

**COMMERCIAL & HUMAN RESOURCES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

13 January 2004
4.30pm – 7.35pm

PRESENT: Councillors Ellis-Miller (in the Chair), Adigun-Harris, Boyce, Bradnack, Downham, Dryden, and Howell

Executive Councillor: The Leader, Ian Nimmo-Smith deputising for Amanda Taylor

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

04/CHR/01 ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR THE DURATION OF THE MEETING

As both the Chair and Vice Chair had given their apologies, the Director of Central Services invited nominations for Chair for the duration of the meeting. There were 3 nominations. On a show of hands, Councillor Ellis-Miller was elected Chair for the duration of the meeting by 4 votes to 3 (for Councillor Dryden with Councillor Bradnack with 1 vote).

04/CHR/02 MINUTES

The minutes of 4 November 2003 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

04CHR/03 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Liddle, Stebbings and White.

04/CHR/04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following made declarations of personal interest:

In relation to minute number 04/CHR/08: Councillors Adigun-Harris and Bradnack (as members of the National Union of Teachers); Councillor Dryden as a member of Amicus.

In relation to minute number 04/CHR/10: Councillor Ward as an owner of a house let out for rent.

04/CHR/05 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No members of the public wished to address the Scrutiny Committee.

04/CHR/06 **SERVICE PLANS and General Fund Revised Revenue & Capital Budgets 2003-04** (see also *Record of Decision 04/CHR/01*)

The Executive Councillor explained that the decisions he took at the meeting would be referred to Strategy Scrutiny Committee so that there could be a corporate overview of all budgets before final decisions were taken.

The Chair tabled an amendment to Appendix B:

“In Appendix B

1. Delete Revenue Bid B1 ‘estimated cost of “all-up” and combined elections’ - £4,000
2. Reduce Revenue Bid B5 ‘reciprocal cash collection’ to £15,000 for each year. A corresponding adjustment will be made in Housing & Health budget proposals.
3. Delete Capital Bid C7 ‘electronic vote-counting machine’ - £60,000.”

The Accountant highlighted other changes to the published agenda –in Appendix E, item H17 from the Hold List could be removed if Bid C6 (Shop Forecourts for £74,000) was approved.

The Service Plan for each service was considered and comments were made as below:

Councillor Bradnack said that his previous general comments about the phrase “on-going” had been largely addressed in most service plans. However, some target completion dates were not yet sharp enough and the Committee needed to know when they would be reached.

Democratic Services

Councillor Howell said that savings could be made if the number of committee meetings was reduced and that he was concerned at the cost of Area Committees.

IT Contract Management

Legal Services

Councillor Bradnack questioned whether recruiting 2 additional solicitors was advisable before the Best Value Fundamental Service Review (BVFSR) of the service had begun. Councillors were also concerned about the significant level of demand for Legal Services from internal customers with no appropriate re-charging mechanism in place which made the work difficult to manage with the resources available.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services said that additional resources were needed immediately and that addressing the issues raised would be a critical aspect of the BVFSR.

Property and Building Services

In response to a question from Councillor Bradnack, the Head of Property and Building Services confirmed that shop parade improvements would be referred to Area Committees.

Reception and Office Services

Accountancy Services

Councillor Ward asked about problems in paying invoices on time. The Head of Accountancy Services acknowledged that the government's target of 100% was not being met but that the Council was doing better than those authorities used for comparison for Best Value Fundamental Service Review.

City Services External Trading

Internal Audit

Human Resources

Revenue Services

Markets (part of Economic Development & Tourism)

The Committee agreed the recommendations 2a)-d), f), h)-j) and l) for the Executive Councillor as stated in the report and e), g) and k) as amended above (by 4 votes to 0).

The Committee also agreed by 4 votes to 0 to put Legal Services bids before those for Committee Services in the prioritisation of the PPF bids.

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendations as amended and the PPF bid priorities.

04/CHR/07 MOBILE CCTV CAMERAS: PROCEDURES AND CRITERIA FOR THEIR DEPLOYMENT AND EVALUATION OF THEIR EFFECTIVENESS (see also *Record of Decision 04/CHR/02*)

The Director of Central Services introduced the report. A bid for funding for the consultants' work on evaluation had been made to the Community Safety Partnership. The tender of £126,000 was considerably above the budget of £90,000 as the radio survey established that additional hub sites were required for the CCTV control room to control the cameras across the city. The sum could still be funded from the Revenue Budget but the Constitution required that the Director of Finance, the Executive Councillor and the Scrutiny Committee agree to this. The Director of Finance had given his approval. The Committee was asked to consider in particular

the length of deployment of the cameras in any location and the procedure for authorising deployment.

