

## Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 24th February, 2020  
6.00 - 8.00 pm

Attendees	
<b>Councillors:</b>	Chris Mason (Chair), Klara Sudbury (Vice-Chair), Sandra Holliday, John Payne, Paul Baker, Max Wilkinson, Dilys Barrell, Iain Dobie, Dennis Parsons and Paul McCloskey (Reserve)
<b>Also in attendance:</b>	Kevan Blackadder (BID), Jess Goodwin (Marketing Cheltenham), David Jackson (Marketing Cheltenham), Councillor Jordan (Leader), Darren Knight (Director of People & Change), David Oakhill (Head of Planning at CBC), Jeremy Williamson (Cheltenham Development Task Force)

### Minutes

**1. APOLOGIES**

Councillor Stafford had given her apologies and Councillor McCloskey would substitute for her.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared.

**3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the last meeting were circulated with the agenda.

The Chairman advised members of a proposed amendment to item 12 (Cabinet briefing). The sentence that read "it is illegal for it is illegal for the council to make payments..." would be changed to "it was illegal for the company to make payments to councillors as it does with all other GAL directors, and therefore if Council decided that these payments should be made, it would be the Council that would have to make them."

The committee agreed the proposed amendment.

Upon a vote it was unanimously

**RESOLVED that the minutes, as amended, of the meeting held on the 13 January 2020 be agreed and signed as an accurate record.**

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

There were none.

**5. MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE**

There were no matters referred to committee.

## **6. MARKETING CHELTENHAM**

David Jackson, the Manager of Marketing Cheltenham introduced the update as circulated with the agenda. Marketing Cheltenham was officially launched in 2017 as the town's official Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO), though it was noted that Marketing Cheltenham was an in-house, department of CBC, rather than a separate organisation. Under 'Visit Cheltenham' much of the initial delivery was outsourced via commissioned consultants, but seen as unsustainable, CBC made the decision to create Marketing Cheltenham, which now consists of five members of staff. Cheltenham BID, together with other stakeholders, have also committed financial support, with a fixed term commitment up to July 2021, which was set-up to bring it in line with the next BID ballot.

Marketing Cheltenham's principal purpose was to lead the delivery of Cheltenham's Visitor Economy Strategy, which sought to grow the town's visitor economy by 5% p/a from 2019 to 2021, increasing from £155m in 2011, to £177m in 2021. It was noted that this level of growth was in-line with national strategy and that growth was currently on target.

This model was not dissimilar to other DMOs that had been created and towns and cities including Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol, Newcastle, York and Chester, had all reshaped their place identities in recent years, as well as having seen significant economic growth. By harnessing the potential of their cultural and visitor economies, these towns and cities had created thriving communities and places where people, especially the young, wanted to live and work; not simply visit.

Marketing Cheltenham had secured match funding commitments from Cheltenham BID and The Jockey Club to deliver shared marketing and event delivery programmes, as well as having over 100 private sector members, plus another 500 plus via an affiliate scheme with BID levy payers.

The work programme was aligned with the Visitor Economy Strategy and CBCs wider place marketing and inward investment ambitions; with 4 priorities which underpinned a principal aim, which was to make the whole greater than the sum of its parts.

In terms of marketing, the launch of The Festival Town branding in July last year, had created a much stronger identity and this continued to be adopted by partners across the town. In 2019 the visitcheltenham.com website received more than half a million visitors, which represented a 60% increase from 2018, whilst social media following and reach had doubled and Marketing Cheltenham secured PR and media coverage on the town at a national and international level, from the Times, FT and with some major online influencers and bloggers. Marketing Cheltenham had partnered with Cotswold Tourism on a major overseas tourism project, securing £250k from Visit Britain to grow international visitors to the region, selling Cheltenham as the 'Gateway to the Cotswolds', and they were hopeful of a further extension to the project in 2020/21. In order to grow the volume and value of business tourism in the town, a conference and venue finding service, Meet in Cheltenham, had been launched.

Marketing Cheltenham had taken the lead on developing an Events Strategy which provided a framework for CBCs support and delivery of events, as well directly managing and supporting the delivery of a range of high profile events alongside BID and CBC. They were also currently leading on a review of the Tourist Information Service in Cheltenham and this could involve Marketing Cheltenham taking on this service, which had previously migrated to the Cheltenham Trust.

In an effort to secure a future beyond 2021, Marketing Cheltenham recognised that it needed to capitalise on new opportunities and achieve a net ROI (Return on Investment) for CBC. It was relatively early days, but David felt that Marketing Cheltenham were performing well and advised members that success would be measured by KPIs relating to destination measures, organisational performance measures and marketing metrics.

