

Community Services Scrutiny Committee19 July 2007
2:30pm to 6.35pm

Present: Councillors Slatter (Chair), Blair, Blencowe, Bradnack, James, Kightley, Lynn, Sanders, Shah

Non-voting co-optees: Brian Haywood, Tony Barnes (Tenant/Leaseholder Reps)

Also Present:

Cllr Smart (Executive Councillor for Housing), Cllr Stuart (Executive Councillor for Community Development and Health), Cllr Nimmo-Smith (Leader – for Cllr Smith, Executive Cllr for Arts and Recreation)

For the Information of the Council**07/CS/39 Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings on 29 March, 24 and 25 May 2007 were confirmed as a correct record.

07/CS/40 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Stan Best and Cllr Smith

07/CS/41 Declarations of Interest

Code of Conduct personal interests were declared as follows:

Councillor Item and Interest

Lynn	The Junction Service Level Agreement <i>Works for Theatre Resource which is involved with the Junction.</i>	07/CS/53
James	Cambridge Challenge: Selecting a Strategic Delivery Partner <i>His brother works for Sanctuary Housing Group referred to in the report</i>	07/CS/45

07/CS/42 Public Questions

Rosie Humphreys spoke to the report on the Junction Service Level Agreement and referred to the changes proposed in programming. Members responded to the comments as they related to the proposals in the report.

The Chair said that the comments would be taken into account in the discussion on the report on the agenda.

07/CS/43 Housing Asset Management Strategy

This asset management strategy report covered the period 2007 to 2010 (the date by which the Council should have attained the Government's Decent Homes standard) and supported the Council's Corporate Asset Management Plan. The plan concentrated largely on those activities relevant to the management of the Council's housing related assets but also touched on the wider housing context within the City and forms a component of the overall HRA business plan. The Strategy followed on from the Asset Management Strategy approved in 2003 that covered the period 2003 to 2006. The original report had been based on a stock condition survey commissioned during the summer of 2003, which was undertaken as a precursor to the Stock Option Appraisal. The results of that Stock Condition Survey had provided short, medium and long term estimates of the maintenance and repairs costs for the entire stock over a thirty year period and had given an indication of the level of investment specifically required to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard. The original survey had been based on a ten percent sample and, since then, further work has been undertaken 'in house', to survey properties so that currently detailed information on about 45 percent of the stock is known.

Members commented on the provision of garage accommodation and the future use of the St Matthews Street Garages.

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

The Executive Councilor for Housing approved the recommendations.

07/CS/44 Lettings Policy for Choice Based Lettings

The report sought approval of the new Cambridge City Council lettings policy, in line with the sub regional agreement to adopt a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme in February 2008. The report also highlighted the requirement for a decision to be made before the next meeting of the Committee in November in respect of a contract for the provision of some services associated with the CBL scheme.

Members agreed that the Chair of the Housing Management Board be included as a consultee in the proposed decision by the Executive Councilor for Housing.

The Committee supported the recommendations set out in the officers' report by 6 votes to 0, with the addition agreed above.

The Executive Councilor for Housing approved the recommendations as amended.

07/CS/45 Cambridge Challenge: Selecting a Strategic Delivery Partner

The Executive Councillor had previously approved the Council's participation in the Cambridge Challenge selection process. The Housing Corporation, with the involvement of Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, English Partnerships and Cambridgeshire Horizons had worked to select and agree on a Strategic Partner to deliver the affordable housing across housing development sites at the Southern Fringe, NIAB and Northstowe. Members were asked to note the content of the report and the progress of the project.

The Committee noted the officers' report.

07/CS/46 Future Provision of Sheltered Housing in Cambridge

In March 2007 the Executive Councillor had instructed officers to prepare a full response to the Countywide 'Best Value Sheltered Housing Green Paper' (Green Paper) which had been launched in January 2007 for consultation with providers of sheltered and extra care housing in Cambridgeshire. The Council's response to the Green paper was appended to the report. Following consultation with sheltered housing providers in Cambridge a response was submitted to the Best Value Review Sheltered Housing Group (BVR Sheltered Housing Group) on the 29th March 2007.

As part of the Green Paper process District Councils had also been tasked, as the strategic leads, with developing a provision plan that demonstrated how localities would work towards achieving the provision targets proposed in the Green Paper. The deadline for submission of these plans was the 26th April 2007. A preliminary provision plan for the City had been submitted to the BVR Sheltered Housing Group on that date. The report updated Members on the outcomes of the discussions that had taken place following the submission of the City Council's response to the Green Paper and outlined the preliminary provision plan for which Executive Councillor approval was sought.

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

The Executive Councilor for Housing approved the recommendations.

