



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING : Monday, 3rd December 2018

PRESENT : Cllrs. Coole (Chair), Ryall (Vice-Chair), Dee, Finnegan, Haigh, Hampson, Hilton, Lewis, Morgan, Pullen, Taylor, Toleman, Walford and Wilson

Others in Attendance

Councillor Watkins, Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods

Councillor H. Norman, Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources

Corporate Director (Partnership Working)

Community Wellbeing Manager

Chief Inspector, Gloucestershire Constabulary

Chief Executive Officer, Barnwood Trust

Accountancy Manager

Democratic and Electoral Services Team Leader

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Hawthorne

114. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

114.1 Councillor Hampson declared an interest in agenda item 10 by virtue of his being a private landlord.

115. DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPPING

115.1 There were no declarations of party whipping.

116. MINUTES

116.1 Members were informed that the minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2018 would be presented at the meeting on 7th January 2019.

117. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

117.1 There were no public questions.

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118. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

118.1 There were no petitions or deputations.

119. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME AND COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN

119.1 The Committee considered the Work Programme and Council Forward Plan. The Chair informed the Committee that the Aspire Trust would be attending the next meeting to assist in consideration of their annual report.

119.2 Members suggested that the Guildhall Development Plan be considered in situ and, as such, it was agreed that the meeting at which this would be considered would be held at the Gloucester Guildhall. It was confirmed that the change of venue would be communicated to the public and to all Members.

119.3 **RESOLVED that:-** The Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the Work Programme and the Forward Plan.

120. COMMUNITY BUILDING IN GLOUCESTER

120.1 Councillor Jennie Watkins, Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods, introduced the report and welcomed the Chief Executive Officer of Barnwood Trust and Chief Inspector Of Gloucestershire Constabulary to the meeting.

120.2 Councillor Watkins explained the Council's journey to and through Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) which Barnwood Trust was leading. She stated that ABCD involved bringing about a cultural shift in how communities and agencies interact.

120.3 The Chief Inspector gave a presentation and provided an overview of research conducted. He cited that Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) had decreased and that ABCD had a role to play in achieving such outcomes.

120.4 The Corporate Director thanked the Barnwood Trust for their thought leadership, support as well as training and mentoring. She also stated that the establishment of a community interest company was under consideration and presented an outline of a ten year budget.

120.5 Councillor Pullen stated that he saw the value in potentially pooling resources for community building. He noted that numerous community organisations were struggling with gaining grant funding and questioned whether it would be preferable to directly support already existing groups. Councillor Pullen also asked what outcomes were being attempted and what a healthy community looked like.

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- 120.6 Councillor Watkins stated that outcomes were not necessarily linked to what organisation support came from and that outcomes involved community activity and not simply services. The Corporate Director explained that the Council's contribution would be £15k per annum and that staffing would be generated by partnerships. She further stated that it would give good opportunities for fundraising and secondments from Barnwood Trust and the County Council. She advised Members that if fundraising proved to not be possible, the company would not be set up.
- 120.7 Councillor Ryall welcomed Members' suggestion of a Member Development session to explore ABCD and Community Building in more depth. She questioned the worth of the evaluation of this form of Community Building being conducted by the agencies that were carrying out the work. The Chief Executive of the Barnwood Trust agreed but highlighted that it was a matter of making the most of resources and that there were always difficulties in assessing impact.
- 120.8 The Chief Inspector, in response to a query from Councillor Finnegan questioning whether the police had taken on too much, stated that such a community building approach was a positive way of working and built trust and intelligence in neighbourhoods.
- 120.9 Councillor Haigh stated that ABCD worked best when communities did it themselves. She further stated that communities would like previous funding levels to be returned by way of grants to fund services they required.
- 120.10 Councillor Watkins highlighted that it was important to change relationships and how the Council worked with communities. She advised Members that a number of organisations had changed and employed community builders.
- 120.11 The Chair stated that community organisations were still competing for money from the same pool of money and that the approach had the appearance being 'to-down'.
- 120.12 Councillor Lewis informed Members that there was a good community in Quedgeley and that funding was not necessary if the community was willing to do it itself. He stated that it was important to consult the community on what it wanted. Councillor Watkins advised that the proposals were to expand on work that had already been undertaken.
- 120.13 In response to a query from Councillor Toleman as to the definition of Asset Based, Councillor Watkins advised that it was to take a strength rather than deficit based approach and investigate what communities valued.
- 120.14 Councillor Hilton stated that a community builder had struggled in Kingsholm and that residents tended to approach ward councillors. He

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shared his view that provision for services was need by way of community grants.

