

**ENVIRONMENT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**21 March 2006
10.00am – 12.12pm

PRESENT: Councillors Reid (Chair), Adey, Bradnack, Durrant, Holland and Stuart.
ALSO PRESENT: Executive Councillors Cllr Bailey (Planning and Transport), the Deputy Leader, Cllr C Rosenstiel deputising for Cllr Coleman (Executive Councillor for Environmental Services).

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

The Chair explained that Councillor C Rosenstiel, Deputy Leader, was deputising for Councillor Coleman who had resigned on 20 March 2006.

06/ENV/20 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 January and the Special Meeting held on 21 February 2006 were confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

06/ENV/21 Apologies For Absence

Apologies had been received from Councillors Baker, Herbert, Kightley and Ward.

06/ENV/22 Declarations Of Interest

None.

06/ENV/23 Public Question Time

No members of the public wished to address the committee.

06/ENV/24 Statement of Community Involvement

(see also record of decision 06/ENV/15)

The Planning Policy Manager tabled some minor amendments to the text of the Statement.

Members raised the following:

- How would issues be identified? (page 37 paragraph 3.2).
- More details would be required of the groups to be consulted as there were groups within the broad groups identified on page 41 at paragraph 3.20.
- Residents' Associations were not identified in Appendix 4 on page 61.
- Concern that consulting residents at the pre-application stage was not included so that they could act proactively rather than reacting to the proposals of others.

The Planning Policy Manager said that consultation with stakeholders was a new government requirement which the City Council had already started. He agreed to send the list to members of the Committee. This stakeholder consultation would identify key issues which would then be widely consulted on. The results of the

consultation on this Issues and Options stage would be reported back to the Committee. At the very end of the process there would be a Public Inquiry.

The Government guidance was that specific bodies should not be identified; however Residents' Associations had been included in the list at paragraph 3.20.

It was important not to define the consultation process too tightly to allow for differences between different residents and different developments.

Councillor Holland and officers highlighted the successful consultation that had taken place with regard to the West Cambridge and NIAB developments in the north of the city and the Southern Fringe development. The process for consulting on the provision of Community Facilities for the latter had been led by the public, starting with a document produced by residents. The whole process had taken over a year.

Agreed that the officers prepare a form of words to describe the consultation process and that this be agreed following consultation with the Chair and Spokespersons of the Scrutiny Committee before decision by the Executive Councillor.

Action:
Planning
Policy
Manager

The Committee approved the recommendations (including the tabled amendments to the Statement) for the Executive Councillor by 4 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport approved the recommendations.

06/ENV/25 Revenue & Capital Budget Significant Variances and Carry Forward Requests (Environmental Services)

(see also record of decision 06/ENV/16)

In reply to a question from Councillor Bradnack about the variances and carry forwards in relation to the Waste Strategy budget, the officers said that some funds were for work not yet completed and that the virement of funds had been agreed at the November meeting of the Committee.

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

The Executive Councillor for Environmental Services approved the recommendations.

06/ENV/26 Revenue & Capital Budget Significant Variances and Carry Forward Requests (Planning & Transport)

(see also record of decision 06/ENV/17)

Councillor Bradnack said that a 10% variance in the budget seemed rather large.

The Executive Councillor said that this had been caused by the difficulty in recruiting Development Control officers.

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

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport approved the recommendations.

06/ENV/27 Revocation of Hackney Carriage Stand outside Numbers 2 and 4 Regent Street (referred by the Liberal Democrat members of the Scrutiny Committee)

(see also record of decision 06/ENV/18)

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

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport approved the recommendations.

06/ENV/28 Environmental Improvement Programme 2006/07 (referred by the Labour members of the Scrutiny Committee)

(see also record of decision 06/ENV/19)

The Urban Design Manager tabled a summary of the financial position.

