

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 30th November, 2015
6.00 - 7.45 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Tim Harman (Chair), Colin Hay (Vice-Chair), Nigel Britter, Chris Mason, Sandra Holliday, Helena McCloskey, Dan Murch, John Payne, Chris Ryder and Max Wilkinson
Also in attendance:	Richard Gibson (Strategy and Engagement Manager), Councillor Jordan (Leader), Rachael McKinnon (Business Relationship Manager), Pat Pratley (Deputy Chief Executive), Steve Read (Head of Service – Joint Waste Committee), Mark Sheldon (Director Resources), Councillor Walklett (Cabinet Member Corporate Services) and Shirin Wotherspoon (OneLegal)

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

All members of the committee were present as expected. The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles had given her apologies.

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.

Councillor Payne had been omitted from the list of attendees. This would be amended.

Upon a vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 26 October 2015, as amended, 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

No matters had been referred to the committee.

6. FEEDBACK FROM OTHER SCRUTINY MEETINGS ATTENDED

Councillor Clucas was unable to attend the meeting and had therefore produced a written update on the work of the Health & Care, and the Gloucestershire Economic Growth scrutiny committees (Appendix 1).

Councillor McCloskey advised that the Police and Crime Panel had met on the 5 November and requested a number of improvements and additions to reports from the Police and Crime Commissioners office. This included; background information in relation to any decisions, an annual report on complaints and Freedom of Information requests so that the panel could identify any trends in subjects and those making FOI requests and complaints. There had been a recent decline in performance of the 101 service which had been attributed to an ICT issue, but given that this had been a recurring problem, the panel had asked for regular performance data. At the last meeting Councillor McCloskey had advised the committee that the panel would be advertising for the position of Independent Member and she could now confirm that two candidates would be interviewed on the 11 December.

In response to a question from a member of the committee, Councillor McCloskey explained that the last three years had been a learning curve for all involved with the panel and it was only now possible to assess exactly what data the panel should be considering, rather than this information having not been forthcoming during that time.

7. CABINET BRIEFING

The Leader thanked the committee for the two Scrutiny Task Group reports which had been submitted for consideration by Cabinet (Railway and Cycling & Walking). Cabinet welcomed the input of scrutiny on both issues, which were important for the town and he looked forward to being able to consider the follow-up reports at Cabinet in January.

8. ICT STRATEGY AND UPDATE ON THE STG RECOMMENDATIONS

The Director Resources introduced the discussion paper as circulated with the agenda and thanked members for allowing ICT the opportunity to update the committee on the progress that had been made in relation to the developments in the service. He was pleased to be able to report that all but one of the recommendations had been fully implemented, with work still ongoing in relation to Disaster Recovery. As well as the investment made in the infrastructure upgrade strategy, which had been agreed by Council, much of the achievements to date were in no small part due to the partnership working with the vision 2020 councils which had proved invaluable up to this point. He noted that the PSN accreditation had been completed this year, both successfully and without the need to spend a lot of money; which he considered an achievement in itself. Work had started with 2020 partners to look at how we might invest in and rationalise Applications and ICT were developing an Applications Strategy including a strategy for providing ongoing support to Ubico whose needs had evolved since conception.

The Director of Resources, along with the Business Relationship Manager and Cabinet Member Corporate Services, gave the following responses to member questions;

- It had always been the case that there were data lines between locations (Cheltenham House, Depot, Town Hall and even included Coleford), meaning that were a line to fail it would be possible to re-route via another location, but investment had resulted in the speeds of these lines having been improved and the configuration changed to reduce to allow re-routing in the event of failure of one of the lines. This would soon include

Cirencester and West Oxfordshire and it was highlighted that much of this would be automatic, without impacting users. The council has an Uninterruptible Power Supply in the basement of the Municipal Offices and, at Coleford, a generator had been installed to support the infrastructure and systems should the electricity supply fail. It was noted that this would not allow systems to run indefinitely but would allow for clean closedowns.

