

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 22nd February, 2016
6.00 - 8.20 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Tim Harman (Chair), Colin Hay (Vice-Chair), Nigel Britter, Chris Mason, Sandra Holliday, Helena McCloskey, John Payne, Chris Ryder and Max Wilkinson
Also in attendance:	Richard Gibson (Strategy and Engagement Officer), Councillor Rowena Hay (Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles), Councillor Jordan (Leader), Gill Morris (Client Officer), Andrew Palmer (Creative Tourist Consults), Councillor Walklett (Cabinet Member Corporate Services)

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Councillor Murch had given his 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 McCloskey confirmed that since the last meeting, she had spoken again with the CEO of GAVCA and had been provided with the minutes of the two previous meetings as well as two draft budgets, one based on the continuation of GAVCA and one based on GAVCA becoming part of the VCS. There had been no further meetings in that time.

Upon a vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 25 January 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

There had been no meetings of the Health and Care or Economic Growth scrutiny committees since the last meeting of this committee and as such, Councillor Clucas had not been required to attend.

Councillor McCloskey gave a verbal update on the recent (05/02) meeting of the Police and Crime Panel. The focus of this meeting had been the budget for 2016-17. The settlement had better than expected which had allowed for the release of £8m from Police reserves, which had been earmarked to cushion against the proposed cuts. This would leave £23m in the earmarked reserves to upgrade IT, replace vehicles within the fleet and develop estates. The police precept would be increased by 1.2% which would raise £560k and equate to £2.58 a year increase for Band D households. This would enable the Chief Constable to end the recruitment freeze and result in an additional 40 Police Officers and 200 Special Constables being recruited over the next 4 years. The Chief Constable had made a case for a 2% increase but in view of the fact that the precept had been increased by this amount in the previous two years and that taxpayers were facing a further increase for local council services in 2016-17, it was felt that this placed an unfair burden on taxpayers. It was moved and seconded that the precept be reconsidered and increased to 1.9% but the motion was lost as the two thirds majority was not achieved.

The panel had also received updates on the Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May, and were advised that the Commissioners Officer had set-up a candidate and agents meeting for the 2 March and a familiarisation event for the 11 April for prospective candidates. The Commissioner explained that phase one of works to Wilton (Holland) House had been completed and that the site was now open, but work was not complete, with phase 2, disabled access to the building and resurfacing of the car park, having been delayed.

Since the meeting of the Panel, Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary (HMIC) had released her annual report (which covered June 2014-June 2015) and the overall judgement was that the force required improvement. Whilst the force was found to be 'good' at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, and keeping people safe, in relation to investigating crimes, the Inspector had concerns that standards of investigations were letting the force down. The victim support satisfaction rates were also lower than the national average. On the plus side, although anti-social behaviour was higher than the national average, it was reduced from the previous year. She reminded members that this report had been published after the last meeting of the Panel and assured members that it would be discussed at the next meeting (11/03), where the panel would be able to question the Commissioner, but did not have the right to scrutinise the Chief Constable directly. She felt that the lack of training and experience in relation to major crimes was because of the low level of such crimes in the area.

7. CABINET BRIEFING

The Leader referred members to the briefing which had been circulated immediately before the meeting.

The Joint Committee of the 2020 Partnership had met for the first time on the 12 February. He explained that under current legislation it was not possible for the Joint Committee to meet via video link, with those with a vote having to be in the same room. Whilst the Government were being lobbied to review this, it would still be possible for these meetings to be observed by video link at each of the 4 partner councils. In reference to the question posed by the Leader about how the committee wished to be briefed on the progress of 2020 generally and the

Joint Committee in particular, the committee decided that it would like quarterly progress reports on both 2020 and the Joint Committee and would look at particular issues on an ad-hoc basis if the need arose. One member voiced his view that regular reports of what all Joint Committees (including 2020, Joint Waste, etc) should be taken to Council so that all members could review what decisions were being taken on the council's behalf. The rest of the committee decided that they should come to O&S and that the committee could then decide if council would be a better forum.

