

**STRATEGY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**4 May 2004  
6.00pm – 8.35pm

**PRESENT:** Councillor Schofield (Chair), Councillors Bradnack, Coleman, Durrant, J Smith, Stuart, Taylor, Todd-Jones and Ward

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor Ian Nimmo-Smith, The Leader.

**FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL****Cllr Ruth Bagnall**

Cllrs Schofield, Nimmo-Smith and Bradnack spoke on the contribution made to the work of the Council by Cllr Ruth Bagnall and the sense of loss felt by her colleagues and friends either as members or officers of the Council.

**Director of Community Services**

The Leader reminded members that this was the last meeting which David Poole was to attend as Director of Community Services, since giving notice of his retirement. He expressed his gratitude for the inspiration, loyalty and leadership which Mr Poole had brought to the Council.

He also welcomed Liz Bissett to the meeting who had been recently appointed as Director of Community Services.

**04/STR/14 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting on 26 January were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**04/STR/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Adey.

**04/STR/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest

**04/STR/17 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present.

**04/STR/18 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ACT 2003**

The report set out the background to the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 which placed a statutory duty on the police and local authorities to work together in partnership with other

agencies to reduce crime & disorder in their area. The Act had also introduced, amongst other measures, the Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO). The Anti Social Behaviour Strategic Group had been established as a formal Task Group specifically to deliver its ASB (Anti-Social Behaviour) agenda

The role of the Strategic Task Group in co-ordinating the ASB work from that time to the present was set out in Appendix A. The work of this Group had received local, regional and national endorsement for its good practice and was believed to have had an impact on the National Agenda. Tackling ASB had been acknowledged as a pressing issue for both the residents of the City and the tenants of the City Council.

The report set out those provisions within the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 for which local authorities/social landlords were primarily responsible. The report had been considered by the Environment and Housing and Health Scrutiny Committees and respective Executive Councillors had endorsed the recommendations set out in the report, which related to their areas of responsibilities.

Cllr Bradnack voiced concerns over the delegation of authority for areas contained in the Act to officers without apparent accountability to Councillors. He also noted that members had limited access to information on specific cases, and sought advice on members' rights to information, particularly on individual housing issues. The speed of action by the Council and its officers working within dedicated Task Groups was of concern, as was the apparent inflexibility of the structure devised to deal with these issues. He said that closure of premises orders in accordance with the terms of the Act and the Council's other powers under the Act needed to be reflected in tenancy agreements, perhaps in a specific document, such as that published by the Cambridge Housing Society. He asked that further consideration be given to the provision of a Help-Desk for reporting cases of Anti Social Behaviour.

Cllr Stuart said that other partners, specifically the Police, had been concerned over the effect and interpretation of the terms of the Data Protection Act as it affected the exchange of information on cases subject to the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003. He noted the increase of incidence of graffiti and the lack of effective prosecution.

Officers responded that the delegation of authority had been set out in the report and had been agreed as indicated by the Environment and Housing and Health Scrutiny Committees and the respective Executive Councillors. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services was in the process of setting out members' rights to access generally to information and documents. The concern of other agencies over exchange of confidential information in the light of the Data Protection Act would be resolved as joint working progressed. The reporting of information took various routes and it was recognised that the routes for reporting instances of Anti Social Behaviour needed clarification.

The Chair said that the concerns expressed by members had been noted and would be taken into account as the work on the Act progressed.

Councillor Stuart's proposal that the following be added to the recommendation: 'Partners should recognise enforcement as an important part of graffiti reduction and will make renewed efforts to bring offenders to justice.' was carried by 5 votes to 0.

The Committee agreed the recommendation for the Leader as amended by Councillor Stuart's proposal by 5 votes to 1.

The Leader agreed the recommendation set out in the report as amended.

#### 04/STR/19 **APPLICATION FOR A DISPERSAL ORDER IN PARTS OF PETERSFIELD AND ROMSEY WARDS**

The Committee noted that the Leader had approved an application by the Police for the use of dispersal powers in areas of Romsey and Petersfield wards under section 30 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003. These powers came into force on 7 April and would remain effective until 6 October 2004.

