



## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MEETING** : Monday, 9th November 2015

**PRESENT** : Cllrs. Lugg (Chair), Hampson (Vice-Chair), H. Norman (Spokesperson), Haigh, Gravells, S. Witts, Dee, Hansdot, Pearsall, Toleman, Etheridge, James and D. Norman

### **Others in Attendance**

**APOLOGIES** : Cllrs. Lewis, Field, Beeley and Randle

### **52. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest at the start of the meeting. However, the Chair declared a personal interest during consideration of agenda item 6 (recorded in minute 56, item 4).

### **53. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **54. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)**

There were no questions from members of the public.

### **55. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)**

There were no petitions or deputations.

### **56. MONITORING OF TASK AND FINISH GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE EVENING ECONOMY**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Paul James, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economy, and Mr Anthony Hodge, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development, to the meeting.

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Members were presented with a report which set out progress made against implementation of the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Task and Finish Group on the Evening Economy. The Committee was asked to comment on progress identified in Appendix 1 and to request further monitoring if appropriate.

Councillor James summarised the key points in the report and invited comments from Members.

Members discussed the following matters:-

1. A Member asked if the planned redevelopment of the old Prison would help to stimulate the evening economy. Councillor James commented that further details on the proposed development were expected at the end of the month and that the inclusion of residential dwellings at the site would result in an increase in footfall along the Quay. Another Member remarked that the development would revitalise that part of the City.
2. A Member expressed concern that a popular pub chain sold beer at low prices. Other Members discussed the impact of the sales of high strength ales at cheap prices on health and anti-social behaviour in the City. As a result of the debate, it was agreed that Overview and Scrutiny Committee would carry out a study into this matter.
3. A Member questioned what initiatives were being undertaken to improve safety in the City Centre. The Member also referred to the increase in the number of rough sleepers and beggars. Councillor James acknowledged the comments and said that he hoped that the Managing Director might be able to pick this up in his role as a Joint Commissioning Director at the County Council. Councillor James added that the new CCTV system would assist in this regard.
4. A Member referred to the leaflet stand at the Gloucester Railway Station and commented that more could be done with signposting so that travellers were aware that they were in Gloucester and could see posters of local attractions. The Member added that it was important that the new Bus Station displayed signage and posters. Councillor James agreed with these comments. Another Member asked for an update on the timetable for the upgrade to the Railway Station and expressed disappointment that some of the enhancements could not have been made in time for the Rugby World Cup. The Head of Regeneration and Economic Development advised the Member on the current position. There was a discussion on the impact of new car parking arrangements involving Ministry of Justice land for the upgraded Railway Station on Great Western Road which was already congested with ambulance and other traffic. The Head of Regeneration and Economic Development advised Members that transport issues were already being explored with the County Highways Department. At this point the Chair declared a personal interest by virtue of her role as a Medical Member of the Tribunals Service for the Ministry of Justice.

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5. During the Cabinet Member's earlier presentation of the report he had alluded to the closure of a Wetherspoons pub in the City Centre which had been publicised by the local media. A Member sought clarification on this point. Councillor James explained that the proposed closure of the 'Water Poet' was part of a nationwide review by Wetherspoons of its underperforming pubs in the country. Councillor James added that the City Council would be encouraging other enterprises to take on the site when it was closed.
6. A Member asked if there were any footfall figures for the numbers of people moving through the shared space close to the Kimbrose Triangle. The Head of Regeneration and Economic Development responded that there were no figures available at the moment but that footfall cameras would shortly capture this information.
7. The Vice-Chair noted that a number of the recommendations in the appendix to the report had the status 'ongoing' and queried why there was no end date. Councillor James responded that the evening economy was subject to continual change because of market demand and that it was unrealistic to mark initiatives as 'complete'. Councillor James agreed to bring a further update to the Committee.
8. A Member reflected that it was difficult to know what sort of environment to expect in a pub or restaurant and that it would be helpful to have a guide. Councillor James suggested the Member might consult 'Trip Advisor' and added that the Council's 'Scores on the Doors' provided an indication of the overall cleanliness of the venue.

### **RESOLVED: –**

1. **That a further monitoring report be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in six months' time.**
2. **That Overview and Scrutiny Committee commission a study to examine the impact on health and anti-social behaviour of the sale of high strength alcohol both in pubs and off-sales.**

## **57. FLOOD IMPROVEMENT WORKS UPDATE**

The Chair welcomed Councillor David Norman, Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, who was deputising for Councillor Jim Porter, Cabinet Member for Environment, and Mr Wayne Best, Environmental Protection Service Manager, to the meeting.

Members were presented with a report which updated them on flood alleviation works that had been completed across the City throughout 2014/15 and those that were currently in progress. The report also outlined future proposed works.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee was asked to note the report, subject to any recommendations Members wished to make to Cabinet.

