

**Community Services Scrutiny Committee**19 January 2006  
2.30pm to 6.35pm

**Present:** Councillors J Smith (Chair), Blencowe, Bradnack, Ellis-Miller, Hughes, Hymans, James, Kightley and Slatter.

**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
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**06/CS/01 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Scrutiny Committee held on 17 November 2005 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**06/CS/02 Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence had been received from Mr Lance Routledge.

**05/CS/03 Declarations of Interest**

The following personal interests were declared in relation to the items relating to grant funding by the members indicated:

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Interest</b>
Bradnack	As an appointed representative of the Committee of CIAC
Blencowe	As an appointed representative of the Board of the Cambridge and County Folk Museum
Ellis-Miller	As an appointed representative of the Board of The Junction
Hughes	Member of COPE
	Member of Citizens' Advice Bureau
	Cambridge Independent Advice Centre
James	Governor of St Andrews School
	Trustee of Church Schools
	As an appointed representative of the Board of the Cambridge and County Folk Museum
J Rosenstiel	Student Committee Action
	Cambridge Sea Cadets (daughter is a member)
	Classworks (daughter attends classes)
	Scouts/Girl Guides (daughter is a member)
Slatter	Trumpington Village Hall
	St John's Ambulance Volunteer
J Smith	Member of Kelsey Kerridge Sports Hall
	As an appointed representative of the Committee of CIAC
	As an employee of Cambridge University

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 he lived on Riverside.

## **06/CS/04 Public Questions**

06/CS/04a St Andrews' Hall

Mr M Bond of the Old Chesterton Residents' Association spoke on the progress of the St Andrews' Hall and said that further discussions had been held with planning officers and the developers. The hall was now open and in use, proving a worthwhile addition to facilities available to residents.

The Executive Councillor Community Development and Leisure confirmed that there were to be further investigation on how S106 funding was to be applied in this case. A report was to be submitted to the Environment Scrutiny Committee and Executive Councillor Planning and Transport on the allocation of the cache of S106 funding.

06/CS/04b Age Concern – The Future of Parson's Court

Mr M Bond, speaking as a Trustee of Age Concern, spoke on the future of the Parson's Court Drop In Centre for older people and its suitability and financial viability in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. He set out the history of the centre and the decision by Trustees to cease to operate at its present location from 31 March 2006. A working group had worked on a proposal for a successor facility in the City Centre which had been put to the Cambridge Strategic Partnership. Two issues arose from consideration of these proposals:

- Funding: in principle agreement for continued long term funding by the City Council to make a new centre available and affordable for older people visiting and residing in the City Centre
- Premises: the wholesale redevelopment of the area adjacent to the bus station provided an opportunity for premises to be provided for this purpose from the S106 obligation funding.

The Executive Councillor Community Development and Leisure reminded the speaker that applications for funding of this sort were considered on an annual basis. However the Council was supportive of the concept, but would need assurance that a business plan based on the proposal would be capable of delivery and was supported by other agencies. There was to be a meeting with Age Concern, the PCT and the County Council.

The redevelopment of the area around the Bus Station was Christ's College responsibility, but consideration could be given to a facility being housed within Grand Arcade.

Age Concern was welcome to attend the forthcoming public meeting on the Station Area Redevelopment application by Ashwell Developments.

Mr B Haywood expressed his concern that where the Council where funding agencies were being forced to make cuts it was inevitably the young, the elderly and the disabled who were disadvantaged.

In response to members' question Mr Bond said:

Age Concern was unable to resource any continuation of the facility after the current proposed closure date.

The proposal needed further discussion with stakeholders to build an acceptable Business Plan and identify a suitable location. It was essential to act now before the opportunity to ensure the continued existence of the facility.

**06/CS/05 Service Plans and Revenue and Capital Budgets – Revised 2005/06, Proposed 2006/07 and Forecast 2007/08 (General Fund)**

Service Plan Performance Reviews and exception reports had been considered in the last Committee cycle (November 2005) and set out the performance for the first six months of 2005/06, highlighting achievements and also detailing actions that would, or could, fail to meet targets by the end of the financial year. The Service Plans for 2006/07, accompanying this report, looked at the service proposals, objectives and budget position for 2006/07 and forecast for 2007/08. This information would enable the Executive Councillor to consider whether service priorities and resources should be refocused to enable objectives and targets for the coming year to be met.

Appendix C of the report set out the overall base revenue budget position for the General Fund Housing and Health portfolio, comparing the revised budget at November 2005 to the proposed revised budget at January 2005 for the financial year, 2005/06, and detailing the proposed budget for 2006/07 and forecast for 2007/08.

