

STRATEGY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6.00pm – 8.05pm

PRESENT: Councillors Adigun-Harris (Vice Chair), Barrett-Payton, Bradnack, Durrant, James, Phillips, Ward (Chair).

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Ian Nimmo-Smith, The Leader. Councillor Colin Rosenstiel, The Deputy Leader.

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**05/STR/01 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting on 22 November 2004 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

05/STR/02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Cantrill.

05/STR/03 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

05/STR/04 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present.

05/STR/05 A DRAFT COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY FOR CAMBRIDGE 2005-2008 *(See also Record of Decision 05/01)*

The Head of Strategy & Partnerships introduced the report. The Committee noted that there were further contributions expected from the Drug Action Team and the Domestic Violence Forum. Group Leaders thanked the officers for the work undertaken in producing the Strategy.

Councillor Bradnack was concerned that the Jury of the Committee of Inquiry had suggested that the Partnership should involve churches in identifying and promoting awareness of acceptable behaviour, on the basis that churches may have different values amongst each other and also between them and the Council. The Head of Strategy & Partnerships clarified that although that was the term used by the Jury, the Partnership had interpreted it to mean youth community groups which are either run by or use churches as venues, rather than churches per se.

The Leader commented that the Strategy was not the totality of the actions to be taken over the coming three years and the Strategy could perhaps better reflect that point. The Head of Strategy & Partnerships stated that further work was planned to list the on-going

work by the Partners. The Leader also requested that further evidence of the fear of crime survey be included to give a reflective picture of what residents feel.

Councillor Barrett-Payton suggested that cycle crime should be included in some way in the priorities, and the Leader supported this view

The Scrutiny Committee agreed by 5 votes to 0 that the comments above be passed on to the Partnership for consideration, the Leader agreed.

05/STR/06 SERVICE PLANS AND GENERAL FUND REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGETS - Revised 2004/05, Draft Budgets 2005/06 and Forecast 2006/07 *(See also Record of Decision 05/02)*

In answer to a question from the Chair on the Service Plan target of a 10% reduction in number of suppliers by the end of 2005/06, the Procurement Manager stated that the Council would still aim to support local suppliers where possible and within the context of best value. The Leader requested that once the assimilation of information relating to this the Service Plan target had been undertaken, that it be provided to him and members of the Scrutiny Committee in a briefing note.

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

The Leader agreed the recommendations.

05/STR/07 SERVICE PLAN AND GENERAL FUND REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGETS - Revised 2004/05, Draft Budgets 2005/06 and Forecast 2006/07 - OVERVIEW *(See also Record of Decision 05/03)*

The Director of Finance updated the report following decisions taken by Executive Councillors following Environment and Community Development & Leisure Scrutiny Committees which had met after the publication of the Strategy papers. It was noted that these changes had been incorporated in the report to the Executive which was meeting on 10 February. The Director of Finance circulated a briefing on the Government's Grant Settlement final confirmation and a statement as the Council's Statutory Finance Officer on the Council's Reserves position.

The Leader thanked the Director of Finance for the work he and his officers had done during the preparation of the Council's budgets for 2005/06.

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

The Leader agreed the recommendations.

05/STR/08 **PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL'S DECISION MAKING AND SCRUTINY STRUCTURE** *(See also Record of Decision 05/04)*

The Senior Strategy Officer introduced the report. The Scrutiny Committee noted that the Decision Making Working Party would be asked to work up the detail and it was agreed that the following issues should be forwarded to it:

