

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 19th August, 2019
6.00 - 7.30 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Chris Mason (Chair), Klara Sudbury (Vice-Chair), John Payne, Paul Baker, Max Wilkinson, Dilys Barrell, Iain Dobie, Jo Stafford, Dennis Parsons and David Willingham (Reserve)
Also in attendance:	Ken Dale (Interim Townscape Manager), Councillor Steve Jordan (Leader), Darren Knight (Executive Director of People and Change), Mark Nelson (Enforcement Manager) and Duncan Turner (Pest Control Manager)

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Councillor Holliday had given her apologies and Councillor Willingham had substituted for her.

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 1 July 2019 be agreed and signed as an accurate record.

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

None were received.

5. MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

There were none.

6. NHS TRUST-GENERAL SURGERY CHANGES

The Chairman explained that there were logistical reasons why the NHS item could not be considered at this meeting. He had been reassured by Pat Pratley that, having had a discussion with Trust CEO, Deborah Lee, there would be ample opportunity for Overview and Scrutiny to be engaged with future plans for the shape of the hospital service in Cheltenham and it was therefore proposed that the item be pushed back to the 9 September meeting.

7. CHELTENHAM TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY STUDY

Ken Dale, the Interim Townscape Manager, introduced the draft Systra study of Cheltenham's transport connectivity. He reminded members that the corporate action plan 2018-19 committed to the commissioning of a study which would put in place a borough-wide transport plan with a focus on modal shift, accessibility and bus connectivity. The resulting Cheltenham transport plan would form part of the council's contribution to Gloucestershire County Council's review of the countywide Local Transport Plan. With support from a range of stakeholders, a number of workshops had been held; this committee had considered a paper back in June 2019 and Systra had presented their conclusions at a member seminar on the 7 August. The views of this committee and its members were now being invited, with a view to finalising the report, ready to make recommendations to Cabinet in October.

The Interim Townscape Manager gave the following responses to member questions:

- He could not recall a particular conversation at the recent member seminar on a Park and Ride in Charlton Kings and would therefore raise this with Systra and come back to members on this issue.
- The study included proposals about inclusion and accessibility for all and this, without mentioning it directly, included blue badge holders and those that had to use private transport.
- The council would be looking to have provision in place to allow children to cycle to school, where possible.
- Discussions with public transport providers will include a request to be more imaginative about pricing given that this was often the factor on which families based their decision to use private transport rather than public.
- The report highlighted the need for real-time information on public transport and acknowledged trains from Ashchurch to Cheltenham as a big missing.
- He accepted that for the transport plan to work, the principles would need to be imbedded with all partners, including GCC as the Highways Authority.
- Systra had set out indicative costs and the Cabinet report would include more detail on funding options, but CBC's means were limited and therefore it would need to influence the spending of GCC, CIL and S106 monies, transport companies and Central Government.
- Systra had attempted to align their estimates with GCC bands, hence the large ranges quoted in the report.
- Data sets were sadly limited and as such Systra had little choice but to base some of their assumptions on the 2011 census. It was stressed that Systra had been asked for a strategy, which by its very nature, had limited detail.
- CBC was currently considering approaches to officer training workshops with Systra and this could be extended to holding events throughout Cheltenham, but there would be cost implications to this approach.
- In terms of the language that had been used, it was noted that this was an intentional attempt to give certain things a brand of their own; but he took the point that this might appear over-complicated and alienate some people from engaging.

- GCCs engagement to date had included an officer on the project team, several officers having reviewed and had input into the draft report, and members, including the relevant Cabinet member, having attended workshops. The draft Systra report has been used for CBC input into GCC's Local Transport Plan.

Comments from members included:

- There was an issue with residents from parking free schemes being given permits in resident parking zones which were already oversubscribed and this needed to be resolved.
- A member raised S106 as a particular concern to him in instances where monies did not cross boundaries but people living just outside of the borough worked in and sent their children to School in Cheltenham.
- One member queried the lack of detail in terms of how the proposed interchange and micro-exchanges would work and voiced concerns that Systra had not visited areas to see how these things would work in reality. He hoped that the final iteration of the report would provide more clarity on this issue.
- There was a lack of Cheltenham specific images with the only one of note being the train station.
- Members urged for appropriately segregated cycle ways, similar to those adopted by the Dutch, rather than something that did not appear at all ambitious i.e. a cycle symbol on an existing and unaltered highway. The Interim Townscape Manager assured members that the ambition was for a strategic cycleway network and lower connective network beneath it, both of a high quality.
- There appeared to be no solution to the issue that had been raised at earlier events, to the cycle link between Charlton Kings and Leckhampton.
- A member suggested that the station was in the wrong location and therefore some buses went to it, but not enough. There also needed to be more about improved accessibility as at present, it wasn't possible for some people in the town to cycle to the station. The Townscape Manager confirmed that the interchange was mentioned in the report and the next step would be to look at connectivity.
- It was unclear as to the need to reduce the speed limits along Shurdington Lane and Up Hatherley Lane as there were no obvious points at which it would be necessary to cross either of these lanes, except where crossing already existed.

In response to member question about the CIL Board, the Leader explained that the Board did not yet actually exist. He went on to explain that the process of establishing the Board had been delayed as a result of Mike Dawson, Chief Executive of TBC and lead, having been involved in an accident. He hoped that a report would be ready for Cabinet in October but at present felt that this may be optimistic.

The Chairman summarised the key points and thanked the Interim Townscape Manager for this attendance.

