

**COMMERCIAL & HUMAN RESOURCES  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

15 March 2005  
4.30pm – 5.05pm

**PRESENT:** Councillors Adigun-Harris (Chair), Armstrong, Barrett-Payton, Boyce (alternate for Councillor Reid), Bradnack, Ellis-Miller, Hughes, Hymans, and Taylor (Vice Chair).

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

<b>FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL</b>
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05/CHR/13 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Meeting held on 18 January 2005 were signed as a correct record by the Chair.

05/CHR/14 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Reid.

05CHR/15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

05/CHR/16 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

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

05/CHR/17 **GENERAL FUND REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS, CARRY  
FORWARDS AND SIGNIFICANT VARIANCES FOR 2004/05**

*(see also Record of Decision 05/CHR/07)*

The Accountant introduced the report saying that the accounts were still provisional at this stage of the financial year. There was an underspend of £104,000 and carry forwards of £86,200 leaving a surplus of £17,800. She highlighted the significant variances – an underachievement of income of £60,000 in Land Charges budget and an underspend of £59,000 in Human Resources budget. There was a request to carry forward the Human Resources underspend as indicated in Appendix B of the officer report. There was also an underspend in capital spending which would require a rephrasing of funding.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendations.

05/CHR/18 **KEY DECISION DISPOSAL OF LAND BETWEEN REAR OF WULFSTAN WAY SHOPS AND HULATT ROAD, CAMBRIDGE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING** *(see also Record of Decision 05/CHR/08)*

The Head of Property & Building Services introduced the report. He said he had held further discussions with the Executive Councillor who wished to include a provision that the Registered Social Landlord (RSL) should be required to achieve higher eco-home standards in line with renewable energy/carbon reduction policies being adopted by the Council. These requirements would be similar to ones to be applied at another recent disposal site. The Head of Property & Building Services also mentioned that an adjoining parcel of land was disposed of to an RSL for affordable housing and the scheme is now well advanced.

Councillor Barrett-Payton was concerned that the extra cost of doing more work would mean that the discounted sale price would be even less. He also said that the S106 policy in relation to RSLs effectively meant that the sale price was discounted again so that in effect the Council was paying the S106 contribution.

The Head of Property & Building Services explained that the Council as the planning authority did not distinguish between the public and private sector with regard to S106 contributions which contributed to the provision of important community facilities.

Councillor Bradnack asked about the principles used to calculate the discount and requested that the decision come back to committee so that they could check that it was value for money.

The Head of Property & Building Services said that negotiations about the price to be paid by the RSL for the site took into account the amount that they could afford commensurate with achieving a viable social housing scheme.

The Executive Councillor reminded members that the proposed eco-works had been included in similar past disposals and that the standard referred to was that in the new Local Plan to be adopted in 2006.

Councillor Taylor spoke as a ward councillor as well as a committee member and endorsed the scheme. The change of what was currently a wasteland to affordable housing for elderly residents was welcomed in the ward.

The Committee agreed (by 8 votes to 0) with the recommendation for the Executive Councillor amended as follows (changes highlighted in bold):

“To approve the principle of disposal of a parcel of land being the site of former gardens, allotments and garages between the rear of Wulfstan Way shops and Hulatt Road, Cambridge to Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Society with the detailed terms **being brought back to the June/July meeting for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee and approval by the Executive Councillor.**”

The Executive Councillor agreed to the amended recommendation.

05/CHR/19 **APPOINTMENT TO AN OUTSIDE BODY: CAMBRIDGE UNITED CHARITIES** *(see also Record of Decision 05/CHR/09)*

The Committee agreed the nomination of Honorary Councillor Gaynor Griffiths to the Trustee body of Cambridge United Charities.

The Executive Councillor agreed the nomination.

05/CHR/20 **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/21 **GENERAL DEBTS - BAD DEBTS FOR WRITE OFF** *(see also Record of Decision 05/CHR/10)*

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

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendation.

05/CHR/22 **NNDR [Business Rates] IRRECOVERABLE DEBTS TO BE WRITTEN-OFF** *(see also Record of Decision 05/CHR/11)*

Councillors Ellis-Miller and Barrett-Payton were concerned about the number of public houses which were included in the amount of outstanding debt and questioned whether it might be possible to recover funds from the brewery owner.

The Head of Revenue Services said that it was very difficult to take such action and that it often cost more than the sum to be recovered. He offered to do a briefing note for members.

The Chair said that would be helpful. He was also concerned that there seemed to be inequalities between the treatment of tenants in the domestic sector and those in the business sector.

Councillor Barrett-Payton also asked that, as this was an item that came to committee each cycle, the total quoted at the end of the report each time give the cumulative total of the percentage of business rates collected so that members could have a better picture of the amount of the shortfall because of irrecoverable debts.

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

The Executive Councillor agreed to the recommendation.

The meeting ended at 5.05pm.

**Chair**