Councillors Bradnack and Dryden welcomed the report. They had no serious reservations about the criteria but, in their view, 2 weeks deployment at any one time was insufficient and that there should be a minimum of a month.

Councillor Howell also welcomed the report but raised concerns that the procedure for selecting sites using the proposed CCTV Management Board seemed very bureaucratic. He was concerned that the process would not be quick enough and would be costly. He also asked for assurance that the guidelines would allow cameras to be deployed in relation to sites which were vandalised repeatedly or subject to graffiti, activities which were not within the remit of the police. He also suggested that 3 months should be a minimum deployment time to allow for meaningful comparisons to be made for crime statistics purposes.

The Director of Central Services assured members that the procedure would not be bureaucratic and that the Management Board would work using email. She clarified that not all the criteria of deployment have to be met; any one would be sufficient.

The Premises Manager emphasised that the guidelines would be reviewed and amended in the light of experience.

The Executive Councillor affirmed that the principles and procedures should not be implemented by members and that the officer members of the Management Board were the appropriate authority.

In reply to questions from Councillors Dryden and Howell, the Director of Central Services said it would be difficult to recover significant costs from other organisations applying to use the mobile camera facility but that we should reserve the right to charge in appropriate cases.

The Committee agreed with the recommendations for the Executive Councillor (by 4 votes to 0).

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendations.

04/CHR/08 TRADE UNION FACILITIES AGREEMENT *(see also Record of Decision 04/CHR/03)*

In introducing the report which was presented annually, the Head of Human Resources said that the Joint Staff Employer Forum had endorsed the status quo and agreed that meetings take place later in the year to consider future arrangements. The unions had equal membership within the Council and had made a bid for 2 full time posts.

Councillors Bradnack and Dryden indicated that they would not support the recommendation to keep the status quo.

The Head of Human Resources said that it was important to develop the shop stewards as the Branch Secretaries could not work at both an operational and a strategic level and the Council needed them to be working at the strategic level.

The Executive Councillor affirmed that the 2 posts would continue to be full time until April 2004 and that there would then be a review.

Councillor Bradnack proposed and Councillor Dryden seconded an amendment to the options suggested in the report, namely that both posts be funded full time.

On a show of hands, the motion was defeated by 5 votes to 3.

The Committee agreed with the recommendation to continue the funding as at present (2003/04) i.e. GMB full-time, Unison 50% (by 4 votes to 0).

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendation.

04/CHR/09 **KEY DECISION OPTIONS APPRAISAL FOR THE WHITLOCKS SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEME** *(see also Record of Decision 04/CHR/04)*

The Chief Estates Surveyor introduced the report indicating that the responsibility of this committee was to agree the sale in principle and that the Housing & Health Scrutiny Committee would be recommended to approve option 6 of the six options explored.

Councillors explored the reasons that other options were not chosen and whether the Council could benefit by putting in an outline planning application for the site and selling it with that in place. The Chief Estates Surveyor advised that it would not be possible to submit an outline planning application as the site lay in a Conservation Area.

The Committee agreed with the recommendations for the Executive Councillor (by 4 votes to 0).

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendations.

04/CHR/10 **COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS AND EXEMPTIONS** *(see also Record of Decision 04/CHR/05)*

The Committee agreed with the recommendation for the Executive Councillor (by 7 votes to 1).

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendation.

04/CHR/11 **VOLUNTARY FIRST REGISTRATION OF COUNCIL LAND** *(see also Record of Decision 04/CHR/06)*

The Chief Estates Surveyor introduced the report highlighting the advantages of the scheme in the long term.

The Committee agreed with the recommendation for the Executive Councillor (by 5 votes to 0).

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendation.

04/CHR/12 **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

Resolved -

To exclude members of the public from the meeting on the grounds that, if they were present, there would be disclosure to them of information defined as exempt from publication by Categories 3, 7 and 9 as defined in the Council's Constitution part 4B (pages 181/3).

04/CHR/13 **CAMBRIDGE GUILDHALL - CROWN COURT ACCOMMODATION** *(see also Record of Decision 04/CHR/07)*

The Committee agreed with the recommendations for the Executive Councillor (by 4 votes to 0).

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendations.

04/CHR/14 **NNDR [Business Rates] IRRECOVERABLE DEBTS TO BE WRITTEN-OFF** *(see also Record of Decision 04/CHR/08)*

The Committee agreed with the recommendation for the Executive Councillor (by 4 votes to 0).

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendation.

04/CHR/15 **GENERAL DEBTS - BAD DEBTS FOR WRITE OFF** *(see also Record of Decision 04/CHR/09)*

The Committee agreed with the recommendation for the Executive Councillor (by 4 votes to 0).

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendation.

The meeting ended at 7.35pm

CHAIR