

Community Services Scrutiny Committee

17 November 2005

2.30pm to 6.45pm

Present: Councillors Slatter (Chair), Blencowe, Boyce (*Alt*), Bradnack, Hughes, Hymans, James, Kightley.

Also Present: Cllr J Rosenstiel, Executive Councillor Community Development and Leisure, Councillor Smart, Executive Councillor Housing and Health
Non-Voting co-opted members nominated by the Housing Management Board: Mr Stan Best and Mr Brian Haywood

For the Information of the Council

05/CS/19 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on 22 July were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

05/CS/20 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Ellis-Miller and J Smith and Mr Lance Routledge.

05/CS/21 Declarations of Interest

The following personal interest was declared by the member indicated:

Cllr Slatter	Priority List of Bids Received for the Housing Corporation's 2005/6 and 2007/8 National Affordable Housing Programme	As Chairman of the Cambridge United Charities
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The following personal and prejudicial interest was declared; the member indicated took no part in the discussion and did not speak or vote:

Cllr Bradnack	Moorings Implementation Policy	As a he lived on Riverside.
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05/CS/22 Public Questions

05/CS/22a S106 Funding for Community Development Projects in the Brooklands Avenue and Newtown Area.

Mrs Judith Chisholm asked why there were problems obtaining funding for Community Development Projects form S106 Agreements by developers. She asked how much had been made available in planning gain and where this would be allocated.

Sharon Brown, Special Projects Implementation Officer in Environment and Planning Department responded to the question by giving details of the funding.

Ken Hay, Head of Community Services gave details of proposals within Community Development to utilise funding allocated from planning gain, including the St Paul's Community Centre Project.

Debbie Kaye, Active Communities Manager, said that a meeting with schools in the area was proposed to review provision.

Mrs Chisholm commented that while accepting proposals were in hand for use of the planning gain, much of this was in the long term there seemed little to meet current needs.

Cllr J Rosenstiel, Executive Councillor Community Development and Leisure, said that one of the flaws in the S106 process was that there was no provision for administering the system. All aspects of the process from the grant of planning permission, negotiation of the agreement, consultation on local needs and progressing proposals consumed officer time.

Councillor Blencowe said that a longer term view should be taken on S106 planning gain, and policies worked up to apply with developments.

05/CS/23b Moorings Policy, Siting of Facilities

Clive Brown of the Old Chesterton Residents Association said the Residents Association was broadly in favour of the Policy set out in the officers' report, but would welcome consultation on the siting of facilities and the contents of licences

The Active Community Manager said that widespread consultation had been carried out but that further discussion would continue with local residents.

05/CS/23c Bell School of Languages Development Site

Mrs Clancey said that the Council was said to have accepted a sum of money in relation to permission given for development of a playing field site at the Bell School of Languages site. What are the proposals for development on the site and what alternative recreation facilities are to be provided.

Cllr Slatter said that any land designated for recreational use would be covered and protected under the Local Plan. Further detailed advice and illustrative plans would be given by the Director of Environment and Planning.

05/CS/23d Nightingale Recreation Ground – Multi Use Games Area

David McKewoan said that the subject of the use of Nightingale Recreation Ground had been raised through the South Area Committee but he had not been satisfied that the Council had taken into account the opinion of the majority of local residents, many of whom were in an older age category. The Council should consider installing the Muti Use Games Area at Cherry Hnton Hall Grounds, given the facilities already in place there and the provision of parking, security and supervision on site.

Debbie Kaye, the Active Communities Manager reported on the results of consultation carried out and the Council's policy in relation to the provision of recreational facilities in the city's parks.

Cllr J Rosenstiel, Executive Councillor Community Development and Leisure, said that she was anticipating a further report on the issue.

05/CS/23 Housing Capital Investment Strategy

The report made recommendations on the spending of the capital funding available over the next 10 years to meet the authority's medium term objectives and strategic housing

commitments. It also updated the existing housing capital investment strategy agreed in 2003. The Housing Management Board had considered the recommendations in other reports to the Executive Councillor during this cycle, namely the Sheltered Housing Strategy and Mansel Court Refurbishment. The Housing Management Board had agreed an amendment to the recommendations to the Executive Councillor for further consideration to be given to the use of prudential borrowing or other funding alternatives that would not conflict with the stock option decision in 2004.

The Director of Community Services said that the detail of the strategy would be brought back to the Committee and Executive Councillor in the March cycle for further consideration.

Members commented that the Housing Management Board had been concerned about the need to review the option of Prudential Borrowing and the needs of the tenants in sheltered housing to be kept informed of developments.

