

**COMMERCIAL & HUMAN RESOURCES
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

18 January 2005
4.30pm – 6.35pm

PRESENT: Councillors Adigun-Harris (Chair), Armstrong, Barrett-Payton, Bradnack, Hughes, Hymans, Reid and Taylor (Vice Chair).

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Nimmo-Smith, The Leader (for items 1-4 and Democratic Services Service Plan), then Councillor C Rosenstiel, Deputy Leader (for the rest of the agenda) deputising for Councillor Liddle, Executive Councillor for Commercial & Human Resources

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

The Leader present deputising for the Executive Councillor.

05/CHR/01 MINUTES

The minutes of the Meeting held on 18 November 2004 were signed as a correct record by the Chair.

05/CHR/02 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Ellis-Miller and from the Executive Councillor, Jennifer Liddle.

05CHR/03 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

05/CHR/04 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

**05/CHR/05 SERVICE PLANS AND GENERAL FUND REVENUE AND CAPITAL
BUDGETS – REVISED 2004/05, DRAFT BUDGETS 2005/06 AND
FORECAST 2006/09** (see also *Record of Decision 05/CHR/01*)

The Accountant introduced the report saying that savings were within cash limit although the £90,000 of bids would take these over the limit. He referred to Appendix 2 and pointed out that saving S4 was linked to bid B2 and saving S11 to bid B4.

As the Procurement Officer had started late in the year, there was a request to carry forward the unspent portion of the money.

He also reminded members that recommendation e) asked for bids to be put in an order of priority.

There was only one capital bid – Mandela House air conditioning which would be funded from the Repairs and Renewals fund.

Decisions were also required at recommendation j) about those items on the Capital Hold List.

In considering the Service Plan of Property & Building Services and that for Economic Development & Tourism, attention should be paid to the review of charges at Appendix D of the relevant Plan.

The Committee then considered each Service Plan.

Democratic Services Service Plan:

Councillor Bradnack said that, unlike those in other Service Plans, the Critical Success Factors in this plan did not indicate those factors which could prevent the achievement of the targets; they were more like targets or outcomes themselves.

The Head of Legal & Democratic Services agreed that was a fair point and said that revised Critical Success Factors would be circulated to members.

Councillor Hughes said that she thought that officer reports were inadequate to enable proper scrutiny to be conducted and there was no reference to this in the plan.

The Head of Legal & Democratic Services said that was because the quality of reports was the responsibility of the officers in other departments.

Councillor Bradnack added that it was not clear what function reports had. Were they for the Executive Councillor about the decisions to be made or were they to advise the Scrutiny Committee about key issues they should consider in relation to the decision.

The Committee agreed that this was being dealt with by the Working Party on Decision Making.

Councillor Bradnack referred to Appendix A and noted that the target - Electoral Registration response to the Annual Canvass - had failed to meet its target for two consecutive years and it made sense to lower the target. Nevertheless it was important to understand why the target had been missed.

The Head of Legal & Democratic Services said that there was a general downward trend throughout the country in the number of people returning their canvass forms and 89-90% was what most other local authorities achieved. He agreed to send details of these figures to Councillor Bradnack.

Councillor Bradnack noted that committee attendances were down by 30% which indicated a failure in encouraging participation by the public. If the budget for area committees (£114,000) was divided by the number of members of the public

attending (777) then the cost was enormous at £150 per person. He proposed the following amendment:

‘That the target for attendance at meetings be changed from N/A to “to increase the attendance at area committee meetings” ‘.

The amendment was lost by 3 votes to 5 on a show of hands.

The Committee agreed (by 5 votes to 0) the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan.

The Leader agreed the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan.

The Deputy Leader present deputising for the Executive Councillor.

IT Contract Management Services Service Plan:

The Committee agreed (by 5 votes to 0) the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan.

The Deputy Leader agreed the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan.

Legal Services & Land Charges Service Plan:

The Committee agreed (by 5 votes to 0) the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan.

The Deputy Leader agreed the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan.

Property & Building Services Service Plan:

Councillor Reid proposed that the completion date for support of the work of the Guildhall Working Party be March 2006 rather than March 2005. The Committee agreed.

The Committee agreed (by 4 votes to 0) the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan with the one amendment as above.