- 120.15 The Chief Inspector advised that, when the research was first undertaken, it was of the utmost importance that if the research showed nothing, the project would cease. He advised that conclusions should be based on research rather than anecdotal evidence. Councillor Watkins stated that issues had been resolved by community builders.
- 120.16 Councillor Hampson shared his view that all good social enterprises came from the bottom upwards such as the Gloucester Park Run which was initiated by two individuals. He stated that he was unsure if the approach outlined in the report was the most effective and efficient way of doing such work. He queried whether it might be preferable to give grants so that funds were not swallowed up by other operational costs. The Corporate Director stated that it was a matter of how resources could be pooled rather than what the Council could spend.
- 120.17 Councillor Haigh proposed the following recommendation: *“That a piece of work be undertaken similar to that done by Exeter or Wigan (whose schemes are noted in the report) on what input the community can have on community building.”* The recommendation was put to the vote and was carried.
- 120.18 Councillor Lewis proposed the following recommendation: *“To organise a Member Development session to explore Asset Based Community Development and Community Building more fully and that endeavours are made for it to include all Members.”* The recommendation was put to the vote and was carried.
- 120.19 **RESOLVED that:** - The Overview and Scrutiny note the report subject to the following recommendations: **The Overview and Scrutiny Committee RECOMMEND** (1) A piece of work be undertaken similar to that done by Exeter or Wigan (whose schemes are noted in the report) on what input the community can have on community building and (2) Organise a Member Development session to explore Asset Based Community Development and Community Building more fully and that endeavours are made for it to include all Members.

121. ACCESSING THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR FOR TEMPORARY & PERMANENT ACCOMMODATION

- 121.1 Councillor Watkins, Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods, provided an overview of the report. She stated that there would be an opportunity to review the scheme. She further stated that it was already working well and praised officers for their expertise.
- 121.2 Councillor Watkins advised that she wanted to reassure landlords of where support could be accessed and for financial incentives. She

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stated that the Council would be looking to expand the scheme and that there would be a review and changes made where necessary.

- 121.3 Councillor Pullen shared his view that what was in issue was a lack of housing stock but that the incentives outlined were helpful. He stated that numerous landlords were reluctant to deal with those who may have complex needs and queried what would be done to change such attitudes.
- 121.4 Councillor Watkins stated that having a relationship between the Council and landlords first was key. She further stated that some landlords had had poor experiences with a minority of tenants.
- 121.5 Councillor Haigh stated that the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) was insufficient to source necessary property. With regard to the one off fee being offered to landlords, she queried the possibility of there being attempts by other authorities to undercut the Council with higher fees. Councillor Haigh also referred to a bond being held by the Council (rather than in a deposit scheme) and questioned what position this would leave tenants in respect of their recourse to law if necessary. The Corporate Director stated that it would be preferable to examine how it operates in practice and review the scheme in due course.
- 121.6 In response to the Chair's noting that there was scope to alter the scheme as power had been delegated, Councillor Watkins stated that it was necessary to balance the need to source housing and to attract landlords.
- 121.7 Councillor Hilton shared his understanding that the scheme would help some residents but not all. He stated that both landlords and tenants should be consulted when the review is undertaken.

On the motion of the Chair, and in accordance with the Constitution, the Committee resolved that the meeting be extended beyond two hours.