Consultations had been held with tenants and Housing Officers would continue to discuss progress with tenants at various stages.

The Executive Councillor commented that if the options were taken to transfer the sheltered schemes to Registered Social Landlords, those tenants who wanted to remain with the Council would be accommodated within the Council's schemes.

The Committee approved the recommendations set out in the officers' report and subsequently amended by the Housing Management Board to the effect that further consideration to be given to the use of prudential borrowing or other funding alternatives that would not conflict with the stock option decision in 2004.

The Executive Councillor for Housing and Health approved the recommendations as amended.

05/CS/24 Choice Based Lettings

In July 2005 the Executive Councillor for Housing and Health had agreed to support a move towards a full Choice Based Lettings (CBL) policy. The officers' report in July had referred to implementation of CBL on a sub regional basis as being the best way forward. The officers' current report updated members on the progress of the adoption of a sub regional CBL scheme, and explained progress in relation to a bid for resources to the ODPM and to provide information about the proposed implementation process and potential costs to the Council.

The Committee approved the recommendations set out in the officers' report.

The Executive Councillor for Housing and Health approved the recommendations.

05/CS/25 Tendering the Private Sector Leasing Scheme

The report recommended that the Private Sector Leasing Scheme (PSLS) currently run by King Street Housing Society (KSHS) and used by the Council for the provision of temporary accommodation for homeless households should be tendered in line with current procurement policies.

The PSLS fell within the definition of a Part A service for the purpose of the Public Services Contract Regulations and should therefore be subject to a tendering process. Furthermore, tendering the scheme would allow the Council to ensure it received best value for money and gave it an opportunity to reshape and define the scheme, during the Temporary Housing Review, to enable it to meet targets set by the government in relation to the use of temporary accommodation for homeless households.

Consultation had taken place with a number of sub regional authorities who had expressed an interest in participating in a joint procurement exercise. Consultation had also taken place with staff involved in the homelessness and temporary housing services as part of the Temporary Housing Review and with KSHS who are aware of the Council's proposal to tender the PSLS and are supportive of this approach.

The Committee approved the recommendations set out in the officers' report.

The Executive Councillor for Housing and Health approved the recommendations.

05/CS/26 Private Sector Housing Strategy

The draft Private Sector Housing Strategy 2006-2011 had been put out to consultation in September 2005 and subsequently amended to incorporate the results of this consultation. The final strategy was attached as an appendix to the officers' report, with the main additions to the draft being listed in the report. Where implementation of proposals would require funding, bids would be submitted as required.

Cllr Bradnack commented that this report was one of a number of important strategic issues being submitted to members for scrutiny without the committee process allowing sufficient time for prior consideration or discussion.

Cllr Smart acknowledged that the Committee process required further consideration.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0 as set out in the officers' report.

The Executive Councillor for Housing and Health approved the recommendations.

05/CS/27 Priority List of Bids Received for the Housing Corporation's 2005/6 and 2007/8 National Affordable Housing Programme (formerly Approved Development Programme, ADP)

The officer's report commented that increasing the level of affordable housing within the City was a high priority for Cambridge City Council. Working with Registered Social Landlord partners the Council sought to maximise development opportunities as they arose.

Most affordable housing was delivered in partnership with the Housing Corporation, who allocated grant from the 2006/8 National Affordable Housing Programme direct to Registered Social Landlord partners, usually through a two year bidding round. The Housing Corporation would discuss bids with the Local Authority, taking account of which schemes the Authority will support on the basis that they meet regional, sub regional and local strategy requirements.

This report outlined those bids to the Housing Corporation which the Enabling and Development have compiled (Appendix A), and prioritised in order of importance to this Local Authority. The Executive Councillor is asked to approve these bids prior to submission the Housing Corporation.

The Council might also choose to invest directly in providing grant for new affordable housing. A proposal for an affordable housing programme was contained within the Ten Year Investment Strategy submitted to the Executive Councillor (November 2005). This report identified priority schemes sites which would require investment in 2006/7, from that capital programme (if approved) and from commuted sums.

This report also proposes the annual development programme of "land audit" or Council owned sites for investigation in 2006/7 (appendix B).

Appendices A and B to the report were not open to press or public at the request of the Housing Corporation by virtue of paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 during discussion of the appendices.

Members asked about the evaluation of the sites detailed in the appendices, and what part the development control process would play in view of proposals which would increase density of housing where it was already high and traffic congestion would inevitably be increased. They also sought clarification on the financial structure of the Bid process in relation to these schemes. Members also recommended closer interdepartmental working between the Housing and Planning departments to ensure a unified approach to proposals for development.

