



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING : Monday, 3rd June 2019

PRESENT : Cllrs. Coole (Chair), Ryall (Vice-Chair), Dee, Hilton, Lewis, Organ, Pullen, Stephens, Taylor, Toleman, Walford and Lugg

Others in Attendance

Councillor Jennie Watkins, Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods

Councillor Steve Morgan, Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure

Corporate Director

Head of Communities

Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Hawthorne, Finnegan and Wilson

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

1.1 **RESOLVED** : - That the appointments of Chair, Vice-Chair and Spokesperson at Annual Council be noted.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 Councillor Organ declared an interest in agenda item 8 (Annual Report on the Grant Funding Provided to the Voluntary Community Sector) by virtue of his active role in organising the Gloucester Retro Festival.

3. DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPPING

3.1 There were no declarations of party whipping.

4. MINUTES

4.1 **RESOLVED that:** The minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2019 were approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

5.1 There were no public questions.

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6. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

6.1 There were no petitions or deputations.

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

7.1 The Committee considered the Work Programme and the Council Forward Plan.

7.2 The Chair informed the Committee that it had been difficult to arrange the Universal Credit Review, with only a couple of organisations responding to the invitations to attend meetings. Organisations were either unavailable to attend the scheduled Overview and Scrutiny meetings or did not respond at all. As such, he felt that it would be more prudent to ask for written submissions to be considered at the 2 September 2019 meeting. It was noted that a few had expressed that they would be happy to provide the written submissions.

7.3 Further, it was agreed that the Chair would attend a Gloucester Advice Partnership meeting to discuss Universal Credit with partner organisations, and then report back to the Committee.

RESOLVED that: - (1) Enquiries would be made to the partner organisations asking if they can provide written submissions for the 2 September 2019 meeting; (2) The Chair would attend a Gloucester Advice Partnership meeting and report back to the Committee.

8. ANNUAL REPORT ON THE GRANT FUNDING PROVIDED TO THE VOLUNTARY COMMUNITY SECTOR

8.1 The Cabinet Member for Communities introduced the report and highlighted key aspects. She outlined that since its introduction in 2012, the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) model had transformed grant funding to the voluntary sector and was now embedded in the approach taken. She highlighted that this transformation could be seen across the 4 areas of grant funding – Grant Funding to Advice Agencies, Councillor Community Fund, Your Gloucester and Gloucester Lottery. Finally, she stressed to Members the benefits of the initiative beyond grant funding, such as, helping organisations to build networks, and encouraging volunteering in the community.

8.2 Councillor Stephens thanked the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods and the Head of Communities for the report. He stated that he was impressed with the breadth of funding, and the excellent causes being supported. He also noted that since its introduction in 2012, the ABCD approach, and particularly the Councillor Community Fund had allowed Members to play a greater role in grant funding. He felt that these factors justified the funding increases in 2018.

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- 8.3 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods responded that the breadth and diversity resulting from the ABCD approach was indeed welcome.
- 8.4 Councillor Ryall questioned what support was being given to encourage organisations to apply elsewhere for funding. In her view, there were not many other sources of funding available to the voluntary and community sector.
- 8.5 The Head of Communities advised that they could be agile in terms of applications connecting the voluntary and community sector with other organisations, and thus build informal networks. She drew Members' attention to the fact that that this was already being done and offered Together In Matson as an example of this.
- 8.6 Councillor Hilton asked what the budget was for 'Your Gloucester' and the 'Gloucester Lottery'. The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods responded that the budget for Your Gloucester was £10,000, and for the Gloucester Lottery, it depended on the figure raised. She provided that last year around £17,000 had been raised.
- 8.7 Referring to Appendix 1 (list of groups funded), Councillor Pullen queried why Amey had been granted funding for a litter bin in the Grange area, given that it was not a voluntary organisation. He suggested that there were better uses for the available funds.
- 8.8 In response to this, both the Head of Communities and the Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods explained that this particular grant came from the Councillor Community Fund. By its nature, this fund was implemented to allow Councillors to support projects which they feel would benefit their ward. Hence, although guidance is provided, Officers cannot be prescriptive about which projects Councillors choose to support.
- 8.9 The Chair concluded the discussion by stating that he endorsed the report and welcomed the opportunities it created in the voluntary and community sector. He felt that the report was a credit to both The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods and the Head of Communities.
- 8.10 **RESOLVED that:** - The Overview and Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the Report.

9. GUILDHALL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- 9.1 The Corporate Director presented the Briefing Paper. He explained that the contents of the Paper should be viewed as a direction of travel and vision for Guildhall. Guildhall, he explained, is uniquely placed as a site which could play an important role in the city 's cultural fabric by becoming Gloucester 's focal performance venue. As such, the proposed plans for Guildhall would be threefold, focusing on 'Building Skills', 'Building Purpose' and 'Building a Place'. The plans would go beyond just renovating the building, but also

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developing skills and creating an environment to foster and grow creative talent in the City. These developments would help Gloucester to bid for City of Culture.

