



## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**MEETING** : Monday, 3rd February 2020

**PRESENT** : Cllrs. Coole (Chair), Ryall (Vice-Chair), Dee, Finnegan, Haigh, Hansdot, Hilton, Hyman, Lewis, Stephens, Taylor, Toleman, Tracey, Walford and Wilson

### **Others in Attendance**

Councillor Watkins, Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods

Councillor Gravells, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy

Councillor Morgan, Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure  
Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer

Head of Communities

Head of Cultural Services

Housing Officer (Strategy)

Lynn Collingbourne, Consultant

Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

**APOLOGIES** : Cllrs. Organ, Patel and Pullen

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPPING**

There were no declarations of party whipping.

### **4. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** - That the minutes of the meetings held on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December 2019 and the 6<sup>th</sup> of January 2020 were approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

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

There were no public questions.

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**03.02.20**

**6. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)**

There were no petitions or deputations.

**7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME AND COUNCIL FORWARD PLAN**

- 7.1 The Head of Communities explained that the Annual Report on the Grant Funding provided to the Voluntary Sector which was on the Committee 's agenda for its next meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2020 had been pushed back on the Cabinet 's forward plan. In response, Committee Members agreed to replace the report with the Climate Change Manifesto report. The Annual Report on the Grant Funding provided to the Voluntary Sector would be made a floating item on the work programme until it was ready to be considered at a Committee meeting.
- 7.2 Councillor Hilton requested that an interim report on Marketing Gloucester Limited (MGL) is brought before the Committee. He stated that this would focus on the report from the organisation which investigated the claims which were made in a whistleblowing case against the company in 2014, as well as the letter from the former employee who had raised the alarm. Councillor Hilton expressed his concern that the Council had so far not been able to locate the whistleblowing report.
- 7.3 Councillor Lewis suggested that the Committee should seek legal advice before holding the meeting to avoid potentially impinging on the ongoing police investigation into MGL. Councillor Hilton stated that the purpose of the meeting would be to look at the Council 's role in the whistleblowing investigations, if any. In particular, this would mean looking at the correspondence between MGL and Council Officers, and documents from any meetings between MGL and Council, if any. Councillor Wilson stated that he agreed with this. Councillor Stephens echoed the point made earlier about the need to be careful about not prejudicing an ongoing police investigation. Yet, he also believed that there was a sense of urgency with this.
- 7.4 Councillor Ryall stated that she agreed with these observations and the importance of the issue at hand. However, she also stressed the importance of not dealing with the issue on politically partisan lines. She added that any investigations should be impartial.
- 7.5 Councillor Coole summarised that they would be seeking legal advice before a decision is made on whether to hold the MGL meeting. Following this, he would then set up a meeting with the other group leaders discussing the potential Special Meeting.
- 7.6 Councillor Haigh asked whether there any progress had been made on extending the local delivery of grass cutting Trial to Matson, pursuant to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 's recommendation at its meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2019. Furthermore, she asked whether any other wards had expressed an interest in the scheme. Councillor Watkins, Cabinet

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**03.02.20**

Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods outlined that whilst there were no further updates, the plan was to consult with the community in Matson, and then proceed from there. Furthermore, she added that there had been expressions of interest into the scheme from community partnership organisations in the Barton and Tredworth wards.

7.7 **RESOLVED that:** - subject to the above, that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the Work Programme and Forward Plan.

**8. HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY 2020-2025**

8.1 Councillor Watkins presented the report and outlined key elements. She stated that this report was the result of cross-party work. Moreover, since the last meeting, there had been a consultation with stakeholders and members of the public. The result of this was a 100% agreement rate amongst those who had participated in the consultation. She explained to the Committee that the report before them was not final, and that changes could still be made. For example, as a result of the discussion at the present meeting. Lastly, she then thanked Officers who had been involved in putting the strategy together for their hard work.

8.2 Councillor Gravells then addressed the Committee. He thanked the Chair, and then Councillor Watkins for the joint report. He added that housing was a key issue. Furthermore, that there would be an action plan once the strategy had been updated. Lastly, he stated that if Members wanted to bring the strategy before the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for consideration every year, this could be done. The Chair stated that he had spoken to the Head of Communities about doing this.

8.3 Councillor Coole questioned whether the Council 's Severe Weather Protocol (SWEP) also included severe hot weather. Councillor Watkins stated that SWEP largely focused on cold weather, however there was a yellow warning for other types of weather conditions. Moreover, SWEP was under review every year with the Council working with the County Wide Homelessness Coordinator and other partners. Similarly, changes were recently made to the Protocol in 2019.

