

STRATEGY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6.00pm – 8.25pm

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

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Ian Nimmo-Smith, The Leader. Councillor Downham attended for item 05/STR/33

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

05/STR/27 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on 11 April were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

05/STR/28 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none.

05/STR/29 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

05/STR/30 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No members of the public wished to address the Committee.

05/STR/31 REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE COUNCIL'S MEDIUM TERM OBJECTIVES (*See also Record of Decision 05/20*)

The Scrutiny Committee noted that BV86 (page 13) should read £38.54 (in red).

The Leader introduced the report by stating that it indicated broadly encouraging progress, but acknowledged that there were some service issues which needed to be explored further with Executive Councillors. This would be done during the service planning process. He gave an example of a Focus Workshop which would look into why the public's satisfaction with community centres (Citizen's Survey) was not consistent with the feedback received from service users.

Councillors Bradnack and Durrant stated that the report showed that the Council had not delivered on many of its service priorities. Councillor Bradnack also stated that under the current Scrutiny Committee regime, it was difficult for members to undertake proper scrutiny because there were no dedicated officer resources towards it.

During further discussion, it emerged that Councillor Bradnack was still awaiting answers to the way in which the Coleridge polling stations had been organised and the Leader undertook to ensure he received a response.

With his knowledge as a member of Cambridge Older Persons Enterprise, Councillor Hymans made the comment that with regard to the public satisfaction rating with toilets, older people believed that the current hours of opening were not long enough.

In response to requests for more information behind the headline figures, the Head of Strategy & Partnerships informed members that there were detailed breakdowns of Citizen's Surveys available on the website.

05/STR/32 APPOINTMENT OF WORKS CONTRACTORS FOR CITY SERVICES (*See also Record of Decision 05/21*)

The Scrutiny Committee agreed the recommendations for the Leader by 6 votes to 0.

05/STR/33 OPTIONS FOR PROVIDING FACILITIES FOR GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS VISITING THE CITY
(*See also Record of Decision 05/22*)

Councillor Downham addressed the Scrutiny Committee with the Chair's permission. She sought clarification of the sort of site the Council was proposing to investigate and whether it was the same as proposed in her Notice of Motion to Council in April. She was of the view that the figure of 50% of gypsies and travellers living in houses to be incorrect for Cambridge. She requested that the traveller community (rather than the agencies representing them) should have a Forum to allow the discussion of these issues. She said that it was also important to make sure local residents were consulted. She asked who would be undertaking the work now required for the proposed report in November. She said that the proper management and enforcement of any site was crucial.

In response to the points raised the officers advised members that the Notice of Motion approved by the Council requested work to be undertaken on an emergency encampment. For transit or permanent sites the Council must work with other Districts and Counties on a regional approach which is in line with Government requirements. A Strategy Officer in Community Services had been appointed. Part of their role would be to co-ordinate the Council's work concerning Gypsies and Travellers. 50% of gypsies and travellers living in houses is a general estimate recognised by bodies such as the National Gypsy Council [*and quoted in Pat Niner's report published by the ODPM in July 2003*]. It was confirmed that there had been seven illegal encampments on Council land in 2004. So far in 2005, another seven illegal encampments had taken place on Council owned land although 4 of these had been the same group of Travellers moving around the City.

Councillor Barrett-Payton questioned the validity of 50% of gypsies and travellers living in houses applying to Cambridge. He stated whatever the outcome the Council would not wish any emergency stopping site to become a site for longer term or permanent pitches and so proper control measures would need to be in place. He also questioned the statement in the report about different traveller groups requiring different sites. The Chair agreed in the context that the Council would not make such a distinction in allocating its Council Housing for example. The Head of Community Services Strategy stated that it

was not the intention that more than one site would be proposed (if suitable), the report reflected the reality on the ground that traveller communities preferred to live in ethnic groupings rather than mixed communities and that this is an issue that the Council may face later. Members noted that any user of the site would be licensed to do so and that the report in November would provide more details for consideration.

Councillor Bradnack suggested that the Traveller community be asked about any sites being considered. He also asked that officers provide details of costs (in terms of officer time and actual costs) incurred in dealing with illegal encampments in the November report so that these could be compared with costs for setting up and managing an emergency stopping place site. Councillor Durrant requested that all Ward Councillors are asked to highlight any land in their ward which may be suitable for an emergency stopping place site and that they are kept informed of progress. The Chair agreed that Ward Councillors should be consulted about any sites which appear to offer a practicable solution. Councillor Bradnack also asked that the officers consider the proposals taking into account the proposed river moorings policy, due in November, where there are similar constraints and concerns.

