



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEETING : Monday, 30th January 2023

PRESENT : Cllrs. Pullen (Chair), Ackroyd, Campbell, Dee, Evans, Gravells MBE, Hilton, Hudson, Kubaszczyk, O'Donnell, Sawyer, Wilson, Conder and Radley

Others in Attendance

Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment,
Councillor Richard Cook
Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods, Councillor
Raymond Padilla

Chair of the Purple Flag Working Group
Head of Culture
City Centre Manager
City Growth and Delivery Manager
Policy and Development Officer
Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Field, Durdey and Castle

86. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hudson declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 11 (Purple Flag Briefing) owing to his position as Chair of the Gloucester Licensed Victuallers Association (LVA).

87. DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIPPING

There were no declarations of party whipping.

88. MINUTES

88.1 In response to a query from Councillor Wilson concerning 81.3 and the commitment to clarify when the City Council's contract with West Mercia Energy was initially put in place and when a new contract would need to be

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
30.01.23

negotiated, the Democratic and Electoral Services Officer confirmed that this information had been obtained and was provided in the Action Point updates in Agenda Item 7.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 9th January 2023 were approved and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

89. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

There were no public questions.

90. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions nor deputations.

91. ACTION POINT ITEM

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

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

92.1 The Chair, Councillor Pullen, introduced the latest version of the Council Forward Plan and invited suggestions as to any items Members wished to add to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme.

92.2 Councillor Hilton noted that the City Council had been unsuccessful in its bid for Levelling Up Fund 2 grant funding and suggested that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee request a briefing on plans to deliver the Eastgate project despite the funding rejection. The Chair expressed the view that the City Council needed to receive feedback from Central Government on the bid prior to this item being brought before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

92.3 The Leader of the Council, Councillor Richard Cook, noted that he had been disappointed to learn that all local authorities who had made second bids for Levelling Up Funding had been automatically turned down, despite having been encouraged by Central Government to make second bids if they were entitled to. Councillor Cook advised that the City Council would receive feedback in due course and that Officers were considering options.

92.4 Councillor Hilton reiterated that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should have a discussion around next steps and proposals to deliver a similar project, The Chair emphasised that in his view this discussion could only take place after Officers received feedback.

92.5 Councillor Gravells noted that he was pleased that a report on the Here to Help reporting facility had been added to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme and invited Members to bring forward any issues of areas of interest which they would like addressed in the report.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

30.01.23

Councillor Wilson noted his interest in this item, as it was his understanding that few other Councils operated a similar Here to Help system.

- 92.6 Councillors Ackroyd and Conder raised concerns about the Here to Help online contact forms. Councillor Conder commented that she found the refuse form particularly difficult to use.

RESOLVED – That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee **NOTE** the Work Programme.

93. ENDORSEMENT OF A FIVE YEAR VISION FOR GLOUCESTER CITY CENTRE

- 93.1 The City Growth and Delivery Manager provided an overview of the Vision for Gloucester City Centre and explained that the document was not an action plan, but a vision to guide future strategies. He explained that the Vision was underpinned by six core principles and provided Members with a summary of the 5-Year Vision document, which outlined aspirations for a green and nature-rich city centre, a well designed and improving city, a growing local economy and workforce, thriving quarters and city which appeals to all ages.
- 93.2 The Chair noted that the public consultation through the University of Gloucester had taken place late in the process and asked whether the consultation data had had an impact on the 5-Year Vision document. He also asked if the City Council were to undertake the consultation again, whether it would be minded to do so earlier. The City Growth and Delivery Manager expressed the view that an earlier consultation would not have altered the outcome, and that the university research had acted as a form of scrutiny. He noted that if a similar exercise was undertaken in the future, consideration might be given to starting the consultation earlier.
- 93.3 Referring to the narrative in the Vision document concerning 'measuring progress' and the absence of figures, the Chair queried how the data would be decided. The City Growth and Delivery Manager clarified that when they were included, the figures would be indicators rather than targets and that his preference would be to steer away from a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) approach. The City Growth and Delivery Manager confirmed that he would be responsible for deciding the figures.
- 93.4 In response to a further question from the Chair regarding the missing figures, the City Growth and Delivery Manager confirmed that updated figures would be included in the final Cabinet report.
- 93.5 Councillor Hilton noted his disappointment that the Vision did not extend beyond 5 years. He raised concerns that the document did not detail the impact of a revitalised city centre on existing city centre residents and felt that more consideration could be given to creating more workspaces for existing residents. In response to these concerns, the City Growth and Delivery Manager accepted that a sense of community was needed and

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
30.01.23

stated that more information would be published on the City Council website in due course.

