

## Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 5th September, 2011

6.00 - 8.05 pm

Attendees	
<b>Councillors:</b>	Anne Regan (Chair), Chris Coleman, Wendy Flynn, Rowena Hay, Diggory Seacome, Jo Teakle and Jon Walklett
<b>Co-optees:</b>	
<b>Also in attendance:</b>	Grahame Lewis, Councillor Andrew McKinlay, Councillor Klara Sudbury and Councillor John Webster

### Minutes

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from James Harrison.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Walklett declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 (HRA Business Plan) as a Board Member of Cheltenham Borough Homes.

**3. AGREEMENT OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 11 JULY 2011**

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 11 July 2011 be agreed and signed as an accurate record.**

**4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

No public questions or petitions were received.

**5. MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE**

There were no matters referred to the committee.

**6. CABINET MEMBER BRIEFING**

The Cabinet Member Sport and Culture informed Members of the following:

- The council had once again run successful play development sessions over the summer. These were delivered at a lower cost to the council as they operated from 2 sites instead of 3. A total of 1,491 attendances were recorded on Playschemes over the five week period. The Summer of Sport programme also recorded 1,426 attendances.
- the council had appointed the contractors ISG for the Art Gallery and Museum redevelopment and had started removing asbestos from the building
- the teaching pool at Leisure@ had recently been closed due to a water quality issue. Remedial action had now been taken. The main pool was not affected.
- The consultation process for the Leisure and Culture review was now underway and 100 stakeholders had been invited to comment on the future of leisure and culture in Cheltenham. The consultation would be completed by the end of the month and a briefing session would be held for all councillors soon after. This would then feed into the interim report due to go to Cabinet in November.

When asked whether the works for the Art Gallery and Museum were on target the Cabinet Member explained that the works had started on time, the process for selecting contractors had gone well and the contract had come in under budget although this was being treated with caution.

The Cabinet Member Housing and Safety informed the committee that with regard to youth services the council was trying to address the gaps left by the withdrawal of funding by the county council. CBC had been allocated £50k by the county to support youth provision in the district. County community projects were progressing well and a full time worker had been recruited, due to commence work on 19 September. The bidding process for the county council funding was due to close at the end of the week and a selection panel would meet next Wednesday to sift through the bids from the voluntary and community groups. A Cabinet decision was expected on 27 September.

The Cabinet Member Finance and Community Development had nothing to report on this occasion.

## **7. HRA BUSINESS PLAN**

The Assistant Chief Executive Resources (CBH) informed members that good progress was being made in the preparation of the HRA Business Plan. The emphasis was on the completion of the Asset Management Strategy which was being informed by the continuing rolling programme of stock surveys. CBH was starting to inform tenants and an article had been placed in CBH news and sent to all tenants. Following Cabinet in mid October tenants would be formally consulted. The first draft of the emerging HRA Business Plan would be presented to the Housing Working Group on 20 September and the CBH board on 21 September. This would enable a debate on the strategic options available to the Council given the increased resources for self financing. An outline business plan would be considered by Cabinet on 18 October and following the final government settlement after Christmas a final business plan would be submitted to the January/February committee process.

The Assistant Chief Executive Resources (CBH) referred to the DCLG consultation document on the implementation of self financing and the Government consultation on streamlining council housing asset management-disposals and use of receipts. These issues would be discussed by the Housing Working Group in mid September. These represented very significant changes to the way housing is financed but this was potentially very good news for local authorities.

In response to questions from Members the Assistant Chief Executive (CBH) made the following comments:

- In right to buy sales the bulk of funds went to the Treasury but in terms of the sale of empty properties or sale of land for housing receipts could be used for affordable housing or regeneration projects.
- In terms of consulting tenants on how funds should be spent under the new self-financing arrangements both existing tenants and those on the waiting list would be consulted as a balance needed to be met between updating properties and new build. He highlighted that there were issues with the scarcity of land in the borough. At the same time with the continual rise in community expectations the condition of dwellings should be reviewed.
- The number of acquired stocks were on the decrease as some were expensive to maintain and therefore disposed of as they were deemed inappropriate for social housing. Specific reference to acquired stocks was made in the Asset Management Strategy and these properties were being examined to see if better value could be realised from a market sale so that receipts acquired could be used for building new properties. The Asset Management Working group were involved in this work and the Cabinet Member Finance and Community Development stated that only a handful of properties fell into this category.