In response to a question from Councillor Adigun–Harris, the Senior Strategy Officer stated that officers were suggesting a maximum stay on site of seven days although this could be flexible. If longer stays were permitted there was a greater risk that the site would be unavailable if other illegal encampments occurred. Councillor Adigun-Harris was of the view that 7 days was a tight timescale.

Responding to the debate the Leader re-iterated that the report reflected the Notice of Motion from Council and as stated in the Executive Summary of the report. He accepted that it would be beneficial to involve the travelling community with regard to possible sites and any management regime. A longer-term proposal of a Forum for discussion with interested parties was also a possibility which could be explored. It was unrealistic to think of setting something up as an extra step before finalising the November report. He envisaged having some kind of initial round table meeting with a limited well defined agenda, and then deciding whether it was worth formalising and reconvening on a period basis, or as and when need arose. He stated that any proposal for an emergency stopping site would need to follow the Council's planning procedures and include consultation with the settled and traveller community. Any proposal would also explore whether there would be an overall reduction in costs compared with the present situation of dealing with illegal encampments.

The Scrutiny Committee agreed the recommendations for the Leader by 7 votes to 0.

05/STR/34 **MEDIUM TERM STRATEGY** (*See also Record of Decision 05/23*)

Members noted on page 211 the fourth bullet point should read 51/57 Ditton Fields.

Councillor Durrant queried the reference to the Market Square project (page 210) and whether members would see this. The Chief Executive stated that this was part of a City Centre Strategy which was being worked on by officers and was at too early a stage to come to members.

The Scrutiny Committee agreed the recommendation for the Leader by 6 votes to 0.

05/STR/35 EVALUATION OF REDEPLOYABLE CCTV CAMERAS *(See also Record of Decision 05/24)*

The Committee noted a table which indicated the times and locations of the deployments from 31 March 2004 to July 2005.

Councillor Barrett-Payton welcomed the report and the positive effect of CCTV, but would find it useful if the cameras were periodically returned to hot spots.

Councillor Bradnack suggested that it would be interesting to know what would be the CCTV package required to meet demand. The Labour Group had previously suggested 8 cameras, but evidence may prove that 8 is not sufficient.

Councillor Boyce believed that there were not enough cameras because two were permanently located on the Mill Road.

Councillor Durrant asked what the costs were associated with moving the cameras between locations, he preferred an increase in permanent cameras. The Chair requested information on who was making the requests for the cameras. Councillor Phillips stated that there was a low level of understanding how requests for CCTV can be made (by members and public). It was noted that there was no information for when the last 3 deployments were made.

The Head of Property & Building Services undertook to address these points and write to members.

Councillor Durrant asked for a report back on assessing where there should be permanent cameras and where there could be mobile cameras (with costings). The Chair requested an assessment of demand and the costs of moving the mobile cameras. Members were advised that this would require considerable officer resources which should be requested through the Service Planning process.

The Leader stated that the report led to the conclusion that there was a case for more cameras. It was also the case that the Council needed to address lighting on Parkers Piece and Midsummer Common. He welcomed the County Council's contribution to CCTV at East Road/Newmarket Road.

05/STR/36 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT *(See also Record of Decision 05/25)*

Councillor Bradnack requested that the Strategy & Partnership Service Plan be reported in November.

The Chair put the request to the vote and there were no votes in favour or against.

The Leader suggested that a revised action plan be circulated to the Committee at the time. The Head of Strategy and Partnerships advised members that all Service Plan information would be on the website.

05/STR/37 LOCAL AREA AGREEMENTS (*See also Record of Decision 05/26*)

The Leader tabled a paper listing the issues which he wished to submit to the County Council on the draft vision.

The Leader agreed with Councillor Barrett-Payton that the issue of accountability and democratic input with such strategic bodies was fraught. It was expected that accountability from the Council's own end could be built in and involving Chair and spokes was a way towards this.

The Scrutiny Committee agreed the Leader's comments on the draft vision and recommendations for the Leader by 6 votes to 0.

05/STR/38 DAY AND TIME OF MEETINGS

The Scrutiny Committee agreed not to change the day or time from Mondays at 6pm.

05/STR/39 FORWARD PLAN - NOVEMBER MEETING

The Scrutiny Committee agreed that the Review of Area Committees be pre-scrutinised at its next meeting.

05/STR/40 DECISIONS BY THE LEADER - The following Records of Decision taken since 11 April were noted:

- Approval for various office moves within The Guildhall (decision 3 June)
- Approval for staffing in the out of hours noise service (decision 17 June)
- Appointments to outside bodies (decision 7 July)
- Approval for county-wide consultation contract (decision 9 August)

The meeting ended at 8.25pm

CHAIR