

**CUSTOMER SERVICES & RESOURCES  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

17 January 2006  
5.00pm – 7.10pm

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

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Councillor Liddle, Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Resources

<b>FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL</b>
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06/CSR/01 **MINUTES**

The Chair signed the minutes of the Meeting held on 15 November 2005 as a correct record.

06/CSR/02 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Armstrong and Reid.

06/CSR/03 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Code of Conduct (personal and prejudicial) interests were declared as follows. The Councillor indicated left the room, took no part in the discussion and did not vote on the item.

Councillor	Minute number	Nature of interest
Adigun-Harris	06/CSR/10	His house adjoins the land near Clay Farm.

06/CSR/04 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present.

06/CSR/05 **SERVICE PLANS REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS-REVISED  
2005/06, PROPOSED 2006/07 AND FORECAST 2007/08**

*(See also record of decision CS&R/060117/A5)*

Key Decision

A late additional item under Appendix B for a proposed additional External Bids in respect of electoral administration (Reference X639 and X721) was tabled.

The Chair ruled under 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 that the item be considered despite not being publicly available five clear days before the meeting. The Committee asked questions of clarification about items in the budget.

In relation to the order of priority of the Priority Policy Fund (PPF) bids, the Committee agreed the three high priority bids proposed in the report and, in addition, agreed that five medium priority bids be changed to high.

The Committee also agreed that PPF817 be changed from a medium priority bid to a low priority bid.

The Committee considered each Service Plan in turn and those where members had concerns are reported below:

#### Accountancy and Support Services

The Head of Accountancy and Support Services introduced the Plan and said that the objectives were similar to those for the current year especially improvements to efficiency which would release staff to carry out work on changes due to legislation. The Council's Procurement Strategy and proposed Customer Access Strategy would also have an impact on the payables system.

Councillor Hughes referred to the pressures on staff mentioned in the previous year and asked whether that had led to higher turnover in staff.

The officer replied that the turnover was lower than the average for the Council and there were not the serious difficulties of the previous year.

In reply to a question from Councillor Barrett-Payton, the officer assured the Committee that aiming for the top quartile in performance on BV8, Percentage of supplier invoices paid within 30 days of receipt, did not disadvantage suppliers; efforts were made to accommodate the needs of suppliers while not compromising the Council's standards.

#### Human Resources

The Head of Human Resources reported that the new head of service had been appointed and would be starting work with the Council on 20 March 2006. The service was to undertake a Best Value Fundamental Service Review. It was a small section and there was considerable pressure on staff. The temporary Diversity Adviser had made good progress on the issues facing the Council with regard to the employment of staff from Black and Minority Ethnic Groups (BME) and other diversity issues but there was still more to do. The bid for continuing the Fixed Term Contract was a critical bid for moving this agenda on.

Councillor Hughes acknowledged that progress had been made but also raised concerns about how slow the progress was especially the appointment of staff from

BME groups to senior positions within the authority and the poor application rate from disabled persons.

The Executive Councillor in mitigation pointed out that in comparison to other local authorities the Council's performance was relatively good and the Stonewall organisation put the Council in the top 6 councils for treatment of gay and lesbian staff. She also pointed out that new staff could only be appointed when current staff left and the Council did not want a too rapid turnover rate either.

The Director of Environment & Planning pointed out that in his department many staff were drawn from professional organisations which already started from a low percentage of the groups mentioned. With regard to non-professional staff, the key was to recruit from local people and develop them on the job.

The Committee approved the recommendations for the Executive Councillor including the priority of the PPF bids by 5 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations including the priorities of the PPF bids as given above.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Human Resources, Louise Harrington, for her work over the past 3 years and wished her well in her new job outside the Council.

## 06/CSR/06 **CUSTOMER ACCESS STRATEGY**

*(See also record of decision CS&R/060117/A6)*

### Key Decision

The Head of Strategy and Partnerships introduced the report which gave an update on the work that had been done since the decision in November for a more detailed assessment of the options for a Customer Service Centre for face-to-face contact and a Contact Centre for telephone contact.

The costs and outline business case on which still more work was needed was the focus of the report.

Councillor Hughes said that the Labour Group had concerns about the high cost of the investment and the relatively low numbers for members of the public consulted about the proposals.

The officer said that 900 people had been consulted at reception points and 800 by phone which was a statistically reliable figure.

The Committee approved the recommendations for the Executive Councillor by 4 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

06/CSR/07 **TENDERING FOR CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL CONTRACTS-  
CHANGES TO THE PREQUALIFICATION PROCESS**

*(See also record of decision CS&R/060117/A7)*

Key Decision

The Scrutiny Committee approved the recommendations by 6 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

06/CSR/08 **KEY PRINCIPLES OF THE DRAFT "BUYING GREEN AT  
CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL" GUIDE**

*(See also record of decision CS&R/060117/A8)*

Non-Key Decision

The Environment Co-ordinator introduced the report. Its recommendations fulfilled the requirements of the Council's Procurement Strategy.

Members raised the following issues:

1. It was important to separate out a general plan for being more "green" from using the products identified as Fair Trade
2. Could the Council go further by ensuring that the stationery used in the Tourist Information Centre and even the clothing for uniforms could be added in the Commodity section?
3. It was important to buy what could be recycled and plastic panels on window envelopes were not recyclable. Could something be done to find a suitable replacement?
4. As well as targeting particular suppliers was it possible to boycott others because of their environmental stance or where the Council had ethical concerns?

The officer acknowledged the first point. In relation to point 2 she said that it was important to be careful about clothing which should always be vetted by the Fair Trade organisation. For point 3, she agreed it was important to consider the whole life cycle of each product purchased and she would explore the issue raised about plastic windows in envelopes.

The Executive Councillor responded to point 4 and said that the Environment Co-ordinator would take legal advice as this was a tricky issue legally.

The Scrutiny Committee approved the recommendations by 8 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendations.

06/CSR/09 **GENERAL ITEMS**

The Committee agreed to scrutinise the following items at the 28 March 2006 Scrutiny Committee:

Guildhall Halls Business Plan

**The Vice Chair, Councillor Taylor, in the chair.**

06/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 Category 9 as defined in the Council's Constitution part 4B (pages 181-183).

06/CSR/11 **DISPOSAL OF LAND NEAR CLAY FARM**

*(See also record of decision CS&R/060117/A9)*

The Head of Property & Building Services introduced the report.

Members had several concerns about the disposal in principle. In particular, the Committee was concerned that the Council should have a greater degree of control over the serviced land that it received back in exchange as part of the deal. The Executive Councillor emphasised that it was at this stage an in principle decision and said that it would come back to Committee for further scrutiny. It was important that the Local Plan be agreed before the sale was concluded. She proposed an additional recommendation:

"That detailed terms be reported back to the Scrutiny Committee before approval by the Executive Councillor".

The Scrutiny Committee approved the amended recommendations by 5 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor approved the amended recommendations.

The meeting ended at 7.10pm.

Chair