

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 23rd April, 2018
6.00 - 8.00 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Tim Harman (Chair), Jon Walklett (Vice-Chair), Colin Hay, Alex Hegenbarth, Sandra Holliday, Chris Mason, Helena McCloskey, John Payne and David Willingham (Reserve)
Also in attendance:	Gary Angove (Building Surveyor), Councillor Coleman (Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment), Councillor Jordan (Leader) and Mike Redman (Director of Environment)

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Councillors Baker and Wilkinson (Councillor Willingham attended as a substitute for Councillor Wilkinson).

The Chairman acknowledged that this would be the last meeting for Councillors Hay, McCloskey and Walklett, all of whom were standing down in the upcoming elections. He took the opportunity to thank them for their contributions to the success of the committee and wished them well for the future. This also stood for any members who might not be successful in their bid for re-election.

He also took the opportunity to thank the Democracy Officer, Saira Malin, for her hard work and support of the committee and all the best with her impending new arrival, as this would be her last meeting before she commenced maternity leave.

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 28 March 2018 be agreed and signed as an accurate record.

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

None had been received but the Chairman noted that a number of requests had been submitted (Appendix 1) with regard to possible future scrutiny of residents parking schemes in Cheltenham and issues they wished to form part of any considerations; namely particular issues within the streets and roads in which they resided. The Chairman thanked members of the public for their interest

and confirmed that their requests would be considered as part of any scrutiny if and when undertaken (no decision would be taken on this until Agenda Item 8 of the agenda).

5. MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

No matters had been referred to the committee.

6. SUPPORT FOR AREAS OF DEPRIVATION - UPDATE

Unfortunately the report author was not present at the meeting and as such this item was taken at the end of the agenda.

Members felt that the paper that had been produced was informative and agreed that they should not lose sight of this issue and therefore tasked the lead members with deciding how this would be taken forward by scrutiny.

A member felt that the key questions were: how do we measure success in these areas of deprivation, could an explanation for why the same areas were still featuring on the indices of deprivation because the support being given was improving people's lives and enabling them to move out of the area. Also, he felt that the council and its partners needed to be clear about what they were trying to achieve in these areas and why.

7. CREMATOR PROBLEMS UPDATE

In recognition that the concerns that members (and the public) had voiced regarding the recent shutdown of the cremators at Bouncers Lane Crematorium, the committee had requested an overview of the issue, details of how it had been resolved and what lessons had been learnt. The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member Clean and Green Environment, the Director of Environment and a Building Surveyor from Property Services.

The Director of Environment introduced the discussion paper which had been circulated with the agenda and whilst he did not propose to talk through it, he did refer members to Section 7 (Lessons Learnt) and the principle lesson learnt related to communications. The council had relied heavily on Funeral Directors to communicate relevant information to their clients on their behalf and from the small number of complaints received it was clear that consideration needed to be given to the council's role in communicating any future business continuity issues. Similarly, members views on how they felt they should be briefed in future given that during the recent issues members were briefed at the same time as the press, often in the form of a press release. It was also noted that the Building Surveyor had been liaising closely with the maintenance contractor with regard to the existing, sub-standard plant equipment.

The Cabinet Member explained that communications would be a key issue in terms of the next 12 months with the existing equipment and admitted he was in a dilemma about which approach the council should adopt: contact bereaved families directly or leave it with the Funeral Directors to communicate business continuity issues. He explained that there were two schools of thought: it was a council service and therefore the council should take responsibility for all communications or: the bereaved families had a relationship with Funeral Directors which made it more appropriate for them to communicate any issues. Discussions were ongoing and he would welcome a view from members, highlighting that any procedure would apply beyond the context of the defective

plant equipment. He had acknowledged at the time, in a statement to Council, that members' were receiving information in the form of a press release, at the same time as the press and whilst this was not his favoured approach, it had been necessary at the time he queried whether members had thoughts on an alternative approach, perhaps including text messages or phone calls. He was also aware that a resident had contacted a Gloucestershire County Council representative who was not aware of the issue and did members have any thoughts on this going forward.