- 121.8 With reference to point 4 of paragraph 3.7, Councillor Wilson queried whether rental values would change after twelve months and further queried whether landlords may want different tenants. Councillor Watkins stated that in building relationships with landlords, their recognition of the positive impact they could have was hoped.
- 121.9 Councillor Hampson shared his view that the rental estimates of properties were conservative and that the incentives were insufficient. He noted that two thirds of homelessness was as a result of eviction from private sector housing and suggested that a better incentive would be a form of guaranteed rent scheme. Councillor Watkins queried whether such an insurance based scheme would guarantee the whole rental value.

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- 121.10 Councillor Hampson suggested that some of the optional aspects of the scheme were not strong and stated that they were matters which landlords already had available.
- 121.11 Councillor Toleman stated that he was keen to see people being moved into private sector housing. He highlighted that some levied a service charge and that some residents were unable to pay this due to delays in receiving Universal Credit payments. He queried whether there was a support mechanism to redress this.
- 121.12 Councillor Watkins highlighted that Discretionary Housing Payments were available and that the Council was working with people in relation to budgeting and maximisation of income.
- 121.13 Council Haigh proposed the following recommendation: *With reference to paragraph 3.7 of the report that point (5) – ‘Optional - Offer a free property inspection so we can make sure your property complies with rental regulations, such as health and safety; the availability of free advice and information relating to tenancy management or maintaining the property in compliance with regulations’ be amended to replace ‘Optional’ with ‘Compulsory’.*
- 121.14 The recommendation was put to the vote and was carried.
- 121.15 Councillor Haigh proposed the following recommendation: *That the optional materials cited at points 6, 7 and 8 of paragraph 3.7 be provided as a matter of course.*
- 121.16 The recommendation was put to the vote and was carried.
- 121.17 Councillor Wilson proposed the following recommendation: *That, upon the expiration of the ‘bridging period’ (paras 3.5 and 3.7), efforts are undertaken to ascertain whether the tenant has remained in the property.*
- 121.18 The recommendation was put to the vote and was carried.
- 121.19 Councillor Hilton proposed the following recommendation: *That during a review in twelve months’ time, both landlords and tenants are consulted on the operation and delivery of the scheme.*
- 121.20 The recommendation was put to the vote and was carried.
- 121.21 **RESOLVED that:** - The Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the report subject to the following recommendations: The Overview and Scrutiny Committee **RECOMMEND** that (1) With reference to paragraph 3.7 of the report that point (5) – **‘Optional - Offer a free property inspection so we can make sure your property complies with rental regulations, such as health and safety; the availability of free advice and information relating to tenancy management or maintaining the property in compliance with regulations’** be amended

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to replace '*Optional*' with '*Compulsory*'; (2) That the optional materials cited at points 6, 7 and 8 of paragraph 3.7 be provided as a matter of course; (3) That, upon the expiration of the 'bridging period' (paras 3.5 and 3.7), efforts are undertaken to ascertain whether the tenant has remained in the property and; (4) That during a review in twelve months' time, both landlords and tenants are consulted on the operation and delivery of the scheme.

122. FINANCIAL MONITORING QUARTER 2 REPORT

- 122.1 Councillor H. Norman, Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, introduced the report and provided an overview of key matters.
- 122.2 With regards to the Performance and Resources portfolio, Councillor Norman informed Members that there were pressures surrounding the Housing subsidy and that, historically, this balanced in Quarters 3 and 4. She also highlighted that large IT initiatives were to be initiated.
- 122.3 Councillor Pullen noted that there were just two vacant market stalls and that, as such, he was surprised to see a deficit in that area. He asked for the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economy to clarify what a private management company would do to improve market income generation. It was confirmed that an answer would be circulated.
- 122.4 In response to a query from Councillor Hilton about whether there was confidence in having the culture budget on target, Councillor Norman stated that she was optimistic about this and that she believed the Council would be able to increase income.
- 122.5 Councillor Hilton asked for clarification on how the vacancy factor was built into draft budget proposals. Councillor Norman advised that an answer would be provided.
- 122.6 **RESOLVED that:** - The Overview and Scrutiny note the report.

123. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

7th January 2019 at 6.30pm in the Civic Suite, North Warehouse.

Time of commencement: 6.30 pm hours
Time of conclusion: 9.05 pm hours

Chair