

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 20th February, 2017
6.00 - 7.35 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Tim Harman (Chair), Jon Walklett (Vice-Chair), Colin Hay, Sandra Holliday, Chris Mason, Helena McCloskey, John Payne, Paul Baker and Max Wilkinson
Also in attendance:	Tim Atkins (Managing Director of Place and Economic Development), Councillor Jordan (Leader of the Council) and Mark Nelson (Enforcement Manager)

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.

Upon a vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 16 January 2017 be agreed and signed as an accurate record.

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

None received.

5. MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

None referred.

6. FEEDBACK FROM OTHER SCRUTINY MEETINGS ATTENDED

Councillor Hay arrived at 6.07pm.

Councillor McCloskey referred members to the written update on the 3 February meeting of the Police and Crime Panel which had been circulated with the agenda and talked through some of the key points.

Councillor McCloskey gave the following responses to member questions:

- The panels concerns in relation to achieving the target to double the number of special constables related to the associated recruitment and training costs.

- There was a suggestion that the County Council feared that the Commissioner wanted to take governance of the Fire Service and that this was the reason that the Leader was refusing to share budgetary information. The Commissioner needed this information to be able to put together a business case and without it was at an impasse. The Commissioner was openly frustrated by the situation and the fact that he has previously stated that he did not wish to take governance of the Fire Service.
- The Commissioners view was that PCSOs should be attached to specific areas, though this had not been possible in recent times due to lack of experienced officers. Neighbourhood policing was a key focus of the Commissioners manifesto and he was reiterating this to senior officers in the force.
- The Chief Constable was due to retire and a replacement would be in place once the Commissioner had made his decision and the appointment had been confirmed by the Panel.

Members agreed that the Commissioner should be invited to attend another meeting the committee to explain further his vision for neighbourhood policing, especially in view of the additional 50,000 properties which would be built in Gloucestershire.

There had been no meetings of the Gloucestershire Health and Care O&S Committee or the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee since the last meeting of this committee.

7. CABINET BRIEFING

The Leader advised that at the recent Leadership Gloucestershire meeting the collaboration between the emergency services had been discussed. Gloucestershire County Council seemed to be implying that they would be submitting a rival business case; though he believed that only one would be accepted and that would be the business case from the Police and Crime Commissioner. He felt it was a little nonsensical that the Ambulance Service had not been included.

He was hopeful that the Growth Deal bid for West Cheltenham would be announced this week.

Members would be aware that a decision had been taken to allow Gloucestershire Airport Limited (GAL) to grant new leases to B Walker & Co (Dursley) Limited in respect of Units SE38, SE41, SE42, SE43 and SE56, South East Area. Some of the detail was restricted as it related to the financial and business affairs of those involved and members were invited to review the report in the Democratic Services office. He noted that, further to his update at the last meeting, discussions were still ongoing in relation to the pension issue at the Airport, as well as broader discussions about the airport more generally.

In response to a comment made by the Chairman about the importance of the airport to the economy of the town, the Leader suggested that an exempt report could well be tabled at the March Council meeting, which would detail the current situation for all members.

8. HMO SURVEY

The Enforcement Manager introduced the update on the private rented Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) survey, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. He confirmed that the survey of properties in St Pauls was now complete and of the 445 that were visited, 313 HMO's had been identified and fully inspected, and 132 properties were found not to be HMO's. During the surveys, 15 properties were referred through to the enforcement team for further investigation as a result of the identification of poor management, poor standards of accommodation or where a licensable HMO was not licensed and of those referred, 7 were now compliant. 20 properties had been referred to planning enforcement due to having more than 6 occupants.

The Enforcement Manager gave the following responses to member questions:

- The HMO Survey post was funded from the Housing Survey Reserve and would eventually be covered by the mandatory HMO licensing fees which were currently payable every 3 years, though this could move to every 5 years.
- The definition of a HMO was a property occupied by persons who did not form a single household which included 3 or more persons for the purpose of the survey. The property had to be the main residence of the occupants.
- Additional licensing for HMOs was only applicable where there was a significant number which were poorly managed, which had not been the case in St Pauls. Article 4 Direction could possibly be adopted if it was found that there was an unbalanced community but would need to be considered in the context of Cheltenham's overall planning strategy and the suggestion was that this should be considered as part of the development of the Cheltenham Plan.

The Chairman acknowledged that Tess Beck, Chair of the St Pauls Resident Association was in attendance and offered her the opportunity to ask questions. The Enforcement Manager gave the following responses:

- He was not qualified to say whether Article 4 would need to be considered as part of the Local Plan or a supplementary planning document.
- Review of the standards of amenity such as provision for storage and disposal of rubbish and the condition of gardens were included as part of the survey.
- He would be happy to attend a meeting of the St Pauls Residents Association.

