

Community Scrutiny Committee – 7 March 2017

Present: Councillor Ms Lisgo (Vice-Chairman)(In the Chair)
Councillors Mrs Blatchford, Davies, Gage, R Lees, Mrs Prior-Sankey, Ryan, Townsend and Watson

Officers: Chris Hall (Assistant Director – Operational Delivery), Alison North (Community Leisure Manager), Tim Child (Asset Manager), Jan Errington (Project Manager), Richard Burge (Open Spaces Manager – Deane DLO), Marcus Prouse (Democratic Services Officer – Scrutiny) and Clare Rendell (Democratic Services Officer).

Also present: Councillors Aldridge, Berry, Booth, Mrs Herbert, Horsley and Mrs Warmington.
Peter Bunday (Deputy Managing Director – GLL), Jon Argent (National Partnerships Director – GLL), Juliette Dickinson (Regional Director, South West and Wales – GLL) and James Curry (Regional Head of Service, South West and Wales – GLL).

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm).

8. Apologies

The Chairman (Councillor Coles) and Councillors Ross and Mrs Floyd.

9. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Community Scrutiny Committee held on 7 February 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed.

10. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Ms Lisgo declared personal interests as a Trustee of North Taunton Partnership and as a user of GLL's Feelgood Factory. Councillor Gage declared a personal interest as a Member of the Board for GLL. Councillor Prior-Sankey declared personal interests as a member of St James Church, a Member of Somerset County Council, a member of the 'Home Stop' Scheme at Taunton Association for the Homeless and as her spouse was a user of the CCTV Service. Councillor Townsend declared a personal interest as his business was located in Coal Orchard. Councillor Watson declared a personal interest as a Member of Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish Council.

11. Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) Performance Report

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the provision of leisure services within Taunton Deane which were now provided by GLL. As approved by Members, GLL would continue to report the performance of the leisure services every six months.

The report provided an overview on the performance of GLL and other leisure related matters. This included GLL's detailed performance and data which covered:-

1. Financial Performance against Business Plan;
2. Utilisation Performance;
3. Asset Management GLL and Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC);
4. Customer Feedback;
5. People;
6. Marketing;
7. Health and Safety;
8. Energy Management; and
9. Sports and Healthy Lifestyle

GLL were a social enterprise and charitable leisure trust and continued to work in partnership with TDBC to operate the Council's leisure facilities and deliver some health and sports development within the District. The funding agreement and leases had all been transferred from Tone Leisure to GLL which enabled a seamless merger with no changes to the services Tone Leisure had provided to the Council since 2003.

GLL was formed in the early 1990's and had grown to be a major provider of leisure services within the charitable social enterprise sector. The company operated over 200 leisure centres nationwide through a growing network of regional hubs which operated a diverse range of services across a variety of health, fitness, sport, library, arts and cultural facilities. GLL employed approximately 10,000 members of staff and had a turnover of approximately £250,000,000. Overall GLL were the largest leisure operator in the UK with a continued growth.

GLL had four core pillars at the heart of business. These were:-

- Better Service;
- Better People;
- Better Communities; and
- Better Business.

Better Service

GLL continued to use the net promoter score to measure customer satisfaction within the Taunton Deane area. At the end of 2015 the Taunton Deane contract stood at a credible 43%. At the end of 2016 this had dropped to 36% for the year. The 7% reduction was disappointing, but was predominantly linked to the new swimming facilities at Blackbrook and changes to the systems and programmes used across the contract. Blackbrook's score had fallen 23% from 49% to 26% at the end of 2016.

GLL had completed an extension to the aerobics studio at Blackbrook's Leisure Centre in October 2016. This extension had increased the class capacity by up to 15 spaces.

During Quarter 4, there were 74 accidents in the Taunton Deane Partnership. This was 14 less than the same period last year. There were two RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013) injuries and one insurance claim for damage to a property which adjoined Vivary Golf Course.

Taunton Deane's compliance target was 90%. The majority of the sites in the District were achieving these targets. Blackbrook Leisure Centre had some work to do to catch up with the other sites. This work would be focused on by the new General Manager.

Better People

New employment opportunities had arisen with the opening of a new swimming pool at the Blackbrook Leisure Centre. A total of 23 new staff had been employed to support the operation of these new facilities.

Sickness records for 2016 were 2.7% which was just below the 3% target.

As the GLL South West and Wales region developed, various new regional roles would be recruited to support all partnerships which included Taunton Deane. This included Project Managers, a Regional Facilities Manager, Community Sports Manager and Regional Business Manager. Recruitment had already commenced for some of these roles.

Better Communities

GLL continued to support Project Wellington. It had held a fun day in partnership with TDBC, Knightstone, Get Set services and the Wellington ONE team.

GLL had held community engagement sessions in Vivary Park in partnership with TDBC and Knightstone to support those affected by the loss of the play area due to the Creechbarrow Road project.

GLL had facilitated learning disability sessions in partnership with Future4 Resource Centre, Roman Road. Through funding received from Somerset Skills and Learning, 16 adults with learning difficulties from Six Acres Future4 Centre had enjoyed six weeks of swimming at Blackbrook Leisure Centre and health/nature walks in their local community. Staff at the centre continued to support these service users. The next stage of the project would see more learners experience trampolining and zumba.