## **8. HOUSING REVIEW WORKING GROUP - UPDATE**

The Director of Commissioning introduced the report and explained that a housing review had been initiated in response to legislative changes both to housing policy and welfare reforms. The review group was not yet in a position to make formal recommendations on what actions needed to be taken in response to these changes but had been examining the main changes, opportunities and challenges and interdependences with other areas. The review group would make recommendations and put together a strategy to underpin the HRA business plan. Welfare reforms were causing most concern as there would be significant impact on the most vulnerable and private sector residents too.

In response to questions from Members the Assistant Director Commissioning made the following comments :

- The impact of the welfare reforms was of great concern. The Housing Options and Benefits Teams were working very closely with landlords and families as there were real issues in terms of levels of rents

- The role of locally elected representatives in resolving problems in their areas would be explored further with the review group
- Further work would be done on the implications of incentive schemes which facilitate moves out of the social rented sector into owner occupation and whether such schemes related to housing association tenants.
- With regard to affordable homes there was a mismatch whereby resources generated at a district level were not ringfenced for reinvesting in the same district area.
- There were currently only 2 private landlords on the private rented sector landlords forum so action would be taken to encourage more participation
- The Council was doing what it could in terms of communicating with vulnerable people, especially as a number of tenants potentially faced being forced out of their accommodation. This issue would be flagged up with the review group for further examination.
- In terms of the allocations scheme those wishing to apply for housing had to meet a set criteria. The Council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme would be examined to see if the process could be improved.

## **9. REVIEW OF NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT PROCESS**

The Cabinet Member Finance and Community Development reminded members of the background to neighbourhood management in the borough which had started with a focus on the community regeneration areas but was now rolled out to the rest of the borough. By encouraging local people to work with each other around specific problems, neighbourhood management was proving to be a successful vehicle for rebuilding communities.

The Policy and Partnerships Manager explained that in March 2010 Cabinet agreed to provide funding to enable neighbourhood coordination groups (NCG) to take ownership of the neighbourhood management process. The Police, the County Council and CBH also supported the process. The table in section 3.2 of the report outlined progress made to date and section 4 reported on areas of success. Communities now had greater flexibility in the way meetings were run. The review meeting held in June identified areas for further development including the encouraging NCGs to move beyond dealing with problems to discussing opportunities.

Members raised the issue of the timing of meetings which were predominantly held in the daytime and therefore excluded some members of the public from attending.

In response to questions from Members the Policy and Partnerships Manager confirmed that the funding of £30k was one-off funding. The aim was to pump-prime the process and make it sustainable for groups to take over. When asked why there were different allocations in funding ranging from £800 to £5000 he explained that different organisations had approached the council for a level of funding which they deemed necessary. The Cabinet Member Finance and Community Development assured Members that funding remained available until the allocated budget was exhausted.

## **10. IMPROVING PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURES**

The Policy and Partnerships Manager introduced his discussion paper by explaining that there was now more flexibility for redesigning partnership structures that could support the commissioning and delivery of public services to meet local needs following the demise of the local area agreement, comprehensive area assessments and the statutory obligations to produce a community strategy. Senior officers and practitioners within the public sector had participated in the Partnership Improvement Programme (PIP) to draw up a draft partnership structure with fewer partnerships and simplified governance arrangements. The draft structure was endorsed by the Cheltenham Strategic Partnership in June and members were invited to comment on the consultation document.

In response to comments from Members the Policy and Partnerships Manager explained that funding was available through the partnership structures and there were clear priorities for Cheltenham in terms of how to use funding to deliver projects. Members viewed the streamlining of partnerships across the county as positive and the new structure had the potential to deliver success. They also commented that any move towards a consolidation of meetings that councillors had to attend would be welcomed. This feedback would be passed on to the partnerships.

## **11. HEALTH, COMMUNITY AND CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Councillor Penny Hall gave a brief overview of the work of the Health, Community and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee of which she is a Member. Her report is attached to these minutes for information. She encouraged members to send her comments or raise any issues of concern.

When asked about the condition of the eye hospital Councillor Hall said she had had the opportunity to raise this issue within the reference group and with Gloucestershire Health. In response to a question on GP commissioning she reported that a report was expected at the November meeting.

## **12. REVIEW OF HEALTHY LIFESTYLES WORK AND FUTURE PLANS**

The Healthy Communities Partnership Manager explained that the changes to public health within the NHS and the Health and Social care bill would mean the public health function would be transferred to top tier local authorities, i.e. GCC. The funding position was currently unclear. The Council's Healthy Lifestyles Development Officer post which was part funded by the NHS, had over the last four years successfully developed and supported a wide range of targeted community initiatives which promoted healthy lifestyles. However, as a result of the changes, the post could no longer be guaranteed beyond 2012. As part of the Leisure and Culture Review a number of options were being explored as the Council was keen for this work to continue.