The following responses were given to member questions:

- The existing cremators had historically operated at the higher end of temperature that you'd expect and this had created problems with flues and other parts, as well as causing the electrics to fail. The chapel was small and cremators obviously generated heat, normally 40 degrees but in the case of the defective cremators this ranged from 50 – 66 degrees and where you would ordinarily mitigate this by installing more windows, for example, this was not possible because the chapel itself was a listed building. In the short term the number of fans had been increased and discussions were ongoing with the Planning Team with regard to other options, though clearly this process would take time given the listed status of the building. The advice from those running the maintenance contract was that maintenance should be undertaken every 3 months but this had been reduced to every 6 weeks in light of the recent issues and the council had also increased the level and range of stock parts.
- The Emergency Planning Team had been made aware of the difficulties posed by the defective equipment and the recent shutdown had highlighted a deficit of capacity in the locality.
- The council had previously be given assurances from neighbours that they had spare capacity should cremations have to be transferred to other crematoria in the locality (Gloucester and Worcester) but at the time of the issues they were catering to higher demand and were therefore not in a position to take displaced cremations from Cheltenham. Instead, Westerleigh, a private funeral provider which had sufficient capacity at their brand new facility in a countryside location just outside of Newport.
- With the robustness and reliability of the defective plant still a concern, transitional arrangements for the coming 12 months were being considered. This included the option of a temporary installation, but there was a process to be gone through, which would take time and there was a judgement to be made about the cost/benefit of doing this given the new equipment was due on line in Spring 2019. Discussions with the suppliers of the new plant equipment about accelerating the programme was another option being explored, but this also involved discussions with those delivering the service to establish how the service would be delivered whilst maintaining a sufficient level of dignity.
- Coffins were transferred to the place of cremation by private ambulance (free of charge) and the ambulance was used to return the ashes the next day, which for cremations carried out at Cheltenham generally took 3 days.
- In his time as Cabinet Member, Councillor Coleman and the team had worked hard to improve relations with Funeral Directors, which had been

badly affected by the issues with the sub-standard equipment. The plan was to engage with Funeral Directors about their views on who should communicate business continuity issues in the future and whilst he would welcome member views on this, he would not go against the decision of the Funeral Directors.

- Obviously CBC councillors were concerned about residents of Cheltenham but what about the larger, catchment area, for want of a better word, people who lived outside of the Borough but who used the crematorium.

A number of members took the opportunity to commend everyone involved for their handling of what had been a very unfortunate situation.

The Cabinet Member added his thanks to officers for how they had dealt with the crisis, which he could not fault and seized the chance to thank Councillors Payne, McCloskey and Ryder who had formed part of his Cabinet Member Working Group for the last 4 years, as he was aware two were standing down. He had found this an invaluable sounding board and urged groups to nominate replacements following the upcoming elections.

Members were of the view that the Funeral Directors were best placed to communicate any business continuity issues, having a relationship with the bereaved which the council did not. A member commented that this would not be acceptable to all but that it would be impossible to develop a procedure which met the expectations of everyone.

There was consensus across the committee that members of Gloucestershire County Council should, along with Borough Councillors, be made aware of any issues at the first opportunity and where possible, in advance of the press, though members appreciated that this was dependent on the circumstances of a particular issue.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their attendance.

8. SCRUTINY TOPIC REGISTRATION FORM

Councillor Hay raised the issue of Councillor Harman chairing this item given his role as Cabinet Member at Gloucestershire County Council. The Chairman did not agree that this was an issue, given his support for scrutiny of this topic, but suggested that the Deputy (Councillor Walklett) take the chair for this item, and the committee agreed.

