

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23rd JULY 2019

Present:

Councillor Stephen Andrews - Chair

Councillors -

Claire Bloomer
Gina Blomefield
Patrick Coleman
Andrew McClean

Dilys Neill
Gary Selwyn
Ray Theodoulou

Officers -

Head of Paid Service

Business Manager Contracts
(Publica)

Chief Finance Officer

Shared Healthy Communities
Manager (Publica)

Executive Director - Commissioning
(Publica)

Community Partnership Officer
(Publica)

Business Manager - Localities (Publica)

Committee Officer (Publica)

Substitutes:

Ray Theodolou

Observers:

Tony Berry
Jenny Forde (invited to speak on
Minutes OS.12 and OS.13)

Joe Harris
Stephen Hirst

Apologies:

Richard Norris

OS.4 SUBSTITUTION ARRANGEMENTS

Councillor Ray Theodoulou substituted for Councillor Richard Norris.

OS.5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(1) Member Declarations

Councillor Coleman declared an interest in Agenda Item 9 - Neighbourhood Planning Update - as he was a member of a Neighbourhood Development Plan Committee in Cirencester.

Councillor Maclean declared an interest in Agenda Item 9 - Neighbourhood Planning Update - as he was Chair of a Neighbourhood Development Plan Committee in his Ward.

There were no other declarations of interest under the Code of Conduct for Members or Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

(2) Officer Declarations

There were no declarations of interest from Officers.

OS.6 MINUTES

RESOLVED that:

(a) given the change in membership of the Committee, the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 5th March 2019 be noted and the relevant points, which required action, be reflected in the Work Plan;

(b) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 14th May 2019 be approved as a correct record.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstention 1, absent 0.

OS.7 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair thanked Officers for the work undertaken in producing the circulated reports but expressed concern that the position statement on Fairford and Tetbury Sports Centres had only been provided the previous day. The Head of Paid Service apologised for this, explaining that it had been a balance between providing the most comprehensive and up-to-date information and timeliness of circulation.

The Chair also explained that he intended to vary the order of business in order to accommodate external speakers who were present, with the item on Healthy Communities Programme being taken before that relating to Leisure and Cultural Services.

OS.8 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The following questions had been submitted by Christine Roberts of Fairford to the Chair of Committee the day before the Meeting:-

'Following on from the news that Tetbury Sports Centre has suddenly closed, we in Fairford are facing the possible closure of our Sports Centre.

Bearing in mind that this community facility was originally run by CDC before it was taken over by Farmor's School, could you please explain what practical assistance was previously made available to the school to help them run a viable business model for a community sports centre.

In addition, what plan does CDC currently have to support Fairford Sports Centre either financially or through practical assistance to save this rapidly growing town's Sports Centre from closure.'

Mrs Roberts was not in attendance at the Meeting and, given the timing of submission of the questions, formal responses were not available at the Meeting, although some of the issues were debated as part of a later agenda item (see Minute OS.12).

Note:

Subsequent to the Meeting, the following response was provided to Mrs Roberts by the Chair, in consultation with Councillor Jenny Forde, as the relevant Cabinet Member:-

'Thank you for your questions which were borne in mind by Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members when the matter of both Tetbury and Fairford sports centres was discussed as part of the agenda of the meeting. Given that your questions were broader than the specific remit of the Committee, the following answers are based on information that was presented to the Committee and supplemented by other information that has subsequently been provided by the Cabinet Member and Officers.

The transfer of the dual use facilities followed a period of extensive consultation and engagement with the school. As part of this, the school reviewed the operating costs and income at that time; the proposed terms and conditions for the asset transfer, including opening hours for community use; and the proposed financial support in the form of grant assistance. As a result of that engagement and work, the school formally requested to take on the facilities. The Council did not put any pressure on the school to reach such a decision; and it was not for this Council to dictate to the school how it should subsequently operate the facility, although officer support was available if required, particularly in the early stages.

As you are aware, in response to the news of the planned closure being made public, the local community and the Town Council have held meetings. None of these meetings have included the school but some have been attended by Councillors in their capacity as Ward Members.

We understand that the school has indicated that the community use of the sports hall will continue, and has given a commitment to explore options and ways in which it can continue to provide as many of the sports centre facilities as it can for the local community. From a financial perspective, the Council has not been asked to provide any further funding; and, indeed, the Cabinet Member is clear that it would not be appropriate to use public monies to support the continuation of a failing enterprise (i.e. with provision as before).

