



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING : Monday, 25th February 2019

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

Others in Attendance

Councillor Watkins, Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods

Councillor Organ, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy

Councillor Lise Noakes, Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure

Councillor H. Norman, Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources

Corporate Director (Partnership Working)

Head of Policy and Resources

Head of Place

Head of Communities

Housing Manager

Accountancy Manager

Principal Planning Officer

Housing Officer (Strategy)

Councillor Kate Haigh

Councillor Deborah Smith

A Matson and Robinswood resident

A Podsmead resident

Democratic and Electoral Services Team Leader

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Finnegan

142. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

142.1 There were no declarations of interest.

143. DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPPING

143.1 There were no declarations of party whipping.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
25.02.19

144. MINUTES

144.1 **RESOLVED that:-** The minutes of the meeting held on 28th January 2019 be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

145. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

145.1 There were no public questions.

146. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

146.1 There were no petitions or deputations.

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

147.1 The Committee considered the Work Programme and Forward Plan. The Chair informed Members that there would be a site visit of the new Council reception at 92-96 Westgate Street on 7th March at 6pm. He further informed Members that there would be a Committee meeting to consider the plans for the new reception on 12th March at 6.30pm.

147.2 Councillor Hilton suggested that an item be added to the agenda for the first meeting of the new municipal year in respect of plans for the unoccupied property at 67-69 London Road. This was agreed by the Committee.

147.3 **RESOLVED that:-** The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (1) consider the property at 67-69 London Road at the beginning of the new municipal year and (2) **NOTE** the Work Programme and Council Forward Plan.

148. FINANCIAL MONITORING Q3

148.1 Councillor Hannah Norman, Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, introduced the report and highlighted key aspects. She advised that further improvements were anticipated and that there were continued pressures on the markets and cultural services.

148.2 Councillor Norman stated that a deficit in homelessness was anticipated but that the team was doing a considerable amount of work in prevention work. She further stated that planning, environment and parking services were forecasting a surplus. Additionally, she advised that a positive trend was borne out in comparison to the previous quarter.

148.3 Councillor Noakes, Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, advised that action was being taken to improve her portfolio's financial position. She cited the relocation of the Tourist Information Centre (the Overview and Scrutiny Committee having been involved in the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
25.02.19

plans) and savings from the Gloucester Life Museum. Councillor Noakes also advised that there were upcoming opportunities for income generation including the 'moon museum' during the summer. She further advised that income targets had previously been unrealistic and that this would be explored in the upcoming budget.

- 148.4 Councillor Wilson queried whether the £275k cited at para 6.2 of the Communities and Neighbourhoods portfolio included recoverable costs. The Head of Policy and Resources advised that this reflected the net position once housing benefit recoveries had been realised. Councillor Wilson also asked whether the marketing and events manager position had been filled and Councillor Noakes confirmed that it had.
- 148.5 Councillor Stephens shared his view that income targets for Culture and Leisure should be reassessed and queried how this area could be improved. With regard to the environment portfolio, he queried why there was an expected shortfall in income from recyclables. With regard to income from recyclables, the Head of Policy and Resources confirmed that revised figures had been provided and he was confident that the forecast was reasonable. In relation to Councillor Stephens' point regarding Culture, Councillor Noakes stated that it was anticipated that this area would be up to full staffing levels which would improve the financial position.
- 148.6 Councillor Hilton stated that he was disappointed in the forecasted shortfall of £68k in the general fund. He shared his view that it was necessary for the Culture and Leisure portfolio to remain within budget and that the budget must be sustainable. He noted that a County Homelessness Coordinator had been appointed and asked that these details be shared. Councillor Hilton also queried the details of the considerable bequest which was included in the report and sought confirmation that this would not be used as revenue.
- 148.7 Councillor Norman advised that the contribution to the general fund had improved on quarter 2 and would hope that this improved further towards year end. Councillor Noakes advised that £90k of the culture overspend was as a result of building maintenance which would not have occurred in other circumstances. She further confirmed that the bequest that was referred to would not be used as revenue spending.
- 148.8 Councillor Pullen noted from Councillor Noake's remarks that the Roundhouse would be involved in training for front of house at the Guildhall. In terms of income generation at the Guildhall, he queried whether this was for staff or for access. He also queried whether there was sufficient capacity. Councillor Noakes confirmed that the Roundhouse would be assisting with staff in building their skills sets.
- 148.9 In relation to the bequest referred to by Councillor Hilton, Councillor Hawthorne queried whether there were any restrictions, as part of the

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
25.02.19

legacy, placed on the use of the funds. He also asked if there could be further opportunities to attract bequests.

148.10 Councillor Noakes stated that the bequest was made a considerable time ago and that there were conditions attached to it. The Head of Policy and Resources confirmed that these details would be circulated.