8.4 Councillor Haigh stated that whilst she welcomed the report, it would benefit from having a breakdown of private sector housing issues. She added that there was a lot of discussion about affordable homes, however there was little information on social rent, which was a pertinent issue. She suggested that Gloucester had lower targets for social rent compared to other areas in the South West. Secondly, she questioned whether there was a policy on controlling what she believed to be an increase of Households in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and student housing in the City. She explained that other local authorities had these policies in place.

8.5 In response, Councillor Watkins stated that there was not any up to date data on the existing housing stock in the City. However, a new stock condition survey was now underway as part of the strategy. Councillor Gravells agreed with Councillor Haigh that affordable rent was a key

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**03.02.20**

consideration, and stated that he was asking Officers to look at the Local Housing Allowance (LHA), and would also consider this as part of the Joint Core Strategy. In relation to Councillor Haigh 's second query, Councillor Gravells stated that reference is made to both HMOs and student housing in the 2011-2031 City Plan. Councillor Haigh asked that clarification is made between student housing and HMOs.

- 8.6 Councillor Wilson stated that the report was excellent. However, he expressed his concern with high rent prices in the City, which he believed was a particular challenge for young people in the City. He then asked when the stock conditions survey results would be published. Councillor Watkins responded to say that private sector housing needed to be looked at, which would likely involve working with landlords in the City. She added that it was important that there was a range of different housing stock in order to cater for everyone. However, she also highlighted that any work carried out by Cabinet and/or Officers would not necessarily bring down rent prices per se. Thus, the focus would be on LHA rates, and perhaps introducing lower rates for those in receipt of benefits. In relation to the stock conditions survey, the Head of Communities advised that this would be a huge piece of work, and was only likely to be ready between years 2 and 3 of the strategy.
- 8.7 Councillor Hilton expressed his concern with HMOs and student housing, an issue which he said he had raised before. He believed that the increase in HMOs and student housing was pricing out families in the City. In particular, he believed that house shares were problematic, as landlords, charging 'per room', had the potential to make a lot more money than they typically would if the same house was rented out as a family home. Similarly, he noted the increase in empty homes as outlined in the report, and questioned whether this was due to students going away during the summer holidays, or whether there was another problem. Finally, he stated that the Council should have an empty homes policy.
- 8.8 Councillor Watkins advised that whilst she understood why an increase in HMOs and student housing would be an issue in a ward such as Kingsholm due to its close proximity to the University of Gloucestershire campus, the stock conditions survey would give a greater indication of the different types of housing in the City. She added that it was important to better understand the issue before making any policy changes. Additionally, the state of empty homes in the City would become clearer following the survey.
- 8.9 Councillor Hyman welcomed the report which he thought was excellent. He queried which agencies in the City worked with homeless individuals, and, the process followed once an individual was referred to Homeless Link. Councillor Watkins explained that there was a wide range of partners who worked with homeless individuals, from across almost every facet of life which could affect an individual. This ranged from the voluntary and community sector, the health sector and faith groups amongst others. She added that the County-Wide Homelessness Coordinator would be a good person to speak to about the issue.

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**03.02.20**

- 8.10 In relation to Councillor Hyman 's second query, Councillor Watkins advised that there was an infographic which outlines the pathway followed, and this would be circulated to Members. Moreover, the City Council had been awarded approximately £1,000,000 from central government in the last few weeks to help the City Council 's initiatives in tackling homelessness. Some of this funding was being used towards the Somewhere Safe to Stay hub. There had been a number of positive stories emerging as a result of this. Moreover, she added that Gloucester was one of the only areas that takes people with no recourse to public funds.
- 8.10 Councillor Hansdot suggested that the intervention and prevention process did not target homeless individuals early enough in the process. Councillor Watkins responded to say that the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 had made a positive impact on this very issue. There was now a duty placed on local authorities to provide interim accommodation for individuals who were believed to be homeless. However, there were still some complex cases, for example where an individual has a disability and it is more prudent for the individual to remain in place rather than to move them to temporary accommodation. She suggested that more options were needed for temporary accommodation in the City.
- 8.11 Councillor Hansdot stated that he was concerned with what happens immediately after residents have been given an eviction notice. Councillor Watkins informed him that due to the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, a plan was put into place as soon as the Council was made aware that an individual was at risk of being evicted, and the individual would be advised to stay in place whilst they were being helped. Councillors Haigh and Coole stated that they could corroborate this based on residents' experiences in their respective wards.
- 8.12 Councillor Stephens commented to say it was unclear which direction national housing policy would be headed in relation to some of the issues discussed. He then asked whether there were enough Council resources to deal with some of the challenges discussed which were, in his view, substantial. A concern for him was affordable housing. He suggested that the City Council could influence the number of affordable houses for new housing developments. Councillor Gravells stated that there had been a lot of progress made to tackle some of these issues, particularly in the last 15 years. Moreover, there was a joined-up approach to tackling the issues with different organisations working together.
- 8.13 Councillor Watkins stated that tackling the issues raised would indeed require plenty of resources. However, there was a lot of cross-party support, as well as partner organisations working collaboratively.
- 8.14 Councillor Tracey echoed Councillor Hilton 's concerns around HMOs, student housing, and empty homes. She was of the view that certain areas in the City, such as Kingsholm had a particularly large number of HMOs and student housing. She stated that this then created issues with other aspects such as parking and bins. Further, she agreed with Councillor Stephens that