Councillor Willingham as the proposer of the topic explained that on the 1 August 2017 permit parking was introduced in areas around Cheltenham Spa Station, and the West End area near the Lower High Street, following formal consultation in May of the previous year (2016). In representations made at the time, Councillor Willingham had advised that this was likely to cause parking to be displaced into adjacent areas, and the need for a post-implementation review to be performed. Within days of implementation, as he had predicted, parking displacement had occurred, with commuters having simply moved from one area to another. In December 2017 Councillor Willingham was advised by the relevant Cabinet Member at Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) that a technical assessment of parking availability would be undertaken in January 2018 and when he queried, in February, if this had been completed, he was

advised that they had carried out a survey in December but that the initial results indicated that there would be benefit in repeating the consultation in January, which had also been completed and the data was, at that time, being analysed. With still no details of any planned review, residents felt that they were in limbo, with no end in sight and it was a testament to the level of local concern that so many residents had made requests for scrutiny and were in attendance at the meeting. He was aware, from discussions with representatives from other wards that the issues he had described were not isolated to his ward but included St Paul's and All Saints. He felt that the fact that CBC were responsible for off-street parking and GCC responsible for on-street parking was irrelevant to the public and far from being about political expedience, joined up thinking between the two authorities was necessary in order to devise a town-wide strategy for Cheltenham and whilst this would not be a quick process, it was a must. Whilst acknowledging the needs of commuters to be able to park in the town, the piecemeal approach that had been adopted was frustrating for residents and he also had concerns about future planned resident parking schemes in areas with predominantly CBH tenants, given that GCC didn't appear to have a policy on cost and means testing.

All members of the committee voiced their support for further scrutiny of this issue, in addition to which the following comments were made:

- A revised residents' parking scheme was introduced in All Saints, with a post-implementation review promised after 6 months, but 12 months on and the message from GCC was that there was no budget to undertake these reviews. Having raised this issue again recently the ward member was advised that he could use Local Highways Challenge Fund to progress the issue more quickly, which he did not consider acceptable.
- The consultants, Arups, who had been commissioned by CBC to do a report into Cheltenham's car parking arrangements, had concluded that a piecemeal approach was the right one but this did not take account of the fact that it would impact streets differently. A town-wide strategy was required.
- In London, to address the issue of all day commuter parking, limited parking restrictions were introduced and in time zones, which made enforcement more efficient and effective. The suggestion was that to resolve the issue of commuter parking you simply had to disrupt it.
- In the ward of St Marks, resident parking schemes had addressed the issue of commuter parking but had only served to push the issue into other roads. GCC had since advised that they were not able to commit to any timescales for a post-implementation review as there were no funds for them to be able to undertake such reviews.
- There appeared to be a lack of consistency, strategy and communication. East Approach Drive in Pittville was subject to restrictions, residents were given permits and seemed to be working well, however, in West Approach Drive there were no restrictions and no problems but now the proposal was that bays would be introduced with all day parking available on one side and 4 hour limits on the other. When this apparent discrepancy was raised, the ward member was advised that East Approach Drive had been a mistake but that it was too complicated a process to change again.

- An issue for residents in some streets in All Saints ward and possibly others was that business permits, which were readily available, often impacted a residents ability to park anywhere near their properties.
- GCC had undertaken 15 months of what was described as excellent consultation in the St Pauls ward various schemes were implemented in all streets except those which contained, predominantly social housing. At the time of implementation a commitment was made to undertake a review in 9-12 months and despite numerous requests by the ward members and Councillor Fisher as the GCC representative, no response had been given.

In response to a member question, another committee member confirmed that residents could apply for a maximum of two permits per household, regardless of whether they had off-street parking or not.

A member did raise the question of whether the GCC member reps on this committee had ever raised the issue of post-implementation reviews or town-wide strategy with the O&S Committee at the County Council. Councillor Hay confirmed that he had raised questions at Council but had not referred the matter to the O&S Committee to scrutinise. The suggestion was that this would be beneficial.

At this stage the Chairman invited any residents who were in attendance, to address the committee if they so wished.

Mr Walker explained that since the introduction of parking schemes in adjacent streets to his own, it was not only residents who struggled to park but also trades people. He felt that there were failings in an approach which saw some streets empty all day and others so full that residents couldn't park anywhere near their own property and had GCC to be unresponsive to his concerns.

Mr Shepherd explained that he had never had any issue parking near his property prior to August last year and yet since that time, Monday to Friday, and to his mind a result of commuter traffic, it sometimes proved impossible to park anywhere near his home, when in adjacent streets such as Lansdown Parade, where parking meters had been installed, were all but empty. He suggested that a drop in on-street parking fees as you radiated out from the town centre might make it more attractive to commuters to park in these streets and thus generate more income. The ward member for Lansdown refuted that it was the cost that was prohibitive to commuters but rather the 4 hour limit that had been introduced as a means of attracting shoppers rather than commuters.

