

## Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 7th June, 2021

6.00 - 7.15 pm

Attendees	
<b>Councillors:</b>	Chris Mason (Chair), Dilys Barrell, Nigel Britter, Wendy Flynn, Alisha Lewis, Emma Nelson, John Payne and Jo Stafford
<b>Also in attendance:</b>	Louise Boyle (Solace), Councillor Jeffries (Deputy Leader), Paul Jones (Executive Director Finance & Assets), Darren Knight (Executive Director People & Change), Martin Stacy (Lead Commissioner - Housing Services, Environmental and Regulatory Services) and Paul Tuckey (CBH)

### Minutes

**1. APOLOGIES**

Councillor Sankey and Hegenbarth had given their apologies, as had the Leader of the Council, though Councillor Jeffries, as Deputy Leader, attended in her place.

The Chair took the opportunity to welcome new members of the committee.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Nelson declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6 (Solace), as her husband was the newly elected Police and Crime Commissioner.

**3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

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

Councillor Barrell highlighted the suggestion made by Councillor Horwood at the last meeting that this authority make common calls with Stroud and Cotswold district councils to see whether there were further representations that could be made direct to the Department of Health, or some of the other NHS bodies such as the South West Clinical Senate or the Getting It Right First Time Team, to raise further concerns about the Fit for the Future proposals that had been accepted by the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee at GCC. Councillor Barrell accepted that there had been no discussion or conclusion on this suggestion at the meeting in April, but queried whether the committee should recommend that Cabinet reach out to the relevant districts on this issue. The committee agreed to make a recommendation for Cabinet to consider the suggested approach.

Upon a vote it was

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 19 April 2021 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 none.

**6. SOLACE**

Louise Boyle, the SOLACE Team Leader, introduced the briefing paper along with Martin Stacy (CBC Lead Commissioner - Housing Services, Environmental and Regulatory Services) and Paul Tuckey (CBH Housing Options Manager), and highlighted its key aspects.

SOLACE was operational in Gloucester for a number of years before expanding to Cheltenham in 2018. Between February 2018 and April 2021, the Cheltenham team dealt with 166 cases relating to high and medium level anti-social behaviour such as aggressive begging, neighbourhood disputes and criminality.

SOLACE's Key Performance Indicators included reducing repeat victims of anti-social behaviour. Since February 2018, there had been 22 repeat victims, an average of 7.3 a year or 0.6 per month. Another KPI included providing a holistic approach and build public confidence and across the same period of time, 252 cases had been closed with no need for legal action across Cheltenham and Gloucester.

During the Covid crisis, SOLACE had been able to operate largely how it did before thanks to its joint working with the police and councils, with the key difference being the form of communication, with partners, particularly from the police and courts, having provided a great deal of support. SOLACE also had a place on the Covid-19 Emergency Accommodation Protocol, working with partners to provide Covid-safe emergency accommodation.

In terms of the process for housing rough sleepers, SOLACE normally got involved when there was an aspect of anti-social behaviour. They used an engage, support, enforce model, with enforcement as the last resort. Many cases were complex, with factors including substance abuse, mental health and PTSD, and it was important to take time to engage people properly. If enforcement was needed, this was done with the help of One Legal, though there needed to be alarm, harassment or distress being caused in order to legally justify enforcement.

Martin Stacy (CBC Lead Commissioner - Housing Services, Environmental and Regulatory Services) stressed that all roads lead to housing options, with the key being to provide rough sleepers with a pathway to accommodation. The real challenges were in working with those with complex needs, and figuring out how best to engage, accommodate and support them. In Cheltenham they had established six housing-led properties, providing accommodation that was 'wrapped around' with constant support for the individuals living there. They had also commissioned a support officer who spent time building trust with these individuals and getting them on the pathway to independent living.

He acknowledged that the number of rough sleepers had increased significantly over the last 5 years or so, and that short-term funding streams posed an issue. The latest new funding award would last for nine months, from July to the end of March. Though, there were advantages to these short-term funding streams, importantly being able to reflect, review and reshape their approach on a regular basis.