The Manager of Marketing Cheltenham (MC) gave the following responses to member questions:

- MC worked closely with the Trust, particularly of late whilst working on the Tourist Information Centre project.
- A collaboration with the University of Gloucestershire for journalism students was being worked up at the moment, but there was more to do in terms of commercial linkages.
- MC worked closely with the Forest of Dean (FOD), not least because Kelly Ballard who was involved with the inception of MC, was now working at the FOD and there were long established collaborations between the FOD, CBC and the Costwolds. Notwithstanding the recent changes at Marketing Gloucester, Marketing Cheltenham also had a good relationship with colleagues in Gloucester. He felt that these relationships would continue to develop further, as the LEP took more interest in the tourism economy.
- MC were actively pursuing opportunities to meet overseas tour operators, from various regions, to discuss how Cheltenham could and should form part of their future tour programmes, and would continue to do so throughout the year.
- Evidence showed that much of the marketing that was done was also picked up locally, and this level of penetration of local audiences went towards driving people from major events, into the Town Centre.
- At the moment there was no close working with the foreign languages schools to promote return visits by students and their families, but this suggestion represented an opportunity which MC would look into further.
- Guidance, at a national level, suggested that if Coronavirus was anything like the SARs virus, markets would bounce back quickly with no legacy effect, though obviously this could change.
- MC did what they could to promote sustainable travel and the Events Strategy included a focus on 'being green'. Many of the Northern European markets were touring markets which travelled by land.
- Outside of the major festivals there had been more than 1,600 events promoted via the Visit Cheltenham website over the last year and the title 'Festival Town' aimed to promote Cheltenham as a cultural

destination rather than giving the message that people should only visit to attend a festival.

- MC already worked with the Playhouse and Everyman and MC were open to working with them more in the future.
- VisitBritain figures were based on the International Passenger Survey (IPS) of passengers when leaving the country, whereas the data being used by MC was collected locally and took consideration of bed stock, occupancy levels, etc, and were therefore more robust than the IPS.

The Chairman thanked the Manager of Marketing Cheltenham for producing an informative overview of the service and for his attendance, and asked that he return in early 2021, to provide facts and figures relating to performance, particularly focussing on the Return on Investment.

## **7. THE RETAIL ENVIRONMENT IN CHELTENHAM**

Jeremy Williamson, Managing Director of the Cheltenham Development Task Force with support from David Oakhill, Head of Planning at CBC and Kevan Blackadder, Director of Cheltenham BID had produced a paper, as circulated with the agenda, which provided an overview of the current retail environment in Cheltenham. In addition to this, they had produced a PowerPoint presentation which is attached at Appendix 1.

The Managing Director of the Cheltenham Development Task Force explained that the national retail environment had been challenging since the latest recession and that this coupled with wages rising slower than inflation, a shift to online shopping, rising costs for retailers and too much corporate and personal debt; has completely changed the face of town centre retail.

The Portas Review of 2011 said “*The new high streets won’t just be about selling goods. The mix will include shops but could also include housing, offices, sport, schools or other social, commercial and cultural enterprises and meeting places.*” Cheltenham town centre had, had its share of losses, but these losses were not confined to the high street and retail was just one component of wider experience, which required a range of things including leisure, food & beverage, town centre living, employment, public realm, connectivity and events. It was also noted that whilst losses had occurred, there had also been a positive take-up of vacant units, with newcomers to the town including Oliver Bonas, India Jane and Urban Outfitters.

Cheltenham was fortunate to have a defined leisure quarter at the Brewery; which in many instances had been developed on the edge of town driving footfall away from rather than into the town centre.

Whilst there had been some high profile collapses (Jamie’s Italian), Cheltenham had a strong and diverse (national names as well as local independents) food and beverage offer and this helped to strengthen the wider night-time economy.

A key step to maintaining vibrancy was to ensure that there were opportunities for people to live in the heart of the town, as without this, the town centre would be deserted after 5pm at night, and CBC has been supporting such initiatives through its planning function, with further properties coming on stream on the Lower High Street. A number of retirement homes operators were now based

in the town centre and these tended to attract individuals with high disposable income, but it was unknown to what extent this was spent in the town centre.

Town centre had seen a decline in employment but Cheltenham had been successfully reversing the trend of employment to residential losses across the town and Honeybourne Place represented the first new employment space to have been developed in Cheltenham in two decades. Formal Storage, a quirky space with no parking, commanded some of the highest rents.