The officers confirmed that bids were made to the Housing Corporation in anticipation of funding in the subsequent year and that the proposals set out in Appendix B, while the subject of preliminary consultation, were by no means the subject of firm applications for funding, illustrative of the type of project that the Council could pursue. They acknowledged that consultation with residents and ward councillors might have avoided local concern and agreed that consultation would be carried out as schemes were developed. While it was acknowledged that not all schemes would receive support or be progressed it was recommended that they be submitted to the Housing Corporation. Members would be offered a briefing on the Bid Process and the sites identified.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 3 votes to 0 as set out in the officers' report.

The Executive Councillor for Housing and Health approved the recommendations.

05/CS/28 Delegation of Function for the Housing Act 2004

The Housing Act 2004 would be implemented on 6 April 2006. All local authorities had a duty to apply this Act. The new Act would revoke much of the current Housing 1985. The new Act would enable officers to carry out a new inspection regime of private sector housing known as the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. It would introduce a new mandatory licensing scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) and give the Council powers to serve Empty Dwelling Management Orders and HMO Management Orders. To allow the Council to fulfill its duties, the Cambridge City Council Constitution would need to be amended and the Head of Environmental Services would also need to be given delegated authority to carry out implementation of the new Act.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0 as set out in the officers' report.

The Executive Councillor for Housing and Health approved the recommendations.

05/CS/29 Working towards a Smoke Free Cambridge

The report sought commitment from the Council to "Working Towards a Smoke Free Cambridge", a local partnership initiative, its Five Year Action Plan (2005 – 2010) and a draft Work Programme from June 2005 – December 2006. The aim of the partnership, over the next five years, was to enable Cambridge to move towards becoming a smoke free city in which no worker or member of the public was involuntarily exposed to second hand smoke in an enclosed public space. The Five Year Action Plan was contained as Appendix One and the Work Programme for 2005/2006 in Appendix Two.

Members while welcoming the principal of moving towards a smoke free city, queried where the initiative had come from and where prior approval had been given to the process. The emphasis of the initiative should be to engage residents and visitors on a voluntary basis and the authority should incorporate this into its policies and aspirations.

The Head of Environmental Services said that the Executive Councillor Housing and Health had approved a package of measures under the Improving the Health of People in Cambridge initiative of which the Smoke free Cambridge was a part.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0 as set out in the officers' report.

The Executive Councillor for Housing and Health approved the recommendations.

05/CS/30 Review of Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003, Statement of Policy and Procedures

Section 12 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 had made it a requirement for Local Authority Landlords to produce written Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedures. Procedures were produced in 2004 to reflect the wider role of the ASB section which extended beyond the Landlord function. Cambridge City Council presented these to Committee in November 2004 and the Executive Councillor Housing and Health had given approval to them in the knowledge that they were working documents, which to be reviewed in a year's time. The ASB Team commenced the 2005 review by completing the original Procedure document. It went on to conduct further consultation with residents and internal departments who had been using the document as a working guide. The documents were also critically assessed using guidelines from externally produced reports, namely the Local Government Ombudsman's Special Report and Housing Quality Network's Anti-Social Behaviour Statements of Policies and Procedures Checklist. As a result of this review, a number of amendments were suggested to the original Policy and Procedures documents. The draft revised documents were attached in Appendix 1 & 2 to the report. It was hoped that these changes would make the document more workable for front-line staff and ensure that the Council met the recommendations of external agencies such as the Local Government Ombudsman. The amendments were also suggested as

necessary to ensure that the Council met its obligations to residents in working to reduce anti-social behaviour and thereby improving people's quality of life.

Cllr Bradnack repeated the comment he had made earlier on the difficulty of giving sufficient scrutiny consideration to major issues without preparatory discussion. He went on to say that the Labour group had two issues with the Procedures, in that it was concerned about whether there was enough protection of witnesses written into them and allied to that the taking of witness statement without revealing the identity of witnesses. It would be instructive to review the success or failure of cases on the basis of identification of witnesses. He found the Council's approach professional and invited members to support the process.

The Director of Community Services emphasized the importance of witness statements in achieving the aims of the ASB Procedure. The issue of identifying witnesses was in the hands of the Courts. The officers would review the Procedures in the light of members comments, the Council were bound to review the Policy and Procedures annually and any suggestions for amendment could be incorporated into the review.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0 as set out in the officers' report.

The Executive Councillor for Housing and Health approved the recommendations.

