

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**03.03.14**



**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**MEETING** : Monday, 3rd March 2014

**PRESENT** : Cllrs. Lugg (Chair), Beeley (Vice-Chair), Llewellyn (Spokesperson), Haigh, Gravells, Wilson, Williams, Dee, Taylor, Hansdot, Toleman and Chatterton

**Others in Attendance**

Councillor Paul James, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture

Councillor Sajid Patel, Cabinet Member for the Environment

Councillor Frederick Wood, Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources

Mr Martin Shields, Director of Services and Neighbourhoods

Mr Peter Gillett, Director of Resources

Mr Ross Cook, Head of Neighbourhood Services

Ms Sadie Neal, Business Improvement Manager

Mr Jason Smith, Chief Executive of Marketing Gloucester

**APOLOGIES** : Cllrs. S Witts, Field, and Randle

**91. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Hansdot declared a personal interest in agenda item 6, Open Space Strategy 2014-17 by virtue of his role as a Trustee on the Barton and Tredworth Community Trust.

Councillor Dee declared a personal interest in agenda item 6, Open Space Strategy 2014-17 because of his involvement with Podsmead Playing Fields.

**92. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held on 6 January 2014 and 3 February 2014 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chair.

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**93. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)**

Ms Kay Powell, a local resident, addressed the Committee. Ms Powell expressed dissatisfaction with the written response she had received from the Cabinet Member for the Environment relating to public open space issues she had raised at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 February 2014. Ms Powell had further questions relating to these matters namely:-

- The calculation of the whole of St James' Park including the City Farm as public open space.
- That most of the area covered by the City Farm was inaccessible to the public.
- The possibility of the large grassed area between Trier Way and Midland Road being identified as public open space.
- The position of the community garden next to the Anglo-Asian Centre which was not included in the document.
- The suitability of a MUGA at St James' Park, bearing in mind its current use as an informal football pitch.
- What 'practical reasons' had prevented public use of the land next to the Trust Centre.

Councillor Patel, Cabinet Member for Environment, thanked Ms Powell for her questions. He responded that the calculation of St James' Park would be revisited when ward profile work was carried out; that the City Farm was open to the public; that he would investigate issues regarding the Anglo-Asian Centre and the proposed MUGA at St James' Park and respond to Ms Powell in writing; that anti-social behaviour had necessitated the locking of a gate at the Trust Centre but that the area was accessible by any member of the public on request and he would publicise this fact; and finally that he had never been a Trustee of the Barton and Tredworth Community Trust.

Councillor James, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture commented that the City Council had sold the land to the Anglo-Asian Centre and that the Centre was under no obligation to convert it into a garden.

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

There were no petitions or deputations.

**95. OPEN SPACE STRATEGY 2014-2019**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Paul James, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture and Councillor Sajid Patel, Cabinet Member for Environment to the meeting.

A question was asked as to why the report author was not present. Mr Ross Cook, Head of Neighbourhood Services, confirmed that it was not normal practice for a junior member of staff to attend such meetings and that he was present as the responsible officer for that service.

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Members considered a report which sought formal approval for a new Open Space Strategy for the period 2014-2019 and which set out a robust, strategic framework for managing public open spaces in the City following public consultation between May and July 2013.

General comments arising from the debate have been listed below and are followed by points raised on the individual Ward profiles and a summary of the discussion including the Cabinet Member's response to the points made.

#### **General comments on the Strategy Document**

- The possibility of Ward boundaries being changed.
- Problems caused by unadopted land on modern housing estates being turned into 'jungles' and equally problems on established estates such as Abbey where areas had become overgrown.
- The fact that some public open spaces such as Plock Court were regularly impassable because of flood water.
- Disappointment was expressed that the opportunity had not been taken to exploit opportunities to work with health partners to publicise the importance of open spaces for health and healthy living and in order to address inequalities.

#### **Abbey**

Members expressed disappointment that the profile did not reflect all the public open space that was available within the Ward. Reference was made to the Hucclecote Hay Meadows which were considered to have been given a low profile in the report. There was concern at the reference to undeveloped land at the Wheatridge which might be developed for housing and it was believed that the language used should be reviewed to enforce the need for provision of public open space as part of any future development.

#### **Barnwood**

Members considered that there were insufficient details on the potential for improvements in this Ward. It was noted that the Saintbridge Balancing Pond was also enjoyed by Abbey residents. There was a query as to whether the King George V Playing Field was situated in Hucclecote rather than Barnwood.

