

**STRATEGY
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**28 January 2003
(6.00 – 7.30pm)

PRESENT: Councillors Smart (Chair), Bagnall, Bradnack, Durrant, Knowles, Sian Reid, Schofield and Ward.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor David Howarth, The Leader

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**03/STR/01 MINUTES**

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting on 11 November 2002 as a correct record which were signed by the Chair.

03/STR/02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Currie and Stuart.

03/STR/03 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

03/STR/05 Councillor Durrant declared a personal interest as a Trustee of the Cambridge and County Folk Museum and Friend of the Leper Chapel; 03/STR/06 a personal interest as Treasurer and member of the East Barnwell Community Centre and he did not speak or vote.

03/STR/06 Councillor Bagnall declared a personal interest as she often used the Barnwell Road cycle path when travelling to work and would benefit from any improvements to lighting.

03/STR/07, 10 and 11 Councillor Howarth having already noted the position on the agenda page for 03/STR/10 and 11, also declared the same personal interest on 03/STR/07 as it was related to the Grand Arcade scheme. He left the room and took no part in the discussion on these three items.

03/STR/04 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Ms. J Payne Chair of PevHill Residents Association addressed the Committee under 03/STR/06.

03/STR/05 KEY DECISION SERVICE PLANS, DRAFT BUDGES 2003/4 AND FORECAST 2004/05 (see also Record of Decision 03/STR/01)

The Director of Finance advised the Committee of three further matters which would be brought to the attention of the Executive at its meeting on 30 January. These were: (i) that the final settlement figure was expected to be announced by Government on 3 February; (ii) South Cambridgeshire DC was considering the

transfer of its Basic Credit Approval to the City Council. This would not impact on the Council's funds and a report would be submitted to Housing & health Scrutiny in March explaining the position further; (iii) the possible purchase of accommodation for medical support to the homeless. This would not impact on the Council's funds as funding would be provided by the Homelessness Directorate.

The Director of Finance amended the report at Appendix R paragraph 8 to read a Council Tax Band D of £126.59. The table below the text was correct.

The Leader advised the Committee that in the interests of transparency Appendix R had been included, which indicated the approach the Executive would be minded to take at its meeting on 30 January.

The Leader stated that although the Council knew the Government settlement would be affected by the fall in the City's population (16,000 less) and the changes to the funding formula, the degree of shortfall had been considerable. Although the Council was protected by a 'floor' of 3% - there were no guarantees that this would continue beyond the short term and a £1.9 million shortfall in future years' grant was probable. The Council continued to receive less from its investments primarily because of the low interest rates. In addition for 2003/04 there would be increases in pension and National Insurance contributions together with an above inflation pay settlement. The resultant budget has required a scaling back of Liberal Democrat policy priorities and a higher level of Council Tax. The Leader stated that the Liberal Democrats would only support an increase in the level of Council Tax for 2003/04 so that it could meet its manifesto commitments. He stated that the County Council was likely to raise its Council Tax by 9.2% despite receiving a generous Government settlement for 2003/04. The Leader was grateful to the officers and Executive Councillors in enabling the Council Tax increase to be less than that of those nearby authorities which had received more favourable Government settlements.

Councillor Bagnall stated that a 3% increase in funding for 2003/04 could not be regarded as a cut. With the extra grant from the Department of Work & Pensions, the Council's 2003/04 grant would only be £100,000 less than forecast in the Medium Term Strategy in July 2002. The Council had also been in receipt of £1 million extra revenue funding from 2001/02. The Liberal Democrat proposals would adversely affect the least advantaged citizens the most. The Labour Group's budget would be presented to Council on 13 February.

Councillor Durrant proposed that the Leader recommend to the Executive that the capital receipt from the sale of Abbey House be allocated to a fund for repairs to, and the conservation of, historic buildings in the City. The Leader stated that he could not recommend to the Executive diverting the capital receipt to such a fund in the current budgetary climate, but did not rule it out for a future budget.

The Committee agreed (by 5 votes to 0) the recommendations for the Leader as stated in the report.

The Leader agreed to the recommendations.