When asked when the NHS funding position would become clear the Healthy Communities Partnership Manager explained that the indications were for

councils to make plans without funding. In any case public health responsibilities would be transferred to local authorities. In order to encompass the work a different way of working may be necessary in order to continue supporting the healthy lifestyles outcomes.

The Committee supported the continuation of the role of Healthy Lifestyles Development Officer and encouraged the Cabinet member to support this too.

### **13. CAR PARK STRATEGY - EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

The Head of Integrated Transport and Sustainability presented his report on the proposed Cheltenham Parking Strategy. Section 4 of the report explained that a working group was envisaged to consider the needs of the community where mobility and disability was of concern. Representations were currently being sought to serve on this working group which could provide advice and guidance in formulating a quality equality impact assessment of proposals to be put forward in developing the Cheltenham Parking Strategy. He suggested that the committee consider the inclusion of a representative on the Cheltenham Parking Strategy Member working group, or receive updates from the aforementioned mobility and disability working group.

Members highlighted that the key thing was the location of disabled bays in terms of accessibility to services. The Head of Integrated Transport and Sustainability confirmed that the issue of accessibility was being taken seriously. This was being considered in the broader context of street space management, parking, walking, buses, taxis etc.

When asked how the proposals fitted into the civic pride proposals it was imperative to broadly take on board representations from the community as to what the needs were. It was important for the town to continue its ease of access and offering for all sections of the community in order to maintain its high level of visitation.

In terms of the council's involvement in consultations to date the Head of Integrated Transport and Sustainability confirmed that CBC was represented on a number of engagement consultations led by the County Council. National guidance set out how authorities should design their parking policies with particular regard to consulting with communities. He confirmed that a broad representation of communities and businesses were involved in the working groups and that the County Council had improved its consultation processes.

Following particularly detailed questions from some members on the proposed parking strategy in general the Chair pointed out that the remit of the Social and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee was on equality. Members were asked to pose unrelated questions to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee whose remit it was to discuss parking issues in general.

The Head of Integrated Transport and Sustainability informed Members that CBC was awaiting the proposal document that week on the Cheltenham Parking Strategy.

**14. COMMITTEE WORK PLAN**

The Chair referred to the scrutiny topic registration request from Councillor Driver as circulated with this agenda item. She advised members that as this was a council tax issue and in the light of the officer implications laid down in the document, Social and Community Committee did not represent the right forum for members to make a decision or comment on the matter.

Jayne Gilpin, Revenues Manager, explained that the Council did have the power to vary the level of charge on two classifications of property-long term empty properties where the council had agreed to a policy to increase the charges on long term empty properties from 50 % to 100 % and second homes where the Council had agreed to increase the charges from 50 % to the maximum 90 %. The Council had no powers to set rules to determine whether a property was considered furnished or unfurnished and which classification for charging it falls into. This was determined by council tax legislation.

Members supported the Chair in questioning the relevance of the issue to the committee and did not regard it as scrutiny.

Clarification was sought by Members on exemptions. The Revenues Manager explained that if a furnished property was empty for a period of six months between lets it would be regarded as a second home but for unfurnished properties empty for six months an exemption would apply.

Members agreed that a reply would be sent to Councillor Driver in writing with the officer's response.

Members considered the work plan and the proposed items for the November meeting. The Chair, Vice Chair and Lead Officer agreed to look again at these items in their work planning meeting as the agenda looked particularly onerous.

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

There were no urgent items for discussion.

**16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was scheduled for the 7 November 2011.

Anne Regan  
Chairman

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**VERBAL REPORT ON HCCOSC by Cllr Penny Hall**

**The Gloucestershire Health, Community Care Overview and Scrutiny [HCCOSC] is responsible for overview and scrutiny of health related issues in the county**

**HCCOSC focuses on health issues from a public perspective and works in partnership with other agencies to improve local health services**

**HCCOSC also scrutinises Gloucestershire county council services relating to adult social care, libraries and information, equalities, customer services and lifelong learning**

**HCCOSC members are 8GCC councillors and 6 District councillors, uniquely its meetings are rotated around the county and district offices so that local members, residents and interested organisations are able to attend and very often do so**

