

**Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee**21 January 2008  
5pm – 7.40pm

**Present:** Councillors Taylor (Chair), Blackhurst, Boyce, Bradnack, Herbert, Ellis-Miller, Sadiq, Ward and Shah

**Also Present:**

Councillor Ian Nimmo-Smith, The Leader (deputising for the Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Resources, Rod Cantrill)

**For the Information of the Council****08/SR/01 Minutes**

The committee noted that the minutes of the meeting on 19 November 2007 were not available. No Matters Arising or follow up Actions were noted from the meeting on 19 November 2007. Upon completion the minutes will be distributed to all members and a copy signed by the Chair.

**08/SR/02 Apologies**

Apologies were noted from Rod Cantrill.

**08/SR/03 Declarations of Interest**

No Code of Conduct personal interests were declared.

**08/SR/04 Public Questions**

Mr Northfrop commented and raised issues regarding Item 8 on the Agenda Ravensworth Gardens:

*The Residents Association are looking for Cambridge City Council to fund the full cost (£25,000) of the remedial work at Ravensworth Garden. The problems with the grassed areas have occurred due to the original defective work being wrongly approved by the council.*

*In the area there is limited recreational space for children to play and this facility is much need and appreciated*

Ms Brown (Director of the Ravensworth Gardens Residents Association Limited - RGRAL) also spoke on the Ravensworth Garden issues:

*RGRAL would like to see the City Council take a leasehold interest in the main open space at Ravensworth Gardens and they feel this is the only sensible solution. They have now stood down their legal advisors and the matter is in the hands of the Council*

Members followed up with questions and comments:

**Q) Open space is limited but the CB1 development at the station will hopefully offer some additional facilities for that area**

*A) It is very unlikely that the CB1 developers will meet their open space obligations. The residents want the open space they were promised, with the facilities promised in the place promised*

**Q) It is stated that the facilities are used by the wider community – can you give an idea of numbers?**

*A) A lot of young children and parents use the facility during the day and in the evening it attracts older children – probably averaging 6-12 per evening. A lot of the housing in the area has limited garden space and with a lot more families moving to the area these facilities are invaluable. Ravensworth Gardens is good place for the community to get together but the inadequate grassed area is a big issue*

## **08/SR/05 Service Plans 2008/09**

The Chair invited comments and questions from members on each of the following headings:

**1. Accountancy** - *No comments raised*

### **2. City Centre Management**

Councillor Bradnack raised concern over:

- the continued use of 'ongoing' as a completion date on the service plans
- the wording 'working with the Executive Councillor...' 4b (page 23)
- the wording 'continue the review':4a (page 24) why have completion date?
- The reduction in the 'Market Occupancy' PI (page 26)

The Officer agreed to review the use of 'ongoing' but noted that a huge amount of other work sits behind the Service Plans which make it difficult to fix some of the dates

He also agreed the removal of wording under 4b and informed the Committee that the Markey Occupancy PI had been reduced in order to make it more realistic

It was agreed to feedback further information to Councillor Bradnack by email

### **3. City Services and External Trading - No comments raised**

### **4. Customer Services**

Councillor Ward asked for clarification on the 2c PI's (page 46) – *'Information entered correctly on the CRM system'* and *'handling times for correspondence'*

The Officer clarified that the CRM system PI target refers to 97% of the fields entered with the correct information. It was felt that 100% would be unachievable due to human error. He also confirmed that the email response time had been reduced from 10 to 7 days but staff are encouraged to respond earlier if possible

Councillor Herbert raised concern over the huge difference in the customer satisfaction figures for each area (page 43) and asked how the lowest scoring areas are being tackled

The Officer noted that the PI's are taken and measured from national customer satisfaction surveys but as the Customer Service Centre is up and running these will be reviewed.