- 93.6 In response to Councillor Hilton's comment that the Vision was not ready for adoption and that further consultation was needed with residents, the City Growth and Delivery Manager highlighted that the initial plan was always for a 5-year Vision and that the Vision was deliberately optimistic in terms of regeneration plans. He noted that consideration could be given to making KPIs more explicit if this was needed to reflect a changing demographic.
- 93.7 Councillor Hilton expressed the view that a significant proportion of Gloucester city centre housing was substandard and that there was a need for more good quality homes. He reiterated his view that the document needed more work prior to adoption. The Policy and Development Officer reflected on his own experience of attempting to purchase town centre housing and accepted that there were challenges, particularly for first time buyers.
- 93.8 Councillor Dee welcomed the 5-Year Vision but noted her disappointment that many respondents did not feel proud of Gloucester city. She asked whether there were any short-term plans to tackle empty retail units in the city centre. The City Growth and Delivery Manager confirmed that the City Centre Manager was currently working with the Culture Trust with the aim of attracting young entrepreneurs into units, including units in the Eastgate Shopping Centre. He stated that there were many ways of encouraging enterprise, including alternative opportunities such as car boot sales and pop-up units.
- 93.9 Councillor Dee expressed the view that pop-ups were a good short-term solution. The City Centre Manager confirmed that efforts were being made to fill vacant units however the City Council could not accept any business regardless of the surrounding area purely for the sake of occupancy. The Chair agreed that it was important to find a balance.
- 93.10 Councillor Conder expressed the view that a useful measure would be the prevalence of independent shops. She felt that this might in turn encourage start-up businesses.
- 93.11 Councillor Wilson asked whether the new University of Gloucestershire campus in the former Debenhams building would include student accommodation. The City Growth and Delivery Manager confirmed that there would be no on-site student accommodation in the new city centre campus, however the recent additions to the Blackfriars Residence student accommodation in Gloucester city centre had been completed. Councillor Wilson expressed the view that students should be welcomed in Gloucester city centre and noted that more students in the city centre might help address safety concerns.
- 93.12 Councillor Gravells referred to the narrative in the 5-Year Vision concerning 'topic-based and thematic strategies' and suggested that future documents be mindful of jargon and written in clear language. He expressed the view

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
30.01.23

that it was important that visions and strategies resonated with members of the public, and that working with key partners would be key to making the Vision a success.

- 93.13 In response to a further query from Councillor Gravells regarding how progress in implementing the Vision would be measured, the City Growth and Delivery Manager confirmed that he had been working to provide the relevant information and statistics ahead of the publication of the report for Cabinet.
- 93.14 The Chair noted his agreement with Councillor Gravells' comments on appropriate language and the City Growth and Delivery Manager agreed to take this point on board.
- 93.15 Councillor Sawyer commended the 5-Year Vision and stated that she looked forward to receiving further detail on the measurement statistics. She suggested that an update on implementation of the 5-Year Vision be provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 12 months' time. The City Growth and Delivery Manager confirmed that he would be happy to return and review progress with the Committee, and that the City Centre Commission would also continue to have a role in monitoring progress.
- 93.16 In response to a query from Councillor Radley as to the plan for the following 5 years, the City Growth and Delivery Manager confirmed that the Vision would continue to evolve.
- 93.17 In response to additional comments from Councillor Radley regarding students and the fact that they lived in the city for a short amount of time, the City Growth and Delivery Manager noted that a challenge for Gloucester was to retain graduates and to ensure that good job opportunities were available to encourage graduates to stay in the city.