The Deputy Leader agreed the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan with the one amendment as above.

Reception & Office Services Service Plan:

The Committee agreed (by 4 votes to 0) the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan.

The Deputy Leader agreed the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan.

Accountancy & Support Services Service Plan:

The Head of Accountancy & Support Services explained why the service was unable to meet its saving targets. Most of the costs of the section were staff costs and there had been difficult staffing issues. At present the service had the minimum levels of staff for the level of work required. There was also now additional work load arising from the transfer of a member of staff from Community Services to this section.

Councillor Barrett-Payton emphasised the importance of keeping an eye on levels of staff in Accountancy as this could impact on all other council services.

The Committee agreed (by 4 votes to 0) the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan.

The Deputy Leader agreed the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan.

City Services External Trading Service Plan:

The Committee agreed (by 4 votes to 0) the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan.

The Deputy Leader agreed the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan.

Internal Audit Service Plan:

Councillor Barrett-Payton commented that current implementation rates of 55% for agreed audit recommendations seemed low.

The Head of Internal Audit said it was new information and that it was disappointing particularly as the recommendations were agreed in consultation with the departmental managers concerned.

Councillor Bradnack thought that it was not reasonable for this to be a target for Internal Audit but rather for departments.

The Head of Internal Audit said that audit did need to make sensible recommendations so there might be work for them to do in that regard.

Councillor Bradnack proposed that such implementation rates be included in individual directors' and managers' objectives.

The Director of Central Services said that all Directors had their Performance Reviews soon and she would suggest that audit implementation rates be recommended to the Working Party as part of the reviews.

The Committee agreed this recommendation by 7 votes to 0.

The Deputy Leader agreed this recommendation.

The Committee agreed (by 4 votes to 0) the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan with the additional amendment noted above.

The Deputy Leader agreed the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan with the additional amendment noted above.

Human Resources Service Plan:

The Head of Human Resources acknowledged that members would realise that some targets due for completion in 2004/05 had been carried forward to 2005/06. This was due to the fact that the team is a small operational support team helping departmental managers deal with considerable organisational change. This had had to take priority.

Councillor Hughes asked whether the Council's involvement in the Graduate Recruitment Scheme would help to address inequalities such as the small proportion of women in senior management posts and the under-representation in the work force of staff from Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

The Head of Human Resources said that other plans were in place to tackle these issues but that the Graduate Recruitment Scheme was intended to encourage young people (also under-represented) to join the Council.

The Committee agreed (by 5 votes to 0) the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan.

The Deputy Leader agreed the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan.

Markets Service Plan:

Councillor Taylor commended the initiative on Community Markets and asked where the pilots would be held and when consultation with local communities including local shop keepers would happen.

The Head of Economic Development & Tourism said he could not give details yet because the detail depended on recruiting a new Markets Officer.

The Committee agreed (by 5 votes to 0) the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan.

The Deputy Leader agreed the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan.

Revenue Services Service Plan:

Councillor Bradnack raised concerns that the targets in the Medium Term Objectives section were different to those in Appendix A and it was important to have consistency. He was also concerned that the Service was always just missing its targets, so were the targets over-ambitious?

The Head of Revenue Services explained that targets were set at one point in time and then new legislation came in and staff had to master that so some targets were missed.

Councillor Bradnack acknowledged the impact of changes in legislation but he wondered whether this council was performing less well than others in the same circumstances?

The Head of Revenue Services said that this council set high standards and that it was still in the top quartile for performance against targets.

The Committee agreed (by 5 votes to 0) the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan.

The Deputy Leader agreed the service objectives and proposals for 2005/06 and future years as set out in the Service Plan.

The Committee then considered the recommendations in the budget report.

- a) had already been considered (see each Service Plan above).
- b) Approved (by 4 votes to 0) the proposed charges as shown in Service Plans Appendix D for General Properties (Civic Rooms) and Economic Development, City Centre Management & Tourism (Markets).

- c) Approved (by 5 votes to 0) the revised revenue budget for 2004/05, as shown in Appendix 1 to the officer report, for submission to the Executive, which results in a reduced use of reserves of £33,500.
- d) Approved (by 5 votes to 0) proposals for revenue savings and bids, as set out in Appendix 2, which had been incorporated into the budgets presented to the Committee.