Cllr Bradnack welcomed the avoidance of the term 'on-going' in relation to setting and achieving targets. He was concerned with how members learned when the targets set were achieved and could assess how much progress had been made toward their achievement.

The Director of Community Services said that this would need to be taken into account in the corporate Service Plan process

Cllr Slatter flagged up potential concern for the increased need when the development to the south of the city would have an impact on the need for sheltered housing as distinct from providing affordable housing.

Cllr Blencowe said that there was no reference to the growth agenda in the sheltered housing strategy.

The Director of Community Services said that these issues would have to be incorporated within the Sheltered Housing Strategy on which there would be a further report to a subsequent cycle.

Cllr Blencowe said that he welcomed the implementation of the Landlord Accreditation Scheme. Marketing in major developments was aimed at 'Buy to Let' purchasers with the inevitable growth of Houses in Multiple Occupation. The Council needed to consider how to access S106 funding for housing issues such as dealing with HMOs and with the growth agenda in general. It was essential that the Council did not lose access to S106 funding and the proposals should be incorporated within the housing strategy.

The Director of Environment and Planning said that the Corporate Management Team recognised the importance of this issue and the Director of Community Services and he had been charged with looking at the allocation of S106 funding as a priority task. The Director of Community Services said that they would be reporting to subsequent cycles on the impact on the housing agenda.

Mr Haywood commented that the Council was losing a lot of housing units by the Right to Buy process and general standards of estates were deteriorating as a consequence by purchasers buying to let.

The Director of Community Services said that this would be addressed in the Private Sector Housing Strategy.

The Committee approved the recommendations set out in the officers' report by 6 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor Housing and Health approved the recommendation.

### **06/CS/06     Single Homeless and Rough Sleepers Strategy Review**

The Single Homeless and Rough Sleepers Strategy (SHRSS) had been written in 2002 and formed part of the wider city council Homelessness Strategy. The current SHRSS action plan ran until 2006 and thus there was a need for a formal review. The final draft of an action plan to cover 2006-09 was attached as appendix 1 to the report. Aside from the provision of a wet centre there was very little from the first strategy that had not been achieved and the action plan represented a new phase in the delivery of services to the single homeless and rough sleeping client group.

The proposed action plan would form a key part of the Homelessness Strategy and, as such, members' comments were invited.

Cllr Bradnack expressed concern on the progress of the provision of a Wet Centre and asked what happened if there was failure to reach agreement with Jimmy's Nightshelter.

Cllr Hughes queried the basis of the funding of the Wet Centre.

Cllr Blencowe queried the priorities allocated in some areas of the strategy.

Members discussed the relationship with NACRO and comparison with hospital and military discharges.

Officers responded to members' comments and said that discussions would continue on the provision of the Wet Hostel and with stakeholders in the provision of services for the homeless.

The Executive Councillor Housing and Health said that work with partner organizations was being built on, and that there was an awareness of gaps in provision, which were being addressed.

The Committee approved the recommendation set out in the officers' report by 6 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor Housing and Health approved the recommendation.

### **06/CS/07     Housing General Fund Grants to Voluntary Organisations for 2006/2007**

The report reviewed the grants that were awarded by Housing and Health Committee from the Housing General Fund (HGF) for the current year in the context of the corporate policy and

made recommendations to continue to grant fund housing related services in the voluntary sector for 2006/2007.

Cllr Bradnack said that the SLA objectives referred to had not changed since the previous year and consequently felt that little progress had been made.

Officers pointed to the Inquiry on Grants that had been held last year the impact of which were just being implemented.

The Executive Councillor Housing and Health said that she was confident that the Committee would not be in apposition to be making similar comments on the lack of progress at the Committee's meeting 2007.

The Committee approved the recommendations set out in the officers' report by 6 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Housing and Health approved the recommendations.

### **06/CS/08 Homelessness Reviews**

In January 2005, the homelessness review process had been outsourced to an external contractor, Sternberg, Reed, Taylor and Gill Solicitors on a two year contract. It had been agreed that the contract be reviewed towards the end of the first year to determine whether or not the council should exercise the twelve month break clause option included within the contract.

The report presented the findings and recommendations following a review of the system by which reviews of homelessness decisions were carried out.

Members raised a number of concerns about the issues covered in the report. These included:

The possibility that process had evolved into a 'rubber stamping' of the officers' decisions. The lack of involvement of CIAC which had previously very active on behalf of clients.

Officers said confirmed there had been no change to the relationship with CIAC. The indications in the review were that while officers' decisions had been upheld, it was not without proper consideration of the clients' cases. In two examples, the right of appeal to the County Court had been exercised and subsequently withdrawn. The process was seen as robust and fair and providing a good service.

