COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 24th November, 2011 at the Cabinet Suite - Shire Hall, Gloucester.

PRESENT:

Cllr Brian Calway                   Cllr David Penman
Cllr David Cooksley                Cllr Brian Robinson
Cllr Gerald Dee                    Cllr Charmian Sheppard
Cllr Terry Glastonbury             Cllr Brian Tipper
Cllr Terry Hale                    Cllr Kathy Williams (Chair)
Cllr Helena McCloskey              Cllr Marion Winship
Cllr Steve McHale

Substitutes:                        Cllr Ceri Jones (In place of Cllr Mike Collins)

Officers in attendance:            Stephen Bace, Iain Bryson, Sally Bye, Simon Harper and Geoff Sallis

Apologies:                          Cllr Mike Collins, Cllr John Jones and Susan Naydorf

34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Sheppard declared an interest with regards to the item on Registration (minute 41) due to employment as a Funeral Director.

35. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

These were agreed and signed by the Chairperson.

36. TRACKING SCHEDULE

36.1 Members discussed the recent visit to the new Coroners Court Complex. A second visit had been arranged for 6 December 2011 for members who had been unable to attend. Members were informed that the court would be operational in January 2012.

37. UPDATE FROM DISTRICTS

37.1 Cllr Calway informed the committee that the County Council’s scrutiny officers had attended a meeting of Tewkesbury Overview and Scrutiny Committee to update members on the development of the Police and Crime Panel.

37.2 Cllr Dee thanked the Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service for the visit to the Tri Service Centre on 11 November.
37.3 There was some discussion around the Police 101 number where one member discussed a resident’s difficulty calling the number. The matter had been reported to the Police.

37.4 Cllr Tipper drew the committee’s attention to an article which details concerns with regards to care for elderly. In addition the member discussed the cost of ‘scams’ in the county and referenced the task group report later in the item.

38. UPDATE ON POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

38.1 Members were updated on the steps that had been taken to establish a Police and Crime Panel as required in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act. Leadership Gloucestershire had agreed in principle that:

- Gloucestershire County Council should act as the lead authority in establishing the panel and provide the necessary officer support
- The panel should be made up of 10 non executive councillors and two independent members
- The elected membership should be made up of six district councillors and four county councillors.

38.2 The Constitution Committee had discussed the proposals and their concerns had centred on the work load of the Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny committee and any conflicts of interest that might arise if it was to be closely linked to the panel. Members discussed these issues and noted that these were the kind of details which had to be considered as the terms of reference was drawn up and plans evolved. Some members commented on the benefit of Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee members being involved in the transition to the panel as they have a good understanding of the requirements.

38.3 In response to a question, members were informed that independent members would likely be appointed using a similar process to the Standards Committee’s process of appointing of independent members. This would be drawn up as part of the operating arrangements of the panel.

38.4 It was clarified for members that the panel would have ten councillors and two ‘lay members’ as this was specified in the Act.

38.5 Included in the next steps in developing the panel, was the need for the draft terms of reference to be considered by the committee at the January 2012 meeting. Following this there would need to be agreement by Constitution Committee and then the appointments of District Members would take place by the end of May 2012. Throughout this time, County Councillors and District Members would continue to be updated on the process and would be provided with links to any new guidance.
38.6 The committee agreed to consider the draft terms of reference at the January 2012 committee meeting.

**ACTION** Lead Members/ Stephen Bace

### 39. TRADING STANDARDS TASK GROUP REPORT

39.1 Cllr Brian Tipper, chairman of the task group, presented the report to the committee. The Trading Standards Service had been identified as an area for the committee to do some more detailed work in June 2011. Concern had been expressed with regards to the protection being provided to the most vulnerable in Gloucestershire.

39.2 The remit of the task group was not to challenge the ‘Meeting the Challenge’ proposals but to discuss options available to the service. The task group had met on ten occasions and had spoken to Trading Standards staff, district council Environmental Health officers and representatives from Defra and the South West Trading Standards Partnership.