**Since I last reported to you in November 2010 there has been a great deal of change in the way health and social care has been delivered with yet more to come in the rest of 2011-12**

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**Health and social care reform and scrutiny**

**When I last spoke to you it was uncertain that HCCOSC would continue but thanks our response to the consultation on the Health white paper “Equality and Excellence” and lobbying with health scrutiny cttes across the SW we were successful in protecting Health scrutiny in its current form**

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**Gloucestershire hospitals NHS foundation trust “GHNHSFT”**

**Following the proposals in early 2010 to reduce up to 200 beds across the trust which were withdrawn by the trust a task group was formed by HCCOSC with the trust to examine the impact of a proposal to reconfigure beds at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital.**

**The reconfiguration and a reduction of 43 beds together with a skill mix of staff was approved in the units concerned**

**During this time I represented HCCOSC on working group with staff from the GHNHSFT, the PCT, and the Chair of the Local Involvement Network [LINK] in developing “Our engagement strategy” the GHNHSFT Board of Governors formally approved the**

**strategy in recognition that engagement with staff and stakeholders needed to change.**

**During the recent consultation on “your NHS, right care right time right place the engagement strategy was followed**

**The proposals came 1<sup>st</sup> to HCCOSC to approve the consultation period and process**

**During the consultation period I was delighted that a discussion on the changes was held at Cheltenham Borough Council lead by the clinicians concerned**

**It was gratifying that I was able to go to the July meeting confident that I had the views expressed by Cheltenham members and officers**

**At that meeting on July 11th we voted to support**

**1“the changes to Emergency Paediatric Assessment “**

**2Centralisation of 1<sup>st</sup> Outpatients appointment for symptomatic breast care patients at Thirlestone Court in Cheltenham**

**At the same meeting Ingrid Barker Chair designate of the future social enterprise Gloucestershire Care Services gave a report to the HCCOSC**

**As their “go live” date is 1<sup>st</sup> October” we will receive its 1<sup>st</sup> OF regular update from them at our November meeting**

**Dr Shona Arora Director of Public Health introduced the draft Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Vulnerable people**

**Her annual report of 2010-2011**

**This is published this month**

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**Another important work undertaken by a task group over the last year is;**

**Provision of services for people with a dual diagnosis in**

**Gloucestershire with a particular focus on housing**

**Dual diagnosis describes a mental health disorder combined with drug or alcohol misuse.**

**An individual disorder can affect not only their physical health and wellbeing, but their housing, employment and whole way of life**

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## **Conclusion of the Enquiries into the Wingmore Farm waste disposal site at Bishops Cleeve**

**For 5 years a task group from HCCOSC has been investigating the health effects of toxic ash from the Grundon site following ongoing concerns raised by local residents**

**The Health Protection Agency report on the analysis of samples collected over a 10 week period was that the dust did not contain harmful levels of any substance which could be damaging to the health of local residents**

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### **Factors to consider in Work planning**

**We recently held a successful performance workshop focusing on Adult Social care,**

**This is a high risk area and it is important that HCCOSC effectively monitors performance so that any concerns/issues can be highlighted more detailed investigation can be undertaken if necessary.**

**There has been a lot of change in the performance framework for Adult social care and the workshop was a good opportunity to get a better understanding of what these changes are,**

**It was also an opportunity for members to discuss directly with the officers what they require in the performance reports**

**The change in performance framework is about a move away from top down regulation from government to a more bottom up accountability to local citizens**

**There is also the impact of the Health and Social care bill on the structure of the NHS, the integration of health and social care staff and the role of the social enterprise trust Gloucestershire Care Services**

**And LINK will be evolving into Healthwatch**

**With all this activity it is important that the HCCOSC ensures that it is focusing its Work Plan appropriately to ensure that it is doing its job to ensure that the people of Gloucestershire are properly supported in terms of their health and social care needs**

**It was agreed at the Performance workshop that members need to get together again to draw up a fresh Work Plan to reflect the current Health and Adult social care agenda,**

**Members know that we cannot look at everything so planning is essential to ensure that the focus is where it should be**

**Some members including myself meet regularly with the PCT's reference group which is helpful in informing us of issues and forthcoming service change proposals and can also help to shape our planning**

**Our new Chairman is in the process of meeting with Chairs and CEO's of the PCT's and Health Trust's**

**I hope you find this helpful**

**I will continue to email you via Democratic services the papers for each HCCOSC meeting as soon as I receive them in time for you to contact me with issues and always hope that you will do so**

**Cllr Penny Hall  
HCCOSC representative for CBC**