148.11 **RESOLVED that:-** The Overview and Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the report.

149. PUBLIC CONSULTATION FOR DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS FOR PODSMEAD AND MATSON ESTATES REGENERATION

149.1 Councillor Organ, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy, introduced the report. He outlined that the Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) had been written by Gloucester City Homes (GCH) with valuable input from Officers. He informed Members that the document would be amended and Council would be the final decision maker. Councillor Organ also advised that the consultation would begin on 18th March and conclude on 29th April.

149.2 Councillor Haigh, in her place as a Matson and Robinswood ward Member, shared her views on the proposed consultation and referred to a contribution she had circulated to Members in advance of the meeting which is attached. She advised that she had attended consultation events hosted by GCH and that she had visited other areas that had undergone regeneration, particularly Salford. She stated that there were fears that the area's sense of community would be lost. She further stated that there was a need for more affordable housing and an increase in density but without damaging local green spaces.

149.3 Sarah, a Matson and Robinswood resident, shared her concern that the strong community spirit in the area could be lost. She stated that more housing was needed and that residents both want and need involvement in the consultation process.

149.4 Councillor Smith, in her place as a Podsmead ward Member, stated that the community make up of Podsmead was similar to that of Matson and Robinswood. She advised that she had attended and contributed to consultation events and one matter which had been raised by a number of residents was the need to maintain the area's green spaces.

149.5 In response to a query from Councillor Wilson, Councillor Haigh informed members that, in other areas, a group of residents would drive the regeneration.

149.6 Councillor Organ stated that he was motivated by improving lives in Matson and Podsmead. He advised that planning was at a very early

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
25.02.19

stage and that, as it stood, a framework was being drawn up. Councillor Organ also stated that such a project could take many years and he encouraged participation in the consultation.

- 149.7 In response to Councillor Pullen asking the residents present how they would conduct the consultation, Sarah stated that not everyone was technologically competent to the level which may be required through an online only consultation. She further stated that it was necessary to communicate with all organisation that were involved in the community. Lisa shared her view that residents needed to be consulted on a face-to-face basis. She advised that, during the GCH consultation, meetings were held in the mid-afternoon which made it difficult for many people. She suggested that meetings be held in the evening or on Saturday mornings.
- 149.8 With regard to the GCH element of the consultation, Councillor Smith stated that it was important that agencies go to residents rather than waiting for residents to approach them. Lisa noted that some may have been reluctant to engage as it was residents' landlord conducting an element of the consultation. The Principal Planning Officer confirmed that the consultation would be varied and that questions were formulated with residents and partner organisations.
- 149.10 Councillor Lewis encouraged residents to set the process and to consider how they wanted the area to look. He also shared his view that parking was always an issue and that it was important that provision was sufficient.
- 149.11 Councillor Stephens thanked Councillor Organ for clarifying the decision making process. He stated that GCH was not a neutral party to proceedings and it was necessary to ensure there was independent advice for residents. Councillor Stephens further stated that the whole process, and not just the consultation, must be resident led.
- 149.12 Councillor Stephens advised a degree of caution and that no tenant should be forced to leave their home with no right to return and that there needed to be the right mix of housing stock with particular provision for homes for social rent.
- 149.13 The Principal Planning Officer advised that the rehousing strategy needed to be tailored to individuals and their needs. She also advised that officers recognised the duties incumbent upon them under the Equality Act 2010.
- 149.14 With regard to Councillor Stephen's point on independent advice, Lisa informed Members that tenants' representation was only available until the end of March 2019. She queried whether a clause could be inserted to provide for a mechanism to continue funding for independent representation throughout the process.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
25.02.19

- 149.15 In response to a query from Councillor Morgan, Councillor Organ advised that, similar to the JCS, reviews were in built to the process.
- 149.16 Councillor Ryall asked how a resident led approach could be balanced with professional expertise and how decisions would then be communicated to residents. Councillor Organ stated that he wanted residents to take ownership of the process. He also advised that such a consultation was governed by statutory regulations and that each response will receive comment. Councillor Organ advised that communication with residents was being considered.
- 149.17 Councillor Hilton queried how proper Member oversight would be ensured and stated that detailed discussions were required. Councillor Organ stated that the Planning Policy Working Group had been recently established and such matters would be considered by that group.
- 149.18 Councillor Stephens proposed the following recommendation:
- Cabinet urgently examine provision for independent advice once funding for the tenancy advisory service ceases
- This was agreed by the Committee
- 149.19 **RESOLVED that:** - The Overview and Scrutiny Committee **RECOMMEND** that Cabinet urgently examine provision for independent advice once funding for the tenancy advisory service ceases.

