

Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 9th May, 2011

6.00 - 8.25 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Rowena Hay (Chair), Chris Coleman, Barbara Driver, Wendy Flynn, Diggory Seacome, Jon Walklett and Simon Wheeler
Co-optees:	James Harrison and Karl Hemming
Also in attendance:	Lawrence Boyd (Cheltenham Borough Homes), Paul Davies (Cheltenham Borough Homes), Jane Griffiths (Director of Commissioning), Councillor Colin Hay (Cabinet Member Corporate Services), Grahame Lewis (Executive Director), Jane Lillystone (Museum, Arts and Tourism Manager), Councillor Andrew McKinlay (Cabinet Member Sport and Culture), Stephen Petherick (Commercial Manager) and Councillor Klara Sudbury (Cabinet Member Housing and Safety)

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Jo Teakle and Duncan Smith (Chairman). Councillor R Hay took the Chair.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Walklett declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 9 (Cheltenham Borough Homes) as a Board Member.

Councillor Driver declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 9 (Cheltenham Borough Homes) as a Board Member of Cheltenham Borough Homes and Chair of the Bromford Hub Committee.

3. AGREEMENT OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THE 28 FEBRUARY 2011

The minutes of the last meeting had been circulated with the agenda.

A spelling mistake on page 10 of the minutes was highlighted. This would be amended.

Upon a vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 28 February 2011, subject to the correction of a spelling mistake, be agreed and signed as an accurate record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

None received.

5. MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

None referred.

6. CABINET MEMBER BRIEFING

The Cabinet Member Housing and Safety wished to update members on some additional items, as well as add to the Cheltenham Borough Homes item which featured later on the agenda.

She had recently undertaken a second visit to Brighton Road where the development of 16 new homes was underway. This was a well run site and she was confident that the houses would be of a very high standard once completed. Work at the St. Paul's site had been delayed as further discussions had been required with Gloucestershire County Council relating to the adoption of roads on completion of the works. This issue was being resolved and it was hoped that work would start on site at the end of May, start of June.

There had been various meetings earlier in the day to do with funding for youth services. Gloucestershire County Council were yet to finalise the details of how their £50k was to be allocated, despite assurances that this would be agreed by last Friday (6 May). Disappointingly, draft versions had stated that the funding would only be fixed for one year, contrary to previous understanding. The deadline for expressions of interest in relation to Cheltenham Borough Council's £50k was last Friday (6 May) and four had been received (GAVCA in partnership with Young Gloucestershire, CCP in partnership with Hesters Way Neighbourhood Project and University of Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire Enterprises Ltd and Third Sector Services). The working group had met to discuss each application and a briefing note would be prepared for Cabinet on the 24 May. She was pleased with progress thus far.

Licensing formed part of her portfolio and members were advised that the Street Trading Policy was currently being reviewed. Whilst this was for the Licensing Committee to agree, she urged Officers and the Chair of the committee to ensure that the draft be consulted on as widely as possible, given that the policy would define successful and unsuccessful applications. This issue evoked high public interest and also corresponded with various corporate objectives.

Earlier in the day the Cheltenham Community Safety Partnership had held a facilitated workshop called 'Turning the Curve' which brought together a wide range of partners to look at new solutions to the high domestic burglary rates in Cheltenham.

In response to a question from a member of the committee the Cabinet Member Housing and Safety stressed that at this early stage, no decisions had been made about the allocation of the 50k CBC funding for youth services in Cheltenham. Expressions of interest had been received and were currently being reviewed by the working group, but ultimately the decision would be a Cabinet decision and in terms of GCC funding, the allocation guidelines had not been finalised. Admittedly some areas in Cheltenham had the infrastructure to deliver and others did not but the aspiration for the CBC funding at least, was that it would form a town approach.

Councillor Seacome, as Chair of the Licensing Committee, confirmed that the draft Street Trading Policy would be reviewed by the committee a week on Friday (13 May) before a twelve week consultation period would commence, in which he would ensure members were included. The policy would then go before the Licensing Committee once again, prior to going to Council for formal adoption.

The Cabinet Member Sport and Culture offered updates in addition to and in support of some of the later agenda items.

The Heritage Lottery Fund bid had been successful and as a result, the Art Gallery and Museum had closed on the 31 March. Securing the funding had been a great achievement for the Council and the town in a time when other authorities were being forced to close such provisions. He reminded members that they were invited to attend the fundraising event for the next phase of the scheme on the 25 May.

Another achievement was that as part of a Gloucestershire consortium, Cheltenham, namely the Prince of Wales Stadium, would host the Malawi Olympic Team in preparation ahead of the Olympics.