Whilst there had been some successes in improving the public realm offer, there remained a considerable amount to do, especially in The Strand.

The Cheltenham Transport Plan had resulted in modal shift and increased footfall and the challenge going forward would be how to maintain and build upon this going forward.

The night-time economy in Cheltenham was very strong.

Reality was that town centres could no longer be synonymous with retail and there was a need for a creative and open-minded approach to the challenges being faced.

The following responses were given to member questions:

- There were several databases, but these contained occupancy data rather than details of freeholders or leaseholders and the authority did not subscribe to any of these as they were very costly. A helpful commercial agent had provided details for some properties, primarily on the Promenade and contact had been made and though there had been very few responses to date, some were engaging.
- At present there was an 8% vacancy rate in the town centre, though Officers were not able to advise what number this equated to.
- Business rates were too high, but it was undoubtedly the case that some rents were also too high and though some landlords were adopting a more sensible approach, some believed that Cheltenham could still afford higher rates.
- There was no suggestion that the town centre was closed to retail, but rather that the new reality was that mixed use was necessary.
- There was a shortage of Chefs in Cheltenham and there would be further repercussions if proposed changes to immigration rules were implemented.
- Churchill had been keen to promote the availability of spaces for events.
- The benefit of pop-up enterprises were being promoted to agents and urged to be open to the idea, though undoubtedly some freeholders/leaseholders were reluctant to incur the time and cost associated with drawing up contracts for what could be a very short-term pop-up.

The Chairman thanked Officers for their attendance.

## **8. SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - EVENTS**

The Chairman of the scrutiny task group (STG), Councillor Parsons, introduced the report as circulated with the agenda. He felt that there had been two main focusses for the group, high level events, but at the same time, lower level events and how to engage with residents. He felt that the report and recommendations did justice to both and addressed the issues that had discussed and he hoped that members would endorse both the STG report and the minority report for consideration by Cabinet.

A member commended what he considered to be an exceptional report and whilst he fully supported the recommendations, he expressed concerns that some decisions relating to some events appeared ad-hoc and his view was that event organisers needed to better understand how decisions would be taken.

Another member sought assurances from the officers present, that the report and recommendations did not simply represent a nimby charter, enabling residents/groups to simply block events from going ahead in their area. Jess Goodwin, the Events Manager from Marketing Cheltenham was confident that this was not the case. She felt the recommendations of the STG struck the right balance between the appropriate level of communication with residents, without being detrimental to event organisers by making the application process too difficult. Councillor Parsons felt strongly that the report and recommendations simply aimed to reduce the impact on residents and protect, where possible, the availability of amenities for all.

A member referred to paragraph 3.39 of the STG report which summarised feedback from the organisers of the Cheese and Chilli Festival. Having attended the event herself, she felt that the noise complaints had been justified given that the music was much louder for residents than it had been inside the event itself. She felt that lessons should be learnt and was confident that it was far from a nimby charter.

The Chair of O&S was comfortable that the ambitions and outcomes set by the committee had been met and now moved to agree whether the report(s) should be endorsed for consideration by Cabinet. Councillor Parsons, as the author of the minority report hoped that his minority report could be considered by Cabinet and that they make a decision on if and how to progress his recommendations. Members were happy with this approach.

In closing, Councillor Parsons took the opportunity to put on record his thanks to the Officers that had supported the STG, for their hard work and what he considered to be a fantastic report. He gave particular thanks to Tracey Crews, Director of Planning and Harry Mayo, Democracy Officer.

Upon a vote it was unanimously

**RESOLVED that:**

- 1. The findings and recommendations of the Scrutiny Task Group be presented to Cabinet.**
- 2. The minority report be presented to Cabinet.**

**9. SCRUTINY REVIEW**

The Director of People & Change reminded members that last year the committee had requested a review be undertaken, three tenders were received, with Campbell Tickell having been appointed and had now concluded their work. They had presented their initial findings to the last meeting and their final report, as circulated with the agenda, made a number of recommendations as to how the effectiveness of the committee could be improved.

One member commented that the key recommendations for him were those relating to an action tracker and more formal feedback from Cabinet, which he felt would enable the committee to push back where it felt there was inaction. He also suggested that members should focus on asking questions rather than making verbose statements.

In response to the suggestion by one member that many of the items considered at O&S should instead be member seminars, another member countered that, whilst this was true, there were no written record of seminars and as such it was not possible to demonstrate to the public that members were looking at these issues.

