

Report to Social & Community O&S - 7th November 2011

Last reported in February. Since then work has been varied and includes:

Police O&S received a report on the civil disturbances in Gloucester city in the summer. The benefits of Tri-service centre at Waterwells were very evident as informal contacts that have been built up between the services aided communication and co-operation during the unrest.

Police & Crime Panels – (Major piece of work reported on at every O&S meeting). The postponement of the election of Police Commissioners until November 2012 has given more time to consider the make-up of the Panel and its terms of reference.

The Act lays down a maximum and minimum panel membership and current thinking in Gloucestershire is that it will consist 10 councillors (4 county & 6 district) plus a minimum of 2 co-optees (not councillors). The Act is silent on how the co-optees should be selected but it is envisaged that some sort of interview procedure will be adopted. Gloucestershire has the advantage that county and police force boundaries are contiguous – some like Thames Valley and West Midlands forces have more difficulty in deciding membership of panels

The Act gives the Panel the power of veto of the police precept and the appointment of the chief constable, both of which require a two-thirds majority (originally proposed three-quarters). The panel will also consider complaints against the Police Commissioner to be judged against a Code of Conduct.

Current thinking is that, to ease transition, a shadow panel will be set up prior to November 2012

Fire & Rescue – Sick absence in the service continues to be a concern, in spite of implementation of task group recommendations. Figures did fall initially but recent increases suggest that work-related stress is a factor due to ongoing change. The task group is reconvening and will report back in the New Year. However, sickness levels compare favourably with other Fire & Rescue services.

Emergency Planning – has become part of the Fire & Rescue Service and Community Safety O&S will receive a report on result of this at next meeting on 24th November.

A report on Effectiveness of Business Continuity of County Council Services showed good progress in this area. All critical services have robust plans in place and a recent discussion exercise tested these against 3 possible scenarios including a major fire at Shire Hall on Budget Setting day.

A Life Skills Centre known as Skillzone located in Tuffley Lane will open in September 2012. It will feature 16 risk & consequence scenarios, eg: a dark alley, open water and a farmyard. The centre will be run as a business using both employed and voluntary staff.

Safer Stronger Justice Commission which is a merger of the Gloucs Safer & Stronger Community Partnership & the Criminal Justice Board is still in its early days. However the Home Office have expressed interest in the concept and met with lead O&S members to explore further. The merger has resulted in a more streamlined structure and the commission is keen to build on its relationship with the districts.

Mortuary Complex Current arrangements do not meet H&S and Human Tissue Act standards and a new complex bringing post mortem facilities, mortuary and coroners court together will be completed in December. After testing and training it will go live in April next year. Gloucestershire conducts around 1250 post mortems and 325 inquests annually.

Trading Standards A task group report to ensure an efficient & effective service in the light of the budget reductions will come to O&S on 24th November.

Finally O&S was shortlisted for the Centre of Public Scrutiny awards in the Innovation category. Sadly it didn't win but it is reassuring to know that its work has wider public recognition.