2010-2011 had been a successful year for sport and leisure in Cheltenham. As the Leisure@ outturn report detailed (agenda item 11), the service had achieved a £78k under-spend. In addition to this the Town Hall and Pittville Pump Room had also achieved an under-spend of £50k.

In response to a question from a member of the committee the Cabinet Member Sport and Culture suggested that GCC had permitted the 'Midnight Walk' in Cheltenham as the Highways Authority.

7. COMMISSIONING UPDATE

The Cabinet Member Corporate Services offered a brief Commissioning update given that very little had changed since the last meeting. Further updates would be a result of the commissioning reviews and in light of this he wondered whether it was worthwhile him attending every meeting. He suggested that he should only attend in instances where he could provide significant updates.

In response to a question from a member of the committee the Cabinet Member Corporate Services assured members that they would play a key role in the commissioning process and could be involved at various stages. This included agreeing processes by which members of the public reported concerns and/or complaints.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member Corporate Services for his attendance and proposed that he contact the Chairman (Councillor Smith) regarding future attendance at these meetings.

8. COMMITTEE WORK PLAN 2011-2012

The Executive Director introduced the paper as circulated with the agenda, the first of its kind to come to the committee. He felt this new approach was a positive one which would allow members to shape upcoming scrutiny and offered the opportunity for more effective involvement in wider scrutiny issues.

The comprehensive plan emerged following discussions between Officers and the Chairman and was informed by the Corporate Strategy and Forward Plan.

Members were invited to raise issues with items that were included on the work plan or highlight topics which in their opinion should be.

In response to a query the Chair confirmed that the Forward Plan was reviewed at each of the Chairs Briefings and therefore informed the committee work plan on an ongoing basis.

Councillor Coleman acknowledged that the work plan currently contained some weighty issues and accepted that resources had reduced but proposed that the committee should consider Christmas celebrations on an annual basis given the level of public interest on the matter.

The Executive Director noted that this was something the Economy and Business Improvement O&S Committee had reviewed in the past, however, agreed to consider whether it fitted with the remit of this committee.

In response to a query by the Chair, the Executive Director suggested that the Cabinet Member Corporate Services attend the committee meetings to provide a commissioning update as an exception rather than as a standard item at each meeting.

Members were invited to raise additional items of interest with the Chair and Vice-Chair in the first instance.

9. CHELTENHAM BOROUGH HOMES

The Chair welcomed Paul Davies and Lawrence Boyd.

Paul Davies, the Chief Executive and Lawrence Boyd, Chair of the Board of Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) introduced themselves and a PowerPoint presentation (Appendix 1).

Lawrence explained that he had been Chair of the Board for the last 18 months and had only 18 months of his 9 year term remaining.

Looking retrospectively over the last decade he felt CBH had performed well, a major factor was the Decent Homes programme, however, this success was also attributed to the Board, Staff and the support provided by the Council.

Going forward things would be very different, the current undertaking of building new homes and the harsh economy would add pressure to CBH and its Board, which was currently comprised of 15 non-executive members, 5 tenants, 5 independent members and 5 Council representatives.

The direction of travel being proposed offered scope to reduce the Board to 12 non-executive members (4 tenants, 4 independent members and 4 Council representatives), though this was still for discussion. External factors included, generally Board sizes were reducing and industry research suggested that a smaller Board was a more effective Board. Internal factors being, that creating a team within the Board structure with the current number (15) was more difficult, a smaller number (12) would allow for improved engagement and

enable more focus from individuals. He did not agree with the argument that this would affect quality.

Personally he wanted to see the change through the passing of time as members came to the end of their 9 year term, as he would next year and one of the tenant representatives the year after (2013).

Paul Davies then spoke about the development of the business plan.

Members were shown a map which depicted the distribution of Council housing stock and areas of deprivation in Cheltenham. The majority of homes managed by CBH were situated within the most deprived communities in the borough, with higher unemployment, lower incomes, poorer health and mortality 4 to 7 years less than the equivalent.

From the outset CBH were not only committed to delivering a successful Decent Homes programme but also providing positive outcomes for their customers. Having consulted 1 in 5 residents, as well as various regeneration partners, it was apparent that there was a strong feeling that CBH should be more than a management and repairs provider and build upon its development of communities.

There was however, still ambiguity in the operating environment and therefore, targets and milestones within the business plan covered the period of 2012-2015. The economic climate made CBH residents more vulnerable and growth within the housing market was an issue. Major welfare changes, too many to mention, posed their own risks to CBH and their residents.

Regulatory reforms had and would see all but the HCA disappear. Delivering a 3 star service had always been the key driver for CBH and with the demise of the Audit Commission came the requirement to monitor themselves and be more accountable to the community.