The Chair suggested that further information could be drawn from the Complaints Handling Report and the Director of Customer and Democratic Services agreed to pull together some further details to forward to members

### **5. Democratic Services**

Members noted that the number of public attending Council Meetings has increased by 70% to 1269 in the last year. However this still equates, on average, to £150.00 per person that attends. Transferring planning decisions to Area Committees was designed to increase public participation – but this cost per person is justification for reviewing the decision

The Chair disagreed and felt that Area Committees were a valuable source of public engagement

Councillor Ward asked for clarification regarding Service Objective 1 (page 49) – Democratic Services webpages

The Director of Customer and Democratic Services agreed to look into this and report back to Councillors

## **6. Human Resources**

Councillor Bradnack again raised the issue of the term ‘*ongoing*’ being used for completion dates and felt that this was unacceptable. He questioned whether the Service Plans were being used correctly and suggested that any topics not resulting in a final report should be removed

The Chair agreed and felt that more specifics could be included

Councillor Bradnack acknowledged the difficulties but highlighted the need for robust targets in order to meet the disability and ethnic minority figures (PI code: BV11b and BV11c)

The Head of Human Resources explained the outreach work being undertaken with disability groups and noted that the PI figures are rising year on year. The recent Staff Survey recorded 5% disability, which is a lot higher than the figure from the corporate data collected

The Chair suggested that this difference could be due to confidentiality issues

## **7. ICT Client Services - *No comments raised***

## **8. Internal Audit**

Councillors highlighted the need for them to be more involved in this important scrutiny process. It was noted that this topic is being discussed at upcoming Civic Affairs and Decision Making Meetings

Budget issues were also raised and it was asked if the service was being asked to do more than they were paid for. The Director of Finance noted that the majority of costs were related to staff and it would be difficult to make year on year reductions without cutting this

Reports are also available to all members and there is an ongoing dialogue with Councillors

## **9. Legal Service and Land Charges - *No comments raised***

### **10. Procurement**

Councillors welcomed any action that encouraged small businesses and the clarity of wording in PI Code 22 (page 113) was questioned

The Director of Finance agreed to review wording in light of these comments

### **11. Property and Building Services**

The 10% increase in PI Code LP1 (MTO2) was questioned

The Head of Property Services commented that definitions had recently changed meaning that two buildings, that had previously performed badly, were now not counted

### **12. Revenue and Benefit Services**

Councillor Bradnack highlighted the poor March 08 forecast under PI Code BV7bi (page 147) and asked for clarification on the reasons

The Director of Finance highlighted the extra effort put into this target but explained that they are open to volumes of over payment, and as its recorded in amounts, one large invoice will distort the figures

It was agreed that the Officer would follow up further with Councillor Bradnack

### **Draft Budgets 2008/09**

Councillors commented on the large increase in charges for Guildhall Committee Rooms and Cambridge Retail Markets (*appendix b*) and it was agreed that the Head of Property Services would contact members with further information on this

The Committee discussed in detail the proposals to open access to the La Mimosa Punt Station (*appendix K1*) to a controlled number of chauffeur punt operators, rather than granting a license to a single operator

The Officers were congratulated on tackling the issue but concern was raised over the start location at Keyside as its unsuitable for small children or the elderly. Would this affect the potential market

The Head of Property Services noted that his department had been marketing the space and had already received a large number of expressions of interest

The Head of Legal Services informed the Committee that ongoing discussions were taking place with Scudamores over the touting issues (*section 3 part 4*) and the revenue costings (*section 8*) and a meeting with Officers has been suggested

The Chair welcomed confirmation that a full Report on all river issues would be taken to the next Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee

The Committee supported the recommendations set out in the Officers' report by 7 votes to 0

The Leader approved the recommendations

#### **08/SR/06 Procurement of New Temporary Staff Supplier Contract**

The Head of Human Resources introduced the Report and gave an overview of the issues and the recommendations

Councillors commented on 4.2+4.3 and raised issues regarding the use of staffing agencies, noting the high commission rates and risk of reducing the pool of people available

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

The Leader approved the recommendations

#### **08/SR/07 New Item from Supplementary Agenda Insurance Services Contract**

The Director of Finance introduced this Report and members raised no further comments

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

The Leader approved the recommendations

## 08/SR/08 Ravensworth Gardens

The Head of Active Communities introduced the report and gave the background on issues concerning the S106 agreement and the Councils obligation to the site

Options considered but rejected:

- Planning enforcement
- Replacement of the soil
- Changing the nature of the open space
- Exchanging improvement works for maintenance responsibility

