecourse and 80 extra buses ran during Festival week. Through work with the Cheltenham BID any employee of a business in Cheltenham could now get 30% off a local travel ticket.
- The biggest challenge facing Stagecoach was congestion. The 94 was the most prominent service in Gloucestershire, linking Cheltenham and Gloucester and now took 60 minutes, 90% longer and required 11 buses rather than 6, compared to 1990. The knock on impact of a journey taking 5-10 minutes longer than it should ultimately resulted in a journey not operating, currently measured at 0.5% of journeys.
- Stagecoach were working closely with GCC and the JCS Team and had identified areas where there was capacity within existing

services and where investment would be required for bus priority measures.

- Faster journeys would result in more people using buses, as with every 10% reduction in bus speed equating to a 10% reduction in those using that service.
- The cost of parking in Cheltenham for 2 hours was the same today as it had been 10 years ago and he did not feel that Economic Development should focus on promoting people to drive into town. He would be comfortable working in partnership with the council and having a written agreement that if parking charges were increased, bus charges would be reduced. He was aware that Nottingham City Council had introduced a work place parking levy.
- The BID deal could backfire in the sense that no more people use the bus service and instead existing users simply get to travel for less each week/month.
- Bus priority measures were key; not only would bus journeys be speeded up but they would also be more predictable as the bus would be unhindered. To this end parking and bus lane enforcement would also be important.
- The new 94 buses entered service 10 days ago and included USB points for every passenger, free Wi-Fi, leather seats, air cooling systems and greener engines that produces less emissions.
- Smart cards accounted for 60% of journeys but he saw mobile tickets sales were the future.

Rupert Cox gave the following answers to member questions:

- There were no issues with the location of existing town centre bus stops but his concern was, if bus use increased, was there adequate space in convenient locations for new bus stops.
- There were some areas where the Transport Plan would alleviate issues with parked vehicles making it difficult for buses to pass.
- Tewkesbury Road in particular would benefit from a bus lane. The Benhall A40 scheme was unpopular with the public but the business case had merit. He felt that the JCS represented a good opportunity as 106 monies could help fund improvements.
- He considered North West Cheltenham to be a good area for development as it had potential to add a park and ride service. Existing services could be made more frequent and given the size of the site, new services could be introduced; to the hospital and/or station for example. This would benefit existing users as well as incentivising more people to use the bus. Depending on demand a bus hub could quite possibly work at this site.
- He didn't feel that building properties with a single car parking space would be beneficial as in reality people would simply park on the road.
- His view was that affordable housing should be located closer to bus stops and it wasn't advisable to build initial phases at the back of a site and furthest away from bus stops.
- Changes to the road layout at Albion Street had resulted in a shorter route for the B service, which meant less emissions and fuel savings. An A40 bus lane would result in a shorter journey particularly at peak

times and throughout the day an uninterrupted one. When the inbound Cheltenham route was introduced passenger numbers increased by 3% but it was not possible to say whether these were previously car users.

- The B service had not only been extended but was now more reliable since being linked with the H service. It also meant that residents on the back of the estate in Springbank were now being served, where they were not before.
- Stagecoach had a lease with the racecourse and there had been no indication, either formally or informally that the racecourse hoped to change these arrangements.

Rupert felt that there was a perception about bus users that needed to be dispelled and he accepted that Stagecoach themselves could do more to do that. The 12 new buses on the 94 service were luxury and could certainly dispel any such myths.

The Chairman thanked Rupert for his time and input into what he felt had been a very useful discussion.

9. UPDATE FROM THE URBAN GULLS FOCUS GROUP

In the absence of Helen Down, Team Leader – Participation and Engagement, the Chairman introduced the paper on behalf of the Urban Gulls Focus Group. Urban gull complaints were nuisance related, but gulls were wild birds and as such the council did not have a statutory responsibility to deal with them. However, in recognition of the considerable disturbance that they caused, the council did allocate a budget for gull control. Prior to 2015, the budget was £5000 per annum for the oiling of eggs. In 2015 the budget was increased to £9,100 and enabled the switch from oiling to replacing eggs with dummy eggs when the oil was withdrawn from sale. Dummy egg replacement was more effective than oil as the gull would continue to sit on them for longer, without re-laying and adults that failed to produce offspring at a site tended to move on in future years. Gulls were also noisiest with hatchlings in the nest, so noise reduced over the summer when the eggs did not hatch. Whilst more effective, dummy egg replacement was more expensive due to the hire cost of the cherry picker needed to replace the eggs and collect them again at the end of the season. The Urban Gulls Focus Group was attended by residents and councillors from affected areas and would, from this point onwards, be chaired by Councillor Harman. The Group were of the opinion that a strategy had to be developed within the context of budget constraints and operational capacity.