There were also opportunities. CBH was comfortable standing as a partner of the Council, happy to help deliver the Councils objectives whilst meeting their own.

Forthcoming changes from housing subsidy to a self financing model also offered opportunities for CBH. Whilst they would have a £58million debt, it was more than capable of serving that debt, with the regeneration works achieving £20million alone. These changes offered potential for provision of new services for the community.

Another issue faced by CBH was the proposed use of fixed term tenancies, ranging from a minimum of 2 to a maximum of 20 years (life in some circumstances). In his opinion this could undermine efforts to create communities.

Given the many uncertainties it was felt that it was time to hold to their current strategy. The core business needed to be robust but CBH were eager to avoid being stagnant and would therefore look to draw in Lottery funding for future innovative projects and schemes. The management fee from CBC would be maintained at the current level aided by a 3 year pay freeze for all employees

and 110 new homes for 110 families would be completed within the coming 5 years.

Paul Davies, the Chief Executive, took the opportunity to express his thanks to CBC for extending the management agreement until 2020, which offered an element of stability to residents in a time of uncertainty.

The following answers were given by the Chair of the Board and Chief Executive of CBH in response to questions from members of the committee;

- The Coronation Square office move was subject to the public agreeing to the Library being situated elsewhere. If possible, a report would be considered by the Board at the end of May, though the process would probably take 12 months. No cost saving would be achieved by this move, however, the building was more modern and accessible.
- The CBH constitution states that the Board must be 5 tenants, 5 independent members and 5 CBC members. Any change would need to be approved by Council.
- CBH would look to utilise Officers with previous experience to liaise with particular providers rather than providing directly (mental health services).
- Fixed term tenure would not apply retrospectively and would realistically take a generation to take effect. Current guidance did not imply that authorities would be forced to offer fixed term tenure and as such the advice of CBH was that these should be used sparingly.
- It would be for CBC to decide the criteria used to assess the length of tenure offered to a new tenant as the responsible authority for the Housing Policy.

The Chair thanked both men for their attendance and members joined her in commending CBH in their successes over the last decade and exciting plans for the future.

The Chair referred members to the draft terms of reference for the Housing review member working group and invited members from the committee to express an interest in forming part of the working group.

The Director of Commissioning confirmed that CBH Officers and Board Members would be co-opted and invited to participate at relevant times. She envisaged that there would be one meeting a month between now and October, probably in the evening to suit members' availability and there would be a large volume of reading involved between meetings.

The Chair felt that, as the group was not a decision-making body, it would be beneficial for membership to be as diverse as possible.

Councillors Coleman, Flynn, R. Hay and Waklett (CBH Board Member) and co-optee Karl Hemming expressed an interest.

The Cabinet Member Housing and Safety would extend the invitation to all members and confirm details in due course.

10. ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM

The Museum, Arts and Tourism Manager introduced the paper which had been circulated separately to the agenda and prior to the meeting. The paper offered an update on progress since the last report to Council on the 11 February.

The second-round bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund was successful with a grant for the full amount requested; £750k.

The AG&M closed on the 1 April 2011 for the start of the decanting programme, moving collections to various sites including the Depot, 3 St. Georges Place and the existing galleries above the Library. No rental charges would be paid for these spaces, just covering costs (business rates, heating and security systems).

The design scheme had been completed and was now half way through the procurement process for a contractor. If current timescales were maintained, work would commence on the 26 July 2011 and be completed by August 2012, ready to be opened by early the following year, 2013.

The fundraising campaign had so far raised, including the HLF bid, £5,380,475, which left a shortfall of £919,525 to achieve the £6.3million target. However, notwithstanding the decision by the Council to underwrite the shortfall, the fundraising campaign continued to raise funds, with the launch of the Phase III fundraising campaign at the end of May.

A partnership agreement with the University of Gloucestershire (Faculty of Media, Art and Communications) was currently being developed.

The AG&M were also in discussions to let the ground floor retail area and sell art and crafts.

A series of off-site exhibitions and projects were being arranged throughout the closure period in an effort to continue to engage and interact with current audiences as well as develop other audiences who would not ordinarily engage.

She took the opportunity to remind members of the event being hosted at the AG&M on the 25 May to celebrate the start of the development scheme and launch the Phase III fundraising campaign.

The following responses were given by the Museum, Arts and Tourism Manager to questions from members of the committee;

- The University had to date, put £60k towards the development scheme. The ongoing discussions were in relation to the placements and events that would be available to students.
- Stakeholders from other galleries, etc, in Cheltenham and slightly beyond had been communicated with and would be contacted again soon to advise them of progress and future plans.
- The design was as agreed as part of the Planning Application that was made, there had been no subsequent changes.
- It was hoped that new audiences would visit the new scheme once work was completed as it would be far more informal than before.