#### **Barton and Tredworth**

It was acknowledged that the Ward fell seriously short in terms of the Council's adopted standard for open space quantity. Matters discussed during Public Question Time were noted and there was no further debate.

**Elmbridge** – no comments

**Grange**

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Members commented on the lack of detail available within this profile. It was noted that an error relating to GR5, Holmleigh Park, had still not been corrected from the previous draft.

#### **Hucclecote**

Members asked for reference to be made to a bund which acted as a buffer for the M5. It was noted that land at HU3 next to Hucclecote Rugby Club was derelict and that some of this land had been allocated to the rugby club for training.

#### **Kingsholm and Wotton**

The importance of the former Civil Service Sports Ground as a potential public open space was discussed.

#### **Longlevens**

Concern was expressed over flooding at Plock Court and latterly at Innsworth.

**Matson and Robinswood** - No comments.

**Moreland** - No comments.

#### **Podsmead**

It was pointed out that Blackbridge was originally created for the school and that reference to this should be edited. It was noted that Winget was separate to Tuffley Park and that Blackbridge was not accessible from Tuffley Avenue. It was further noted that some of the pitches at PO4 were not being used. Under this heading Members were informed that this area of the City was being considered as a potential Southern Sports Hub.

#### **Quedgeley Fieldcourt**

There was a request for the language used relating to Needham Avenue to be revisited in order to allay any anxiety to residents.

#### **Quedgeley Severn Vale**

The existence of the A38 as a barrier to residents accessing public open spaces was noted.

#### **Tuffley**

It was pointed out that a piece of land off Grange Road was not a public open space. It was requested that reference made to undeveloped farm land at Grange Road being identified for housing in the Joint Core Strategy should be revised as no decisions had been made and the land remained as a public open space.

#### **Westgate**

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There was uncertainty as to whether all the public open spaces had been identified, namely land on west side of Hempsted Lane, land in front of Newark Farm, land in Rectory Lane, land in Hempsted lane by the river, and land at Severn Trent sewer works. There was a perception that the Severn Trent Nature Reserve and Netheridge Farm were the same and should be marked as one item and it was pointed out that the Barn Owl Centre took up land at the Netheridge Reserve.

### **Conclusions**

Councillor Patel thanked Members for their comments and stressed that he was keen to protect and enhance public open spaces within the City. Points raised by the Committee would be included in the Strategy and Members and residents would be engaged in the proposed Action Plans for each Ward.

The Committee responded with the following comments:-

- Members believed that there should be engagement with health and leisure partners and that this should be reflected in the Strategy.
- Members considered that the Strategy contained inaccuracies and ambiguities which should be corrected.
- Members requested that the language used relating to parcels of land which might be possibly interpreted by the public as being earmarked for disposal should be revisited.

The Committee requested that the document should be withdrawn from the Cabinet agenda for 5 March 2014 to allow revisions to be made. Councillor James replied that he would consider the Committee's views and discuss the matter with his Cabinet colleagues.

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET:** That the Open Space Strategy for 2014-19 should not be approved by Cabinet on 5 March 2014 as it requires further revision.

## **96. CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL'S TREE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES**

Councillor Patel presented Members with a report which sought adoption of revised tree management guidelines for City Council owned trees. The guidelines had been updated to address concerns regarding trees and their potential impact upon third party property interests.

The Committee discussed the following matters:-

- Whether there would be a possibility in the future for residents to arrange their own pruning of trees provided there were no objections from neighbours.
- Clarity was sought on which trees were the responsibility of the City Council as opposed to Gloucestershire Highways. It was noted that the proposed policy could only be applied to City Council owned trees.
- The effect of tree roots planted on grass verges on neighbouring properties.

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- The negative effect of imposing trees on residents' health, particularly where individuals were elderly or housebound. It was considered that this should be reflected in the policy.
- The frustrations experienced by Members when trying to deal with complaints by residents in their Wards regarding dangerous or out of control trees.

The Committee welcomed the report.

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET:** That the report be noted.

**97. FUTURE OF GLOUCESTER CITY COUNCIL EVENTS CO-ORDINATION**

The Chair welcomed Mr Jason Smith, Chief Executive of Marketing Gloucester.

The Director of Services and Neighbourhoods presented Members with a report which sought approval for changes to the City's Events Programme and its delivery. The report proposed the establishment of a Central Events Team which would be based at Marketing Gloucester Limited's premises and would provide a single point of contact for all event queries and advisory requests.