At the Meeting, the Cabinet Member confirmed that initial discussions with SLM to explore the ramifications of adding the Fairford and Tetbury sites to the existing contract had indicated that this would firstly need the support of the schools and would not be viable in the short-term. The Committee asked the Cabinet Member to facilitate discussions in the community to find a possible solution. The Cabinet Member confirmed that CDC had spoken to both schools to confirm details of the situations and, following those discussions, expressed the view that the Council should not seek to pro-actively facilitate discussions within the community at present as we need to be mindful that the Council has no direct ownership or control over the facilities and any future decision ultimately rests with the schools.

From an Overview and Scrutiny perspective, the Committee has agreed to set up a sub-group to look at what lessons might be learnt from the approach taken to leisure provision in Fairford and Tetbury since 2013. Terms of Reference for that sub-group have yet to be agreed, but it will report back to the main committee, probably by the

end of the year. At that point, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will take a view on what points, if any, need to be referred to either Cabinet or Full Council for further action.

Subsequent to the meeting, the Cabinet Member has indicated that, if asked to do so, the Council would consider providing professional advice on any emerging options and, should a viable alternative option come forward, would consider a request for support. However, this would only be with the agreement of the school should any such option relates to the school's facilities.'

OS.9 MEMBER QUESTIONS

No questions had been received from Members.

OS.10 CALLED-IN DECISIONS

No executive decisions had been the subject of Call-In since the Committee's previous Meeting.

OS.11 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING UPDATE

The Community Partnership Officer had circulated a report by way of an update on Neighbourhood Planning activity within the District, and information on process; the scope and influence of such plans; the benefits and disbenefits of developing such plans; and the impact of the Community Infrastructure Levy.

In response to Members' questions Officers explained the following:

- (i) Timing of neighbourhood plans was very difficult in relation to the local plan and when reviews took place, in order to make sure that the neighbourhood plans worked for the local community. Some authorities (Herefordshire, South Oxfordshire and Arun) had neighbourhood plans covering the whole district. Although this approach reflected the National Planning Policy Framework, it was considered that this could be quite difficult in a rural district. The Community Infrastructure Levy could be used with groups of parishes.
- (ii) The Forward Planning Team and the Community Partnership Officer worked closely to support the development of neighbourhood plans and achieve community aspirations such as housing allocations. Neighbourhood plans should be reviewed so as not to become out of date, although they were not subject to review in the same way as the District Local Plan.
- (iii) The cost of neighbourhood plans for small parishes was a consideration. Officers were aware of this, and provided advice and support to local parish and town councils.
- (iv) The process of 'adopting' a neighbourhood plan was organised by the District Council through a Referendum. Should there be a 'yes' vote of over 50% of the ballots cast, the district council was expected to 'make' the plan.
- (v) Sustainability should always be at the core of the plans.
- (vi) It was important that the District Council was not seen to be driving Parish Councils to produce a neighbourhood plan, but they could offer support and guidance.

Notwithstanding existing resources through websites and toolkits, it was suggested that officers could produce a guidance note document on CIL and neighbourhood plans, in an attempt to simplify the process for local communities. This could also identify the benefits and disbenefits of pursuing a Plan, provide a checklist for Parishes to assess whether it would be relevant for them to undertake a plan, and lessons learnt by others. The possibility of a parish event was also suggested, perhaps organised independently of the district council.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the progress made by local communities be noted;**
- (b) the Committee notes the relationship of neighbourhood plans with the Local Plan, and the opportunities and challenges this creates;**
- (c) Officers be requested to produce a document highlighting the lessons learnt and the reasons why a neighbourhood plan might or might not be of value to communities.**

Record of Voting - for 8, against 0, abstention 0, absent 0.

OS.12 HEALTHY COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME

(a) Healthy Communities Programme Update

The Healthy Communities Manager explained that she welcomed the opportunity to be able to present this report to Committee. The current work programme was a place based approach, and the service was currently working with communities in Bourton-on-the-Water, Tetbury and Fairford to identify and achieve healthy outcomes.

The University of the West of England was evaluating the Bourton-on-the-Water pilot project, the challenges and opportunities which would be relevant throughout the district.

(b) Future Policy Direction

Councillor Jenny Forde, Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Public Safety, explained that the Cabinet was currently formulating a new Corporate Plan, which would identify the Council's direction, aims and ambitions for the new term. All Cabinet Member portfolios were overlapping and the aim was to have healthy, well connected, local communities and, through the Community Safety Partnership, stronger, safer communities.

The Community Safety Partnership was a statutory body which had strategies to prevent crime and was also concerned with the wellbeing of residents. It was considered that a toolkit for Members could be produced in order for them to work with their communities and be involved.

During the ensuing debate, the following issues were raised:

- (i) Transport was critical, particularly for the young and elderly. A community bus was considered to be ideal for people to access the district and not be isolated.
- (ii) Broadband coverage should be 100% across the Cotswolds.