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

94. GLOUCESTER CITY COMMISSION TO REVIEW RACE RELATIONS - YEAR ONE UPDATE

- 94.1 The Leader of the Council, Councillor Richard Cook, advised Members that the briefing document provided a one-year update following the report of the Gloucester City Commission to Review Race Relations and their resulting 'calls to action.' In relation to the call to action to establish an independent legacy institution for Gloucestershire, Councillor Cook advised Members that the Gloucestershire Race Equality Action Group (GREAG) had been established. He noted that the City Council had held several meetings with GREAG and were building a relationship with the organisation to help progress its work collaboratively. He further confirmed that the council had agreed to second an Officer to the Black South West Network to support the work of GREAG.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
30.01.23

- 94.2 Councillor Cook referred to the call to action to set out a Gloucestershire wide vision for workforce equality in the public sector and the delivery of a 'stepping up programme'. He confirmed that engagement had started on the steps which could be taken to formalise workforce equality initiatives, however he noted that there were limitations in the role the City Council could play beyond its own remit.
- 94.3 In respect of the call to action to put measures in place to ensure the collection and use of high-quality ethnicity data in planning and delivering public services, Councillor Cook confirmed that strong progress had been made through equalities actions which had been embedded in the Council Plan and service plans. He noted that this had been further emphasised by equalities being a key overarching theme in the Council Plan. Councillor Cook highlighted the call to action to acknowledge the existence of racism, prejudice and micro-aggressions in Gloucester and confirmed that the City Council did acknowledge this.
- 94.3 The Chair queried whether all Gloucestershire District Councils would be assisting with funding the independent legacy institution. The Policy and Development Officer explained that the initial £100K funding to establish the organisation had been provided by the County Council and NHS, and that conversations regarding further funding with District Councils were ongoing.
- 94.4 The Chair asked whether the Terms of Reference could be made available to the Committee. The Policy and Development Officer explained that GREAG were taking some time to adapt and establish themselves and at the time of sharing, it was their view that the Terms of Reference produced by the City Council were too formal to be able to adopt at that stage in GREAG's development.
- 94.5 In response to a further question from the Chair regarding staff appointments, the Policy and Development Officer confirmed that appointments were decided by GREAG with the City Council having assisted with the advertisement of two posts. He further stated that the former Chair of the Gloucester City Commission to Review Race Relations was involved in the group and that support was also being provided by Gloucestershire County Council and the Black South West Network.
- 94.6 In response to a query from Councillor Wilson as to whether the set of proposed goals had been agreed, the Policy and Development officer confirmed that GREAG intended to use the Race Relations Commission's report as a basis, but the organisation wanted to establish itself in a way that suited them.
- 94.7 Councillor Wilson noted that he was pleased to see that progress had been made as there had previously been some uncertainty as to who would be responsible for taking the Calls to Action Forward. He asked whether the meeting held on 18th March 2022 was the first meeting, to which the Policy and Development Officer confirmed that it had been one of the first.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
30.01.23

- 94.8 In response to an additional query as to whether any progress had been made since, the Policy and Development Officer noted that building relationships was likely to take some time. The Head of Culture further added that progress was taking longer than hoped, however GREAG was being supported by the Black South West Network as well as the City Council.
- 94.9 Councillor Wilson requested further information regarding the Officer support for GREAG. The Head of Culture explained that the City Council had agreed to second an officer to support the work of GREAG and this was a full-time role which would be funded by the Black South West Network.
- 94.10 In response to a query from the Chair regarding the term 'reverse mentoring', the Policy and Development Officer explained that this was an initiative where staff members from racially minoritized backgrounds would work alongside senior members of staff so that senior staff could learn from their experiences.
- 94.11 The Chair referred to the 'Tea Break' initiative and asked whether this was compulsory for City Council Staff. The Policy and Development Officer confirmed that Tea Breaks were not mandatory but took place during a period where all staff could attend if they so wished.
- 94.12 In response to a query from Councillor Gravells as to the attendance rate at Tea Break sessions, it was explained that these sessions were coordinated by the Community Wellbeing Team.
- 94.13 Councillor Gravells asked whether staff working in partner organisations, such as Ubico, were also invited to attend these sessions. The Head of Culture noted that Tea Breaks were not formal training but instead a deliberately informal peer-to-peer network. He noted that Tea Breaks took place virtually and were recorded so staff had the opportunity to view the discussion afterwards if they were unable to make the session.
- 94.14 A discussion ensued about whether an invite should be extended to partner organisations to attend these sessions. Councillor Cook noted that organisations such as Ubico were likely to have their own training initiatives.