Paul Tuckey (CBH Housing Options Manager) outlined his key role in assessing applicants while liaising with partners to offer support, interventions, mental health services and domestic abuse services. It was important to work together to find long-term solutions and engage people, supported by proper aftercare services. An Interventions Officer was now working in the team, working closely with those impacted by rough sleeping and he reiterated the importance of robust wraparound support being provided.

A member praised the very thorough report and the important work that SOLACE undertook. She asked how the street link worked, and whether the officers found it to be satisfactory. Louise Boyle responded that the street link was generally very proactive and effective. She acknowledged that responses could be slower when rough sleepers move during the night and are more difficult to find, but also that this was difficult to avoid. Overall, she was happy with the process and its outcomes.

The same member also asked about the duty to refer process. Paul Tuckey responded that the duty to refer came in under the 2018 Homelessness Reduction Act and obliged statutory authorities to give local authorities prior notification when they became aware of someone who was either homeless or threatened with homelessness in their area. Anyone could submit a referral to the authority, either through the website, via email or over the phone, though there may be some glitches in what was still a relatively new system.

Another member asked whether the clients they dealt with were primarily the subjects or perpetrators of antisocial behaviour. Louise Boyle responded that they could be either or a mixture, and that SOLACE would deal with both aspects on a case-by-case basis.

The same member also noted that SOLACE was a relatively small organisation with a low budget. The ONS suggested that 35% of crime in Gloucestershire was related to anti-social behaviour and queried where SOLACE fit into the response to this? Louise Boyle responded that they worked on high and medium level antisocial behaviour, with lower-level ASB referred to either the council's neighbourhood team, other support organisations, or to Restorative Gloucestershire who offer restorative justice and mediation. The restorative approach can help resolve neighbourhood disputes before they bubbled over into something more serious.

A member asked for more details on the KPIs. Louise Boyle responded that the KPIs were reported to the quarterly governance board, which involved representatives of CBC, GCC and the police and that she was happy to report back with more info on KPIs in the future.

The Chair asked what the council could realistically do to help SOLACE work more effectively. Louise Boyle responded that they were fortunate to have

ongoing support from CBC, particularly from the neighbourhood team and Environmental Health. Martin Stacy suggested that the most significant help would come from simply delivering more homes and widening the range of options in the housing stock. CBH recently agreed to deliver six new homes for the most complex rough sleeping cases, but he noted that there could never be too many. It was important that the housing options team within CBH continues to improve understanding throughout the organisation, and that we keep looking at how processes and partnerships could be improved.

The Chair thanked representatives for their contributions and suggested that they return in twelve months with an update.

No decision was required.

## **7. O&S REVIEW SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - FINAL REPORT**

The Chairman reminded members that the objective for this committee was to consider the proposed actions and timescales being proposed by the task group.

Councillor Payne, as Chair of the task group, was pleased to be able to present the report, which set out the proposed actions and timescales in response to the Campbell Tickell recommendations and which he felt clearly demonstrated the rationale for each of the proposed actions. He explained that for health reasons he had been prevented from attending all but one of the meetings, and thanked the other members of the group, Councillors Parsons, McCloskey and Barrell for their hard work. He also wished to put on record his thanks to the Democracy Officer and Executive Director People & Change for the considerable organisational skill, knowledge and support that they had provided the group. He felt that the report made clear that the methodology used by the group was sound and had allowed them to scrutinise the recommendations and develop well thought out responses for each, as detailed in the report. Campbell Tickell had made 19 recommendations and whilst he did not intend to go through them all, he felt some were particularly important. Recommendation 1 and defining the role of the committee, was the key recommendation and he felt that the draft definition was sound, workable and covered a huge proportion of the work undertaken by the committee.

He was of the opinion that much progress had been made over the last two years in terms of the briefs and advice being provided to report writers and presenters (Recommendation 10) and that this was critical in ensuring the continued success of the committee.