8. URBAN GULLS

Mark Nelson, Enforcement Manager, introduced the update as circulated with the agenda, as well as Duncan Turner, the Pest Control Manager. He explained that he had taken the recommendations made by the task group and provided an update on the implemented measures, and had also outlined plans for the coming year.

The Enforcement Manager and Pest Control Manager gave the following responses to member questions:

- The use of drones had been discounted not only the basis of the restrictions of use imposed within 5km of any UK airport runways, but also because of the complications associated with privacy. The Enforcement Manager would investigate further whether it would be possible to use drones within the GDPR framework.
- Falconry had been discounted on the basis of the costs associated with it, given the need to undertake it continually throughout the breeding season. It was also proven that it simply chased the gulls from one area to another.
- Bins ranged from £600 to £4.5k and this vast price difference depended on the kind of condensing system within the bins. More information on this issue would be sought from Karen Watson, the Client Manager for Environment Services.
- Egg oiling was the most effective method for controlling the urban gull population as it prevented eggs from hatching and any surviving chicks usually return to breed in the locations where they hatched. Statistically, commercial premises had the greatest number of nesting gulls and targeting these properties would therefore reduce the overall population in Cheltenham.
- It had not been possible to access some streets because of parked vehicles and insufficient room for the 18 and 30 tonne vehicles. Cones had been delivered by officers but only residents in Montpellier Grove had put them out, meaning access could not be gained to Montpellier Villas.
- The feeding of birds constituted littering, but the litter generated by the night time economy in Cheltenham was also a factor. Officers took the point that issuing fines to people who fed gulls and press coverage of any such policy may help change attitudes.
- Officers were aware of some commercial premises, particularly in the Kingsditch area, which were experiencing real issues with urban gulls this year. These businesses had chosen not to pay for the service in light of the focus of council resources on residential properties, as generally there was an attitude that the council should be covering the cost and therefore there had been little appetite to carry out any works. In targeting residential properties, a smaller number of eggs could be treated within the budget available.

Members welcomed the focus on residential areas this year, which had proved successful in reducing the number of noise complaints from residents, but noted their disappointment that many commercial premises had opted not to pay for work to be carried out. The suggestion was that if they were experiencing

increased issues this year as a result, that they may be more inclined to pay for the service in the future.

A member commented that the term 'animal proof bins' should be used, rather than 'gull proof bins'.

The committee agreed that the four original task group members, Councillors Barrell, Harman, Seacome and Subury, should meet with the Enforcement Manager and Cabinet Member Development and Safety, to discuss outcomes from this year compared to previous years and possible strategies going forward. A further update would also be scheduled for January 2020.

The Chairman thanked the Enforcement Manager and Pest Control Manager for their time and looked forward to further updates on this issue.

9. EVENTS SCRUTINY TASK GROUP

The Chairman introduced the draft one page strategy for the Events task group and advised that it was for this committee to agree the ambitions and objectives.

A member felt that the ambitions and objectives were too broad and that he had hoped the task group would focus on how events were managed and the way in which members were involved. He explained that events requiring licenses were subject to public consultation and member involvement, but events requiring only a land use agreement were not, and that it was these kind of events that his residents took issue with.

Other members disagreed that the ambitions and objectives were too broad. They felt it was important to understand the entire system and not simply focus on the end result; and the ambitions and objectives outlined in the draft OPS would meet that requirement.

Members agreed that it would be useful to get Louis Krog, Licensing Manager, involved in the review at an early stage, to understand the licensing process and how this could inform the events process generally.

Upon a vote it was unanimously

RESOLVED that the draft one page strategy for the Events task group, be approved.

The Democracy Officer confirmed that she would email members, inviting all non-executive members to register their interest in participating on the task group with a view to getting 5-7 members in total. She would then look to arrange the first meeting at which members would be given an understanding of the task group process, before deciding how they wanted to approach the review.

10. FEEDBACK FROM OTHER SCRUTINY MEETINGS ATTENDED

A written update had been circulated on behalf of Councillor Brownsteen which covered the 19 July Police and Crime Panel meeting. Councillor Willingham would raise issues with Councillor Brownsteen directly.

Councillor Dobie confirmed that he had in fact subbed for Councillor Horwood at the recent meeting of the Health and Care O&S Committee (HOSC) on the 16 July. The main item for consideration had been the Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group performance report, though the issue had been raised that not all data was included. Members had welcomed the news of GP practices working together to offer over 100,000 additional GP surgery appointments available this year, though clarification was requested as to what percentage of these would be with GPs/nurses. It was noted that there had been an increase in waiting times across the county.

The Leader responded to the suggestion that Councillor Horwood, given his election as an MEP, may no longer be able to commit to the role as representative on the HOSC. He suggested that this would no longer be an issue were Brexit to happen on the 31 October and this would be discussed further at that time.

11. CABINET BRIEFING

A written update had been circulated with the agenda on behalf of the Leader. He accepted an earlier comment regarding the number of county-level discussions and assured members that a member seminar would be arranged which would provide updates on each of the issues, as well as giving some context to what was happening in Cheltenham. He felt that the seminar would benefit members in advance of the formal decisions on CBC involvement, which would go to Council later in the year.

12. UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS

There were none.

13. REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The work plan would be updated to include the NHS item at the next meeting (9 September) and members were advised that to accommodate this item on the agenda for that meeting, the North Place, Depot Review and Town Hall masterplan items would be deferred to the October and November meetings. Members were comfortable with this.

A further update on urban gulls would be scheduled for the January 2020 meeting.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for Monday 9 September. The Chairman noted his apologies for this meeting and the Vice-Chair confirmed her availability to chair the meeting.

Chris Mason
Chairman