As Chairman of the committee, Councillor Harman explained that it had been suggested that a Scrutiny Task Group should be set-up to develop a strategy, but given that the Focus Group already operated well, members may not be minded to do this. He noted that the publication of this report had sparked media interest from the Gloucestershire Echo and BBC Radio Gloucestershire, both of whom had said that they would be happy to assist with a media campaign in the future.

Expert advice was that the problem could not be eradicated irrespective of budget and therefore members questioned whether spending more would actually benefit the town. Members were keen that a more scientific approach

be adopted when devising the strategy. There were no calls from members to establish a task group.

The committee agreed that the Urban Gulls Focus Group should investigate further what strategy would deal with the issue more comprehensively, based on scientific evidence.

The Chairman confirmed that the Focus Group were scheduled to meet again in January 2017.

10. THE UPDATE ON PRIVATE RENTED HOUSES OF MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMO) SURVEY

Mark Nelson, Enforcement Manager, introduced the discussion paper as circulated with the agenda. He explained that following a desktop analysis to identify possible Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO's), 450 had been identified within the St Pauls Ward and survey work commenced in early September 2016. So far 225 HMO's had been fully inspected and a further 72 properties had been visited and found not to be HMO's following an interview with the occupants. If this trend continued it was likely that approximately 300 HMO's would have been identified in St Paul's. Of the HMO's inspected thus far, only 10 had been referred to the enforcement team for further investigation (following the identification of poor management, poor standards of accommodation or where a licensable HMO was not licensed) and this figure (5%) was extremely low for this type of housing stock. He felt that this was undoubtedly a result of the proactive work that had been undertaken by enforcement officers over the last 5 years, which had included the licensing of 130 HMO's in the St Pauls ward area under the Governments Mandatory HMO Licensing Scheme. It was likely that the survey work in St Pauls would be complete by February and at that stage a report could be produced.

In response to a member question, the Enforcement Manager explained that the housing health and safety rating system was a risk-based evaluation tool used to assess safety in housing. There were 29 types of hazard which are assessed under this system and category 1 hazards posed the most risk to the occupants. The level of risk was determined by the likelihood of harm caused by the hazard and the severity of the harm which would result. In the example of a glass door; it might only be rated as category 1 if there was trip hazard which increased the risk of the glass being broken.

Members felt that were the number of HMO's in St Pauls to exceed the national limit of 10%, that this council should invoke Article 4 Direction and remove permitted development rights of HMO's within that area (and any other ward found to exceed the national limit), so that planning permission needed to be obtained. This would be flagged with the Planning Liaison Group at this stage, with a request that they consider the issue further once the final survey results have been fully collated and analysed, assuming the final figure was in fact above the 10% limit.

The Chairman thanked the Enforcement Manager for his attendance and looked forward to seeing the final report.

11. QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Richard Gibson, the Strategy and Engagement Manager, introduced the Quarter 2 performance figures and he apologised for the delay in having circulated it to members. He highlighted that of the 99 milestones identified in the 2016-17 action plan, 37 were amber, meaning there were concerns about the deliverability of the project and 7 were red and related to 4 key projects; North Place (1), car parking (3), the Cheltenham Plan (2) and the Crematorium development (1). Being classed as red meant that there are concerns about whether these milestones will be delivered by March 2017.

