

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 10th October, 2012
6.00 - 7.04 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Duncan Smith (Chair), Klara Sudbury (Vice-Chair), Nigel Britter, Barbara Driver, Colin Hay, Helena McCloskey and Diane Hibbert
Also in attendance:	Councillor Penny Hall, Councillors, Councillor Jon Walklett, Councillor Steve Jordan, Councillor Peter Jeffries and Grahame Lewis

Minutes

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Teakle and Councillor Wall (Councillor Jacky Fletcher was attending as his substitute).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting of the 16 July 2012 were agreed as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS, CALLS FOR ACTIONS AND PETITIONS

None received.

5. MATTERS REFERRED TO COMMITTEE

None.

6. FEEDBACK FROM OTHER SCRUTINY MEETINGS ATTENDED

Councillor Penny Hall updated members on her attendance at the Gloucestershire Scrutiny Group held on 4 October at Shire Hall. A summary of the matters raised had been circulated to members at the meeting.

Councillor Sudbury circulated a written update regarding her attendance at the Gloucestershire Health, Community and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Shire Hall on 18 September 2012.

Councillor McCloskey updated members on the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel and it was noted that an October update had been circulated to all members. An induction programme was in progress for the members of the panel and the two newly appointed independent members. At their meeting on 26 November, the panel would have their first opportunity to meet with the newly elected Police Commissioner.

7. SCRUTINY PROCEDURES AND GUIDES

The Democratic Services Manager introduced the scrutiny guides which had been designed by Democratic Services to provide more information on overview and scrutiny and would be available on the council's website and via the intranet. They contained an overall introduction to overview and scrutiny and there were specific sections for the public, members and officers who were going to be involved in some way. The public guide explained how members of the public could get involved by asking a question, being invited to be a co-optee on a task group or being a witness at a meeting. The section for councillors explained how they could nominate a topic for scrutiny and the final section for officers explained the process if they are called to assist in a scrutiny review. The guides would considerably enhance the information on scrutiny available on the website and she invited members comments before their publication.

Resolved that the scrutiny guides be endorsed and made available on the website

8. GENERAL UPDATE ON SCRUTINY TASK GROUPS

The chair referred members to the summary which had been circulated with the agenda. This listed all the current and potential scrutiny task groups and provided a brief summary of each. He did not intend to go through this in detail and there were no further questions raised by the committee.

A draft terms of reference for a proposed UBICO review had been circulated. These had been circulated to all the members of the task group for comment and they were due to hold their first meeting on 17 October 2012. Councillor Fletcher, as a member of the working group, was satisfied with the terms of reference and regretted that she would have to give her apologies for the first meeting.

A draft terms of reference for a proposed youth services review had been circulated. These had been discussed at the last meeting of the scrutiny task group in September. Councillor Driver, as a member of the group, said she was happy to accept the terms of reference. Councillor Fletcher highlighted the excellent work that was being done by CCP and Richard Gibson in her ward and anything that can be done to encourage young people to participate in such projects should be encouraged. As there were no other comments the terms of reference were agreed.

Resolved that the terms of reference for the scrutiny task groups UBICO and Youth Services be agreed.

9. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - EVENT MANAGEMENT

The chair welcomed Councillor Penny Hall, as chair of the working group, to introduce the final report of the working group. He emphasised that the role of this committee was to ensure that the task group had met their original terms of reference and that they were generally happy with the work that had been done and could endorse the recommendations.

Councillor Hall said this was an important report, firstly because it was the first scrutiny task group to report to this committee but more importantly because it was a review which was breaking new ground in its recommendations. The ambition of the working group was to set up an events advisory group which

could make decisions on whether an event should go ahead and enable consultation with ward councillors and the public during this process. The group were made aware that these type of advisory groups existed in other councils and in particular at Gloucester City and they had considered a protocol used elsewhere. At a meeting in July, they were advised by officers that they could not support the protocol as it duplicated processes already in place and further legal advice made it clear that the events advisory group would not be in a position to make any recommendations or have any legal standing. Councillor Hall acknowledged that further work needed to be done to understand this position and she was meeting with the solicitor from One Legal tomorrow to question the legal advice. She would welcome any advice from the committee at this stage on how to take this review forward.

Other members of the working group agreed that this was a very important piece of work but in their opinion it was not ready to go to Cabinet and should not be rushed. They welcomed any process which would enable ward councillors to be more aware of events coming up but were disappointed if the advisory group could not have any teeth.