Members commended the progress and improvements that had been achieved in this area and welcomed the enhanced reliability of ICT. The committee agreed that any outstanding issues would be picked up as business as usual and that there was no need for further progress reports on this issue.

9. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE AT END OF QUARTER 2 (APRIL TO SEPTEMBER 2015)

The Strategy and Engagement Manager introduced the corporate performance report for the first six months of the municipal year (April - September 2015). He reminded members that the Corporate Strategy, which set out commitments for the year, was agreed in March and included milestones, performance indicators and outcomes within an action plan. This report provided members with an opportunity to review performance at this halfway point; make any comments or observations relating to performance concerns or areas where performance has been better than expected and possibly identify areas for further scrutiny. The 2015-16 action plan identified 78 milestones and of these, 8 (10%) had been completed, 50 (64%) were on track to be delivered on time, 20 (26%) were amber, meaning that there were concerns about the deliverability of the project and 0 were red. Of the 15 performance indicators (outcome measures) identified in the action plan, 10 (67%) were green, 2 (13%) were red and 2 (20%) had not been updated by the relevant Service Manager. The action plan identified 15 service measures, which tracked how well an individual service was performing and of these, 4 (47%) were green, 5 (33%) were red and 3 (20%) were not updated.

The Strategy and Engagement Manager gave the following responses to member questions, with help from the Cabinet Member Corporate Services;

- As Chairman of the Joint Consultative Committee, the Cabinet Member Corporate Services, was able to confirm that this group received quarterly reports on sickness which analysed absences by type. He stressed that instances of longterm sickness had a greater impact on the average number of days lost due to sickness absence, because of the reduced number of staff overall at the council (currently only 231 FTE).
- In the past, the Government had imposed national targets in relation to the processing of planning applications and though these had recently been lifted to allow local authorities some discretion, Cheltenham Borough Council had continued to measure against the 91 days set by the Government.
- The Planning process itself had been reviewed as part of the systems thinking work and the process was illustrated on the first floor where it had been set out in full, step by step. Systems thinking aimed to break down each step to make the process more efficient and co-ordinate more effectively between different departments (Planning, Licensing, etc).

- Clearly any amendments to a planning application would increase the number of days it took the council to process an application, and this was why the council encouraged people to undertake the pre-application process, which ensured the quality of an application and therefore made for a swifter planning process, however, this was voluntary.
- The service measure relating to the number of disabled and older persons able to stay in their own homes as a result of Council action and the target of 126 had been set by this council. The change in policy at County level impacted the service that this council could deliver at a local level A briefing note would be produced by the relevant Service Manager outlining the impact of the change in policy and this would be circulated to members outside of the meeting. It was suggested that this could then be the focus of further scrutiny if the committee so decided.
- The issue of food safety was discussed. The Leader confirmed that a food safety policy report had been considered by Cabinet which set out the need for a risk based approach during a period of under-resource and it was this that had impacted the ability to reach the target. The Service Manager would be asked to produce a short briefing note outlining the current situation for members and this would be circulated outside of the meeting.
- Jane Stovell was the Project Manager for the Pittville Park play area.

Whilst some members were comfortable that the report, as it was currently presented, was easily readable on the iPad, others preferred that it be printed on A3 paper.

No decision was required.

10. JOINT WASTE COMMITTEE DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN 2016-19

Steve Read, Head of Service for the Joint Waste Committee introduced the draft Business Plan 2016-18. He wanted to give members an opportunity to consider the emerging business plan before the budget setting process and allow the Joint Waste Committee to take any comments into consideration. The Joint Waste Team (JWT) had three main priorities; Broadening the partnership - encouraging Gloucester City and Stroud to join; Integration – seeking synergies and avoiding duplication of effort and resources; and, most importantly, Diversion – minimising the amount sent for disposal through waste avoidance, reduction or material recovery. He assured members that these objectives were in no way going to be undermined by the mobilisation of Javelin Park by the County Council.