GLL had attended the National Older People's Day event at the Brewhouse Theatre attended by 300 older people. Tailored products for older customers were promoted on the day. Activities included health walks, walking football, forever active and Nordic walking.

GLL had a beginners ladies running group at three of the main leisure centres in the District called 'This Girl Can Run'. Many of these ladies were new to exercise and running. Attendance was approximately eight ladies per group each week. Some of the ladies had started with a target of running 5km and had now completed the Taunton 10km.

Better Business

Following on from the opening of the new swimming pool and spa at Blackbrook Leisure Centre, there had been a big focus on the new business streams at this site. Catering and swimming had performed on or above expectations. GLL recognised that it would take time to develop and grow an affordable spa in this area.

Following a review of the tennis membership offered in Taunton Deane and GLL's desire for the tennis offered to be focused on bringing more people of all abilities into the sport, some new memberships had been agreed for 2017.

There had been some funding challenges at the Taunton Academy in the last few years as the school struggled to increase their student intake. GLL were informed in September 2016 that the school would no longer use Wellsprings Leisure Centre for its physical education programme. This had left a £30,000 hole in the site budgets. Meetings had been held which included TDBC officers, the Richard Huish Trust and GLL. Some additional funding had been secured from the local Diocese to support the physical education programme for at least 12 months.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and statements and asked questions which included:-

- Concern was raised about the number of accidents that had occurred and the performance levels, in particular at the Blackbrook Leisure Centre.
Accident levels had improved with increased health and safety levels. Members were reminded that the number of accidents were for six centres and over a time frame of three months. Blackbrook's performance had fallen but this was due to a lot of changes in the leisure management system. The figures were low but there was strong commitment to bring them back in line with the contract score.
- With the increased number of disabled athletes using sports centres, were there plans to improve the facilities for such users?
The GLL Foundation Programme recognised the increased profile of the Paralympics and Special Olympics. They realised that accessibility was an issue and had made significant improvements at Blackbrook with inclusive fitness and equal access.
- Concern was raised about the relationship issues between Taunton Academy and Wellsprings Leisure Centre.
Taunton Academy had experienced challenges with their finances but work had been carried out to fund the project. In the long term, they aspired to return to their previous standard.
- The spa at Blackbrook was taking a while to become established. What steps were being taken for the use to be improved?
It was difficult for local authorities to compete with private spas. However, over the last 3-4 weeks, the spa had improved. The weekly target income was £2460 and they had achieved £2983.
- Concern was raised about the money the Council was spending to subsidise some of the projects.
GLL expected the Council to want best value for money. The Council's contract stipulated how much and what projects were subsidised.
- Feedback was given on operational and maintenance issues at some of the centres. This would be fed back to local managers to be rectified.
- Information would be distributed on the Community Foundation and the social impacts from the local projects. This would be fed back through the Weekly Bulletin.
- The Committee gave formal thanks to GLL and the Tone Leisure Board for its performance update.

Resolved that the report be noted.

12. Supported Housing Property Options Review

Considered report previously circulated, which presented the findings from a review on the sheltered and extra care properties and the development of a new aspirational property standard which provided information on stock performance and condition.

The report set out a proposed approach to stock rationalisation, options appraisal and importantly how TDBC could achieve the key elements of the standard incrementally over the 30 year Business Plan.

In 2015 the Council undertook a review of supported housing in response to the changing environment and the need to make sure the Council was providing the right service and suitable accommodation in the future. The aims of the review were:-

- Achieving and maintaining a high level of tenant satisfaction;
- Providing housing that was attractive to older people to want to move in to;
- Meeting the local demand for people over 60 years of age; and
- Supporting people to maintain their independence and social networks of family and friends.

The Council recognised that it was essential that the buildings themselves were fit for purpose, were somewhere that tenants would want to live, met their needs and were financially sustainable.

The review considered the following:-

- Future demand for the properties;
- Stock condition;
- The new Supported Housing Property Standard;
- Appraisal of properties against the Standard;
- Stock performance (through Savills analysis);
- Investment required to meet the Standard;
- How the Council prioritised works over the 30 years;
- Smarter Solutions; and
- Options Appraisals of five low performing schemes.

Details of the review were:-

Stock Profile -There were 980 dwellings of which 586 were flats and 394 were bungalows. Almost 50% of flats were on the first floor without access to a lift. This was not suitable for those with mobility needs.

Stock Condition - The estimated investment needed for the next 30 years was £26,300,000 (excluded inflation). The average future investment need per sheltered unit over 30 years was £26,884. The sheltered stock was generally in fair condition, but the provision of general amenities was relatively basic, there was poor access, there was work needed to the common areas and there was no dementia friendly signage or colour schemes.

Financial Performance - The average net present value of the 30 year operating cash flows for sheltered stock was £14,267, which was 13% lower than the average for TDBC stock. Bungalows scored the highest and flats the lowest. Flats were less likely to reach the aspirational standard.