There had been a marked increase in the number of individuals begging in the town centre. CBC had a responsibility to tackle homelessness and had a contract with Cheltenham Housing Aid Centre to deal with rough sleeping as a result of homelessness; but it appeared that the majority of individuals were not in fact homeless and therefore fell outside of the CBC contract. He suggested that this topic would benefit from a task group reviewing the situation and advising on possible solutions. Members agreed that this was a growing issue in the town centre and that scrutiny should look at the issue in more detail. The lead members would meet on the 8 March to discuss an appropriate form of scrutiny.

CBC was a member of both the Local Government Association and South West Councils and had benefited from these memberships, most notably in securing a higher level of recovery from Icelandic Banks. Bryony Houlden, Chief Executive of the South West Councils had offered to visit councils and explain the benefits of membership to those that may not be aware of what they offer. The committee agreed that this would be useful and suggested that a member seminar should be arranged for all members, sometime after the elections in May, to allow new members to absorb the information they are given immediately after elections.

8. PROJECT TO DEVELOP A NEW STRATEGIC APPROACH TO TOURISM

The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles introduced Andrew Palmer from the tourist consultants, Creative Tourist Consults. The committee were given a PowerPoint presentation which summarised the report that had been circulated with the agenda.

The following responses were given to members questions by the Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles and Andrew Palmer, of Creative Tourist Consults;

- The report made clear that the 'full' offer was of equal importance to the cultural offer (currently 16 weeks of Festivals), but Cheltenham was culturally rich and as such, this was a major focus.
- The consultants advocated an honest appraisal of the existing Festivals and felt that this could be easily undertaken given the number of comparable events across the country. One suggestion was that Cheltenham, as other towns and cities had started to do, should look to use public open spaces as part of the offer, with innovation being key to success.
- The key focus of the money that had been set aside, but by no means the sole purpose, would be manpower, rather than simply improving websites. The consultant's report would be taken to Cabinet on the 8 March and the recommendation was that Tim Atkins, Managing

Director, Place and Economic Development, be delegated authority to consider the delivery plan and proposed delivery mechanism.

- Marketing and promotion would be the next area of focus for the Partnership, but whilst it was important to have a creative campaign, it was equally important to target the right markets in order to get the best return from any investment.
- It was recognised by all (Cheltenham, Cotswolds and Gloucester) that working together would improve the message and therefore the overall offer. The Cotswolds was internationally known but it was for Cheltenham to decide what it wanted/needed from the DMO. Gloucester were in the process of creating a cultural strategy and had invited Cllr Hay to contribute. Marketing Gloucester would be invited to participate on the Tourism Partnership.
- The 2011 report did not include details of how Cheltenham could or indeed, should, improve its offer, it simply set out that the products were good but could be better.
- Creative Tourist Consults were commissioned and Cheltenham Tourism Partnership established because the council recognised it did not have anybody with the right skills set to take tourism strategies forward. Whilst the council needed to drive the programme forward for now, it was not envisaged that the council would always be leading on this.
- Areas where a Business Improvement District had been developed had seen improvements to tourism and culture simply by attracting people to the geographical area itself. It was important that resources dovetailed rather than crudely overlapped and therefore it was vital to have early conversations, which was being put into practice by the inclusion of Kevin Blackadder.
- If the action plan is successfully delivered then examples of the difference that could be seen in 5 years' time would be a coherent and consistent message with greater penetration, assets being used to their full potential, with time specific reasons to visit (events) increased and enhanced. Whilst existing markets would continue, new audiences would be coming in.
- Free events were available at most festivals, though there was always scope to do more, but with no central place to access information, these events were not always as well publicised as they could be. However, it was most likely that the more expensive events would result in more revenue and would therefore, always be promoted to a greater degree. The consultants suggested that festivals with free entry could in fact raise the market for everyone.
- The report acknowledged that the Wilson was perhaps not the best location for the TIC. Seasonal or even pop-up TICs, and not just in the town centre, but at transport gateways and slightly out of town locations, could be a means of using assets in the most effective way in the future.
- No one person would be responsible for, or able to take forward all of the actions on the action plan. Work had already been undertaken to improve advertising and marketing by the Wilson and this demonstrated that some of the actions could only be realised with the help of Partners.

