



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING : Monday, 4th September 2023

PRESENT : Cllrs. Field (Chair), Ackroyd, Campbell, Castle, Chambers-Dubus, Dee, Evans, Hilton, Hudson, Hyman, Sawyer and Toleman

Others in Attendance

City Growth and Delivery Manager
Strategy Officer – Gloucester Growth Strategy
Economic Growth Officer
Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Pullen, Durdey, Kubaszczyk and Wilson

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hudson declared an interest in Agenda Item 8 (Gloucester Growth Strategy) owing to his position as owner of Butler's Venue Bar and Chair of Gloucester Licensed Victuallers Association (LVA).

26. DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPPING

There were no declarations of party whipping.

27. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd July 2023 were approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

28. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

29. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions nor deputations.

30. ACTION POINT ITEM

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- 30.1 The Chair referred to the update and noted that he had been advised by the Leader of the Council that identifying suitable locations for pollinators was also proving difficult. He informed Members that it was hoped that the Climate Change Action Plan would include provision for these initiatives.
- 30.2 In response to a query from Councillor Sawyer, the Democratic and Electoral Services Officer confirmed that the appropriate contact for Members to approach should they have any ideas for suitable wildflower planting locations would be the Open Spaces Strategy Team Leader.

RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the update.

31. GLOUCESTER GROWTH STRATEGY

- 31.1 The City Growth and Delivery Manager introduced the Strategy Officer for the Gloucester Growth Strategy. He outlined the Project Brief and explained that the purpose of bringing the document before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was to stimulate conversation and ascertain the Committee's views on the scope of the strategy.
- 31.2 The City Growth and Delivery Manager further confirmed that discussions around the scope of the strategy were currently taking place with stakeholders, and that it was hoped that the strategy would include 'golden thread' themes such as addressing climate change and guiding city centre regeneration in the face of changing high street patterns. He noted that this was the beginning of the process, and that the ambition was to submit the Growth Strategy document for approval by Cabinet in the new year, with a further opportunity for the document to be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee beforehand.
- 31.3 The Strategy Officer provided a background to the project and explained that there was a challenge in that the likelihood of obtaining large amounts of funding for the project from Central Government was slim. He noted that he was keen to engage with organisations in both the private and voluntary sectors in the development of the strategy, and that he had already had a positive response from stakeholders following an initial communication.
- 31.4 The Strategy Officer advised that he anticipated several key quarters in the vision, with themes including housing, night time economy (NTE), community safety and regeneration. He also hoped that this would be a visible plan which residents could easily see and access.
- 31.5 Councillor Hyman asked whether the Growth Strategy document would be put out for public consultation and whether the council would work with partner organisations during the development of the strategy. The Strategy Officer confirmed that he had upcoming meetings with key Officers in the Community Engagement team, and that it was hoped that there would be public consultation through events as well as online opportunities. The Strategy Officer confirmed that he was currently working on a community organisation and stakeholder mapping exercise and that he was keen for

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ward Councillors to also be involved in the process. The City Growth and Delivery Manager further commented that Officers were hoping to go beyond the standard consultation process and that with the help of the council's Youth Engagement Strategy Lead, it was hoped that consultation would be extended to young people as well as faith groups and the wider community.

- 31.6 In response to an observation from the Chair that the Council already had many high-level strategies and a query as to whether there was a justification for another one, the City Growth and Delivery Manager stated that the Growth Strategy would not contradict these strategies but would complement and tie them together. The Strategy Officer further added that he believed that the strategy would deliver outcomes and that Gloucester had significant opportunities for development. He noted that his key focus would be on pragmatic and fundable solutions to identify key projects and how they could be delivered.
- 31.7 In response to a query from Councillor Sawyer, the Strategy Officer provided an overview of the 'Together Gloucestershire' initiative in place in Cheltenham and Cirencester. The City Growth and Delivery Manager further noted that Officers were keen to engage with anchor institutions and that meetings with large employers in Gloucester were underway. Councillor Sawyer agreed to send information regarding an initiative adopted by Preston City Council to the Strategy Officer for consideration.
- 31.8 Councillor Hudson reflected on his experience of working in the night time economy sector and noted that although the city was known for its night time safety accolades, the main Eastgate Street strip has not seen any development for several years. He raised concerns that underinvestment in the area might put potential investors off investing in the city centre. The Strategy Officer agreed that this would be a good opportunity to identify areas where the strategy could make a significant impact, however political will and drive were also needed. The City Growth and Delivery Manager further noted that the council needed to work collaboratively with partner organisations, such as Gloucester BID to look at investment opportunities, and that night time economy provision was particularly important for the young population.
- 31.9 In response to a query from Councillor Toleman regarding footpaths and tracks in Hempsted, the City Growth and Delivery Manager explained that the strategy would not focus in detail on individual streets.
- 31.10 Councillor Hilton impressed that it was important that Officers clearly defined what was meant by 'Growth', ahead of any benchmarking exercises and deciding what to include in the strategy. In response to earlier comments regarding the night time economy in Gloucester, he noted that pubs in the city centre were seeing less footfall. The Strategy Officer confirmed that he was currently scoping what was meant by 'Growth Strategy' and was conscious that this would be a finite project. The City Growth and Delivery Manager further confirmed that this stage of the project was to identify the scope of the strategy.