150. ROUGH SLEEPING BRIEFING

- 150.1 Councillor Watkins, Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods presented the briefing. She informed Members that good progress had been made on rough sleeping and welcomed the Government's pledges to end rough sleeping by 2027. Councillor Watkins also updated Members on the County Homelessness Co-ordinator role.
- 150.2 Councillor Ryall asked if there was any comment on the accuracy of calculating the number of rough sleepers. Councillor Watkins advised that government methodology was utilised. She further advised that a live count was conducted and expected a drop in numbers due to the social impact bond. The Housing Manager informed Members that she had taken part in counting rough sleepers and that MCHLG sent a verifier who observed how it was conducted.
- 150.3 Councillor Hilton shared his view that the briefing did not appear to address the Somewhere Safe to Stay hubs which were due to be operational in the spring of 2019. Councillor Watkins advised that this had not yet been finalised but that two assessment centres were proposed – one each in Cheltenham and Gloucester. The Housing Manager informed Members that the hubs would be operational 24 hours a day, seven days a week. She

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
25.02.19

further advised Members that the funding would enable officers to work with those with no recourse to public funds.

150.4 In response to a request from Councillor Stephens that the Cabinet Member return to the Committee when more detailed information was available, the Housing Manager advised that the strategy would be updated by the end of 2019. Councillor Watkins advised that there were six rough sleepers at the last count which was a reduction.

150.5 Councillor Toleman queried what provision there was for those who were intentionally homeless. The Housing Manager advised that nothing in the strategy changed the Council's approach to those individuals and that each person would have a personalised housing plan.

151. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

151.1 25th March 2019 at 6.30pm in the Civic Suite North Warehouse.

Time of commencement: 6.30 pm hours

Time of conclusion: 8.30 pm hours

Chair

This page is intentionally left blank

The Matson Estate

Matson forms part of the ward of Matson, Robinswood and White City. It is largely a post war former council housing estate. There are high levels of deprivation, low educational attainment and poor physical and mental health. The area benefits from being on the side of Robinswood Hill and a spacious and green feel created by large amounts of passive and active green space.

Regeneration

The case for regeneration is a strong one. The quality of build and the poor design of many of the properties are detrimental to residents' health and wellbeing. In particular, the flats and maisonettes are in a poor state, damp and difficult to heat, with mould and condensation a constant problem.

Furthermore, as the largest social housing estate in the City the problems of undersupply of social housing are particularly prevalent. Overcrowding is common; residents wait years for suitable properties. People with disabilities and the elderly become isolated in flats with steep staircases and nowhere suitable to move to. The social costs of poor housing are well documented, and Matson pays the price.

For residents, access to social housing is important. Most work, but low pay means that buying a property or private rents are beyond their means. Right to buy has taken many of the better quality properties out of the social rented sector, only to reappear as more expensive private rentals in due course. An increased supply of social rent must form part of the regeneration of Matson and will benefit the City as a whole.

Community

In many places that regeneration has taken place there has also been a social regeneration. Matson is different; there are many community groups that have been active in the area for decades. There is a Community Economic Development Plan "The Power of Three" and the Community Partnership is considering applying to become a community council.

The danger that physical regeneration presents is that this strong sense of community will be lost.

GCH has yet to make public its rehousing strategy but this is key to retaining community resilience and build on it.

Aspirations

There are a number of key aspirations to consider.

Retain the green look and feel of the estate. This is a strong contributor to residents' wellbeing but also to their sense of Matson as a place. New builds to be tenure blind.

The right to return – some residents may be happy to leave but many have strong ties to the area, to family and to neighbours.

In order to achieve an increase in the number of social and affordable homes in Matson there must be an increase in density of a minimum of 1.5 new properties for each existing one. This and more is achievable if the developer is ambitious and flexible.

Flats should be built to a high standard with off road parking and lifts. This will enable a far greater range of residents to be housed in flats, from young families with push chairs to older people with mobility issues.

Off road parking to be provided for houses.

Cycleways to be built in to the scheme.

Bus services to the remoter parts of the estate to be developed.

Currently most houses are rendered and differ in appearance from most other parts of the City. This look and feel should be retained to reduce a clash with none regenerated housing.

That the regeneration consider all possible areas in Matson – the problems are not confined to the Matson Avenue corridor and the SPD does not indicate how the parts of the estate which are in the ownership of GCH and where there are opportunities to increase density will be improved. There are opportunities for negotiations with local schools and other organisations which may also free up land.

Gloucester City

This SPD will become the Councils policy for regeneration in Matson. The need is urgent and it is vital for the community and the City that the early stages must provide significant increases in both social and affordable rent. The community welcomes the prospect of regeneration but has reasonable concerns about managing the impact of significant change over a decade or more. The Council should support a resident led approach, working with existing and new organisations.