Members were pleased to see that overall, the quality of HMOs had been high and requested that consideration of the final report be scheduled for the June meeting of the committee when members would give further consideration to whether they felt it was necessary to make a recommendation that an Article 4 Direction be adopted by this council.

The Chairman thanked the Enforcement Manager for his time and looked forward to welcoming him back in June.

9. CYCLING AND WALKING STG

Councillor Holliday arrived at 6.40pm.

The Managing Director of Place and Economic Development, introduced the progress review for the Walking and Cycling STG, as circulated with the agenda. He accepted that progress had been hampered by a lack of dedicated resource, but he was pleased to confirm that Councillor Wilkinson had been appointed as the member cycling champion and that the walking and cycling group were scheduled to have their first meeting tomorrow evening (21 February). Cheltenham was ideally suited to develop cycling and members were reminded that the town would be hosting the Tour of Britain in September. Interestingly, a town centre survey about perceptions of Cheltenham identified that the number of people that came to Cheltenham by car (around 20%) was far lower than people perceived the number to be, with the majority of people walking, cycling or using public transport and this, without doing a great deal. This was positive and indicative that with some momentum, more could be achieved.

The Managing Director of Place and Economic Development gave the following responses to member questions:

- Cheltenham had good working relationships with GCC and the NHS CCG but only with more dedicated resources it would be possible to develop partnership working and identify funding streams in relation to cycling and walking initiatives. This work could also involve local cycle shops.
- Members would be aware that a Place Strategy was being developed, which would be the overarching strategy of a number of areas of focus. The Managing Director had intended to give a presentation on this subject ahead of the last Council meeting but technology had failed and therefore he had been prevented from doing so. This was now scheduled for the 1 March at 6pm.
- Some projects (Cheltenham – Bishop's Cleeve link) were big and complex, but there were smaller initiatives that could be undertaken within the council's gift, relatively cheaply, that should also be explored. This was not to say that the council could not use its influence on the larger scale projects, but again, this was reliant on having adequate resources.
- A divisional-wide review was currently underway to identify where resources could be reduced, areas where more resource was required and opportunities to increase income; but as a council, decisions needed to be made about priorities. This was an opportunity to identify cycling and walking as a priority for Cheltenham and to allocate resources accordingly.
- One of the challenges for any new housing developments was designing something which allowed people to store their bicycles.

Councillor Hay had supported a motion at GCC to create a budget for pavements which was separate from the overall highways budget, but this had been defeated, though he was sure further attempts to do this would be made. He also commented that many walkers were deterred from walking because of the condition of pavements and the trip hazard they posed and whilst he was

not suggesting that paving slabs should be replaced with tarmac, there were other options, such as the surface that had been laid on the high street.

Councillor Wilkinson accepted that the lack of progress was a result of there not being enough people to undertake the work required and thanked the Managing Director for driving this issue forward. The first step to doing this would be the meeting of the cycling and walking group tomorrow (21/02) and the group would be discussing how it could influence the local plan and ensure that cycling and walking was a key consideration. This was a diverse issue with a number of aspects, from the Transport Plan, which had already opened up new shared spaces, to the issue of benches. From his experience, benches were important to some but he urged members not to underestimate the opposition that the installation of a bench could incite. He also explained that as part of the original task group review, it had become apparent that guard rails often made it difficult for walkers to walk in the most direct route and whilst some were undoubtedly erected for safety, GCC staff had conceded that many guard rails were not necessarily required.

Councillor Payne advised that Bloor Homes had made £70k available from a development in Prestbury and that the cycling and walking group might want to consider applying for some.

The Chairman thanked the Managing Director for an honest appraisal of progress to date and invited a further update in due course.

10. UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS

The Democracy Officer referred members to the update that had been circulated with the agenda. The Street People STG had met with representatives of Project SOLACE (Gloucester City Council and Gloucestershire Constabulary) and had a very positive discussion. The task group were now going to be drafting their final report and recommendations and would be meeting with the relevant Cabinet Members in due course.

11. REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The Democracy Officer noted that at the moment there was only one of item of business scheduled for the next meeting (24 April); to consider the response to the Accessibility report which was sent to Cabinet in December 2016.

An invitation would be extended to the Police Commissioner and the 24 April would be suggested as a possible date. The Democracy Officer would update members as necessary.

The HMO survey final report would be scheduled for the June meeting.

A cycling and walking progress update would be added to the list of future items, as a date was yet to be determined.

12. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXEMPT INFORMATION

Upon a vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED 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. UPDATE ON PROPERTY MATTER

The Managing Director of Place and Economic Development gave an update on a property matter. The committee asked that they be kept informed of any further developments.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for the 24 April 2017.

Tim Harman
Chairman