

Economy and Business Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 5th March, 2012
6.00 - 7.00 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Malcolm Stennett (Chairman), Garth Barnes, Tim Cooper, Lloyd Surgenor, Pat Thornton, Peter Jeffries and Jon Walklett
Also in attendance:	Councillor Steve Jordan, Councillor Colin Hay and Pat Pratley
Apologies:	Councillor Paul Massey, Councillor Paul McLain and Councillor Andrew Wall

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Barnes, McLain, Massey and Wall.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting of 23 January 2012 were approved as a correct record subject to the first paragraph on agenda item 9 referring to a report on Absence Management in May 2011 not 2012 as stated in the minutes.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

None received.

5. MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 29 February 2012, the committee had considered a paper on the event submission for major events in the town which had been produced by officers at the request of the chair. After some discussion Environment O&S had resolved to set up a task and finish group to develop the process. They agreed to invite members of both the other overview and scrutiny committees to join the working group. The recommendations from the task and finish group would be reported back to the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee in May.

Resolved that Councillor Surgenor be appointed to the working group to develop a policy for consideration of major events in the town.

6. BRIEFING FROM CABINET MEMBERS

Leader

The Leader updated members on the Promoting Cheltenham Fund. After an initial allocation of £150,000 in phase 1, there was an amount of £30,000 still to

be allocated. He had received an approach from the Chamber of Commerce who had suggested that the tourism website needed refreshing and in particular the hotel booking site. He was mindful to allocate the remaining fund to this and had requested a full business case which could go to the fund panel for a final recommendation. If this was not successful there was an option to carry forward the outstanding amount to next year's allocation as it would not be worthwhile to encourage many organisations to submit bids for a relatively small amount of money. A report was due to go to Cabinet in April 2012 which would include a review of the success of the events which had received funding to date and a recommendation on the remaining allocation.

The chair considered the tourism website worthy of consideration and otherwise supported the rollover of the funding.

Resolved that the allocation of £30K from the Cheltenham Promoting Fund for improving the tourism website be endorsed subject to a supporting business case being produced and if this was not approved by Cabinet then the £30K should be rolled over to the fund for the next financial year.

The Leader advised that he had spoken to the Chief Executive, David Owen, from gFirst regarding his attendance at this meeting but he had been unable to attend. The Democratic Services Manager advised that David Owen was due to attend a meeting of the Gloucestershire Scrutiny Group on 1 June where one of the items to be discussed was scrutiny links with the district councils. The committee considered that this was an important issue which should continue to feature on the new overview and scrutiny committee's agenda.

As this was the last meeting of the committee, the Leader wished to put on record his thanks to the committee for their scrutinising of himself and his fellow Cabinet Members on their portfolios.

Cabinet Member Corporate Services

The Cabinet Member updated members on the new overview and scrutiny arrangements. He explained that the new O&S committee would have a focus on managing and coordinating the process. It was important not to lose the presentation type agenda items which had come to this committee but he suggested that these could be sessions open to all interested members. The constitution working group was currently meeting to agree the changes needed to the Constitution to support the new arrangements. He advised that there had been some press enquiries regarding the new arrangements and some concern that the public may be excluded from scrutiny task groups. He stressed that this was an issue which the new O&S committee must consider and challenge each new scrutiny task group to consider how much of their review could be open to the public.

- 7. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CORPORATE STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2012-13**
The Strategy and Engagement Manager introduced the report as circulated with the agenda. The objective and outcomes framework had been retained, though as the council's budget had reduced significantly from last year, the scale of activity had reduced with fourteen less improvement actions. Government had lifted the national indicator set which had been welcomed as it presented an opportunity to reflect on

indicators used to measure corporate performance and choose new indicators which could be more meaningful.

The corporate strategy had been prepared in the context of the commissioning programme and the various commissioning reviews were starting to inform the actions in next year's plan and future reviews were also included as distinct improvement actions in the 2012-13 strategy. The next set of priority projects for commissioning were:

- Housing options
- Supporting the review of asset management being led by Leadership Gloucestershire
- ICT services

He concluded that it was an ambitious and challenging agenda. This year the resources needed to support the action plan had also been estimated and as a result several pinch points had been highlighted in HR, One Legal and the commissioning division. These would continue to be addressed and monitored by the Senior Leadership Team.

Councillor Cooper asked how the commissioning reviews for next year had been selected as he had not seen any details on how they were prioritised and it seemed rather ad hoc rather than strategic. He asked why parks and gardens was not on the list as he considered it would be a good one to 'test' the private sector. In response, the Strategy and Engagement Manager advised that the Strategic Commissioning Programme Board had devised a scoring mechanism covering five criteria which included potential financial savings, timeliness and scope for doing something different. Regarding parks and gardens, the Executive Director advised that this had been scheduled to be looked at in 2013/14 as it was important that the new local authority company had time to bed down. She was not able to detail the criteria but would be happy to supply this detail to all members outside the meeting.

Councillor Cooper questioned why the agendas or minutes of the Strategic Commissioning Board were not made public. The chair requested that a briefing note on how the commissioning strategy was determined should be circulated to all members.

The Leader added that the timing of the Asset Management review was to enable the council to be ready for any recommendations which might come out of the Leadership Gloucestershire review of Asset Management across the county. With the housing review and changes to the housing benefit scheme, the housing options commissioning review was very important. Similarly the commissioning review of ICT tied in with the ICT review currently in progress and the implementation of the shared ICT platform for GO. The Leader agreed to provide information on the commissioning prioritisation process and the criteria used as an appendix to the Corporate Strategy report to Cabinet on the 15 March and then to Council on the 28 March for final approval.

Councillor Jeffries suggested that there should be a link in the action plan to delivering the financial benefits from the new local authority waste company as well as outcomes for improving services to residents. The Strategy and Engagement Manager acknowledged that both were important.

The Chair thanked the Strategy and Engagement Manager for his attendance and commended him on the new improved and concise nature of the report.

Resolved that a briefing note on how the commissioning strategy was determined should be circulated to all members.

8. WORK PLANNING 2012/13 - GOING FORWARD TO THE NEW SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

The chair explained that this was the last meeting of the committee before the new scrutiny arrangements were put in place. A discussion paper had been circulated which invited members to give their thoughts on the regular items which had come to this committee in the past and how they should be dealt with in the future. The options would be for them to be considered by the new overview and scrutiny committee, to be the subject of a scrutiny task group or a potential item for a member seminar or briefing.

After some discussion, members concluded that the following items should continue to be part of the workplan for the new O&S committee:

- Corporate Strategy
- Commissioning programme
- Economic Strategy (including update from Gfirst)
- Partnerships

They concluded that scrutiny of commissioned services was also important and the Cabinet Member Corporate Services suggested that scrutiny task groups could be set up for this purpose.

There was some discussion about scrutiny task groups and how they could be managed. A member suggested that members should be selected for a task group based on their interest in the subject, their skills and expertise and their availability. It was suggested that when invitations to join a working group were circulated to members, the timescales and commitment needed for the review were made clear. The Democratic Services Manager advised that further work was being done to define the scrutiny task group process and she would be involving members in these discussions.

Resolved that the items listed should be recommended for inclusion in the new overview and scrutiny workplan and the remaining items currently on the workplan for this committee should be reviewed by the new committee as part of their planning process.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

As this was the last meeting of the committee a further meeting was not scheduled. However the first meeting of the new committee will take place on Monday 28 May 2012 at 6 p.m.

The chair wished to record his thanks to the committee and to officers who had supported the committee and likewise members extended their thanks to the chair.

Malcolm Stennett
Chairman