The Committee approved the recommendations set out in the officers' report by 6 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Housing and Health approved the recommendations.

### **06/CS/09 Temporary Housing Review**

The purpose of this report was to present the findings and recommendations of the Temporary Housing Review (THR) which had been underway since June 2005. The recommendation of the report focused on proposed actions to reduce the number of units of temporary accommodation to 70 which is the 2010 target whilst the body of the report

explained what actions and decisions had already been taken during the review process to ensure that the Council would achieve the target and manage with reduced numbers of units of temporary accommodation at its disposal.

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.

**06/CS/10 Service Plans, Revenue and Capital Budgets: Revised 2005/06, Proposed 2006/07 and Forecast 2007/08 (Community Development and Leisure)**

Service Plan Performance Reviews and exception reports had been considered in the last Committee cycle (November 2005) and set out the performance for the first six months of 2005/06, highlighting achievements and also detailing actions that would, or could, fail to meet targets by the end of the financial year. The Service Plans for 2006/07, accompanying this report, looked at the service proposals, objectives and budget position for 2006/07 and forecast for 2007/08. This information would enable the Executive Councillor to consider whether service priorities and resources should be refocused to enable objectives and targets for the coming year to be met.

Appendix C of the report set out the overall base revenue budget position for the General Fund Housing and Health portfolio, comparing the revised budget at November 2005 to the proposed revised budget at January 2005 for the financial year, 2005/06, and detailing the proposed budget for 2006/07 and forecast for 2007/08.

Cllr Bradnack expressed alarm at the disproportionate level of increases in certain areas, such as the Leisurecard and suggested that they should be taken over two years.

The Head of Active Communities said that these appeared disproportionate because of the low level of the fee levied. The charges had been compared with others made and were still in keeping with service provided and often below the average charged across the region. She undertook to take into account those services which had an impact on those who found it hard to meet the costs, such as the allotments.

Cllr Bradnack noted that additional resources should be provided within the service particularly in relation to the implementation of the Moorings policy.

The Director of Community Services said that it had been flagged up as a bid for resources.

Cllr Bradnack said that there had been only a marginal increase in customer satisfaction noted in the Arts and Entertainments Service Plan relating to the Corn Exchange.

The Head of Arts and Entertainments said that there were broader issues involved in collecting information and assessing satisfaction. Improvements in gathering information were being investigated and the service was looking at developing Performance Indicators in line with national measures.

Cllr Bradnack referred to the lack of Performance Indicators within the Community Development Service.

The Head of Community Development said that the Service Plan had been written in line with corporate guidelines aimed at simplifying the service plan process. There was a further level of indicators which he was willing to share with the members.

Cllr Slatter said that she would prefer to see community facilities provided on site as a default position with S106 obligations.

The Director of Community Services said that the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister was consulting local authorities on the planning mechanisms which would cover these issues. The Cambridge Urban Growth Group was working to develop a systematic approach to dealing with the impact of planning issues.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 6 votes to 0 as set out in the officers' report.

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

### **06/CS/11 Moorings Implementation Policy Progress**

This report contained further recommendations for the implementation and administration of the Council's approved Mooring Policy. It also considered the impact of implementation following the completion of a Stage One Equalities Impact Assessment and the recent consultation paper from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister regarding residential moorings.

Members commented on:

The need to consider how the removal of boats could be effected  
The requirement to use smokeless fuels

Officers confirmed that a robust legal process was in place but the strength of the policy was its consultation and agreement by a wide range of the boating fraternity and co-operation from other stakeholders, notably the Conservators of the River Cam.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 6 votes to 0 as set out in the officers' report.

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

### **06/CS/12 Financial Support to Voluntary and Not-For-Profit Groups 2006-07: Community Development, Leisure and Economic Policy.**

This report gave details of applications from voluntary and not for profit organisations for community development, leisure and economic policy funding and made recommendations for 2006-07.

Members commented that they felt that the allocations were in the process of complying with the results of the Council's Inquiry into Grants and the commitment to the local Compact was to be welcomed. There was some concern that 'Women' was no longer regarded as a separate priority group being included under 'People with disabilities' The

Executive Councillor Community Development and Leisure agreed that she would review this issue with the officers.

The Committee approved the recommendations by 6 votes to 0 as set out in the officers' report.

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

**06/CS/13 Record of Executive Decision:**

The Committee noted the decision by the Executive Councillor for Housing and Health approving the purchase of a home for a family with a child with disabilities.

**06/CS/14 Forward Plan Non-Key Decisions Designated for Scrutiny**

The Committee noted that there were no non-key decisions on the current version of the Forward Plan (published 16 December 2005).

CHAIR