

**COMMERCIAL & HUMAN RESOURCES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

6 July 2004
4.30pm – 6.05pm

PRESENT: Councillors Adigun-Harris (Chair), Armstrong, Barrett-Payton, Bradnack, Ellis-Miller, Hymans, Reid and Taylor (Vice Chair).
Councillor Boyce as alternate for Councillor Ellis-Miller for minute numbers
04/CHR/29-04/CHR/33

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Liddle, Executive Councillor for Commercial & Human Resources

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

04/CHR/29 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2004 were signed as a correct record by the Chair.

04/CHR/30 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Hughes.

04CHR/31 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Taylor declared a personal interest in minute number 04/CHR/35 as she worked for a printing company.

04/CHR/32 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

04/CHR/33 **GENERAL FUND REVENUE AND CAPITAL FINAL OUTTURN,
SIGNIFICANT VARIANCES AND CARRY FORWARD REQUESTS
FOR 2003/04** (see also *Record of Decision 04/CHR/18*)

The Accountant introduced the report highlighting that there was a net income of £2.252m and a net beneficial variance of £496,000 after allowing for carry forward requests. At the last meeting of the Committee carry forwards of £76,000 had been approved. An additional £7,530 of carry forward requests detailed in Appendix C of the officer report was for decision at this meeting. Approval for re-phasing Capital expenditure as detailed in Appendix D was also required.

Councillors Bradnack and Barrett-Payton expressed concerns about the accuracy of the budget process given the large net variance.

The Accountant put the figure in perspective by indicating that this was only 2.3% of the total budget for this portfolio.

The Committee agreed (by 6 votes to 0) with the recommendations for the Executive Councillor.

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendations.

04/CHR/34 **MEDIUM TERM STRATEGY JULY 2004** (see also *Record of Decision 04/CHR/19*)

The Accountant explained that the Medium Term Strategy was the Council's key financial planning document for the 5-year period 2004/5 to 2008/9. It considered the implications of the Medium Term Objectives and priorities which the Council had approved. Appendix B indicated the main budget assumptions and Appendix D listed the main areas of uncertainty (those relevant to this portfolio were numbers 7,18,30 and 32). The Committee was asked to give any other areas of uncertainty they wished to be taken into account.

There were no specific views to put to the Leader.

The Executive Councillor agreed.

04/CHR/35 **PUBLICATION OF REPORT ON THE COUNCIL'S COMPLAINTS HANDLING PERFORMANCE IN 2003/04** (see also *Record of Decision 04/CHR/20*)

The Senior Strategy Officer tabled comments from the Standards Committee. Several members of the committee shared the concern expressed by the Standards Committee about why the Council was not achieving its target of answering 100% of complaints within 10 days.

The Committee agreed (by 6 votes to 0) with the recommendations for the Executive Councillor.

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendations.

04/CHR/36 **ANNUAL REPORT ON RECRUITMENT AND WORKFORCE MONITORING** (see also *Record of Decision 04/CHR/21*)

The Human Resources Manager said that this report and the following one should be considered together. She gave feedback to the Committee on the views expressed at the 29 June meeting of the Joint Staff Employer Forum which had endorsed the action plan. The Forum had highlighted the importance of obtaining feedback from the Black and Minority Ethnic Group (BME group) and so both reports were going to be considered at the next meeting of that group. The problem of the ageing workforce and the difficulties of attracting young people to work in local

government also needed to be addressed. Job Evaluation had shown that there were wide variations in the way job descriptions were written and the unions suggested that the section which asked employees to act in accordance with the Council's policies on equal opportunities in employment and service provision should be part of the annual performance review otherwise there was a risk that only lip service was paid to it.

Councillor Ellis-Miller asked whether there had been more responses to the new look adverts in the local paper. The officer said that there had been an increase in applicants per post.

Councillor Reid asked whether it was possible to apply on-line as she thought this would appeal to younger applicants. The Officer indicated that in the last 2 months senior posts had been advertised on-line and there were plans to extend that facility.

Councillor Barrett-Payton welcomed many of the actions in the action plan and particularly the one relating to the work/life balance policy but he was also concerned that there was a risk of positive discrimination.

The Chair pointed out that positive discrimination was against the law.

Councillor Bradnack raised concerns about the way the statistics were presented in Appendix 2 of both reports. He suggested that percentages be used as that would make the comparison with the community statistics more meaningful.

The Chair pointed to paragraph 6.5 which said that further investigation was required about why applicants from under-represented groups were not appointed and said that the same had been said the previous year. The Officer pointed out the relevant parts of the Action Plan which indicated that work had begun but that there was still more to do.

Councillor Taylor thought that there should also be investigation of why application forms were not returned by under-represented groups and not just why more were not appointed. The Human Resources Manager agreed and said that work had started in that area.

The Committee agreed (by 6 votes to 1) with the recommendations for the Executive Councillor.

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendations.