#### 04/STR/20 **MAYORAL ALLOWANCE**

On 28 January 2004 the Civic Affairs Committee had agreed recommendations for this Committee and the Leader relating to the allocation of expenses within the budget for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

The Committee agreed the recommendation for the Leader by 5 votes to 0.

The Leader agreed the recommendations set out in the minute of Civic Affairs Committee on 28 January 2004.

#### 04/STR/21 **REVIEW OF RACE EQUALITY SCHEME 2004**

The report set out the background to the City Council's Race Equality Scheme which had been developed in accordance with the draft *Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality*, and approved by the City Board at its meeting on 16 April 2002. The report reviewed progress on the implementation of the scheme and the conclusions of the review.

The officers proposed four key areas on which to concentrate on taking forward over 2004-2005:

- Securing commitment to race equality
- Mainstreaming Race Equality
- Training and raising awareness in race equality issues
- Employment and delivering positive action to achieve a representative workforce at all levels of the Council.

The Committee agreed the recommendation for the Leader by 5 votes to 0.

The Leader agreed the recommendations set out in the report

**04/STR/22 DRAFT BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN**

The Council had a statutory duty in accordance with the Local Government Act 1999 to publish its Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) by 30 June 2004. Under the Constitution, the BVPP was part of the Council's 'policy framework' and, therefore, a matter for approval by the Council. Ideally the content of the BVPP would be reported to this Committee before the meeting of Council but the timetable for the production of the Plan was very tight, with year-end performance data still being incorporated well into May. Rather than call a special meeting of Strategy Scrutiny Committee for just before Council it was recommended that the Chief Executive report the content of the BVPP direct to Council for approval.

In the light of the changes to the current statutory requirement for the audit of the Best Value Performance Plan, it was proposed to change the format of the Best Value Performance Plan from a paper-based document to an electronic document available on the internet. The Plan would consist of an introduction that highlighted the main areas of service improvement to be undertaken in 2004/05 and included the statement on the Council's compliance with the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Local Authority Service Contracts.

The Committee agreed the recommendation for the Leader by 6 votes to 0.

The Leader agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

**04/STR/23 COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

The Cambridge Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) had been identifying key issues for the City and the objectives that might address them. These issues and objectives had been tested with stakeholders and members of the public last summer/autumn and Strategy Scrutiny Committee had given its views on 7 July 2003. The purpose of the LSP's work was the preparation of a Community Strategy for Cambridge. The strategy, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, was intended to show how the well-being of people living in the City would be improved over the next 3 years.

The Community Strategy was structured around chapters that covered each of the identified issues and recognised the significant partnership work that was taking place in the City around the issues. The LSP was not seeking to replicate this work. The actions shown in the report were those where the LSP would be taking a lead.

Labour members were concerned that issues of resources were being targeted at wards with higher levels of deprivation. The Leader drew attention to the role of the City Council's research on Mapping Poverty in the Community Strategy's priority theme relating to social inclusion.

The Committee agreed the recommendation for the Leader by 5 votes to 0.

The Leader agreed to recommend the Council to approve the Community Strategy and the associated actions set out in the appendix.

#### 04/STR/24 **SAFER CITY GRANTS**

The report set out the background to the Safer City Grants and the appendix showed the applications for consideration in Round 1 (of 4 rounds) in 2004-05. Attention was drawn to the change in circumstances of a grant allocated in relation to Rawlyn Court and a proposal by members that a grant be made to the D Team Project where officers had recommended no allocation.

Members were advised that it would not be possible to fund all the revenue bids for Round 1 as they totalled more than the grant remaining. It was suggested that it might be preferable to reserve some grant funding (both capital and revenue) to be allocated in Rounds 2-4. As there would be over £39,000 capital left in the fund even if all applications were approved, members endorsed the option to move 19K of this capital to be used for revenue applications in the subsequent rounds.

Councillor Durrant's suggestion that applicants be encouraged to consider how projects would be funded beyond the life of grant was endorsed.

The Committee agreed the recommendation for the Leader by 5 votes to 0, with the addition of allocating £4,775 to the D Team Project, leaving £14,425 of the £19,000 transferred from capital to revenue available for revenue applications in future rounds.

