

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 6th September, 2021
6.00 - 7.05 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Alex Hegenbarth (Vice-Chair), Dilys Barrell, Nigel Britter, Wendy Flynn, John Payne, Julie Sankey, Jo Stafford, Tim Harman (Reserve), David Willingham (Reserve) and Matt Babbage (Reserve)
Also in attendance:	Cllr. Rowena Hay, Cllr. Peter Jeffries, Richard Gibson, Darren Knight

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Cllrs. Mason, Lewis and Nelson sent apologies, with Cllrs. Babbage, Willingham and Harman substituting for them.

In the absence of Cllr. Mason, Cllr. Hegenbarth chaired the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr. Barrell noted that her son worked for Cheltenham Borough Homes, which could be relevant to the exempt item.

**3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING
RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the 5th July meeting be approved and signed as a correct record.

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

There were none.

5. MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

Members discussed the Council motion from 19th July where members agreed to 'Work with scrutiny to investigate ways the Borough Council can encourage more people to participate in future elections in Cheltenham', and made the following points:

One member suggested that when the council sends letters to residents about council tax it could encourage them to register to vote. Another member agreed with this, noting that someone registering for council tax did not automatically register them to vote although one might assume it did. The Revenues and Benefits department would need to be properly supported to do this. Another

member agreed that anything the council could do to increase participation was positive, and small things could make a big difference.

One member added that it was important to avoid exclusionary processes which might dissuade people from engaging. They cited the current Gloucestershire PCC roadshow which required an inordinate level of information from people to attend, and should have been more open. Darren Knight, Executive Director People and Change, thanked the member for flagging this and agreed to follow it up as the council's link to the PCC.

6. HOUSING AND REGENERATION STRATEGY

This item was deferred to the October meeting due to unforeseen circumstances.

7. SCRUTINY TOPIC REGISTRATION FORM

Cllr. Willingham outlined his reasons for proposing the topic for scrutiny, noting that both his CBC ward and his county council division contained areas of significant deprivation. He had submitted a motion to the 7th September GCC Council meeting asking the authority to take the lead on this.

He hoped the motion would be passed and that the authorities could work closely together on a key issue. GCC had produced a helpful analysis of the 2019 Indices of Deprivation, which was hugely useful but needed to be followed by tangible progress. Portsmouth's Tackling Poverty project was a good framework for what CBC could try. It was important to look at what they can control (e.g. areas like housing), and who the key partners were in areas that CBC did not control (e.g. education, health and crime). He hoped that colleagues would support this and contribute their experience and expertise, perhaps initially through a Cabinet Member Working Group or Scrutiny Task Group.

Richard Gibson, Strategy and Engagement Manager, added that he had reported to the committee on this topic in 2019. It was clear that a multi-agency approach was needed, with many of the main drivers of deprivation being linked to employment and skills, which were mostly outside CBC's remit. He supported the scrutiny request but noted that the committee needed to be aware of the limitations on the authority's capacity.

One member supported the request and emphasised the need to look at all options to support deprived areas of Cheltenham. They reassured members that there was agreement from the county council on the importance of the issue, and the authorities have a lot in common.

One member commended Cllr. Willingham for a well-researched and passionate topic request. It was hugely important to look at how areas of deprivation can be aided and improved, and the council must make every effort to tackle these problems urgently. It was not a partisan issue, but rather something they could work with GCC on.

One member noted that as a former social worker, they were aware that a wide variety of factors were linked to deprivation. They acknowledged that there

would always be capacity issues and they must think carefully about how they can help most effectively.

One member suggested that a Scrutiny Task Group was preferable to a Cabinet Member Working Group since the non-political aspect would be beneficial. Members agreed. The Leader added that the topic of deprivation related to so many different areas that either form of group would be effective. She emphasised the importance of keeping track of what the council could influence itself and what it needed to put pressure on others to do.

RESOLVED:

That a Scrutiny Task Group be set up on the topic of deprivation.

8. SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

Darren Knight, Executive Director People & Change, presented the report and praised the work of the committee over the last year. Its effectiveness had certainly grown and its recommendations to Cabinet had been taken on board, so he was optimistic about the next twelve months.

One member thanked officers for their work over the last year and for putting the report together.

The Chair moved to the vote, where it was unanimously:

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Report be approved for noting by Council.

9. FEEDBACK FROM OTHER SCRUTINY MEETINGS ATTENDED

Cllr. Brownstein's update on the Police and Crime Panel meeting from 7th July was taken as read.

Cllr. Barrell updated the committee on the Gloucestershire Health O&S Committee meeting from 13th July. She added that she was following up several queries with the county council but had not yet had answers from them. She urged members to read the minutes of the HOSC meeting as it had tackled a number of complex topics relating to significant changes.

The Gloucestershire Economic Growth O&S Committee had not met since the last meeting of this committee.

10. CABINET BRIEFING

The Leader's briefing was taken as read. She added that the council would be flying a flag to mark the day celebrating emergency services and the NHS, and this would be added to the council's flag protocol. The celebration sought to promote good citizenship and raise the profile of the emergency services in the hope that more people would come forward as volunteers.

One member asked for clarification about the local boundary review and how it related to the government's ongoing national boundary review. The Leader clarified that the local review was the first of its kind in over 20 years and related

to ward sizes and member numbers. As an example, St Peters ward had a relatively high population and as a result its boundaries could change. CBC seemed to have a reasonable number of councillors for its population and so the overall number was not expected to change.

One member asked how the second Joint Core Strategy was progressing. The Leader responded that she had attended an member liaison group on the topic that morning. JCS 2 had been due to go out for consultation by now but was had been postponed until October. She expected it to be a long process and would meet with the relevant officers, such as the Director of Planning, to ensure the council remained on top of it.

The Executive Director People and Change added that the Cheltenham Lottery was progressing well, and urged members to spread awareness of it.

11. REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

One member suggested that in the future, the committee ought to consider the outcomes and lessons learned from the council's Covid response. This was still an ongoing process so they did not have a particular date for it, but it would be important to look at what went well and what they could have done better.

The Vice-Chair noted that the deferred Housing and Regeneration Strategy item would go to the October meeting instead, and that the scrutiny task group agreed in this meeting would have to be set up.

**12. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXEMPT INFORMATION
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).

**13. EXEMPT MINUTES
RESOLVED:**

That the exempt minutes of the 5th July meeting be approved and signed as a correct record.

14. PROPERTY SERVICES RESOURCES

Members considered an information paper regarding the property department, and Cllr. Jeffries (Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member Finance and Assets) responded to questions from members.

**15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING
4th October 2021.**

Chairman