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 03.02.20

addressing some of the issues raised around housing would require more resources, including more staff. Lastly, she commended Councillor Watkins who would be stepping down in May 2020 for her hard work and comprehensive knowledge in the Communities and Neighbourhoods portfolio.

- 8.15 Councillor Gravells responded to Councillor Tracey 's observations as follows. Firstly, in relation to her concerns around HMOs and student housing, he stated that it was about getting the balance right. For example, in terms of student housing, he reminded Councillors that they had campaigned hard for the University before it was established, and student housing was an inevitable consequence of having a university. He added that he would be happy to take the issue back to Planning Officers, however, it was important to note that any discussion of the subject would not be straightforward. Finally, he thanked Councillor Watkins for her work within the portfolio, and especially for working collaboratively with partner organisations. He stated that it would be hard to replace her.
- 8.16 Councillor Toleman moved the debate to issues surrounding drug addiction and homelessness. He stated that whilst there were a lot of agencies providing assistance with accommodation for homeless individuals, it could be difficult for those dealing with drug addiction to access these resources. For example, there were limited spaces for drug rehabilitation, and, in some cases, individuals were required to 'get clean' before they could be placed in a rehab unit. He then asked whether it would be possible to potentially open a detox unit in Gloucester. Councillor Toleman also thanked Councillor Watkins for her work.
- 8.17 Councillor Watkins referred Councillor Toleman to Page 12 of the strategy of which one of the actions outlined is finding solutions "for those who are homeless and/or with more complex housing needs". A potential 'solution' could be a revolving door approach where money is spent on helping to fund organisations working within the sector. However, this would require conversations with partner organisations, such as Gloucestershire County Council. Finally, she stated that whilst she would personally support opening a detox unit, this was not an issue which was within the remit of the present meeting.
- 8.18 **RESOLVED:** - that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the report.

### 9. EVENTS AND FESTIVALS PLAN 2020-21

- 9.1 The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, Councillor Morgan, introduced the new Head of Cultural Services. He then introduced the Festivals and Events Report, and highlighted key elements. Firstly, he referred to paragraph 3.5 which he believed was one of the most important changes. In relation to paragraph 3.6, he explained that city-wide coordination would be starting imminently, and stressed the importance of having conversations with other organisations in the City. Councillor Morgan further highlighted

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**03.02.20**

paragraphs 4.2, 4.6, 4.8, and 5.0 and 6.1. Lastly, he drew Members' attention to paragraph 10.1, outlining that at this stage Cabinet was behind schedule with the programme of events, however they would be making progress with this.

- 9.2 Councillor Stephens was of the view that the Culture and Leisure portfolio had traditionally underperformed in the past, and thus it was important to ensure that any changes to the Festivals and Events programme were watertight. He suggested that, as it stood, the Festivals and Events programme needed some amendments. Firstly, he was concerned with the way the budget for the Festivals and Events programme had been calculated. In particular, he questioned why there was a £50,000 increase in the budget, making the total budget £210,000 for this year. Moreover, he suggested that the breakdown of costs was inadequate, and that more clarity was needed on whether the events would be chargeable.
- 9.3 Councillor Morgan advised that Cabinet and Officers were still in the early stages of the festivals and events programme, and thus were not able to include all costs. For example, staffing costs had not yet been included in the budget. Councillor Morgan explained that although work was underway, the report was kept deliberately vague to allow for flexibility. For example, organisations could still approach the Council.
- 9.4 The Head of Cultural Services explained that there would be a change in the model of delivery for events in the City. The onus would be on organisations to deliver events, and to come up with robust plans. Moreover, whilst the Council would provide some funding towards the costs of events, the total cost of events would likely exceed this. As such, organisations would be expected to leverage additional funding.
- 9.5 Councillor Stephens queried whether events would still be held in the event that no organisation would be available to deliver the event. Councillor Morgan responded to say that given the aspirations to change, it would not necessarily be the same types of events which would be delivered, and it might be that the previous events may not be held under the new festivals and events programme.
- 9.6 Councillor Stephens reiterated his concerns that the report was lacking a full breakdown of the costs which would be involved in the delivery of events. For example, in situations where organisations would have to obtain private funding. He believed that a review was needed in a few months' time.
- 9.7 The Chair agreed with the view that a review would be needed in a few months' time. Additionally, pointing to the fact that the onus would be on organisations to deliver events, they asked whether the premise of the new delivery model was not essentially the same as MGL. The Head of Cultural Services stated that the Council would pledge a certain amount, and the organisation delivering the event would be expected to leverage additional funding, for example from the Arts Council, based on the money pledged by the Council. Overall, each event could have a different funding model.