39.3 It was emphasised that the task group wished the report to be seen as constructive in supporting Cabinet to improve efficiency and to support the service. The task group had made a recommendation relating to the Meeting the Challenge savings targets and this was to ensure Cabinet had fully considered the impact on the service.

39.4 The chair of the task group thanked the members of the group for the work they had undertaken and the officers who had provided support.

39.5 Some members questioned the budget reductions in this area and looked forward to the response from Cabinet to the task group’s concerns. One member commented on the need to ensure that there was a full analysis of services before meeting the challenge proposals were finalised. It was also felt that Budget and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee would have an interest in the report and would be able to look at it from a more strategic perspective.

39.6 Some members made reference to the comments within the report on working with partners. This was felt to be an important way of developing the service. There was concern expressed from some members about the difficulty of establishing relationships with partners. In discussion it was established that the work of Trading Standards overlapped with partners such as the Police and it was important to be clear as to how they could work effectively together.

39.7 Concern was expressed with regards to the loss of preventive work within the service as well as increased pressure on staff. It was emphasised that areas such as animal welfare had far reaching consequences if the work was not carried out correctly.
39.8 There was a discussion around the public’s lack of understanding of the work of Trading Standards and the importance in ensuring that there was good promotion of their activity.

39.9 One Member commented on the recommendation in the report about how complaints were handled in the Trading Standards Service. It was suggested that there could be an opportunity to have ‘informal resolutions’ in the same way the police operate.

39.10 Members thanked the task group for the extensive and in-depth work that they had done. The committee supported the recommendations and looked forward to a response from Cabinet to the recommendations.

40. **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

40.1 Iain Bryson updated the committee on the changes to the Emergency Management Service and Business Continuity. In April 2011 the service relocated to the Tri-Service Centre and integrated into Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service to achieve efficiencies identified in the Meeting the Challenge Programme.

40.2 The staffing levels in this service area had been reduced significantly since the implementation of the Building Our Future and Meeting the Challenge projects. Despite these reductions, members were pleased to be informed that there had been benefits to the integration into GFRS. This related to more joined up planning and training, promotion of community resilience, ICT support, closer working with the fire control room and project management support.

40.3 It was acknowledged that the downsizing of Emergency Management Service also brought some risks which had been included in the business plan. This included the impact on the emergency response arrangements due to loss of staff. Despite losing 31 staff from the emergency response teams since June 2010 the service had managed to recruit 17 new members.

40.4 Members were informed that the Business Continuity Management (BCM) Steering Group met in October where members gave updates on BCM arrangements within their areas of responsibility. The general view was that no major overhaul of plans could be completed until the restructuring had been finalised. However, all were confident that the existing plans in place for Gloucestershire County Council critical services were still appropriate and should be able to be adapted to meet the new structure. The committee was asked to agree member(s) to represent the committee on the group and Cllr Tipper and Cllr Calway agreed to take on this role.

**ACTION** Iain Bryson

40.5 It was reiterated to members that integration had been a positive step for the service. Members welcomed the update and were pleased to note that the service had been integrated successfully into the Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service. There was still work to be done and risks to mitigate but the benefits were
beginning to be evident. Despite this, concern was expressed with regards to how far current resources could stretch to support Gloucestershire County Council officers in an emergency. Currently the service was looking at the possibility of Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service officers assisting with support. The Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee would continue to monitor this service area and would receive an update in early 2012.

**ACTION** Lead Members / Iain Bryson

### 41. BUDGET SCRUTINY

**41.1** Cllr Andrewartha informed the committee that Budget and Performance Overview and Scrutiny members had been meeting throughout the previous few months in order to establish council priorities. This was part of the committee’s process of advising Cabinet on the draft budget. The committee would send an interim report to Cabinet for its meeting on 14 December. This report would detail the committee’s findings and ask for a response from Cabinet on how the budget supported the priority areas. The committee would then agree a final report making recommendations to Cabinet on the draft budget that would be out for consultation.