Mr Jaynes reiterated that the issue of commuters parking in his street often meant that residents, some with young families, were not able to park in anything like close proximity to their home.

Ms Atherstone, a candidate for St Peters ward in the upcoming Borough elections reaffirmed that the prediction made by Councillor Willingham had come to be and following a number of surveys it was clear that some of the bays and lines that had been introduced in some streets were, either blocking driveways or inexplicably reducing the number of spaces available within a street. In some instances they were also creating dangerous parking situations resulting in pedestrians being unable to get a clear view of the road when

attempting to cross. She agreed with Councillor Hay's suggestion about the adoption of a similar approach to that adopted in London and felt strongly that Cheltenham required a town-wide strategy.

The Chairman thanked the members of the public that had addressed the committee for having provided a better understanding of the issue, before inviting the Leader to address the committee if he wished. The Leader, invited by the Chairman, explained that the Station was the final of the 'new schemes' which represented a timely opportunity to undertake post-implementation reviews of schemes across the town and which he would fully support. He did note that there had been a Parking Board which had facilitated open dialogue on issues such as this, but that this had been scrapped when enforcement for on-street parking was taken back by GCC.

The Chairman asked that the committee, who were clearly in support of further scrutiny of this issue, to decide what form this should take.

Councillor Willingham, as proposer of the topic felt that there were two matters to be addressed, a town-wide strategy was one, but the more urgent, from the standpoint of residents, was the post-implementation reviews.

A member suggested that, in terms of a strategy, it would be sensible to first hear from the relevant Cabinet Members and Lead Officers from both CBC and GCC and members of the committee supported this approach. The Democracy Officer advised that, in line with the county-wide protocol for the attendance of officers and members of one public authority at meetings of another public authority, she would write to the Chief Executive of Gloucestershire County Council and make the request. The committee would be updated as to any response.

Another member proposed that Councillors Hay and Payne, as County Councillors as well as members of this committee, submit a Call for Action to the O&S Committee at GCC, regarding post-implementations which are yet to be undertaken. The committee supported this proposal.

Upon a vote it was

RESOLVED that:

- 1. The relevant Cabinet Members and Lead Officers from both CBC and GCC be invited to discuss on-street and off street parking at a future meeting of the committee.**
- 2. Councillors Hay and Payne submit a Call for Action to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Gloucestershire County Council, seeking post-implementation reviews of all new parking schemes introduced in Cheltenham.**

9. FEEDBACK FROM OTHER SCRUTINY MEETINGS ATTENDED

Councillor McCloskey had produced a written update on the recent meeting(s) of the Police and Crime Panel and this was circulated at the start of the meeting (Appendix 1). She explained that the meeting on the 16 March had been relatively short, and included an update on Restorative Justice. Having begun as a small project in 2010 in HMP Gloucester it had now expanded into

Cheltenham and Gloucester and members would recall having had a presentation, some months ago, prior to a Council meeting. It was noted that the service was recognised nationally having received the Restorative Service quality mark, the Police Support Volunteer Team of the Year award in 2015 and 2016 and the PCC Spotlight award.

There were no member comments or questions.

Councillor Harvey had not submitted an update on the recent meeting of the Health and Care O&S Committee, nor was he present to provide a verbal update.

A written update from Councillor P McCloskey on the recent meeting of the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee had been circulated with the agenda. Members were asked to contact him directly with any comments or questions.

10. CABINET BRIEFING

The Leader referred members to the briefing which had been circulated with the agenda, and which focussed on 2050. He asked whether members were supportive of the proposal to hold a second seminar on the 28 June, in the hope of having a cross-party discussion and deciding whether it was possible to achieve agreement on a motion, which could then be debated at Council on the 23 July. Members were happy with the proposed approach.

11. REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The work plan had been circulated with the agenda and the Democracy Officer outlined the items scheduled for consideration at the next meeting (25 June): End of year performance review Arle Nursery Strategic Review and a North Place update, which would only come if sufficient progress had been made since the last update and it was noted that this was likely to be exempt.