- The 'Museum Take-Away' service, which involved a box of exhibits going out to various venues would be rolled out across Cheltenham in partnership with organisations, which could include Schools and Resource Centres. However, first work would be undertaken to build relationships within communities in order to provide them with what they want, rather than imposing something on them. This approach had worked for other galleries in the past.

The Chair thanked the Museum, Arts and Tourism Manager, who agreed with the suggestion that whilst various updates were scheduled on the work plan, members would benefit from and welcome site visits. She advised that the architect and out-reach officers would be attending the event on the 25 May.

11. LEISURE@CHELTENHAM

The Commercial Manager of Leisure@ introduced the paper as circulated with the agenda which detailed the successes of 2010-2011 and outlined plans for the future.

Some key points which were highlighted by the Commercial Manager included carry forward requests which had been made in relation to systems thinking and a feasibility study.

Footfall overall was ahead of target.

CBC did not subscribe to the national swim scheme as it had already established its own 'under 16 free swim' and '£1 concession swim' schemes which have continued, though they did fall slightly short of their targets.

He explained that were a class for 20 people to be cancelled and 20 complaints be received as a result, this would equate to 1 'unique service failure'. In 2010-2011 there had been 37 which fell short of the target of 40.

Retail had grown consistently over the last few years and had continued to do so in 2010-2011.

Casual swimming had not done as well as was anticipated but this had been more than offset by the success of other pool use.

In relation to hall hire, evening business was full and as such the focus was now on securing day and weekend business.

In terms of the year ahead there would be a focus on retention, new business, communications & sales and efficiencies & savings.

The following responses were given by the Commercial Manager to questions from members of the committee;

- He accepted that an important part of a stand-alone website that linked to partners and social media, etc, was that it was regularly updated and members were assured that this formed part of the plan.

- From a financial standpoint swimming were figures only narrowly short of the target. Casual swimming had proved a problem in March, but month on month the targets were being achieved.
- When Leisure@ re-opened after the floods every effort was made to publicise that the pools were available to casual swimmers during the day. The suggestion was that there was a requirement to repeat this message.
- 'Systems Thinking' identified and removed waste from systems and processes and was used to drive out efficiencies and savings. The 'check' exercise required an element of resource for which there was an associated cost.

The Executive Director reminded all members that 'Systems Thinking' was a formal process adopted by and used across the Council.

The Chair thanked the Commercial Manager for his attendance and congratulated him on the 'good news' story.

12. LEISURE AND CULTURE COMMISSIONING REVIEW

The Chair apologised to the Cabinet Member Sport and Culture that this item was being discussed later than scheduled.

The Cabinet Member Sport and Culture introduced the paper as circulated with the agenda, which he took as read, choosing to highlight key points only.

Members were reminded that they were not required to make any decisions at this point.

Item 1.1 of the paper set out the services which did and did not fall within the scope of the review. He stressed that the Leisure and Culture review was in the first and what he considered to be the most important phase of the commissioning cycle – analysis.

Whilst the paper also set out progress to date, this was the first major commissioning undertaking and the process would develop along the way.

'Systems Thinking' identified and removed waste from systems and processes. This would, where possible, drive out waste and create efficiencies, resulting in not just monetary savings but time savings which would allow staff to do other things.

The Art Gallery and Museum review was on hold given the uncertainty about the HLF funding but since this was no longer the case the opportunity would be taken to undertake the review whilst it was closed.

The figure referred to in item 2.6.4 was not a random one but there was a slight amendment required, as it represented 30% of the operational subsidies rather than the operational budget.

The Cabinet Member Working Group was scheduled to meet for the first time on the 18 May and was tasked with preparing a paper for Cabinet on the 26 July, though this would be similar to that which had been presented to this committee rather than outlining particular recommendations about services.

The following responses were given by the Cabinet Member Leisure and Culture in response to questions from members of the committee;

- The Cabinet Member was aware of past failings but reiterated that the process was not at the stage at which decisions were being taken. The priority at present was to make current service delivery as efficient as possible before drawing comparisons with other delivery models.
- Members of the working group would be provided with hard copies of the background papers referred to within the paper and co-optees of this committee could also be provided with copies if they so wished.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member Leisure and Culture for his attendance and apologised again that the meeting had run later than scheduled.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIRMAN DETERMINES TO BE URGENT AND WHICH REQUIRES A DECISION

There were no urgent items for discussion.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for the 11 July 2011.

Rowena Hay
Chairman