They praised the work of the chair and the excellent support for this review from officers, particularly those in Democratic Services who had worked hard to keep this review on track.

The executive director, Grahame Lewis, spoke as sponsor of this task group. He explained that the covering report for Cabinet was designed to set out the implications for Cabinet when making their decision on the recommendations. The implications set out were based on legal advice and for that reason the officers could not support the third recommendation. In his view, the police were very keen on these types of advisory groups and indeed a Safety Advisory group operated at Cheltenham Racecourse very successfully.

Other members of the committee suggested that the task group should do further work in understanding how other councils could operate such a group within legal boundaries.

The chair commended the task group for their work and felt they had produced a robust report but acknowledged they needed more time to complete the review. He suggested that the task group could carry out further work and bring back their final report to the next meeting of this committee on 26 November. He suggested that the committee may wish to consider forwarding the recommendations to Council before going to Cabinet for approval so that a wider group of members could discuss the recommendations and give their views. The working group may also want to consider whether any constitutional changes may be required to support their recommendations as these would need to be approved by Council.

Resolved that the task group do further work with a view to bringing back their final report and recommendations to the next meeting of the O&S committee on 26 November.

10. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - ICT REVIEW

In the absence of the chair of the working group, the Democratic Services Manager gave a brief introduction to the work of the scrutiny task group. She emphasised that throughout the course of the review, the task group had

worked very closely with officers from ICT and those involved in the commissioning review and the Cabinet Member had also had the opportunity to comment. As a result, officers were fully supportive of the recommendations.

Councillor Walklett, as the Cabinet Member responsible for ICT, was invited to give his view. He commended the work of the task group who in a very short space of time had studied a considerable amount of paperwork and got to grips with a lot of detailed information. He concurred with their views and acknowledged their recommendations.

He referred to section 9.2 of the report which referred to a Cabinet Member Working group to support the ICT commissioning review. He had invited nominations by the group leaders and directly with members but sadly as only two members had come forward he had decided that it would not be effective to run a working group with such a small number. He suggested that during the course of the review, some members of the working group had been particularly interested in members ICT and he would be happy to look for opportunities for Councillors Wheeler and Chard to continue to input to this issue, working with Democratic Services and ICT. It had been agreed that the business case for the ICT review would go to the budget scrutiny working group and a meeting was being arranged in November for this purpose before the report went to Cabinet. The working group had also raised the issue of Cheltenham Festivals and the viability of continued support from the council's ICT services. He was pleased to report that he had already taken action on this and an amicable agreement had been reached whereby the festivals would set up their own ICT services separate from the council.

The chair invited members to consider the next steps.

Councillor Smith declared an interest at this point as he worked for a company which was setting up an external ICT service for a local authority. He suggested that the council should be looking to buy in ICT services rather than ongoing significant capital expenditure in ICT infrastructure. He cautioned the Cabinet in taking advice from officers who were currently involved in providing ICT services as it may be difficult for them to give an unbiased view. He urged the Cabinet Member to challenge any assumptions very carefully.

The Cabinet Member said that four options were being considered including outsourcing and sharing with another provider. He believed that capital investment was necessary to ensure sustainability of ICT and there was evidence to support that ICT services could be provided more cheaply by sharing the service with another partner. On that basis, a shared service was his current preference. He also added that he was satisfied that the new people were being brought into ICT who could offer a fresh viewpoint. The report on the business options and the corresponding business cases would be presented to Cabinet on 13 December 2012.

Councillor Colin Hay, who had arrived late at the meeting at 6.50 pm, was invited by the chair to add any comments as chair of the working group. Councillor Hay highlighted the issues raised in the report regarding the lack of investment in the infrastructure and the importance of role of the Senior Leadership Team where it was acknowledged that there had been a gap for a period of time.

Members commented that it was a very good report. Although they might welcome comments from Council, they agreed given the urgency that they should endorse the recommendations for forwarding to Cabinet on 16 October 2012.

Resolved that

- 1. the recommendations of the scrutiny task group ICT review be endorsed and forwarded to the next meeting of Cabinet**
- 2. Councillor Hay has further discussions with the working group and the Cabinet Member to consider whether there was an ongoing role for the task group in carrying out further scrutiny of key stages in the ICT commissioning review and/or driving the delivery of members ICT.**

11. SCRUTINY WORKPLAN

The committee noted the workplan which had been circulated with the agenda. The chair invited members to advise the Democratic Services Manager if there were any topics they wish to be considered for inclusion in the workplan.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Date of next meeting: 26 November 2012.

Duncan Smith
Chairman