In considering recommendation e), Councillor Taylor proposed the following amendments:

“That the bid for PPF1 be reduced to £84,000 in 2008/09 and subsequent years.
That the order of priority for the PPF bids be PPF1, PPF4, PPF2 and PPF3 (joint third) PPF6 and PPF5.”

The Committee agreed both recommendations.

- e) Approved (by 5 votes to 0) the Priority Policy Fund (PPF) bids, as shown in Appendix 2 to the officer report with one amendment, that the bid for PPF1 be reduced to £84,000 in 2008/09 and subsequent years, for submission to the Executive with the following order of priority: PPF1, PPF4, PPF2 and PPF3 (joint third) PPF6 and PPF5.
- f) Approved (by 5 votes to 0) the budget for 2005/06 as shown in Appendix 1 of the officer report, for submission to the Executive.
- g) Agreed (by 5 votes to 0) to seek approval from Council to carry forward funding for the Procurement Officer of £15,000 due to a later start of this initiative.
- h) Agreed (by 5 votes to 0) to seek approval from Council to carry forward resources of £28,000 from 2004/05 into 2005/06 to fund rephased capital spending and reserves of £21,000 for overspends, as detailed in Appendix 3 of the officer report.
- i) Approved (by 5 votes to 0) the Capital Bids, as identified in Appendix 2 of the officer report, for submission to the Executive for inclusion in the Capital Plan or addition to the Hold List, as indicated.

In considering recommendation j), Councillor Reid proposed that H14, Cleaning & Restoring the Outside of the Guildhall and H18, Cellarers Chequer Roof Repair be taken off the Hold List and put on to the active list of capital projects.

The Deputy Leader asked why there were no Repairs & Renewals funds for the Cellarers Chequer Roof repair.

The Head of Property & Building Services explained that the work to make the roof safe had already been done; the remaining work is desirable conservation work. He added that only that morning he had received a request from a Trust to buy the building and that he would keep councillors posted on developments.

- j) Approved (by 5 votes to 0) the following amendments to the Capital Bids currently on the Hold List, included at the end of Appendix 4 of the officer report, for submission to the Executive – to put H14, Cleaning & Restoring the Outside

of the Guildhall and H18, Cellarers Chequer Roof Repair on to the active list of capital projects.

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendations as amended.

05/CHR/06 **GUILDHALL WORKING PARTY** (*see also Record of Decision 05/CHR/02*)

Councillor Reid proposed an additional recommendation:
To appoint Councillor Cantrill to the Working Party as an additional member.
because of his architectural and business experience.

The Committee agreed.

The Committee agreed (by 5 votes to 0) with the recommendations for the Executive Councillor as amended and set out below:

- (a) To endorse the general principles set out above as the basis for the Working Party's future work;
- (b) To instruct the officers to put the marketing of a new lease on the Crown Court accommodation on hold, pending further work on the feasibility of the TIC using the premises;
- (c) To approve expenditure of up to £10,000 from the Property Strategy Fund, to enable expert advice to be commissioned on how the WP's broad aims might be realised.
- (d) To appoint Councillor Cantrill to the Working Party as an additional member.

The Deputy Leader agreed to the recommendations as above.

05/CHR/07 **LAND FOR HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS, COWLEY ROAD CAMBRIDGE** (*see also Record of Decision 05/CHR/03*)

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

The Deputy Leader agreed to the recommendations.

05/CHR/08 **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

Resolved before considering the appendices 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).

05/CHR/09 **DISPOSAL OF FORMER BARN, TENBY CLOSE, CHERRY HINTON**
(see also Record of Decision 05/CHR/04)

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

The Deputy Leader agreed to the recommendations.

05/CHR/10 **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 181-183).

05/CHR/11 **ARBURY COURT SHOPS – REQUESTS FOR LANDLORDS
CONSENT TO A CHANGE OF USE** *(see also Record of Decision
05/CHR/05)*

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

The Deputy Leader agreed to the recommendations.

05/CHR/12 **NNDR [Business Rates] IRRECOVERABLE DEBTS TO BE
WRITTEN-OFF** *(see also Record of Decision 05/CHR/06)*

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

The Deputy Leader agreed to the recommendation.

The meeting ended at 6.35pm.

Chair