The report highlighted a number of reasons as to why the town was not being promoted as it should, however, members were asked to be mindful of the fact that the 2011 strategy was drafted at a time when the council was losing staff year on year and it was proposed that now was the time to look forward rather than dwelling on the past and focussing on what went wrong. Partners had an appetite to work together and this coupled with the BID process, put Cheltenham in a strong position to take advantage of all opportunities and he envisaged that in 5 years time, Cheltenham would be nationally recognised.

One member felt that most people would access tourist information online rather than seeking out and visiting a TIC and therefore did not place significant value on this arrangement going forward, suggesting that a TIC would be even less important in 5-10 years. He went on to say that in order for Cheltenham to boost its economy it needed to attract more people to live and work in the town and that this started with tourism, but he felt that as a town, there was a reluctance to attract such increases, which it needed to overcome.

The committee were happy to endorse the recommendations that were going to be considered by Cabinet at their meeting on the 8 March, to accept the consultant's report, delegate authority to the MD Place and Economic Development to further consider and progress the proposed delivery mechanism and to allocate funding required to source the additional capacity needed to take the programme forward.

The Chairman thanked Andrew Palmer from Creative Tourist Consults and the Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles for their attendance.

No decision was required.

9. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CORPORATE STRATEGY 2016-17

The Strategy and Engagement Manager introduced the draft Corporate Strategy 2016-17. The Corporate Strategy sets out the proposed priority actions and milestones for an ambitious yet realistic programme for delivery of the four outcomes. The committee were being asked to consider if any improvements were required to make the document more clear or robust.

The following responses were given to member questions;

- The word 'vibrant' would be added to the vision statement.
- suggested a minor re-wording of our transformation outcome to reflect that the council's role is to enable and facilitate delivery of outcomes, rather than to deliver them directly..
- Leckhampton Hill had been designated as a SSSI and this would be referenced in the context for the environmental quality outcome.
- Could a statement be added to the vision statement to encourage sustainable forms of transport for Cheltenham.
- The wording of the key milestone for priority action ENV1 suggested that the JCS would be adopted in December 2015. This would be revised to reflect that its adoption would be subject to council approval.
- Corporate Risk 89 had been attributed to the strong, safe and healthy communities outcome as it didn't really fit anywhere else. A caveat would be added to explain why it was there.

- The Strategy and Engagement Manager was asked to consider if improving air quality could be considered as a priority.

A member suggested that we look at offering additional support to help people recycle who live in blocks of flats or HMOs. His interest in this came about from reviewing a planning application for a flat conversion where no provision had been made for the external storage of recycling boxes. He also wondered if there was more we could do to encourage people living in flats to recycle. Another member also felt that this was important as she was aware of some of the challenges facing disabled residents of flats. The Strategy and Engagement Manager could not comment on this issue but suggested that he contact the relevant Cabinet Member for more information.

The Chairman thanked the Strategy and Engagement Manager for his attendance and members of the committee for their input. The committee felt that with their comments having been taken on board, they were happy to endorse the draft strategy for approval by Council on the 4 April.

No decision was required.

10. MEMBERS' ICT SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - REVIEW OF PROGRESS

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services introduced the progress report in relation to the Members' ICT STG recommendations which were approved by Cabinet in April 2015. Paragraphs 2 to 5 set out the progress which had been achieved against each of the four recommendations of the STG and it was for the committee to decide if any further scrutiny or follow-up was required.