- 1) Para 4.5 of the report refers - Should all members be given the opportunity to scrutinise reports and submit comments to the Chairs of Scrutiny Committees? (From Cllr Bradnack)
The decision to which Scrutiny Committee and item is reported to should be that of the Chair and spokes not the Executive Councillor (From Cllr James).
- 2) All Executive Councillors should visit annually local communities through Area Committees [and possibly Chairs of Scrutiny]. (From Cllr Bradnack, Cllr Ward, Cllr C Rosenstiel)
- 3) Reports to Committees should be shorter, with the onus on the Councillor to request background information if required. Recommendations should be clearly defined with the basis for the recommendation made clear. (From Cllrs Barrett-Payton and Bradnack)
- 4) A set meeting day and time should be put into the Municipal Calendar so that ad-hoc member level meetings will be held on these reserved days. (Cllrs Barrett-Payton and Durrant)
- 5) Re Executive Portfolios – (i) That the C&HR, Strategic IT and Strategy portfolios be looked at when considering a merged Customer Services & Resources portfolio. (ii) That the Deputy Leader's portfolio should include the remit of major one-off projects, as envisaged when the Grand Arcade scheme required a specific Executive Councillor lead. (Cllr C Rosenstiel)
- 6) Re para 4.8 of the report – an Executive Councillor should be able to ask for a non-key decision to be pre-scrutinised.

Councillors Bradnack, Durrant and Barrett-Payton expressed disappointment at the Liberal Democrat proposals that retained the principle of pre-scrutiny which they all stated was not proper scrutiny nor was it in accordance with the principles of the Local Government Act 2000. The Leader and Deputy Leader stated that the Liberal Democrat Group believed that pre-Scrutiny offered Councillors an opportunity of proper scrutiny in an open and democratic way. The Leader stated that the scrutiny of services took place at two points of the Municipal Year through the Service Review and Planning process, but accepted that it did not work as well as it could and that it needed to be reviewed.

Councillor Bradnack tabled a list of questions requesting the Leader to respond in due course during the next stage of the review. These are listed below:

“Does the Lib Dem leader acknowledge/ accept that:

- The current council structure of executive and committees was built on the assumption that it must enable the ruling group to fill the full range of both scrutiny and executive roles, rather than sharing them?
- Separation of powers between executive and scrutiny is a sound constitutional principle, which the current arrangements do not reflect?
- Corporate Performance Assessment gave Council an excellent rating, but said Council's scrutiny processes need development?
- The Local Government Association has said that replication of previous committee systems is not an adequate response to the needs of scrutiny?
- A 'broad' scrutiny function as proposed (para 4.1) will also be a shallow one?
- Service failures have taken place e.g. fencing and gas contract, and internal audit has identified issues, which scrutiny process should have picked up?
- There is no specified officer responsible for scrutiny, except internal audit, which until recently was only achieving 50% of scheduled work, and until this year secured no commitment from departmental heads to implement recommendations?
- Guidance in the legislation, that post-decision scrutiny should be un-whipped, is currently a dead letter in Cambridge?
- There is a strong public perception that the Council does not provide good value for money in its service delivery?"

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

The Leader agreed the recommendations.

05/STR/09 CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN CAMBRIDGE A RACE EQUALITY ACTION PLAN FOR 2005/06 *(See also Record of Decision 05/05)*

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

The Leader agreed the recommendation.

05/STR/10 COUNTY-WIDE CONSULTATION FRAMEWORK CONTRACT *(See also Record of Decision 05/06)*

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

The Leader agreed the recommendation.

05/STR/11 PROGRESS WITH COUNTYWIDE LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICES AGREEMENT (LPSA) *(See also Record of Decision 05/07)*

The Head of Strategy & Partnerships updated the Scrutiny Committee on the topics and targets in Appendix A of the report as a result of on-going discussions with the County Council. On footway maintenance, it may be that the Performance Indicator covers one Ward of the City. On reducing smoking, the target was most likely to be for the workplaces

of the partners within the LPSA. On affordable housing, because of on-going discussions with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on the topic, the timing may be such that this may end up not being included within the LPSA.

The Chair requested that the Head of Strategy & Partnerships organise a meeting with himself, the Leader and spokespersons once the Council was clear what would be signed up to.

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

The Leader agreed the recommendation.

The meeting ended at 8.05pm

CHAIR