- 9.2 Finally, he informed Members that due to stretched public finances, funding the development through the Council 's budget would be difficult, and so the plan would be to acquire funding from other organisations. It was noted that there were opportunities for grant funding from external organisations.
- 9.3 Councillor Stephens opened the discussion. He reminded the Committee that the proposals should not be considered a development plan, as much a vision statement. He proceeded to say that although some of the proposals were welcomed, detailed work was still needed. He stressed the importance of setting realistic targets and budgets. He questioned, for example, whether the proposed cinema would be profitable, and how the food provision would work.
- 9.4 In response, the Corporate Director commented that he did not disagree with Councillor Stephens. Indeed, the Government 's funding scheme was not guaranteed, and therefore it was about utilising available funding opportunities. Additionally, the plans could be as big as funding allowed, and similarly they could also be scaled down if necessary. He added that as an example, the Future High Streets Fund if acquired, could provide an opportunity for expansion. In answer to the query about food provision, he suggested that for this to be successful, it would be about matching the food offers to the events taking place at the time. Moreover, he confirmed that a decision had not yet been made as to whether this would be stand-alone.
- 9.5 Pointing to the fact that Officers had mentioned the possibility of having interns as part of the Guildhall Development Plans, Councillor Ryall asked how this would be regulated. She noted that Apprentices, for example, tend to be more regulated. Interns, on the other hand, could be more open to exploitation, such as underpayment.
- 9.6 Responding to this, the Corporate Director advised that there were no detailed or concrete plans with regard to taking on interns yet. However, it was a conversation to be had. Any decisions made would uphold the rights of interns. The overall aim would be to create a positive experience for them. He suggested for example that the University of Gloucestershire could be approached to partner with students from the Performing Arts. However, he emphasised that this was still in the thinking stages.
- 9.7 Councillor Pullen submitted that the aim should be not to compete with larger cities such as Birmingham and Bristol, which could be unrealistic, but rather local theatres such as the Roses Theatre in Tewkesbury and the Wyvern Theatre in Swindon. Thus, any plans for Guildhall would aim to make it a place which people want to visit from within Gloucestershire and surrounding counties.

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- 9.8 Councillor Lewis commented that whilst the proposals were laudable, there was perhaps a risk that they were too ambitious, and thus needed to be narrowed and focused.
- 9.9 The Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure suggested that there was an appetite for cultural regeneration in the City. The Guildhall plans if realised, would play a key role in this. Notably, the plans would help young people in the City to develop both artistically, and in other ways.
- 9.20 Councillor Lewis suggested that it was a chicken and egg situation, in that the onus would be on the Council to show external organisations that Guildhall would be worth investing in.
- 9.21 Councillor Hilton felt that the Council needed to clarify what it wanted to achieve in cultural terms. In his view, the potential for Guildhall to succeed as a professional theatre could be hindered by the fact that more people could choose to visit the Everyman Theatre in Cheltenham, an already established professional theatre. Moreover, attracting performers to Guildhall could prove challenging. Additionally, he questioned whether a cinema would do well.
- 9.22 He drew Members' attention to the fact that Guildhall had been operating as an Arts Centre for over 30 years. In his opinion, it had not been very successful in this time. He asked the Officers whether they should be looking outside the box, and looking at larger venues, such as the (Regal) Wetherspoon in Gloucester City Centre which would provide more space than Guildhall. Furthermore, he felt that this venue would have the added benefit of being in closer proximity of the railway station, car parks and bus stations.
- 9.23 The Corporate Director advised that, economically, Gloucester would not be able to sustain a bigger venue at the moment, although it could be possible in the future. Likewise, Councillor Stephens stated that there were already places in the City which could hold large audiences, including Kingsholm Stadium and the Cathedral.
- 9.24 Councillor Lugg commented that Cheltenham had cornered a lot of the market for the Arts within the local area, and this could limit the potential for a redeveloped Guildhall to succeed. Equally, she suggested that the Guildhall 's website needed to be improved, and that in its current state, the Guildhall was perhaps struggling to attract younger audiences.
- 9.25 Councillor Toleman queried whether the Olympus Theatre which was currently undergoing construction would help or hinder Guildhall. The Corporate Director responded saying that he did not feel that this would hinder the plans for Guildhall.
- 9.26 Councillor Walford asked Members to make a decision about what to do with Guildhall.
- 9.27 Councillor Morgan stated that overall, he could not disagree with what had been presented in the Briefing Paper.

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9.28 Bringing the discussion to an end, the Chair concluded that the discussion had been useful, and that the Committee had nothing to oppose in principle.

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

10. STATUTORY GUIDANCE ON OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IN LOCAL AND COMBINED AUTHORITIES

10.1 The Chair outlined the contents of the new Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. He emphasised the importance of the guidance, which Councils 'must have regard to' when exercising overview and scrutiny functions. The Committee unanimously agreed with this.

10.2 Furthermore, it was decided that a meeting would be arranged between the Chair and Senior Management to discuss how the Council can implement the statutory guidance going forward.

10.3 **RESOLVED that:** - The Chair would meet with Senior Management to discuss how to implement the guidance going forward.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

11.1 1 July 2019 at 6.30pm in the Civic Suite North Warehouse.

Time of commencement: 6.30 pm hours

Time of conclusion: 8.00 pm hours

Chair