03/STR/06 **APPLICATION FOR SAFER CITY GRANTS – EAST BARNWELL COMMUNITY CENTRE & BARNWELL ROAD CYCLE PATH** (see also *Record of Decision 02/STR/02*)

Ms Payne addressed the Committee on the recommendation not to fund the application for the Barnwell Road cycle path. She asked/stated (i) if the Environment Safety Fund could cover the costs of the lighting requested; (ii) that the reference to the lighting requested was not in the area stated in the report; (iii) had members visited the site, if not why not. Referring to the application from the East Barnwell Community Centre, Ms Payne asked why eight cameras were required.

The Leader stated that his recommendation to the Committee would be to agree the funding for lighting the cycle path in full (ie. for £15,000) as there was sufficient budget available.

The Committee was advised that the Community Centre required eight cameras because of the shape of the building.

The Committee agreed the recommendation in 2.1 (by 7 votes to 0) and the amended recommendation that the Barnwell Road cycle path lighting be funded to £15,000 (by 8 votes to 0).

The Leader agreed to the recommendations as amended.

03/STR/07 **CITY CENTRE MANAGEMENT PROJECT FUNDING – FITZROY STREET** (see also *Record of Decision 03/STR/03*)

The Committee agreed the recommendation as stated in the report.

The Deputy Leader agreed to the recommendation.

03/STR/08 **KEY DECISION ADOPTION OF NEW CODE OF PRACTICE FOR TREASURY MANAGEMENT IN THE PUBLIC SERVICES** (see also *Record of Decision 02/STR/04*)

The Committee agreed the recommendations for the Leader as stated in the report.

The Leader agreed to the recommendations.

03/STR/09 **ELECTED REGIONAL ASSEMBLIES – GOVERNMENT “SOUNDINGS” EXERCISE** (see also *Record of Decision 02/STR/05*)

The Leader advised the Committee that in its submission the Council should favour elected regional assemblies in principle and that the proposal for a referendum was

sensible. He did not agree that the referendum should be used to seek views on other local government reform, rather that this should be a matter for each regional assembly. The submission should also reflect support for unitary status but not comment on its suitability for the whole region. The Government should be encouraged to devolve more power to the regional assemblies.

Councillor Bagnall stated that it would be important to ensure that the public were given information about the current boundaries between the various levels of government and between quangos and elected bodies. She suggested, when it was appropriate to do so, that the EELGC be requested to produce a short summary of the current structure of the region. Councillor Bagnall concurred with the Leader's concerns over the degree of devolved power and when to pursue further local government reform.

The Committee noted that the Council did not have the resources to consult widely in the time available. The Leader requested that the officers investigate whether the County Consultation Contract could be used to commission a poll to gauge citizens views on a regional assembly.

The Committee agreed the recommendation that a response based on the above be compiled by the Chief Executive in consultation with Group Leaders.

The Leader agreed to the recommendation.

03/STR/10 **KEY DECISION GRAND ARCADE – WALKWAYS AND CCTV AGREEMENTS** *(see also Record of Decision 02/STR/6)*

The Committee agreed the recommendations for the Deputy Leader as stated in the report.

The Deputy Leader agreed to the recommendations.

03/STR/11 **KEY DECISION GRAND ARCADE – DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT & ASSOCIATED MATTERS** *(see also Record of Decision 02/STR/7)*

In tabling a set of revised recommendations, the Grand Arcade Project Manager advised the Committee that an element of the Development Agreement required further negotiation and the revisions removed any reference to agreeing the Development Agreement at this stage and added:

'That authorisation to execute and complete the Development Agreement be deferred until the figure for car park compensation referred to in 4.4 of Confidential Appendix Four to the report is agreed by the Head of Property and Building Services'

The Committee agreed that if this issue could be resolved before the next meeting a report should be circulated to the Committee and the decision taken by the Deputy Leader following consultation with Chair and spokes. If any member of the Committee so requested, a special meeting could be held to discuss the issue before

the Deputy Leader took a decision.

The Committee agreed the recommendations for the Deputy Leader as revised.

The Deputy Leader agreed to the recommendations.

The meeting ended at 7.30pm.

CHAIR