The Strategy and Engagement Officer and the Leader where appropriate, gave the following responses to member questions;

- Adoption of the Cheltenham Plan was amber as officers were optimistic that this could be done within 2017, though admittedly this was almost entirely dependent on the JCS.
- If the JCS was unable to be adopted as planned then the council would need to have a Local Plan which included strategic allocations set out in the JCS and the implications of this were in the process of being determined. But we were not in that situation yet. However, the Leader acknowledged that it is more difficult to properly assess new developments without the framework of an adopted strategic plan.
- The potential for developing a business case for a second chapel had always been included in the Crematorium Development programme and it was in the context of the original costings of £10m having reduced that the potential for the second chapel was being considered now.
- The MD Place and Economic Development had confirmed at the last meeting of this committee that representatives from GCC had attended a meeting of the Parking Working Group.

Given that the deadline for the opening of the new crematorium building has been pushed back, members of the committee felt that they would like to understand more about the reasons why. The committee agreed that they would invite a formal update on the programme, to their next meeting, to establish how the programme was progressing.

12. UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS

The Democracy Officer explained that progress in relation to the Devolution task group was as it had been at the time that the summary had been circulated with the agenda; there had been no further developments.

The Street People STG had held a workshop with various agencies to discuss the extent of the issue in Cheltenham. This was a useful session and the task group agreed that they needed to meet with representatives of Project SOLACE, which worked to bring agencies together to deal with anti-social behaviour and which had resulted in the number of persistent beggars in Gloucester having fallen significantly. This meeting would be arranged in due course. A number of members of the committee felt that some of the messages coming from Project SOLACE were quite negative and urged the STG to take a different approach. Members of the committee, who also sat on the STG gave assurances that the group accepted that this was a complex issue, with no single solution; some rough sleepers were genuinely homeless, for some it was a lifestyle choice and some were not homeless at all, claiming benefits and free

prescriptions and were begging to make, in some cases, hundreds of pounds a day.

13. REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The work plan had been circulated with the agenda and would be updated to include a formal update on the Crematorium Development Programme at the meeting in January, as well as a briefing note on progress relating to car parking.

The committee agreed the two items that had been proposed for the next meeting (January 16); Everyman Theatre presentation from Geoffrey Rowe and a further discussion on the Place Strategy.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for Monday 16 January 2017.

Tim Harman
Chairman

Stagecoach In Cheltenham

Rupert Cox
Managing Director



Who we are

- We employ about 180 people based in the town – mixture of drivers, supervisors, engineers and support staff
- Two sites – depot in Lansdown Ind. Est. and operations facility plus travel shop in the High Street
- We have a fleet of 63 buses – average age of fleet 4.7 years



Bus usage

- 16 Stagecoach routes that serve the town – some from depots in Gloucester, Stroud and Swindon
- Routes see about 11m annual passenger journeys
- Passenger growth of around 2%. About 30% growth since 2005



Route by route trends

- Usage is increasing on services B, 41, 42/42A, 51, 94U/X, 97/98
- Fewer people are using services A, C, D/E, P/Q, 10, 61, 94, 99



What do our customers say?

- Transport Focus independent annual surveys – autumn 2014 and 2015
- Accent Economic research 2014



Working with others

- University of Gloucestershire
- Zurich Financial
- Gloucestershire Airport
- Cheltenham Racecourse
- Cheltenham BID



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Major events

- Cheltenham Race 'Festival' – 90,000 passengers on dedicated shuttle buses
- Cheltenham Race 'Open' – 15,000 passengers on dedicated shuttle buses
- Royal International Air Tattoo – special Park & Ride service with 10 buses



We need some assistance - 1

- Congestion is a major problem
- Service 94 takes 90% longer at peak times to travel between Gloucester and Cheltenham
- 70% of trips in Gloucestershire are by car (62% in 2004). Bus journeys 4%.
- We measure the number of journeys that don't operate – 75% of cause is congestion



We need some assistance - 2

- Key hotspots that have biggest impact
- Access the town centre – convenient bus stops
- Parking and bus lane enforcement
- Car parking charges
- Planning and development control – including Joint Core Strategy



New initiatives

- £3million for 12 new buses for service 94. Entered service 10 days ago
- Stagecoach Bus App – track, plan and buy tickets – launched 2 weeks ago
- Next generation ticket machine with contactless payment – 2017
- Smartcards – around 60% of all journeys now made using smartcard



Any questions?