The JWT were driven by performance, cost, customer demand to recycle more and compliance within the regulatory environment, which was intended to improve material quality. The JWT had started using stickers to remind people not to put food waste in their general waste bin and as direct result there had been a 20% increase in food waste collected across the county. The JWT had recently taken over responsibility for the marketing of Cheltenham's recyclables and whilst there was no shortage of people willing to take the material, because of the quality, at present, prices nationally had fallen. The European Union would soon be releasing a report on the Circular Economy and it was rumoured that they would be setting a recycling target of 65% by 2030.

There were a number of projects involving the review and re-specification of collect contracts on the horizon (e.g. Javelin Park would be mobilised in 2018-19, the anaerobic digestion contract was up for renewal in 2019, the Household Recycling Centre contract was due to end in 2018 and the vehicles in Cheltenham were already reaching the end of their life). The JWT single client team would work to develop solutions which reduced costs, improved customer service and increased recycling.

The Head of Service gave the following responses to member questions;

- 50% of waste that was sent to landfill could in fact be recycled and this alone proved that recycling levels could be increased. He was of the opinion that some people would recycle everything that they could, the majority of people would recycle but needed to be constantly reminded to do so and that there were some people who would not do anything regardless.
- HMOs often required bespoke solutions, as standard kerbside collections were not always appropriate or even possible. This was not to say that it wasn't being encouraged, but there needs to be an assessment of the cost versus benefit if more officer time was to be dedicated to it.
- Gloucester City had been undertaking some interesting engagement with individual households and there were plans to do similar in Forest of Dean and Cotswolds too.
- There were many campaigns, Love Food/Hate Waste included, managed by the JWT. WRAP was a charity that worked with major retailers and producers to reduce packaging and food waste and had recently contacted a number of local authorities regarding a major initiative in 2016. This offered the opportunity to join up messages to consumers.
- The JWT were regularly reviewing targets and income and he did not consider that there was any conflict between the two: the more recycling that was collected the greater the recycling credit income that could be achieved.
- In his view, Local authorities subsidised producers and suppliers by covering the cost of collection of materials for recycling. This was a wider issue that needed to be addressed at a national level.
- He was not privy to the estimated cost per tonne of taking of waste at Javelin Park, but the cost of taking waste to landfill has exceeded £100 per tonne for some years.
- GCC offered recycling credits of around £50 for every tonne of material that was diverted from landfill. There could well be an increase in cost if the council was to recycle more, but its recycling credits would also increase.
- A proportion of residual waste was being exported from this country because there is currently no cheaper means of disposing of it. There is unlikely to be a shortage of waste to be incinerated at new facilities coming on line such as Javelin Park. Members could therefore be assured that would no need to divert accessible recyclable materials to Javelin Park in order for the site to be at capacity.

- The reuse shop located at Foss Cross site was well used and the JWT were now looking to include such a shop at Hempsted as part of a planned reorganisation of the site.
- The JWT were in dialogue with Ubico regarding vehicle renewal and an element of these considerations would be the additional cost of moving waste from Cheltenham direct to Javelin Park. From experience he felt the likely outcome would be that direct delivery to Javelin Park would be cheaper than building a transfer station for Cheltenham and Tewkesbury but this was still to be proved. Any reasonable additional cost would be bore by GCC rather than Cheltenham.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Service for his attendance and urged members to do all that they could to maximise recycling in their wards. He commended the partnership working across different councils and asked that Steve Read pass on specific comments on this committee to the JWC.

11. CHELTENHAM TOURISM PROJECT UPDATE

The Chairman explained that it was originally envisaged that the committee would, at this meeting, consider the draft consultant report, but this item had been deferred until the February meeting, when the consultants were available to present their draft final report. However, Councillors Hay, Payne, Ryder and Wilkinson, of this committee, were also members of the Cabinet Member Working Group and the Chairman invited these members to discuss their view of the progress to date.

The working group had to date, only reviewed Report A, the first report of three, to be produced by the consultants. This report was a situational analysis and summarised the opinions of the Cheltenham 'offer' from various organisations within the tourist industry, which had been anonymised to facilitate for honest feedback.