Members discussed the following matters:-

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1. A Member queried if there were plans to carry out works in Rea Lane. The Environmental Protection Service Manager informed the Member that this work may have been postponed due to a modelling exercise which the Environment Agency were currently carrying out. The Environmental Protection Service Manager agreed to contact the Environment Agency for an update.
2. A Member referred to flooding problems at Longford and on Tewkesbury Road and asked if the City Council liaised with Tewkesbury Borough Council. The Environmental Protection Service Manager responded that he did consult with Tewkesbury Borough Council and the Environment Agency at Tewkesbury, when appropriate. The Member also raised an issue with Himalayan Balsam growing in the channel and along the banks of the Wotton Brook downstream of Tewkesbury Road on Tewkesbury Borough Council land. The Environmental Protection Service Manager agreed to contact Tewkesbury Borough Council for a response regarding maintenance of Wotton Brook.
3. The Chair expressed concerns regarding silt levels in Saintbridge Balancing Pond. The Environmental Protection Service Manager replied that he was currently working with the Environment Agency to look at options for reducing silt levels. He added that a Reservoir Panel Engineer had inspected the Balancing Pond and the current level was not a matter for concern at the moment in time.
4. A Member mentioned problems caused by houses being built on top of Linden Brook and extensions being built to a school in Stroud Road.
5. A Member asked the Environmental Protection Service Manager if there were areas that he would like to investigate but was unable to because of the lack of resources. The Environmental Protection Service Manager said that there were between 10-12 locations in the City which had highways related flooding issues which the City Council could potentially assist Highways with with, if and when resources allowed. He stressed the importance of working with partners. The Member commented that access to funding streams was more of an issue than having human resources available to do the work. The Environmental Protection Service Manager stated that funding from the County Council was generally administered equally between the Districts, but that this year funding was only available for emergency works.
6. The Vice-Chair was concerned that there might be high risk projects which were unresourced. Councillor Norman suggested that as Cabinet Member he could approach the County Highways team to ask them to come to a future meeting of Overview and Scrutiny to explore the matter further.
7. All Members commended the Environmental Protection Service Manager for his excellent work and commitment.
8. A Member thanked Councillor Norman for his attendance in the absence of Councillor Porter and suggested that a letter be sent on behalf of the

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Committee to Councillor Porter acknowledging that whilst his portfolio work was being well covered in his absence, that the Committee missed him and looked forward to seeing him at a future meeting of Overview and Scrutiny in the near future.

9. The Chair asked the Environmental Protection Service Manager to circulate the appendices in the report to all Members for information.

#### **RESOLVED:**

1. **That the report be noted.**
2. **That the County's Highways team be invited to attend a future meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**
3. **That a letter be sent to Councillor Porter.**
4. **That the Committee places on record its appreciation for the excellent work carried out by the Environmental Protection Service Manager.**

#### **58. FINANCIAL MONITORING QUARTER 2 REPORT**

The Chair welcomed Mr Jon Topping, Head of Finance, to the meeting.

Cabinet Member Councillor David Norman presented Members with a report which outlined budget variances, year end forecasts and progress made against agreed savings targets for the second quarter of the financial year which had ended on 30 September 2015.

Councillor Norman reported that despite significant challenges he anticipated delivering a balanced budget at the end of the financial year.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee was asked to note the report, subject to any recommendations Members wished to make to Cabinet.

Members discussed the following matters:-

1. A Member sought clarification on Shopmobility savings highlighted as a risk for 2014/15. Councillor Norman confirmed that the target of £50K was unlikely to be met and that it would be rolled forward to the following financial year.
2. Members queried why there were underspends on several projects in the Capital Programme. The Head of Finance explained the reasons for each of the individual underspends. Councillor Norman added that he expected the total spends to be closer to the projected figures at the year end.
3. A Member questioned how Asset Based Community Development considerations (paragraph 12) had been taken into account in the preparation of the report. Another Member remarked that this paragraph should be removed from the report completely as it was not relevant. The Head of Finance suggested a different form of words for the paragraph which was agreed by Members.

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4. A Member said it was encouraging to see increased income levels for the Guildhall, Cemeteries and Crematorium, Arbor and Parking Services. Councillor Norman acknowledged the Member's comments and added that he was actively exploring new avenues for income generation.
5. A Member commented that the administration was doing well to meet its targets under difficult circumstances and a rapidly evolving climate. Another Member highlighted the importance of Overview and Scrutiny in monitoring budget savings and spending. Councillor Norman accepted both of these remarks and added that partnership working was a key factor in the City Council successfully delivering its services with a decreased budget.

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET – That paragraph 12.1 be amended to read 'There are no ABCD considerations in this report'.**

**59. CABINET FORWARD PLAN**

Members considered the latest version of the Cabinet Forward Plan.

**RESOLVED – That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.**

**60. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered the latest version of its work programme and amended it in line with suggestions made by Members.

**RESOLVED – That the work programme, as amended, be noted.**

**61. UPDATE ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

There were no updates on this occasion.

**62. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 30 November 2015 at 18.30 hours.

**Time of commencement: 6.30 pm hours**

**Time of conclusion: 8.10 pm hours**

**Chair**