07/CS/47 Sub-Regional Housing Market Assessment

The Cambridge sub-region was carrying out a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (HMA) to assess the need and demand for housing, across all tenures, sub-regionally and on a local authority basis. The report outlined the background behind the carrying out of the assessment and the process being followed. It also outlined some of the initial outputs from the work carried out so far, and began to explore what some of the implications of these outputs might be in terms of strategic planning for housing.

As the first stage of the HMA was not yet complete, and the outputs had not yet been ratified by the local authorities concerned or the Sub-Regional Housing Board, they should be treated with caution at this stage.

The executive Councillor for Housing asked that a briefing be held for members once more detailed outputs are available and more of the strategic and policy implications were apparent.

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

The Executive Councilor for Housing approved the recommendations.

07/CS/48 2006/07 Revenue and Capital Outturn, Carry Forwards and Significant Variances (Housing Portfolio)

This report presented a summary of the 2006/07 outturn position (actual income and expenditure) for services within the Housing portfolio, compared to the final budget for the year. The position for revenue and capital was reported and variances from budgets were highlighted, together with explanations. Requests to carry forward funding arising from certain budget underspends into 2007/08 were identified.

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

The Executive Councilor for Housing approved the recommendations.

07/CS/49 Appointment to Outside Bodies

The Labour Group Spokespersons said that the Labour Group had requested an item on Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee to review the

Appointments to Outside Bodies. They were of the view that existing appointments should stand until the review took place.

Children and Young People Steering Group (1)

The Committee noted that In relation to this appointment there was also another associated body to which an appointment should be made: **Children and Young People Area Partnership (1)**

The Executive Councilor for Community Development & Health agreed that Councillor Sanders and Cllr Blair be appointed to the above as alternate members.

07/CS/50 2006/07 Revenue and Capital Outturn, Carry Forwards and Significant Variances (Community Development and Health Portfolio)

This report presented a summary of the 2006/07 outturn position (actual income and expenditure) for services within the Community Development & Health portfolio, compared to the final budget for the year. The position for revenue and capital is reported and variances from budgets are highlighted, together with explanations. Requests to carry forward funding arising from certain budget underspends into 2007/08 are identified.

The Committee supported the recommendations set out in the officers' report by 6 votes to 0,

The Executive Councilor for Community Development & Health approved the recommendations.

07/CS/51 Cambridge City Crematorium – Memorabilia Questionnaire

Following risk assessment of the grounds, complaints from some memorial leaseholders and difficulties encountered during grounds maintenance users of the Crematorium, families had been requested to remove all glass and breakable objects and refrain from planting within the communal memorial gardens. One memorial leaseholder had contacted the local press regarding this decision. Full consultations were to be undertaken to cover all aspects of the Crematorium, including extending the choice of memorials for the bereaved and asking their opinions on future developments. A draft questionnaire was appended to the report and members were invited to comment on the content.

Members made a number of comments and suggestions for amendments which the officers agreed to assimilate into the questionnaire as appropriate. The officers would circulate a second draft to all members for further comment and then submit a final draft, taking into account any further comments, to the Chair and Labour Spokesperson for agreement. The Executive Councillor for Community Development & Health would then be asked to agree the final form of the questionnaire.

The Committee supported the process set out above to obtain an agreed final version of the questionnaire.

The Executive Councillor for Community Development & Health approved the questionnaire in principle subject to the final amendment process as outlined above.

07/CS/52 Expansion of Memorial Choice – Project Appraisal

Following scrutiny of the Business Plan in November 2006 the Executive Councillor for Community Development & Health had approved a recommendation to review ways of improving memorial choice available to the public at Huntingdon and Newmarket Road Cemeteries and the Crematorium, subject to resources being made available to fund the initial investment. In February 2007 Council had approved investment of £100,000 to improve memorial choices as ‘an invest to save’ scheme, where the initial investment is repayable to general fund reserves over a 10 year period.

Officers proposed to spend the resources available on providing a wider range of memorial choice, with the introduction of a children’s memorial area, a place for bereaved parents to visit, a new memorial garden and individual smaller gardens. The need for improvements to Bereavement Services by offering a wider memorial choice was recognized. Subject to member approval, the purchase and subsequent development of a variety of memorials provides an excellent, future service provision opportunity to contribute to the Council’s Medium Term Objectives (MTO’s).

The Committee supported the recommendations set out in the officers’ report by 6 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor for Community Development & Health approved the recommendations.

07/CS/53 The Junction Service Level Agreement

In January 2007 the Executive Councillor had agreed to continue the City Council’s funding agreement with the Junction at a level of £97,400 per

annum for three years with effect from 1 April 2007. This agreement was subject to review if there was a substantial shift in the nature of the Junction's activities or programme during that time.

