

Cheltenham Borough Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee Minutes

Meeting date: 5 June 2023

Meeting time: 6.00 pm - 7.45 pm

In attendance:

Councillors:

Steve Harvey (Vice-Chair), Nigel Britter, Jackie Chelin, Stephan Fifield, Tabi Joy, Emma Nelson and Julian Tooke

Also in attendance:

Darren Knight (Executive Director of Place and Communities), Paul Minnis (Director of Major Development and Regeneration), Richard Gibson (Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships), Martin Chastney (Senior Development Manager, Place & Economic Development), Richard King (Construction Manager, Major Developments & Regeneration) and Sandra West

1 Apologies

Councillor Payne.

2 Declarations of interest

There were none.

3 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 April were approved and signed as a correct record.

4 Public and Member questions, calls for actions and petitions

There were none.

5 Cabinet Briefing

There were no questions for the Cabinet Member Cyber, Regeneration and Commercial Income who was attending as the Leader had sent her apologies.

6 Matters referred to committee

There were no matters referred to committee on this occasion.

7 Report of the Scrutiny Task Group on Tackling Multiple Deprivation

The Vice Chair introduced the item and put on record his thanks to Harry Mayo, Democracy Officer, who had drafted the report on behalf of the task group. Cllr Willingham, Chair of the Scrutiny Task Group, thanked all Members who had participated, including substitutes. Thanks were also given to officers from Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) and other guests who had been invited to participate and who had provided a valuable insight into the issues. He highlighted that there were two areas in the borough which, based on the 2019 indices of multiple deprivation, were in 10% of the most deprived areas in the country, those being in St Marks and St Pauls. He added that there were other areas which were in the 20% most deprived areas.

He noted that tackling deprivation required partnership working and he made reference to the GCC levelling up funds granted to projects in St Marks and St Pauls as well as Hesters Way and West Cheltenham Partnership.

He highlighted that the report contained 21 recommendations which the council could deliver without extra funding, albeit additional funding would improve outcomes. Further issues were raised in the report which were beyond the control of the council, such as the nationwide shortages in teacher recruitment, access to transport, dental provision, tackling predatory lending and high strength, low cost alcohol.

It was imperative the council works with partners and he noted that councillor representatives sat on bodies such as the Gloucestershire Health Scrutiny Committee and the Police and Crime Panel.

The important message was for this to be acted upon which could involve lobbying organisations such as the LGA.

Members were given the opportunity to comment on the report and the following points were raised :

- Members thanked all external participants and officers, including the project sponsor, Richard Gibson, Head of Communities, Wellbeing and Partnerships.
- The report represented a comprehensive assessment of many of the issues and was timely in manner due to the current cost of living crisis. It was right that the council was accountable for things within its control and it was suggested that the relevant GCC Cabinet Members could be invited to the Council to outline their work in this area to facilitate more partnership working.

- Recognition of neurodiversity in education was highlighted, particularly traumas in early school life for which the right types of intervention and support were needed by national government and GCC, but noted that this was outside of CBC direct control
- Those on pre-payment meters were paying a premium and this should be addressed as a matter of equity. It was recognised that Cheltenham Borough Homes could provide advice in this respect to tenants
- The importance of recommendation 3 was flagged in terms of briefing borough councillors on signposting, referral and support routes throughout the cost of living crisis, through member seminars and ongoing support.
- An example of excellent work between the districts and the county council was given as the Gloucestershire Strategic Housing partnership on homelessness

The Vice-Chair thanked Members for their contributions and highlighted that whilst being mindful of what was within the council's remit, pressure can be applied to those who are in a position to make change.

It was suggested that some points arising from the debate be considered at the O&S Chairs group and that in any event a report on progress be brought back to O&S in a year's time.

RESOLVED THAT

The report be forwarded to Cabinet and brought back to Overview and Scrutiny in a year's time.

8 Feedback from other scrutiny meetings attended

The update from Councillor Bamford, CBC representative on the Gloucestershire Health O&S Committee (HOSC), was noted.

A Member raised the issue of funding for pharmacies in light of their role in acting as a first point of contact for common clinical conditions. He suggested that this could be raised by Cllr Bamford at the next meeting of HOSC.

9 Updates from scrutiny task groups

There were no current scrutiny task groups.

10 Review of scrutiny workplan

A Member suggested that Gloucestershire Highways be invited to a meeting in order for Members to understand their strategy for highways in the borough.

11 Date of next meeting

3 July 2023

12 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXEMPT INFORMATION

RESOLVED THAT

“That in accordance with Section 100A(4) Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining agenda items as it is likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, if members of the public are present there will be disclosed to them exempt information as defined in paragraph 3, Part (1) Schedule (12A) Local Government Act 1972, namely:

Paragraph 3; Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)”

13 Gloucestershire Airport

Members received a presentation from the Chair and Head of Finance of GAL and had the opportunity to raise questions.

Members also requested that further information be provided by the Airport with respect to the pre-submitted questions.

It was noted that GAL would be requested to attend Overview and Scrutiny in a year's time.

14 Golden Valley update

The Golden Valley team introduced themselves and referred to the exempt discussion paper circulated with the agenda.

Members had the opportunity to ask questions of the officers and thanked them for their attendance.