



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING : Monday, 14th September 2015

PRESENT : Cllrs. Lugg (Chair), Hampson (Vice-Chair), H. Norman (Spokesperson), Haigh, Gravells, Lewis, S. Witts, Dee, Field, Beeley, Pearsall, Randle, Toleman, Etheridge, Noakes, D. Norman and Smith

Others in Attendance

Councillor Lise Noakes, Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure
Councillor David Norman, MBE, Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources

Councillor Mary Smith

Mr Martin Shields, Corporate Director, Gloucester City Council

Mr Jon Topping, Head of Finance, Gloucester City Council

Ms Sarah Scott, Interim Director of Public Health, Gloucestershire County Council

APOLOGIES : Cllr. Hansdot

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Randle declared a personal interest in agenda item 8, Cultural Strategy Update, by virtue of her role on the Aspire Trust and as the Council's Champion of the Evening Economy.

Councillor Hampson declared a personal interest in agenda item 8, Cultural Strategy Update, by virtue of his role on the Aspire Trust.

28. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

29. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

30. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

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There were no petitions or deputations.

31. INTERIM REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE HOUSING TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Chair welcomed Councillor Mary Smith, Chair of the Housing Task and Finish Group, to the meeting.

Councillor Smith briefed Members on progress made by the Housing Task and Finish Group to date.

The Committee was advised that the Private Sector Housing Team had carried out a number of unannounced inspections of HMOs in the City and that serious breaches of safety had been discovered as well as evidence of overcrowding. These visits had been carried out in conjunction with the Fire Service. Councillor Smith also referred to a recent successful prosecution of two landlords which had received good coverage in the press.

Councillor Smith explained that the study was still ongoing and that she hoped to report the recommendations of the Group to the Committee in due course.

The Chair thanked Councillor Smith for her presentation.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

32. ANNUAL REPORT ON PUBLIC HEALTH IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

The Chair welcomed Ms Sarah Scott, Interim Director of Public Health, Gloucestershire County Council, to the meeting.

Ms Scott presented Members with the Annual Report of the director of Public Health for the year 2013-14 which gave an account of the stewardship of the public health grant; a snapshot of health and wellbeing in Gloucestershire; outlined the future of public health in Gloucestershire; and outlined progress made in 2014/15.

The Committee discussed the following matters:-

1. The impact of devolution on public health.
2. Young people's mental health issues.
3. The fact that the largest part of the public health grant was spent on dealing with substance and alcohol misuse with clarification given on the decision making process for allocating funds to various issues.
4. Work carried out through GPs on dementia.

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5. The LGA's stance on the sale of legal highs and the fact that this was an emerging significant issue. The Committee noted that the Director of Public Health had no legislative powers to close shops.
6. The role of district nurses.
7. The provision of sexual health services.
8. The success of the 'Active Together' initiative.
9. There was a discussion on housing and inequalities with the recognition that health was everyone's issue.
10. How the quality of the service was measured. There was no clinical audit, but the position was monitored on a monthly basis.
11. Members stressed the importance of having a joined up service encompassing mental health and public health and it was acknowledged that there was confusion over roles and responsibilities.
12. There was a suggestion that the University of Gloucestershire should carry out an exercise with 'Active Together' to ensure that the grants were being invested in the most needy communities.

The Chair thanked Ms Scott for her presentation.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

33. CULTURAL STRATEGY UPDATE

The Chair welcomed Councillor Noakes, Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, and Mr Martin Shields, Corporate Director, to the meeting.

Members were presented with a report which updated them on progress made in achieving the current Cultural Strategy's targets from January to June 2015. The report also incorporated an action plan detailing planned activities from various stakeholders for the period July to December 2015.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee was asked to consider the information contained in the report and make any recommendations it considered appropriate to the Cabinet.

Following presentation of the report, Councillor Noakes referred to the recent Michael + Partners report and explained the importance of drawing up a new and up to date cultural strategy to enable the City Council to attract funding from the Arts Council. Members were advised that an Interim Culture Board had been set up to kick-start the process.

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Councillor Noakes explained the tight timescales and challenges posed by the process of creating a new strategy and implementing the recommendations in the Michael+ Partners report and welcomed the assistance of Overview and Scrutiny Members with the project.

The Committee discussed the following matters:-

1. It was noted that Overview and Scrutiny Members would act as consultees on any new strategy, but not in a task and finish group role.
2. A Member sought clarification on Cabinet portfolios for heritage and culture as there appeared to be a cross-over.
3. A Member observed that whilst events were increasing at the Guildhall there had been some recent cancellations and asked for information. The Corporate Director agreed to supply statistics to the Committee.
4. A Member queried whether Councillor Noakes had considered sponsorship for events as it was unrealistic to expect the Council to be able to fund all of them. Councillor Noakes confirmed that sponsorship options were being explored.
5. A Member remarked that the report was positive and upbeat and asked Councillor Noakes to thank the staff at the Guildhall for their efforts.
6. A Member commented on the temperature and acoustics in Blackfriars. The Corporate Director responded that Blackfriars was a seasonal venue which was popular in the summer, particularly for weddings. He added that the Council acted as custodians of the buildings for English Heritage.
7. A Member recommended that e-ticketing should be considered when procuring any new ticketing system for venues. As part of the discussion it was noted that the ticketing system at the Aspire Trust would continue to be separate.
8. A Member sought clarification on the opening times for the Fanzone during the forthcoming Rugby World Cup.
9. A Member referred to the plethora of different groups which all appeared to have the same membership and said it was important to diversify representation on these groups as much as possible. Councillor Noakes agreed with this comment and added that there would be consultation on the new strategy with a wide range of stakeholders.
10. A Member asked if there was a strategy for defining which buildings were clad in the City Centre. Councillor Noakes explained that this was not part of her portfolio. As a result of the discussion, the Committee decided to request a report from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economy for a future meeting.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

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34. FINANCIAL MONITORING QUARTER 1 REPORT

The Chair welcomed Councillor Norman, Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, and Mr Jon Topping, Head of Finance, to the meeting.

Members were presented with a report which set out financial monitoring details including budget variances, year-end forecasts, and progress made towards agreed savings targets for the first quarter ended 30th June 2015.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee was asked to note the contents of the report and make any recommendations it considered appropriate to the Cabinet.

Councillor Norman explained that this was an early snapshot of the Council's finances and that the position would become clearer at the end of quarter 2 when action would be taken if any of the targeted savings appeared to be in jeopardy.

There was a discussion on the significant budget savings target set for the Amey contract and as a result Members requested that Amey be invited to their meeting on 30 November 2015 so that the Committee could scrutinise their proposals for achieving the savings target.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

35. CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Members considered the latest version of the Cabinet Forward Plan.

RESOLVED – That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.

36. 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.

37. FUTURE TASK AND FINISH GROUP TOPICS

The Chair outlined ideas which had been submitted by members of the public and Gloucester City Councillors for a future task and finish group study for the Committee.

RESOLVED – That a study regarding employment and skills opportunities for young people in the City be explored. The study would also look at health and inequalities in the City.

38. UPDATE ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no updates on this occasion.

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39. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 19 October 2015 at 18.30 hours.

Time of commencement: 6.30 pm hours

Time of conclusion: 8.35 pm hours

Chair