Non-Financial Performance - Each scheme also included a non-financial and social sustainability analysis. Indicators were not specific to sheltered housing but were still relevant.

Stock Rationalisation - The aim was to improve the stock profile, swap in more suitable stock and swap out less suitable stock.

Options Appraisal - This was to explore opportunities to invest or develop stock and to identify poor performing stock due to financial, non-financial or aspirational standards.

Aspirational Standard - This had been developed by colleagues and tenants together. It reflected tenants' priorities and national good practice. It encompassed accessibility, condition, security, location and proximity to amenities.

Approach. Not all the schemes involved would have to meet the full Standard or would be made fully accessible. Work would be realistic, affordable and achievable. Schemes would be appraised against the Standard and agreed priorities.

Essential Planned Works. These would be carried out through the Capital Programme, Existing Budget and the HRA Business Plan.

Other Priorities. The high priorities that were discussed were related to access (paths, doors and positioning) and also health and safety with suitable locks.

Details of what needed to happen next included:-

1. Survey the stock;
2. Refine the scheme matrix;
3. Refocus the capital programme;
4. Integrate the voids process and lettable standard;
5. Develop assessment framework;
6. Options appraisals for low scorers;
7. Adapted properties review;
8. Sheltered Lettings Policy review;
9. Set the rationalisation plan in motion; and
10. Carry out annual reviews.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and statements and asked questions which included:-

- Concern was raised that all top floor flats would be allocated to younger tenants, which could cause social problems.
A 'common sense' approach would be used. It was deemed acceptable to place vulnerable younger tenants (those with learning difficulties, etc.) in these types of properties, as it was better to have the properties occupied than empty. Officers would do their best to allocate these properties appropriately.
- Sheltered properties were exempt from the right to buy scheme. This was based on the designation of the property and the registered need of the tenant.
- It was confirmed that the Disabled Facilities Grant was administered through Somerset County Council and would be assessed by an occupational therapist and based on the tenants' eligibility.
- Concern was raised about the lack of maintenance carried out at the sheltered complexes in the District, which could lead to health and safety issues. This was passed on to the Open Spaces Manager who was present at the meeting and he would feed back to his team to get this rectified.
- How would the work in the review be programmed?

Certain work was included in the Capital Programme. Works with a health and safety implication would be prioritised and repairs would be dealt with on an ad hoc basis as needed. Not all work would be able to be carried out on one property at the same time. Some contractors would be specialised in one trade. Officers would have to be mindful of what works tenants would allow to be carried out.

- Would the Aspirational Standard be relevant in 30 years?
The Standard would be reviewed periodically. This was an organic process, so would be evolved over time.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The Council's new approach to smarter use of its stock to make it fit for purpose in the future for older people through stock rationalisation and ensuring that suitable components used for sheltered and extra care housing were fitted in a way appropriate to the needs of vulnerable older people be noted. This new approach was consistent with the Asset Strategy principles agreed through the Business Plan Review in 2016; and
- (2) The Executive be recommended that the Standard, as an aspirational standard, should be implemented as and when affordable, focusing on the attributes as prioritised.

13. Dog Waste Bins

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the current arrangements for the provision, maintenance and emptying of dog waste bins in Taunton Deane, their funding and locations.

The Deane DLO's Parks and Open Spaces Department were responsible for the installation and emptying of dog bins. The budget for this service was held by the Environmental Health Department who acted as the client.

Across the Borough a total of 201 public use dog waste bins were in operation. The allocation of the dog waste bins were split between internal customers, which were departments within the Council, and external customers, which were County and Parish Councils and other organisations. From 1 April 2017, internal bins which were emptied on behalf of the Council, were scheduled to be emptied 3 times a fortnight, additional external bins were emptied twice a week.

The cost for an internal bin to be supplied and installed was £345, which was the same as an external bin. However, the cost to empty an internal bin was £2.80 compared with £2.64 for an external bin.

It had become clear that this charge had not been increased at a rate to match the cost and had resulted in an under recovery of £832 per year. This would be corrected and all external customers who currently paid for this service, would be written to and advised of the increase to £2.80 per visit. The option to reduce the frequency the bins were emptied for Parish Councils could be offered to offset the increase to retain the service in case additional funding was not available.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and statements and asked questions which included:-

- Concern was raised that there was information missing from the report. The dog bins in the Unparished areas were not listed.
- Members were in agreement that the cost to empty the external bins should be brought in line with the internal bin cost.
- Members requested that the extra information was collated and the report brought back to the Committee at a future date.

14. Community Scrutiny Forward Plan

Submitted for information the proposed Forward Plan of the Community Scrutiny Committee.

During the discussion of this item, Members requested that the following be added onto the Forward Plan:-

- Somerset Community Council to give an update on Village and Community Agents.
- The Police to be invited to attend to give the Committee an update.
- Health and Wellbeing Workshops, requested better understanding of Members roles.
- The Meeting Halls item needed clarification.
- Concern on doors that were fitted in the Council's housing stock and the poor workmanship.

Resolved that the Forward Plan be noted.

(The meeting ended at 9.05 p.m.)