Whilst most of the recommendations in the report were welcomed by the Committee, there was concern over the proposal for the Central Events Team to co-ordinate the logistical and operational side of the Council's Civic events, including the administration of invitations. Members stressed that civic functions were totally different to the other events currently organised by Marketing Gloucester and required a specific skillset in order to ensure that the correct protocols and formalities were observed, particularly when arranging Royal visits. There were reservations that the proposed Central Events Team would not have the capacity to deal with an important and high profile event such as Remembrance Sunday in November when there were several other events going on at that time. The Committee considered that there should be continuity in the support given to the Mayor's Office and proposed that this should continue to be provided by a member of the Executive Support Team as the Team had nurtured relationships with the relevant organisations. Members expressed concern that the role of the Civic Office might be undermined. Reference was made to the Sheriff's role which was of equal importance.

The Director of Services and Neighbourhoods responded to these comments by assuring Members that there would be a proper hand-over to Marketing Gloucester and that none of the knowledge and expertise garnered by the Executive Support Team would be lost. He added that the Team had produced templates and processes to support each event which would be provided to Marketing Gloucester. He stressed that there was no intention to undermine the Civic Office in any way. He explained that the Executive Support Team was already stretched in having to provide resources for other officers and referred to a recent inventory of the number of hours spent by the team in organising Civic events. He believed that the Mayor would receive an improved service from the new arrangement and pointed out that only six key events were transferring to Marketing Gloucester and that all the other Mayoral duties would remain with the Executive Support Team.

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Members discussed other matters arising from the report:-

- Clarity was sought on the proposal for management of the events budget and a proportion of the Civic hospitality budget by Marketing Gloucester. The Director of Services and Neighbourhoods explained that the transfer of budget related to the six key events being passed to Marketing Gloucester and that a suitable service level agreement would be drawn up.
- It was stated that Marketing Gloucester's prime focus should be on marketing the City
- Reference was made to the impending review of the Guildhall. There was a concern expressed that the report might be perceived as pre-empting the outcome of that review. The Director of Services and Neighbourhoods responded that the Guildhall Manager had been consulted on the proposals and was supportive of them as events outside of the Guildhall were a distraction and drained their resources.
- Members queried whether Marketing Gloucester would have the capacity to deliver any extra events to those set out in the programme.

### **Suspension of Council Procedure Rule 6**

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

Mr Jason Smith, Chief Executive of Marketing Gloucester, addressed the Committee. Mr Smith referred to the co-ordinated calendar of events which had been sent to all Councillors. Members welcomed the co-ordinated calendar.

Members brought the debate to a close by acknowledging the comments of the Director of Services and Neighbourhoods. The Committee resolved not to endorse recommendation 2.2 (5) and requested Cabinet to consider retaining the management of the Civic events in-house with the role being carried out by one member of the Executive Support Team.

### **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET:**

- (1) That the recommendations shown at 2.2 of the report be endorsed with the exception of 2.2 (5).
- (2) That management of the Council's Civic events remains in-house and is carried out by one member of the Executive Support Team

## **98. DRAFT COUNCIL PLAN 2014 -2017**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Wood, Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources to the meeting.

Members considered an updated draft of the Council Plan for 2014-2017 which detailed the priorities and plans for delivery for the Council for the next three years and the performance measures to be set against the proposed plan.

The Committee was informed that the Committee's previous comments had been incorporated into the current draft and that the document would continue to be a 'work in progress'. The section on the three year money plan had been revised and

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there was now more emphasis on health and the provision of housing. It was noted that whilst a five year money plan had been agreed at Council on 27 February 2014 that the document covered a three year period to 2017.

Reference was made to trade waste left out all day in the City Centre and Councillor James was requested to add a performance measure to address this. Councillor James pointed out that there was a measure for cleanliness within the document, but that he was willing to consider including this measure.

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET:** That the report be noted.

**99. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD DATES FOR NEXT MUNICIPAL YEAR**

**RESOLVED:** That the Scrutiny Work Programme and Forward Dates for next municipal year be noted.

**100. UPDATE FROM MEMBERS WHO SIT AS CITY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

There was insufficient time to consider this item.

**RESOLVED:** To defer the item to the next meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 31 March 2014

**101. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Monday 31 March 2014 at 18.30 hours.

**Time of commencement: 18.30 hours**

**Time of conclusion: 20.57 hours**

**Chair**