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

95. PURPLE FLAG BRIEFING

- 95.1 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods, Councillor Raymond Padilla, provided an overview of the Purple Flag accolade, explaining that it was an international award aiming to raise standards and broaden the appeal of town and city centres during the evening and night-time. He explained that accreditation of the award was run by the Association of Town and City Management (ATCM) and was the benchmark for good night-time destinations with a safer atmosphere. Councillor Padilla

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
30.01.23

further informed Members that Gloucester City Council would be applying for its sixth consecutive Purple Flag award over the coming months.

- 95.2 Councillor Hilton stated that he was aware that there had been issues with knife carrying and drink spiking in the city. He noted that he was pleased with the work and wished Officers success for the Purple Flag application, however he raised concerns that some businesses in Gloucester were refusing to accept payment by cash. The City Centre Manager noted that this issue could not be addressed through Purple Flag due to its narrow terms of reference, however he agreed to take the matter up with street trading colleagues. A discussion ensued and Councillor Hudson suggested that this was an issue which could be taken up with Gloucester Business Improvement District (BID).
- 95.3 Councillor Wilson referred to the narrative in the update concerning the overnight 12-hour assessment and asked whether judges would stay for the full duration. The City Centre Manager confirmed that the judges would stay for the full duration as every element of the night-time economy would be assessed, including taxi marshalling, dispersal, security cameras and street medic coordination. He noted that this assessment was undertaken twice annually, once through the City Council and subsequently Purple Flag. The Chair of the Purple Flag Working Group noted that interested Members were welcome to attend the overnight assessment.
- 95.4 The Chair of the Purple Flag Working Group explained that her role within the partnership was to convene stakeholders and noted that work on making the city safe during the evening and night-time went on throughout the year. She noted that safety was an ongoing issue which had improved over the years and that Purple Flag status would not have been achieved without input and investment from the City Council in the night-time economy, such as CCTV upgrades.
- 95.5 In response to a query from Councillor Radley as to awareness of the city's Purple Flag status amongst night-time economy users, the City Centre Manager noted that work was ongoing following the latest City Council self-assessment to raise awareness. He explained that door staff wore badges promoting the city's Purple Flag status and that the Purple Flag Working Group had attended a Freshers event at Hartpury University. The City Centre Manager noted that resource limitations were a challenge, but it was important that users, businesses and parents felt reassured.
- 95.6 In response to an additional query from Councillor Radley regarding the cost of a Purple Flag application, the City Centre Manager explained that this depended on the size of the city, but the cost to Gloucester City Council would be £800. Councillor Radley asked whether this also covered the cost of the assessment itself which the City Centre Manager confirmed, however he noted that although there was no additional cost for the assessment, significant resources were needed for the successful administration of the 12-hour assessment.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
30.01.23

- 95.7 The Chair expressed the view that it was important that the public were made aware of the work undertaken to make the city safer and queried whether the Purple Flag accolade had had any impact on city centre footfall. The Chair of the Purple Flag Working Group confirmed that it had and that businesses operating in the night-time economy sector were noticeably busier. She referred to the relationship which had been built with Hartpury University and noted that Gloucestershire Police did not need to provide as heavy a resource in Gloucester city centre during the night-time as it did previously.
- 95.8 Councillor Hudson paid tribute to Officers, the Purple Flag Working Group and its Chair for their hard work in consecutively achieving Purple Flag status. He noted that city centre accommodation for Hartpury students was now readily available in the Blackfriars Residence and expressed the view that this investment in the city would not have taken place without the safety accolade. Reflecting on the student population, he noted that this was growing and was very important to the thriving city.
- 95.9 The Chair noted his agreement with this sentiment and commented that students were very important to the city of Gloucester and its economy.
- 95.10 In response to a query from Councillor Ackroyd regarding a 'Night Time Economy' tour for Councillors which had been postponed, the City Centre Manager explained that this tour was an initiative of the Licensing Team rather than the Purple Flag Working Group, however a further invite was likely to be extended to Members in due course. The Chair recommended that Members make use of this experience.
- 95.11 The City Centre Manager advised Members that a previous comment received from the Purple Flag judges was that Gloucester city had set the standard for other towns and cities and that he had been informed on many occasions that Gloucester was much safer due to this work and had good partnership working. The Chair thanked the City Centre Manager, Councillor Padilla and the Chair of the Purple Flag Working Group for their informative update.

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

96. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 27th February 2023.

Time of commencement: 6.30 pm hours
Time of conclusion: 8.20 pm hours

Chair