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- 31.11 The Chair expressed the view that it was crucial that young people's views were sought during the consultation stage. The Strategy Officer noted that the Gloucester Culture Trust had good communication avenues with young people which he could pick up on.
- 31.12 Councillor Castle suggested that consideration be given to investing in the Westgate Park and Boating Lake area. Reflecting on its former use, she commented that this area would not likely need significant spending to restore. The Strategy Officer provided assurances that green spaces would be a central thread in the strategy, however he noted that it was important to consider how the city maintained those spaces. A discussion ensued regarding maintenance of green space areas in the city and whether responsibility for managing those areas should rest solely with the council or whether the council would look to do some things differently. Councillor Castle expressed the view that engagement with local Councillors was key.
- 31.13 Councillor Hilton referred to the work undertaken at Wellington Parade Gardens and noted that this had had an impact on the number of street drinkers in the area. This said, he stated that the gardens were poorly maintained and that in his view, this was an example of the council failing to maintain community spaces and relying on management by volunteers. In the context of economic growth, Councillor Hilton expressed that it was important that the council met its own core responsibilities before considering wider developments. The Strategy Officer responded that good green space management was key to investment and although it was a challenge, it was hoped that the Growth Strategy would include a proposal to achieve this.
- 31.14 In response to a query from Councillor Campbell regarding the restoration of the Mecca Bingo venue, the City Centre and Delivery Manager noted that he agreed with the ambition however it was important to be realistic about what the council could achieve. He stated that the council could have an enabling role however it was not always the solution. Councillor Sawyer noted her understanding that Gloucester Culture Trust were attempting to obtain funding to purchase the venue.
- 31.15 Councillor Sawyer expressed her support for investment in open spaces and more outdoor seating as a key means of attracting families into the city. She asked whether Councillors would be formally consulted on the development of the strategy. The Strategy Officer confirmed that they would, and asked the Committee whether there was any particular way Members would like to be approached. The Chair suggested that the monthly Members' Bulletin would be a good way of seeking input from Councillors.
- 31.16 Councillor Hudson commented that the Growth Strategy needed to be credible and must go beyond the next local elections in 2024. He queried whether it might be an opportunity to identify solutions on a cross-party basis. Referring to young people studying and living in the city, he noted that without them, local amenities such as bars, restaurants and gyms would struggle, and suggested that links to student unions might help the council engage with students. The City Growth and Delivery Manager noted his agreement and reiterated that engagement with young people in the

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development of the strategy was important. The Strategy Officer observed that there were areas of high deprivation in Gloucester and suggested that an element of the strategy could look at how to attract residents living in the suburbs into the city centre.

- 31.17 Councillor Hudson advised that he was aware of that some designs containing proposals for the redevelopment of Eastgate Street had previously been drafted. He also noted that a survey undertaken by Gloucester BID confirmed that if the town centre looked attractive, residents were likely to spend more money, and that there was an aspiration amongst local businesses to work together to achieve this.
- 31.18 Councillor Ackroyd shared that there was a loyal group of volunteers working hard to maintain the green space in Moreland and that she would like to see a plaque in the area to commemorate a historic plane crash.
- 31.19 Councillor Chambers-Dubus noted that she agreed with earlier comments made by Councillor Hudson and expressed the view that the council should prioritise maintenance of areas already under council responsibility, ahead of pursuing larger scale development schemes. The Strategy Officer agreed with these sentiments but highlighted that the council needed to be transparent about spending.
- 31.20 In response to further comments from Councillor Chambers-Dubus regarding a tree planting initiative which had failed due to maintenance issues, the Chair impressed the need for Officers to engage and consult with Members directly during the development of the Growth Strategy as Members were well placed to understand their communities and residents' views.

RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the update.