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

- It had been acknowledged and accepted that some members would adjust to using an iPad more quickly than others. With this in mind, group and 1-2-1 training sessions had been offered by Democratic Services and paper copies of some documents were still produced where documents did not present well on the iPad.
- The suggestion about ICT being on hand before or after Council meetings had been raised with ICT and they had been receptive to the idea.
- Members had received an increment of £100 to their allowances to cover the cost of wireless printers, improved wi-fi, etc. One councillor had chosen to forego the increment to her allowance in order to continue to get paper copies despite having being issued with an iPad. This councillor was happy with this solution at the time as her home PC was no longer in use. This councillor had now purchased a laptop and would be meeting with Democratic Services and ICT to discuss the various options available to her going forward.
- The Planning Committee was not administered by the Democratic Services Team, nor did any of the associated printing costs come from the DS budget and therefore, no figures for this had ever been included in the business case or savings calculations.
- Given the number of options available to members the committee could be assured that the council met all requirements relating to equality.

Members were pleased that the majority of members had moved to paperless and that this was generating savings. They also welcomed the proposal to provide refresher training to existing members following the May elections.

The Cabinet Member committed to exploring the availability and cost of keypads for use with iPads.

Upon a vote the committee unanimously

RESOLVED that having considered the progress that had been made against each of the recommendations, that no further scrutiny or follow-up is required.

11. PUBLIC ART PANEL SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - REVIEW OF PROGRESS

The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles introduced the progress report in relation to the Public Art Panel STG recommendations which were approved by Cabinet in March 2015. The report set out the progress that had been achieved against each of the eight recommendations of the STG and with all but two having been achieved, it was for the committee to decide if any further scrutiny or follow-up was required.

The Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles gave the following responses to member questions;

- Having personally sat in on one of the selection panels, she assured members that the Project Manager was adhering to all of the project management processes and could only assume that all Project Managers were doing the same.
- Artists were still responsible for management of some projects but the panel gleaned project management skills from the artist's application and interview.
- A commitment had been made to update members of completed works via the Members Briefings but in actual fact no works had been completed in the last 12 months.
- More than one officer was involved in taking projects forward and despite there being capacity issues, the process was always a slow one. Despite this, there was no immediate danger of losing any of the funding.
- Personally, the Cabinet Member would rather spend money on art rather than events to launch new installations.
- Ultimately the aim was to empower groups outside of the council to manage projects through to fruition.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member Healthy Lifestyles for her attendance and welcomed the progress that had been achieved.

Upon a vote the committee unanimously

RESOLVED that

1. **Progress in respect of implementing the recommendations arising from the Public Art Panel scrutiny task group, agreed by Cabinet in March 2015, be noted.**
2. **No further scrutiny or follow-up was required but details of completed works should be included in the members' briefings.**

12. UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS

The Democracy Officer confirmed that the Broadband STG had met on the 15 February and broadly agreed the terms of reference; to develop a map of problem areas in Cheltenham and Gloucester; understand the reasons behind areas with slower speeds and; discuss these issues with BT and Virgin, with a view to being able to recommend solutions. Members reviewed some detailed maps of service provision in Cheltenham and Gloucester, as well as discussing the various reasons behind certain areas requiring improvement. Their aim now was to meet with BT and Virgin to discuss possible solutions.

Councillor Mason, as Chairman of the Devolution STG explained that the group had not met since the last meeting of the committee and had in fact deferred their next meeting from the 1 March to a date to be determined towards the end of March as there was nothing to discuss at this time, and therefore, nothing further to report.

13. REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

Members were reminded that the NHS Trust would be attending the next meeting of the committee and that as part of the Council's Scrutiny Witness Charter came a commitment to provide questions and requests for information, in advance of the meeting. Members had until the 25 March to submit this information to Saira Malin in Democratic Services. A reminder would be sent nearer the time.

A member referred to the Car Parking Strategy which had been deferred until the end of the year and asked that the committee be provided with an update on its current status. The Democracy Officer would liaise with the relevant Officers and discuss the scheduling of an update at the next briefing with lead members.

The committee would consider the business case for the 2020 Local Authority at its meeting in June.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for the 11 April 2016.

Tim Harman
Chairman