- (iii) Churches - communities should look as to how they could turn their churches into multi-use community places.
- (iv) Training had taken place with the planning team looking at health and wellbeing as part of the planning system, building and designing houses, spaces and streets creatively; with green infrastructure being important with cycle routes into town and village centres.
- (v) The need for a Leisure Strategy was crucial in order to meet the varying needs across the district.
- (vi) Access to counselling for young people was important.

(c) External Support to Communities

The Director of Operations for Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) attended Committee to explain about the work being carried out by the Community Council; and explained that there were there three strands of work being undertaken - infrastructure organisation, community wellbeing service and other projects.

Infrastructure organisation looked at community plans for the future, giving communities support through the neighbourhood planning process by facilitating meetings and events.

The community wellbeing service, with the help of the Clinical Commissioning Group, was running a service throughout the district, based on the social prescribing model. This included adult organisations and partners advising on social care, strengthening individual health and wellbeing, debt advice for financial issues and citizens advice to deliver services. Support was also being given to communities by carrying out housing needs surveys.

Project support was also provided, along with Gloucestershire Association of Town and Parish Council, in the voluntary community sector with training and day to day help for community groups.

(d) A Local Perspective on Delivery

The Fairford Surgery PPG and Community Wellbeing Programme Lead was in attendance, and provided information on the programme which represented the interests of patients in the surgery and in the area as a whole. He drew attention to a model which had been adopted in Frome which had integrated care, with access to databases of all support groups in the area to direct people to the relevant organisation to help. Support services worked together and, as a result, Frome had 21% less admissions to A&E, although at the same time Mendips have had an increase of admissions to A&E. Key needs included access to public transport, such as a community bus.

There was a need in the area for more co-ordination of organisations, such as Friends organisations, Churches who had bereavement counselling, and dementia initiatives. A Community Wellbeing Action Day was being held in October 2019 to bring groups together who would make a contribution to the services which might be provided to people to help with loneliness, isolation, keeping healthy, youth services, welfare and digital transformation.

In response to questions from Members, the following information was provided:

- (i) Bourton-on-the-Water had been part of a programme helping people with diabetes, engaging with the community on how programmes such as this could be rolled out further.
- (ii) Due to financial constraints, people around the district were being directed to the relevant organisation for help, such as social prescribers, community wellbeing service and local schools who had parent support advisors who would be able to help people link with other organisations.
- (iii) Funding and resource needed to be applied to projects, and the evaluation of programmes was important to be able to nurture future work programmes, such as the projects being run in Bourton-on-the-Water and the Cotswold School with the Wildlife Trust (which the Governors of the Cotswold School had given positive feedback following a visit). Councillor Forde indicated that work would be undertaken by the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Skills and Young People for school leavers and the skills and advice they would need to find work after leaving school or college.
- (iv) Members highlighted that a database of volunteers would be useful with a point of call for people.
- (v) The Council would continue to work to develop healthy communities, spaces and places for people.

RESOLVED that the reports received, and comments made, be noted.

Record of Voting - for 8, against 0, abstention 0, absent 0.

OS.13 LEISURE AND CULTURAL SERVICES

(a) SLM Contract Review

The Business Manager Contracts presented this item, and explained that the Council was in year six of the contract with SLM Everyone Active for management of Cotswold, Bourton-on-the-Water, and Chipping Campden Leisure Centres and the Corinium Museum. Performance to date had been analysed against the management contract outcome, financial performance and what the contractor projected at the time of taking up the contract - with original objectives having been met. The Council had until January 2020 to invoke the break clause, if necessary, although no concerns have been raised working with SLM. Customer satisfaction surveys have been carried out and a report will be presented to Committee in September and Cabinet in October with the results of the review.

Members highlighted that the Council should consider whether the facilities at the leisure centres were fit for purpose in the review.

(b) Position Statement on Tetbury and Fairford Sports Centres

The Business Manager Contracts presented the item, clarifying that he had drafted the report which Members had received. The Chair asked that the date on the report be updated to 22nd July 2019 as that was when it had been received by the Members.

The officer highlighted that, in early 2017, the schools had raised concerns regarding the sustainability of operating the facilities in the current format. It was explained that the Council had transferred the facilities to the schools, and staff had been

transferred through TUPE; and the Council's responsibility for these centres had ended when the properties and facilities were transferred. The facilities at Tetbury had been closed for community use on 8th July 2019, and the Fairford facilities would close at the end of August 2019.

Note:

At this juncture, Councillor Theodoulou declared an interest as his wife was a Governor at Farmor's School.