Opinion amongst the representatives of the working group was evenly split. Two members felt that Report A contained too much corporate language, and statements which were not substantiated by any data. These members were also of the opinion that the Trust should be doing more.

The other two members were comfortable that the report, which was not a public report, used terminology and language which the tourist industry were familiar with. They felt strongly that any criticism of the Trust was completely unjustified given that the only responsibility in relation to tourism that had been delegated to the Trust by the Council; was the day-to-day running of the Tourist Information Centre, though they were keen to take on more.

The Leader attempted to dispel any confusion surrounding this issue. The Cheltenham Tourism Partnership was set-up by the council and whilst the Trust was represented, membership was much broader (Festivals, Racecourse, etc). The Partnership met once and decided to commission consultants to develop a strategy, something the council had not had for some years since the collapse of the Regional Tourist Boards. Report A from the consultants simply aimed to outline the status quo rather than provide the solution. In some aspects, Cheltenham had an international reputation, but CBC wanted to be clear about what the Cheltenham offer was and therefore wanted to develop a strategy, which would help us determine who was best placed to deliver this. It was

suggested that a briefing note, a position statement on Tourism, would be beneficial to members. This would be circulated outside of the meeting.

In response to a member question, Councillor Payne confirmed that Report A included a 'destination tourist wheel' which identified a number of issues relating to how tourists accessed the town and the welcome that they received, much of which, he said, was outside of the councils control. He highlighted that The Promenade in Cheltenham was again voted the 5th best street for shopping in the UK and he was eager to see Report B of the consultants.

The Chairman welcomed the offer of a briefing note, recognising the value of tourism to the town and acknowledging that there seemed to be some confusion on the issue.

12. UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS

The Democracy officer gave the following update on each of the active scrutiny task groups;

Cycling & Walking and Railway – both STG reports were noted by Cabinet on 10 November and detailed reports would be taken to another meeting in due course. The committee would be updated on the outcome at the appropriate time and reviews scheduled accordingly.

Broadband – the task group had only received details of cabinets in Cheltenham and Gloucester which were known to require upgrades last week. The Chairman had contacted Fastershire directly to ask for further information in order that these cabinets could be marked on a map, along with details of which premises they served. Arrangements for the next meeting would be made in due course and once the group had agreed upon some aims and objectives for the review, the draft One Page Strategy would be tabled with the committee for approval.

Devolution – the committee agreed the One Page Strategy at the last meeting but the special Council meeting was subsequently cancelled as discussions with Government were not yet finalised. The Leader advised members that there were currently two options for how to progress; the first was that an initial package would be developed by February/March and consultation on the combined authority be run in parallel, which officers felt was a sensible approach. The second option, which he favoured, was slightly slower, allowing for an initial view to be formed of the package on offer, before undertaking consultation in July, thus enabling the council to sign-off the final version.

Councillor Mason, Chairman of the task group, advised that members of the group had unanimously agreed that they would not meet again until there was more information and the next document was not expected until January. The Leader confirmed that a copy of the formal response by the county was expected this week.

13. REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The Democracy Officer referred members to the committee work plan, as circulated with the agenda. She explained that the Tourism item had been confirmed for the February 2016 meeting, to allow the consultants, who were not available to attend the January meeting, to give a presentation.

The Railway and Cycling & Walking STG reviews would be scheduled once Cabinet had considered their follow-up reports, which was likely to be in January.

Councillor McCloskey, as the elected representative on GAVCA was keen that the committee consider the survey results at the next meeting, as suggested on the work plan.

Councillor Hay advised members that the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee had established a task group to consider the issue of pub closures. The task group had received an interesting presentation from an organisation called 'The Pub is the Hub' who were funding a survey of rural areas and it looked as though the county would be funding a survey of urban areas. He stressed that this was not simply about giving local communities the opportunity to buy local pubs and therefore, this might be an area for scrutiny that the committee could consider in the future.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for 25 January 2016.

Tim Harman
Chairman