The Leader agreed the recommendation set out in the report as amended above.

#### 04/STR/25 **CORPORATE RISK AND ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK**

Developments in best practice in Risk Management coupled with changes stemming from the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 required the Council to reassess its approach to strategic risk and assurance. The Project Definition and associated Project Appraisal set out the means of achieving this.

The Committee agreed to recommend the Leader approve the Project Appraisal by 6 votes to 0.

The Leader approved the Project Appraisal.

#### 04/STR/26 **STRATEGY - GENERAL FUND REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS, CARRY FORWARDS AND SIGNIFICANT VARIANCES FOR 2003/04**

The officers' report set out the latest position against revenue and capital budgets for the financial year, 2003/04, for the services reporting to this Scrutiny Committee. It highlighted any anticipated significant variances and presented requests for approval to carry forward certain budget under-spends to 2004/05 (subject to final outturn).

Cllr Bradnack asked for consideration to be given to additional funding of the Junction CDC of £350,000 to enable the continuation of the programme put on by Café Afrika. The Public Entertainment Licence for this venue had not been renewed and the Junction provided a suitable alternative. The Leader noted this suggestion and commented that the Junction was already allocated £0.3M funding and that the outcome of the Licensing application by Café Afrika was not finally resolved.

The Committee agreed the recommendations for the Leader set out in the report by 5 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

04/STR/27 **CORPORATE OVERVIEW - GENERAL FUND REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS, CARRY FORWARDS AND SIGNIFICANT VARIANCES FOR 2003/04**

The report set out the latest position against the revenue and capital budgets for the financial year, 2003/04 for all Service Committees, Appendix A for revenue budgets and Appendix C for capital. Appendix B showed the details of all requests from Executive Councillors to carry forward budgets from 2003/04 into 2004/05.

Under spending in 2003/04 would have the effect of increasing the amount of reserves available at 1 April 2004 by a corresponding amount. As a result, approval of these carry forwards should not increase the net budget requirement for 2004/05.

This report also indicated the impact of significant variations from the 2003/04 revised budgets that had been highlighted to all scrutiny committees during this cycle in order to provide context for decisions on carry forward requests. The projected effects of significant variations and requests to carry forward budgets were summarised in Appendix A.

The Director of Finance pointed out that the Executive Councillor Environment had revised the Planning Development Grant fund carry forward from £40k to £50k with a consequent effect on the total of reserves to be used to fund the carry forwards. This sum would be £299,520 and not £289,520 shown in the report.

The Committee agreed the recommendations for the Leader set out in the report as amended above by 5 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

04/STR/28 **ONLINE PAYMENTS AND CASH MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS**

The committee considered a Project Appraisal on proposals to introduce a standard approach on-line payments and a corporate cash management system throughout the authority.

Members noted the constraints on the proposal referred to by the Director of Finance. It was intended to fund that part of the project relating to cash management from repairs and

renewals funds as approved in January 2002 and the additional £34,000 relating to on-line payments from a bid to the Technology Investment Fund which would require consideration by the Strategic IT Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee agreed to recommend the Leader approve the Project Appraisal and the terms of the on-line payments system set out in the front piece to the Project Appraisal by and the extension of the current 'Merchant Acquirer ' contract, by 6 votes to 0.

The Leader approved the Project Appraisal and the terms of the online payments system and the extension of the current 'Merchant Acquirer ' contract.

**04/STR/29 URGENCY ACTION – ELECTRICITY FOR COUNCIL SITES WITH CONSUMPTION BELOW 100kw**

The Committee noted the decision of the Leader on agreement to a new electricity supplier to Council sites consuming less than 1000kw.

**04/STR/30 BYELAW – CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL IN PUBLIC PLACES**

The Committee noted the response from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in relation to the Council's application for a provisional byelaw regulating street drinking and considered what action should be taken as a result of its receipt.

The committee approved the recommendation of the Leader that no further action be taken by 5 votes to 0.

The Leader agreed that no further action be taken to pursue the application for a byelaw.

The meeting ended at 8.35pm

**CHAIR**