05/CS/31 2005/06 Service Performance Reviews and Revised Revenue and Capital Budgets (General Fund)

The Service Performance Review set out performance for the first six months of 2005/06, highlighting achievements and also detailing only those actions that will, or could, fail to meet targets by the end of the financial year. This information would enable the Executive Councillor to consider whether service priorities and resources should be refocused to enable objectives and targets for the current year to be met.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0 as set out in the officers' report.

The Executive Councillor for Housing and Health approved the recommendations.

05/CS/32 Moorings Implementation Policy

The former Head of Parks and Recreation had submitted a report on River Moorings and the Executive Councillor Community Development and Leisure had agreed the completion of detailed arrangements for the introduction of charging and regulation of mooring in partnership with the Conservators of the River Cam. The report contained recommendations for the implementation and administration of the Council's approved Moorings Policy and considered the financial implications of the scheme, improvements to provision of utilities and services to riverboats and gave an update on related issues.

Members queried the practicalities of providing facilities to the boat owners and occupiers, for example the collection of refuse. Consultation with residents at Riverside had not been covered in the report.

The Active Communities Manager said that there had been extensive consultation with a variety of stakeholders and that she would continue to discuss issues with residents. The refuse collections service to the boat owners and occupiers would be incorporated in the daily collection on the commons; this would be an improvement on the current situation.

The Committee approved the recommendations set out in the officers' report.

The Executive Councillor for Community Development and Leisure approved the recommendations.

05/CS/33 2005/06 Service Performance Reviews and Revised Revenue and Capital Budgets (Community Development and Leisure)

The Service Performance Review set out performance for the first six months of 2005/06, highlighting achievements and also detailing only those actions that will, or could, fail to meet targets by the end of the financial year. This information would enable the Executive Councillor to consider whether service priorities and resources should be refocused to enable objectives and targets for the current year to be met.

Members sought more information on the implications set out under PS5: Develop Marketing Strategy to encourage use by all residents of the City's Parks and Open Spaces.

While expressing satisfaction with PS13: Complete refurbishment of Kings Hedges Learner Pool, members asked that activities for adults be incorporated in the programme.

The overlap of interests in under-spending on New Information Boards and the Arts and Entertainment Poster-boards was drawn to the attention of officers.

Councillor Bradnack commented on staffing issues within Arts and Entertainment following the recent job evaluation programme which he felt had resulted in lower paid staff losing out and should be addressed by the leading group.

Other issues commented on by members included the County Council's turn away from funding from museums, the need to make greatest possible commercial use of the Guildhall's Large and Small Halls, disappointment that young people's interest in Area Committees was not being further encouraged.

Officers referred to the Parks for People marketing strategy and the possible impact of the new Licensing regime on use of public open space.

The Active Cambridge Programme funded from Lottery Grant and the Council's budget would support a widening of the programme for adults at Kings Hedges Learner Pool.

The management of related poster sites in different areas of responsibility was under review.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0 as set out in the officers' report.

The Executive Councillor for Community Development and Leisure approved the recommendations.

05/CS/34 Corn Exchange Contract

A new contract was required for bar and catering services at the Corn Exchange. This report sought authority for a new contract to be awarded to cover the provision of food and bar services at the Corn Exchange. These services include the operation of a daytime

café, provision of bars and refreshments at events, providing conference and artiste catering.

The current contract with Leith's had commenced on 1 April 2002. The initial three year contract allowed an extension of up to two years; it had so far been extended by one year which was to expire 31 March 2006. The current contract provided the Council with an annual income of £65,000. A new contract could commence on 1 April 2006 subject to negotiation between the Council and the new operator of the contract as a new operator could more easily be installed to the venue during a period of down time for the venue to allow training, refurbishment or rebranding.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 5 votes to 0 as set out in the officers' report.

The Executive Councillor for Community Development and Leisure approved the recommendations.

05/CS/35 Record of Executive Decision: Grant Award to Age Concern Cambridge for the Rent of 3a Parsons Court

The Committee noted the decision by the Executive Councillor for Community Development and Leisure approving a grant to Age Concern Cambridge in respect of 3a Parsons Court.

05/CS/36 Forward Plan Non-Key Decisions Designated for Scrutiny

The Committee considered the non-key decisions on the current version of the Forward Plan (published 14 October 2005) and set out below to identify which, if any, items it wished to scrutinise at the January meeting.

Resolved that both of the non-key items identified be scrutinised by the Committee at its next meeting:

Homelessness Review Contract (Executive Councillor for Housing and Health) - Whether to continue the Homelessness Review contract in place with Sternberg Reed Taylor & Gill Solicitors for a further 12 months.

Temporary Housing Review (Executive Councillor for Housing and Health) - To consider the recommendations contained within the Temporary Housing Review report.

CHAIR