04/CHR/37 **ANALYSIS OF RACE RELATIONS (AMENDMENT) ACT
MONITORING DATA 2003/04** (see also *Record of Decision*
04/CHR/22)

Councillor Barrett-Payton asked how it was proposed to achieve the target of 4.5% of employees being from BME groups by 2009/10. The Human Resources Manager

replied that the Action Plans relating to Recruitment and Workforce Diversity were the means.

The Chair asked several questions and the Human Resources Manager responded:

Question	Answer
Were there any black women on the new training course "Women Aspiring to Management"?	Not so far but there were only a few applicants and the closing date was some weeks ahead.
How would the equalities action plan address the needs of BME groups?	Through access courses and the learning & development groups
Incremental progression within the City Pay Bands - is this really performance related pay?	Employees would have to meet the objectives set in their performance review and show evidence of learning & development among other criteria still being developed in collaboration with the unions.
Research tended to show that there was always a bias against BME groups and working class white women in relation to performance review/pay?	The HR Service was aware of such research.
What was the BME staff group?	This was a group of staff drawn from within the Council and they would next meet in September 2004.

The Committee agreed (by 6 votes to 1) with the recommendations for the Executive Councillor.

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendations.

04/CHR/38 **IMPROVEMENT WORKS AT COUNCIL-OWNED SHOPS/SHOP PARADES (NORTH CAMBRIDGE)** (see also *Record of Decision 04/CHR/23*)

The Head of Property & Building Services reported that North Area Committee had considered the report and were in favour of the proposed works. He tabled an amendment to Appendix 2 for the item relating to 1a Hazelwood Close – adding the sum of £500 for bicycle racks and deleting the comment "existing provision adequate for single shop". He also reported that a ward councillor had flagged up concern that the lighting at Campkin Road shops post arrival of Tesco was not adequate after all and undertook to review the position.

Councillor Bradnack asked if there were any way to prevent cars parking on the pavement in Carlton Way. The Officer agreed to investigate preventative measures with Highway/Housing colleagues.

The Committee agreed (by 6 votes to 0) with the recommendations for the Executive Councillor.

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendations.

04/CHR/39 **ELECTRICITY SUPPLY AT MANDELA HOUSE** (*see also Record of Decision 04/CHR/24*)

The Head of Property & Building Services said that the project appraisal was in draft form as not all aspects of the works had been costed although it was now likely to be less than £25,000. The project would be paid for from R&R funds.

The Committee agreed (by 7 votes to 0) with the recommendations for the Executive Councillor.

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendations.

04/CHR/40 **APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES** (*see also Record of Decision 04/CHR/25*)

The Chair nominated Mr Paul Gilchrist as the second representative for Cambridge United Charities.

The Committee agreed (by 6 votes to 0) with the recommendations for the Executive Councillor including the nomination above.

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendations including the nomination above.

04/CHR/41 **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

Resolved before considering the appendix of the report 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 7 and 9 as defined in the Council's Constitution part 4B (pages 181-183).

04/CHR/42 **KEY DECISION FUTURE OF COVENT GARDEN HALL, COVENT GARDEN, CAMBRIDGE FOLLOWING ITS PLANNED SURRENDER IN 2005 BY JUNCTION CDC** (*see also Record of Decision 04CHR/26*)

The Chief Estates Surveyor introduced the report saying that ward councillors had been consulted and that there was strong interest in the site from the Anglia Polytechnic University (APU). The Covent Garden Residents' Association indicated they were happy with community/arts use but that use by faith groups could be problematic because of the problems of car parking.

Councillor Reid said that if the venue was once lost it was difficult to get it back. She wanted the priority to be to find a tenant preferably for community/arts use.

She tabled an amendment to the recommendations:

“The Commercial & Human Resources Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the recommendations below.

The Commercial & Human Resources Executive Councillor is asked to take a decision as indicated below.

2.1 To confirm that, subject to the decision of the Community Development and Leisure Executive Councillor:

2.1.1 The Head of Property and Building Services be authorised to market on a lease basis Covent Garden Hall for independently funded arts or community use subject to consulting with the Community Development and Leisure Executive Councillor and reporting terms to the Commercial & Human Resources Executive Councillor, Chair and Spokespersons for Commercial & Human Resources Scrutiny Committee

2.1.2 Covent Garden Hall be treated as a surplus asset if appropriate terms for lease to an independently funded arts or community organisation cannot be agreed.”

Councillor Bradnack welcomed the sentiments of the amended recommendations. He mentioned that the APU drama department was going to expand greatly and the venue was very nearby.

The Executive Councillor indicated that selling was the last possible option should finding a suitable tenant fail.

The Committee agreed (by 6 votes to 0) with the amended recommendations for the Executive Councillor.

The Executive Councillor agreed to the amended recommendations.

04/CHR/43 **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 7 and 9 as defined in the Council's Constitution part 4B (pages 181-183).

04/CHR/44 **NNDR [Business Rates] IRRECOVERABLE DEBTS TO BE WRITTEN-OFF** (see also Record of Decision 04/CHR/27)

The Committee agreed (by 6 votes to 0) with the recommendation for the Executive Councillor.

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendation.

The meeting ended at 6.05pm.

CHAIR