32. ALLOCATION OF THE GLOUCESTER UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

- 32.1 The City Growth and Delivery Manager introduced the report and advised that the purpose of the report was to update the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress in spending the UK Shared Prosperity (UKSPF) budget and the intention for the amount remaining unallocated in the fund. He noted that the Economic Growth Officer had been recruited and funded through the UKSPF administration levy.
- 32.2 The City Growth and Delivery Manager explained that a consultation process with local community groups had taken place from May – July 2022, the outcome of which had informed the Investment Plan which had been put forward for approval by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). He confirmed that the council had received expressions of interest from 49 organisations, and that 3.2 of the report summarised the services provided through the UKSPF to 8 organisations during its first year. The City Growth and Delivery Manager noted that he was pleased with the progress made by the council in distributing the UKSPF funding to local projects, and the Economic Growth Officer provided the Committee with an overview of these projects.

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- 32.3 In relation to a £160k remaining underspend, the City Growth and Delivery Manager advised that Officers intended to hold a second round of allocation during the Autumn of 2023 and would be inviting community-based organisations to submit expressions of interest for their projects. He advised Members that an audit process was currently ongoing, and that it was expected that the review and shortlisting of submissions would take place in November, with the hope of distributing the funds to projects towards the end of the year.
- 32.4 In response to a query from the Chair regarding the statement in the narrative in 4.2 that £93,518k needed to be spent on capital, the Economic Growth Officer explained that this was a stipulation in the DLUHC terms of memorandum.
- 32.5 In response to a follow-up question from the Chair, the Economic Growth Officer confirmed that all of the remaining fund would be put towards the new expressions of interest and that previous applicants were welcome to come forward. The City Growth and Delivery Manager further encouraged Members to put local community groups and projects forward for consideration.
- 32.6 In response to a query from Councillor Toleman, the Economic Growth Officer advised that Officers hoped to open expressions of interest to organisations between October and November 2023, and that a communication would be sent to all Councillors in due course.
- 32.7 Councillor Dee asked for further information regarding the success criteria. The Economic Growth Officer stated that potential projects needed to fall in line with DLUHC priority areas, and this would be made clear in future communications. By way of example, the City Growth and Delivery Manager confirmed that improving places, businesses and employment and skills were considered to be priorities.
- 32.8 Councillor Hyman referred to the evaluation panel and asked how the external advisors from the community sector and small businesses had been selected. The City Growth and Delivery Manager confirmed that the representative from the voluntary and community sector (VCS) worked within a local organisation in Stroud and was selected due to their knowledge and the fact that they had no vested interest themselves in submitting a bid. He further stated that the other advisor had been selected from the Federation of Small Businesses.

RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the update.

**33. TASK AND FINISH GROUP ON ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUNG PEOPLE -
PROGRESS UPDATE**

- 33.1 The Democratic and Electoral Services Officer introduced the update and explained that the purpose of this item was to provide the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an update on progress in implementing the

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recommendations of the Task and Finish Group on Engagement with young people, 6 months' on from when they were accepted by Cabinet. She confirmed that most of the recommendations were in progress, with two 'on hold', noting that the Open Spaces Strategy was not due to be updated until 2026 and that the current recommendation following a review of the council's Communications Strategy was to continue the use of social media platforms the council currently used.

- 33.2 The Democratic and Electoral Services Officer confirmed that the Youth Engagement Lead had met with Members of the Task and Finish Group to provide an update on her work, and that the Youth Engagement Coordinating Group had recently met with a view of considering how the council engages with young people across all services.
- 33.3 The Chair observed that it was good to see the majority of the recommendations being progressed, and that he understood the reasons that the remaining recommendations were 'on hold.'
- 33.4 Councillor Chambers-Dubus noted that she had chaired the Task and Finish Group on engagement with young people and extended her thanks to the supporting Officers for their work on the project. It was suggested that a further update be provided to the Committee following the local elections in 2024.

RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the update.

34. ANNUAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2023-24

- 34.1 The Chair introduced the draft Annual Work Programme of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the latest version of the Council Forward Plan.
- 34.2 The Democratic and Electoral Services Officer explained that the Annual Work Programme had been compiled following the Annual Work Programming Workshop held by the Committee back in July. She noted that three key themes had been identified as areas of interest for Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members, namely city centre, culture and climate change. The Democratic and Electoral Services Officer confirmed that leading Officers in each of these service areas had been consulted and items had been plotted on the Work Programme over the course of the year accordingly.
- 34.3 Councillor Hilton suggested that the Committee consider the Green Travel Progress Report and it was agreed that this report be added to the agenda for the meeting on Monday 2nd October.
- 34.5 Councillor Dee asked whether some of the discussion at the Annual Work Programme could be formalised and circulated to Committee Members. The Democratic and Electoral Services Officer confirmed that a brief write-up would be drafted and circulated to Members.

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RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee **APPROVE** the Annual Work Programme 2023-24.

35. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 25th September 2023.

Time of commencement: 6.30 pm hours

Time of conclusion: 8.07 pm hours

Chair