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**03.02.20**

- 9.8 Councillor Haigh referring to paragraph 3.5 questioned whether there was capacity for delivering the events in house. In addition, she queried what the legal position was in respect of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 (TUPE) and the current staff of MGL. She was informed that the Chair of MGL would be having discussions around this.
- 9.9 Councillor Morgan explained that he was unsure of how many staff would be transferred from MGL to the City Council. The Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer explained that the City Council would honour its obligations under the TUPE regulations in respect of this issue.
- 9.10 Councillor Ryall questioned whether there was a willingness from organisations to work with the City Council given what was, in her view, recent negative publicity for the City Council around MGL. Councillor Morgan advised that it was a mixed picture. However, the key organisations had shown an interest in the idea of thematic festivals and events. He added that it was important that the City Council was well prepared with a watertight festivals and events programme.
- 9.11 Councillor Hilton believed that bringing the function of events and festivals development and delivery in-house would lead to better scrutiny. However, he also stressed the importance of ensuring that the income from events aligns with the money invested into them. Furthermore, referring to the Innovation Fund outlined in paragraph 4.8., he queried whether money could be raised towards this. Lastly, he stated that the City Council should consider holding external events, and perhaps holding an event in the summer which utilised the water at Gloucester Docks. This, he suggested, would have the added benefit of bringing people to the Docks each year.
- 9.12 Councillor Morgan agreed with Councillor Hilton that events did not need to be held in-house. The innovation fund which would seed-fund emerging ideas, festivals and events would be useful in this regard. Moreover, he agreed that making certain events a permanent feature in the annual festivals and events programme could attract a following of visitors who will travel specifically for that event. He added that the 'Gloucester Goes Retro' festival which attracted large numbers of visitors to the City each year was a good example of this.
- 9.13 Councillor Finnegan was keen to ensure that the moving lorries remain a feature of the Gloucester Festival. Moreover, she asked the Councillor Morgan and the Head of Cultural Services whether they would be engaging with partner organisations in relation to civic events such as the D-Day commemorations.
- 9.14 Councillor Morgan responded to Councillor Finnegan 's queries as follows. Firstly, he was mindful that the Gloucester Festival was a community event, and the moving lorries presented a potential hazard, particularly to children who may be running around. Secondly, he stated that Cabinet and Officers

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**03.02.20**

would be engaging with partner organisations such as the Royal British Legion and the Imjin Barracks in respect of civic events.

- 9.15 Councillor Lewis asked whether Cabinet could provide an example to the Committee of how an event would be run and funded. He added that it would help to clarify any questions, and could also provide a point of reference to other businesses. The Head of Cultural Services explained that the total costs involved are typically only clear *after* an event. However, each event would be scrutinised properly. Both he and the Councillor Morgan agreed that an example with the breakdown of the funding would be prepared for the Committee.
- 9.16 Councillor Tracey echoed Councillor Tracey 's view that the moving lorries should be kept as a feature of the Gloucester Festival. The Head of Cultural Services informed her that it is an aspect which would need to be assessed within safeguarding considerations. He added that the events management plan for any proposed event is scrutinised by officers, and is included within the budget with event organisers.
- 9.17 Councillor Tracey commented that the City Centre would, in her opinion, benefit from having a statue of George Whitfield. Councillor Morgan responded to say that, realistically, it would not be feasible for the Council to fund this. Thus, it would be down to any third parties to erect the statue should they wish.
- 9.18 The Chair concluded the debate stating that they appreciated that the programme would require a lot of work, and that it was still in its infancy.
- 9.19 **RESOLVED;** - that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee NOTE the report

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**Time of commencement: 6:30pm**

**Time of conclusion: 8:30pm**

**Chair**