Another critical recommendation, in his view, was that relating to the continued development for members and the de-brief that would be scheduled at the end of each agenda would provide an effective means of allowing the committee to scrutinise its own performance and become more effective.

Councillor Payne explained that the committee were being asked to approve the proposed actions and timescales in response to the 19 Campbell Tickell recommendations. At this stage he reminded members that of these 19 recommendations, twelve had already actioned, which he felt clearly demonstrated the commitment of officers and the organisation as a whole, to modernise and enhance the relevance of scrutiny. One recommendation was

being rejected (as it called for the Chair to read all reports ahead of publication and was simply impractical) and the remaining six were due to be completed by the end of June 2021.

The Executive Director People & Change highlighted member comments on the quality of the report and presentation for the previous item and acknowledged that tightening-up of the administration of the committee had driven improvement, a journey which he hoped would continue.

Councillor Barrell, commented that she had thoroughly enjoyed her time on the group and echoed the sentiments of Councillor Payne in terms of the level support provided by Officers. She also highlighted that having attended a recent scrutiny training session run by Gloucestershire County Council she had been pleased to see that this committee was doing much of what was being suggested as part of that training, and encouraged that, in fact, we were doing more in some cases.

Upon a vote it was unanimously

**RESOLVED that the proposed responses to the Campbell Tickell recommendations (see Appendix 1 of the task group report), be accepted.**

## **8. CABINET BRIEFING**

Councillor Jeffries, Deputy Leader, apologised that the spreadsheet detailing the revised portfolios had not been circulated earlier. He assured members that the portfolios had been tweaked rather than significant changes having been made and that these changes had been made in consultation with the Executive Leadership Team and better reflected the revised Operating Model for the organisation.

In fact, many portfolios had stayed relatively unchanged, with the Leader continuing to focus on the strategic level. Finance & Assets now included Gloucestershire Airport, as an asset. The Housing portfolio had remained relatively unchanged given the commitment to sizeable investment in the town. The Culture, Wellbeing and Business portfolio aimed to bring together elements of the place agenda, as well as the Recovery Task Force and the cemetery and crematorium had been added to the Safety & Communities portfolio as a key community service. There had been some minor changes to the Waste, Recycling & Street Services portfolio based on the operating model and a focus on parking had been included linked to potential changes to national policy. It was felt that it made sense to join Customer & Regulatory Services given the customer focus of regulatory services, and Cyber was a sizeable amount of work but it was felt that there were also major links with Strategic Transport (J10, etc). Finally, Climate Change alone represented a significant strand of work, but equally was one that cut through all other portfolios.

A member felt that the restructuring of portfolios was good as some portfolios now fit much better with what the council was doing, but she did query how Cabinet could make it easier for back benchers to engage with cabinet members and queried whether there was anything the Deputy Leader felt Cabinet itself felt it could improve.

The Deputy Leader felt that the new structure would prove easier for members, particularly new members to understand and reassured the committee that Cabinet were open to having conversations and no member should feel unable to approach them. He suggested that one challenge for Cabinet would be strengthening linkages between colleagues, after Cabinet increased from 7 members to 9.

Another member acknowledged that climate change did indeed cut across all portfolios. However, having heard the Cabinet Member Climate Change, at the last C5 meeting, say that there was no action at all that CBC as an organisation could take to address the climate change agenda without GCC; if this were true, how could CBC move the climate change agenda forward. The Deputy Leader, in the absence of the Cabinet Member, acknowledged that CBC were not able to change the policy direction of others, but were able to do everything they could to demonstrate leadership and hopefully influence others.

There were no further questions.

**9. REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORK PLAN**

Work plan circulated with the agenda.

No comments or questions.

**10. 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)**

**11. NORTH PLACE AND PORTLAND STREET**

The committee considered an update on North Place and Portland Street.

**12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was scheduled for the 5 July 2021.

Chris Mason  
Chairman