During questions and debate the following issues were raised:

- (i) It would be more efficient and effective for a task and finish group to investigate the issues and learn the lessons from the past and future provision, with a clear way forward of how people would access facilities in the future.
- (ii) Councillor Forde apologised for the delay in getting the report to Committee, but she too had been awaiting information. The facilities were entirely in the possession of the schools and information was awaited from them as to ideas and solutions. She emphasised that the schools had not asked for any financial help. She highlighted that people preferred to take exercise within the community at different classes rather than use gyms and considered that scrutiny of the issues should be undertaken so the same thing did not happen in the future. A leisure strategy would help inform the future needs of the district.
- (iii) Concern was expressed in relation to the provision of facilities and where people had to travel to when the gyms closed; the value of the gym equipment was negligible due to its age, and dialogue with the Governors should take place, although the Chair of Governors had not responded to correspondence; informal discussions had taken place with SLM; support was being provided to Bourton-on-the-Water and Chipping Campden centres; and a reasonable case would need to be put together before further financial support could be contemplated.
- (iv) There was a need to look at the whole of the Cotswolds in relation to gym facilities. The attendance at gyms was declining and it might be that people now wanted to attend classes in different places, such as community centres.
- (v) The grant agreements with Tetbury and Fairford would run out on 31st December 2019.
- (vi) It was suggested that the administration facilitate a discussion with SLM and the local representatives in the communities. It was pointed out that these facilities were not within the Council's ownership and any proposals coming forward would need to be assessed by the Schools in the first instance.
- (vii) Comparing Tetbury and Fairford with other centres in the Cotswolds was counterproductive; and the focus should be on future needs for the district and learning lessons.
- (viii) Members considered that a Task and Finish group should be set up to look at what lessons might be learned from the approach taken to leisure provision in Fairford and Tetbury since 2013, and the District-wide provision of facilities to meet current and future needs of residents.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the report be noted;**
- (b) a task and finish group be set up to look at:**
 - **What lessons might be learnt from the approach taken to leisure provision in Fairford and Tetbury since 2013.**
 - **The future provision of facilities to meet current and future needs of residents;**

with Councillors Coleman and Theodoulou being appointed to the task and finish group, along with the Committee Chair;

- (c) terms of reference be drawn up for the task and finish group, for consideration and approval by the Committee, including work timelines.**

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstention 0, absent 1.

OS.14 SUMMARY FINANCE/SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT - YEAR END 2018/19

The Committee received a report summarising overall performance by the Council as at 2018/19 Year End, with particular focus on progress towards achieving the Council's top tasks, and efficiency measures. The report also provided information on the Council's financial position, including revenue outturn and budget variances; and capital expenditure, capital receipts and use of reserves.

The Chief Finance Officer introduced the item and highlighted various aspects of the circulated report.

In response to questions from Members, the following information was provided:

- (i) The new corporate plan would identify tasks and performance indicators to be included in future reports.
- (ii) Overall targets had been met for affordable housing.
- (iii) A review of Fastershire should take place as not all villages were included in the project.
- (iv) A network was being set up for electric vehicle charging points and a report was expected to be presented to Cabinet in September 2019.
- (v) The Cirencester town centre master plan, a supplementary planning document, would be presented to the local plan programme board.
- (vi) Waste contract update and changes to the level of service would be taken into account at Cabinet in September.
- (vii) The climate change action plan will be considered in the future.

RESOLVED that the service and financial performance for Quarter 4 of 2018/19, and the comments made, be noted.

Record of Voting - for 7, against 0, abstention 0, absent 1.

OS.14 CONTINUATION OF MEETING

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9, as the meeting had exceeded the four hour limit identified within the Constitution, the Committee was asked to consider whether the Meeting should continue or be adjourned.

RESOLVED that the meeting be continued.

Record of Voting - for 6, against 0, abstention 0, absent 2.

OS.15 APPOINTMENTS TO GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The Committee was requested to make appointments to the Gloucestershire County Council's Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) Councillor Blomefield be appointed as this Council's representative on the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee, with Councillor Coleman as deputy;**
- (b) Councillor Neill be appointed as this Council's representative on the GCC Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with Councillor Andrews as deputy.**

Record of Voting - for 6, against 0, abstention 0, absent 2.

OS.16 QUARTERLY DIGEST

The Committee received a Quarterly Digest, which included updates in respect of Gloucestershire County Council's Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and the Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel. The Council's Executive Forward Plan July 2019 Update was also provided.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Record of Voting - for 6, against 0, abstention 0, absent 2.

OS.17 WORK PLAN 2019/20

The Committee was requested to consider its forward work programme, including the identification of any other matters for possible consideration.

It was agreed that a Broadband update be provide to a future meeting; and that a report be also submitted in due course in relation to the establishment of management companies on new housing developments.

It was also agreed that the elections update item be rescheduled to December 2019.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above changes, the Work Plan be approved.

OS.18 OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

The Meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. and closed at 2.44 p.m.

Chair

(END)