The Chairman proposed that a task group be established to look at the recommendations and how best they could be implemented. Members supported this proposal and it was agreed that a One Page Strategy would be tabled at the next meeting (30/03) for members to agree the ambitions and outcomes for a review. Councillor Payne confirmed that he would be happy to chair this group.

**10. FEEDBACK FROM OTHER SCRUTINY MEETINGS ATTENDED**

No written update on the 14 January meeting of HOSC had been provided by Councillor Horwood, nor was he present to provide a verbal update.

A written update from Councillor Brownsteen on the 3 February meeting of the Police and Crime Panel, had been circulated prior to the meeting. Members had no comments, but one member did put on record her thanks to Councillor Brownsteen for regularly producing these updates. The Chairman repeated his concerns about how valuable these updates were and suggested that the task group that was being established to look at the Scrutiny Review recommendations, should also be asked to consider this issue.

The Leader explained that the having appointed members to these bodies and without wanting to scrutinise them, these feedback sessions aimed to satisfy members at this council, that these groups were operating effectively.

**11. CABINET BRIEFING**

The Leader had nothing to add to the briefing which had been circulated with the agenda, other than to say that, when appropriate, these briefings would be used as a means of formally feeding back to the committee any comments on task group reports and recommendations, but that over recent years, there had been a very small number.

In response to questions from a member of the committee, the Leader explained that:

- LTP comments
- In terms of 'cyber' he reported that the joint consultation with Tewkesbury on the SPD had concluded and that the results would be reported to Cabinet next week (03 March). The next step would be to agree a process, as the landowner, to get a developer on board.

## **12. SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCE TASK GROUP - ONE PAGE STRATEGY**

The Chairman reminded members that at Council in December (2019), having considered the IRP report, the matter of payments for members appointed to outside bodies as non-executive directors or trustees was referred to O&S for further review.

The committee had agreed that a task group should be established and members were now asked to agree the proposed ambitions and outcomes for the review, as set out on the One Page Strategy that had been circulated with the agenda. Once agreed, the Democracy Officer would invite all non-executive members to volunteer to take part in this review.

Upon a vote it was unanimously

## **13. UPDATES FROM SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS**

The Democracy Officer advised the committee that she and Richard Gibson, the Strategy and Engagement Manager, had met with the Property Team to discuss the policy and associated application process. This had identified some possible improvements and the Strategy and Engagement Manager had agreed to draft a briefing which outlined some of these improvements. This would be tabled with the committee in due course.

## **14. SCRUTINY TOPIC REGISTRATION FORM**

The Chair invited Councillor Parsons to introduce the topic request form that he had submitted. He explained that having met with Officers he understood that the homelessness policy was working, but felt that in some instances the process of getting people into secure accommodation took too long. The example he used was of a tent dweller who had arrived in Wellington Square some three weeks prior and although he was cooperating with outreach, the process of finding secure accommodation was still ongoing, to the detriment of the homeless person, as well as people with young children who felt unable to use the green space because of the associated waste matter and drug paraphernalia. It was his opinion that scrutiny of the issue would help identify opportunities for a swifter outcome, as well as demonstrating how seriously resident concerns were taken.

A member from another ward advised that she had experienced a similar issue at Tivoli Triangle, and though there had been no anti-social problems as in the case outlined by Councillor Parsons, this person had been in situ for between one and two months.

The Chairman outlined the options available to the committee in terms of what action it could take: do nothing; set-up a task group; consider a report at a future meeting; request a briefing, which would not be discussed at the meeting;

or arrange a member seminar. The committee discussed the advantages and disadvantages to some of the options available to them and agreed that a report should be tabled at a future meeting, with the Cabinet Member Housing being asked to attend.

Upon a vote it was unanimously

**RESOLVED that Officers be asked to set-out the process and associated timescales within a report, giving members the opportunity to identify possible improvements and that the Cabinet Member Housing also be asked to attend.**

**15. REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORKPLAN**

The scrutiny work plan would be updated to include:

- A One Page Strategy for the 'Scrutiny Review STG' at the 30 March meeting.
- A follow-up from Marketing Cheltenham would be scheduled and this would cover in more detail, the current and forecast return on investment.

The Director for People & Change advised that motions from the last 12 months had been collated and would be added to Clearview, where it would be possible to track progress and suggested that this could be monitored, as required, by the committee.

**16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was scheduled for the 30 March 2020.

Chris Mason  
**Chairman**