Ordinarily a service level agreement was concluded between the Junction and the City Council prior to the beginning of the financial year. However it had been necessary to postpone this process this year since the Junction's future activities had been under review.

The Head of Arts & Entertainments circulated a summary of the proposals by the newly appointed by the interim Chief Executive of the Junction.

After a considerable discussion around the proposed programme, its relationship to the Council's SLA and the balance of events and courses being run, members noted general concern on the effect on the some of adult classes and the youth programme. They also noted the Director of Community Services' comments on the need to further review the programme once the Chief Executive post had been filled and the request by members for monitoring of the impact of the proposed changes.

The Chair advised that it might be appropriate to convene a special meeting of the Committee once the new Chief Executive was in post and was able to take the Committee's concerns into account.

The Committee supported recommendation 1 (To approve 20% discretionary rate relief until 31 March 2008) set out in the officers' report by 6 votes to 0. The Committee also recommended that the Leader agree that the Head of Arts and Entertainments seek amendments to the Service Level Agreement with the Junction with the new Chief executive of the Junction, taking into account the concerns of the Committee.

The Leader (in the absence of the Executive Councilor for Arts and Recreation) approved the above recommendations.

07/CS/54 Outside Bodies

The Labour Group spokesperson said that the Group would wait for the review at Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee before nominating any members.

The Junction (5)

The Chair said she understood there were now to be 3 representatives, the 2 Lib Dem nominations were Cllrs Stuart and Ellis-Miller.

The Labour Group spokesperson said that the Group would wait for the requested review at Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee before nominating members.

Cllrs Stuart and Ellis-Miller and 1 Labour Group nomination

The Folk Museum (2)

Cllr James and 1 Labour Group nomination

The Leader (in the absence of the Executive Councilor for Arts and Recreation) approved these nominations.

07/CS/55 2006/07 Revenue and Capital Outturn, Carry Forwards and Significant Variances (Arts and Recreation Portfolio)

The report presented a summary of the 2006/07 outturn position (actual income and expenditure) for services within the Arts and Recreation portfolio, compared to the final budget for the year. The position for revenue and capital is reported and variances from budgets are highlighted, together with explanations. Requests to carry forward funding arising from certain budget underspends into 2007/08 are identified.

Officers responded to comments by Cllr Bradnack on the relative workloads of sections within Active Communities and the ability of teams to complete projects and supply services.

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

The Leader (in the absence of the Executive Councilor for Arts and Recreation) approved the recommendations.

07/CS/56 Future Developments And Funding Opportunities For Jesus Green

The Council has consulted on proposals to update and improve aspects of Jesus Green. Over the last few years, feedback and consultation has identified several issues and concerns, many of which link to tired or redundant facilities and underdeveloped potential for this valuable open space. A project plan had been established and would aspire to make capital improvements to Jesus Green in order to conserve and improve the heritage value, increase audiences and opportunities for volunteering and to make

improvements to skills, knowledge and training to allow improved management and maintenance.

The City Council was expected to make cash and non-cash contributions to this project as part of any bid to the HLF. These requirements were summarised in the report.

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

The Leader (in the absence of the Executive Councilor for Arts and Recreation) approved the recommendations.

07/CS/57 Project Appraisal - Refurbishment to Jesus Green Pump-out Station

In 1997, capital funding had been made available to carry out building improvements to Jesus Green Swimming Pool. The improvements had provided new toilets for the pool and, facing the river, a Pump-out Station. This facility provides a foul waste disposal system for boats and was the only facility of its kind in the city.

In 2005, the Council had adopted a formal moorings policy that allowed appropriate, licenced boats as well as visitors to moor along some of its riverbanks.

Since 2005, routine discussions with the riverboat community, users of Jesus Green and nearby residents has revealed the need to improve the facilities at the Pump-out, primarily to reduce odor and improve functionality and reliability. Streetscene maintained the facility and in addition to the above points, the Head of Streetscene has raised concerns about design in relation to health and safety.

A range of improvements were discussed with Streetscene and a capital bid had been included in the 2007/08 budget cycle for a £60,000 refurbishment.

Additional consultation has since been carried out with Camboaters and other interested parties to ascertain specific requirements and establish best practice from elsewhere.

The Project Appraisal recommended the Executive Councillor to accept the recommendations to approve capital spend on this project to improve and refurbish the existing boat foul waste disposal facility on Jesus Green for licensed moored boat dwellers and boating visitors to Cambridge City.

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

The Leader (in the absence of the Executive Councilor for Arts and Recreation) approved the recommendations.

The meeting ended at 6.35pm

CHAIR