Councillors Durrant and Bradnack questioned the rationale of dividing the available funds equally between each area committee. They thought that the decision in 2002/03 had used different criteria and asked that officers look back at the Record of Decisions and minutes for that period to confirm what had been done then. They suggested that division using the criterion of population size would be more equitable.

Councillor Durrant also questioned the full £25,000 of fees being deducted as the Principal Landscape Architect's post would have been vacant for at least 3 months. He asked that the relevant proportion be allocated between the four area committees.

After considerable discussion the Executive Councillor agreed in respect of recommendation 2.2:

1. to defer the final decision on allocation of funds until a further report had been considered at the June meeting of the Committee.
2. To allocate £20,000 to each area committee from 1 April 2006, with the balance of funds to be allocated following the June meeting.
3. To consider the proposal about a proportion of the fee being re-distributed.

Action:
Exec Cllr
Urban
Design
Manager

The Committee approved recommendations 2.1 and 2.3 for the Executive Councillor by 4 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport approved recommendations 2.1 and 2.3.

06/ENV/29 Environmental Safety Fund – Request for Funds for Elizabeth Way Underpass (referred by the Labour members of the Scrutiny Committee *(see also record of decision 05/ENV/20)*)

There was general support for this request.

Councillor Bradnack asked that officers send a briefing email about the different safety funds the Council had access to and what the criteria were for their use.

Action:
Urban
Design Mar

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

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport approved the recommendation.

06/ENV/30 Design and Historic Environment Champions – renewal of appointments (referred by the Labour members of the Scrutiny Committee) (*see also record of decision 05/ENV/21*)

Councillor Stuart in the Chair (Councillor Reid is the Design Champion and stayed in the room to take part in the debate but left the room during the vote on the recommendation).

Members raised the following:

- How had the £1000 mentioned in paragraph 3.4 been spent?
- Concern about a possible personal interest for the champions when acting as members of the Planning Committee because of their proactive role in the planning process.
- As excellence in design and protection of the historic environment were part of the Executive Councillor's portfolio why was there a need for separate roles?
- One positive outcome had been that some historic buildings such as Barnwell Priory were getting the attention they deserved; further positive results might only be known in years to come.

The Historic Environment Manager affirmed that the key contribution of the roles was to stimulate public involvement in the areas of design and the historic environment. The £1000 had been spent on attendance at conferences and meetings. It was also important to distinguish between aspirations to raise the quality of design across the city and the role of deciding on any one planning application placed before the Planning Committee. Advice had been taken on the issue of interests and there was deemed to be no conflict of interest.

Councillor Stuart proposed an amendment to the recommendation - delete all after June 2006 such that the recommendation read:

“The Executive Councillor is recommended to extend the appointments of the current Design and Historic Environment Champions until June 2006.”

The Committee approved the amended recommendation for the Executive Councillor by 3 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport approved the amended recommendation.

06/ENV/31 Conservation and Design Panel (referred by the Liberal Democrat members of the Scrutiny Committee) (*see also record of decision 05/ENV/22*)

Councillor Reid in the Chair.

The Historic Environment Manager introduced the report and tabled some draft Terms of Reference. The Panel currently met every 6 weeks and it was time for a thorough review of the operation of the Panel so that the Council would be provided with external Conservation and Design advice to meet current needs. A Member Panel to oversee the review was proposed with the intention to report back to the June meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

Members raised the following:

- The importance of having a clearly expressed view (without jargon) for the Planning Committee's deliberations.
- The importance of retaining the independent spirit of the Panel.
- That the views presented to Planning Committee would be the result of cross-expert discussion rather than individual expert views; a synthesis rather than a series of individual views.

The Committee approved the recommendation for the Executive Councillor by 3 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Transport approved the recommendation.

06/ENV/32 Forward Plan

The Scrutiny Committee requested scrutiny of the following items on the Forward Plan – The Council's Policies on Burials & Cremation, Appointments to outside bodies/Steering Groups.

Action
Committee
Manager

The meeting ended at 12.12pm.

CHAIR