**41.2** The Budget and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee wanted to allow all scrutiny members an opportunity to feed into the process. Members were informed that they could identify any areas of concern that had arisen to inform the budget scrutiny process.

**41.3** Members discussed the importance of budget scrutiny members considering the Trading Standards Scrutiny task group report. In particular they wished the committee to consider the recommendation around ‘Meeting the Challenge’ savings targets.

**41.4** The committee also asked budget scrutiny members to consider the importance of the successful integration of the Emergency Management Service into Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service. It was important to ensure that the service continued to be resilient.

### 42. REGISTRATION

**42.1** Sally Bye, provided members with a briefing of the changes taking place in Registration. The aim was for Registration to be cost neutral by March 2014. In order to achieve this, the service was reducing costs in premises, supplies and other services and increasing efficiencies by centralising most of the administrative functions. The head office and register office was based in Cheltenham and that was where the majority of the staff were now based.

**42.2** The service had moved from the Old Memorial Hospital in Cirencester and into Cirencester library, moved out of Maitland House in Gloucester and into Shire Hall, centralised all of the historic registers and copy certificate production into
Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

Archives, and carried out a management restructure reducing from 6 managers to 4.

42.3 Members received details of the ‘Tell Us Once’ scheme and were shown a brochure detailing this initiative that allows those who are bereaved to only have to tell government departments about the death of a loved one once. Members welcomed the scheme and one member commented that the brochure should be provided to funeral directors. There was a suggestion that sponsorship could be obtained to help fund the production of the brochure.

42.4 It was explained that in order to become cost neutral there needed to be good income generation. It was acknowledged that a great deal of this income was generated through marriages. In terms of charges, the service had to be mindful of competition from other authorities. Gloucestershire could attract people into the County to get married. In response to a question, it was confirmed that couples could get married in other counties but that the certificates would be held in that county. Couples could get married at the Registry Office in Cheltenham or in certain licensed rooms within Shire Hall.

42.5 Members discussed the ability of individuals to access and request certificates and data online. There was concern that this presented data security issues. It was clarified that an audit trail was kept of requests for certificates but that this was only held for a period of time. This was an issue at national level were discussions had taken place around the threat of data security issues.

42.6 One member asked a question about one individual’s experience of not being able to register a death within the set 5 days. The individual was in the Forest of Dean and it was identified that the Registration Office had been closed due to sickness but was now open again. According to the legislation a death had to be registered within 5 days although there were exceptions to this.

42.7 The committee thanked the officer for the presentation and noted that they would continue to monitor this area.

43. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

43.1 Geoff Sallis presented members with the Community Safety Performance report for 2nd quarter 2011/12. Members noted that earlier in the agenda members had discussed many of the service areas contained in the report. Members noted that performance was on target for the outcomes detailed within the report.

43.2 Members were informed of the opening of the new Water Rescue Centre at Tewkesbury on 15 October that marked the start of a new strategic alliance between the service and Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA).

43.3 In response to a member’s question it was clarified that there were 5 fire officers on the first appliance sent out to an incident. This was due to the need to balance
the number of officers needed and the need for a quick response. A second appliance to the seen could have more officers on it.

43.4 The committee received an update on the consultation on the Integrated Risk Management Plan for the Fire and Rescue Service. This examined the changing risk profile within the county in terms of demography, life risk and behaviours as well as broader environmental changes, climate impact and the potential for man made and natural disasters. It then identified the Fire Authorities proposed operation response to this changing environment and that the consultation on these proposals was due to run until 18th January 2012. The committee would receive a further update at the January 2012 committee meeting.

43.5 As part of this consultation, meetings had been set up for district members across the county as well as six public meetings. Members had been circulated earlier drafts of the plan but requested that they be sent the latest version alongside the consultation questions.

**ACTION** Geoff Sallis/ Stephen Bace

**CHAIRMAN**

Meeting concluded at 12:35