A member believed that the LGGA would soon be publishing a report on scrutiny and suggested that this was something that should be reviewed by the committee. The Democracy Officer confirmed that Democratic Services would review any such publication and decide if and how it would be presented to the committee, in consultation with the Chairman.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for the 25 June 2018.

Tim Harman
Chairman

REQUEST ONE

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Dear Sir

Concerns about parking displacement in Alstone Croft

The Bramery on Alstone Lane has seen town working commuters parking on site since the displacement, and has introduced its own parking scheme limiting businesses on site to how many permits they can have for each worker. This has in turn displaced both the town working commuters and also workers from the Bramery from parking there. Many town workers are now parking their cars in Alstone Croft and using fold up bicycles to get into town, which is affecting our own residents and their own visitors ability to park outside their own houses, , and many Bramery workers have been observed to be parking in Alstone Croft and walking across to their place of work on a daily basis. We are now suffering the fallout from an ill thought out scheme, which will only get worse when the Boots corner scheme forcing more traffic into residential area's is implemented. Does anyone involved with decision making process actually live in the area's affected, as scant regard is being given to those who do, and is there any plan to counter this newly manufactured problem!

Mr Filmer

REQUEST TWO

Dear CBC

Could the Chairman please ensure that the following parking problem in Gloucester Road is highlighted for investigation when the committee decides how it will investigate parking in Cheltenham. Details below:

I've written to Gloucestershire CC on numerous occasions as the amount of available parking on Gloucester Road has been reduced near our house since the introduction of the new parking scheme. The problem started when the the new parking bay was painted in with a large gap between the end of the bay and our neighbours drop kerb. When I parked partly on the new bay and partly on the unmarked piece of road I was approached by two parking enforcement officers who told me I couldn't park like this. I first questioned this in August 2017 and was told that it would be checked. Without coming back to me, however, the unmarked section of road was covered with double yellow lines, reducing the amount of available parking. Despite numerous requests for their removal, the new double yellow lines are still in place, and I cannot see why this additional restriction has been put in place? It does not appear to match the plan and hinders rather than helps our parking issues.

Thank you and kind regards

Ms Woods

REQUEST THREE

Dear Sir or Madam,

I have a question to ask under Item 8 of the agenda:

“Could the Chairman please ensure that the problem of displaced commuter parking in Alstone Avenue is highlighted when the Committee decides how it will investigate parking in Cheltenham?”

Yours sincerely,

Mr Walker

REQUEST FOUR

Could the Chairman please ensure that the problem of ... Displaced Parking Problems due to new parking zone boundaries in Alstone Croft Cheltenham is highlighted for investigation when the committee decides how it will investigate parking in Cheltenham.

Many Thanks

Mr Jaynes

REQUEST FIVE

Could the Cabinet Member/ Chairman of Committee please ensure that the problem of ... vehicles contravening the No Entry on the junction of Alstone Croft and Alstone Lane Cheltenham and the wish of the residents (via a poll handed to the Road Safety Hub) of Alstone Croft to have this junction closed to stop this happening daily ... is highlighted for investigation when the committee decides on highways in Cheltenham.

Many Thanks

Mr Jaynes

REQUEST SIX

4 visitors parking bays were installed at the top of Great Western Terrace, yet given the reduction in actual parking spaces these bays have created, it is only residents who are using these spaces since there is nowhere else to park.

An easy 'fix' which would create some extra spaces for parking, would be to remove the Visitors bay outside numbers 33 & 35 Great Western Terrace and the single yellow line opposite - this would create an extra 3 parking spaces for residents, whilst still leaving 2 Visitor spaces.

The implementation of this parking scheme has only served to make the road quieter during the day, which is not when a problem previously existed. The problem still remains that some residents are unable to park in the road during the evening due to space not being available - this has simply been made worse by the single yellow lines which have reduced the amount of parking available.

Therefore, could the Chairman please ensure that the problem of reduced parking and ineffectively used visitors bays in Great Western Terrace is highlighted for investigation when the committee decides how it will investigate parking in Cheltenham?

Ms Hindle