Options considered:

- (i) The Council does not take on additional responsibilities for open space
- (ii) The Council takes a leasehold interest in the open space
- (iii) The Council fund works to the main open space through the Planning Obligations Strategy or through other development contributions
- (iv) The Council fund the cost of the remedial works in full or in part

Approval was sought from the Committee to endorse option (i) and request that Officers continue discussions with RGRAL, local residents and members to develop a practical solution. It was noted that the Council are under no legal obligation to do the remedial works

Councillor Ward raised the possibility of taking over the freehold of the car park and the play area and renting the parking facilities out to the public. It was advised that taking over a whole new structure could be problematic

Councillor Bradnack referred to section 3.8 - that states *'the quality of the soil is very poor and unlikely to be of the BS Soil Standard submitted in the original specification documents'* – and section 4.1.1 that confirms the work was inspected and approved by the Council in October 1999. It was felt that this confirmed the council's failure to conduct an adequate soil inspection. A preference was therefore given to option (iv) with option (ii) also being investigated at a later date

Councilor Ward agreed that if £25,000 would definitely solve the problem he would be in support of the option, however he would not be in agreement with taking over longer-term responsibility for the open space

Members agreed with the lack of provision in the area and discussed possible funding requests heard through the Area Committees

The Leader felt it would be beneficial to investigate further:

- the survey results with the specialist turf agronomist
- the details of the transferring of the freehold interest to RGRAL
- alternate funding routes such as the Planning Obligation Strategy

He noted that the Council has a clear responsibility to ensure continued access to this important open space but he would not like to see the Council take over the freehold responsibility

The Committee supported the recommendations set out in the Officers' report by 4 votes to 0

Councillor Boyce arrived late so was unable to vote on this item

The Leader approved the recommendations

## **08/SR/09 Service Plans and Draft Budgets 2008/09**

### **1. CCTV**

Councillor Bradnack raised concern that Service Plan PI Code LPI CCTV3 did not seem to meet the demand for mobile cameras and the document also failed to confirm response timings

The Director of City Services noted these comments

### **2. Strategy and Partnerships and Corporate Marketing**

Members raised no further comments

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

The Leader approved the recommendations

## **08/SR/10 Revenue and Capital Budgets 2007/08 (Revised), 2008/09 (Proposed) and 2009/10 (Forecast) – Overview**

The Director of Finance introduced this item and informed the Committee that the information regarding Employer Contribution Levels has now been received and the Bus Subsidies are currently out to tender

The Department is currently recruiting for experienced full time Urban Designers and is working with South Cambridgeshire District Council on the possibility of joint posts. Negotiations are taking place regarding concessionary fares and we are currently looking at additional costs of around £240 million in addition to the £200 million contingency from last year

Councillor Shah questioned whether the Member Training budget would be sufficient if planning training was required on legal challenges

The Director of Finance confirmed that the £15,000 would supplement the funds already held for in-house training and Members were encouraged to highlight any further training needs

The Committee supported the amendments set out in the Officers' report by 6 votes to 0

The Leader expressed his thanks to the Director of Finance and his team for all their hard work in completing the document and praised the clarity and robust framework upon which it is based. The importance of a highly skilled Urban Designer Team was also noted

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

The Leader approved the recommendations

### **08/SR/11 Cambridge Community Safety Plan 2008 – 2011**

The Report was introduced by the Director of Community Services. It was noted that the priorities have been redefined as a result of the consultation and vehicle and cycle disorder have now been added

The Committee was informed that the final Report is required to go to the Leader and the Spokes prior to going to full Council

The Community Safety Strategy Officer also noted that as the Government has not issued guidance on Crime Reduction Figure Indicators this would be developed locally to fit with LAA targets. These have yet to be finalised by the board but this will take place at the February meeting

Councillor Bradnack raised the issue of Section 30 Orders and highlighted this as an opportunity to raise the profile of Designated Public Place Orders (DPPO's)

The Leader confirmed that the options will be continually looked at and that street drinking and anti-social behaviour form part of Policies and Strategies. DPPO's are not favoured by the Council and the local Police have not suggested that we change this approach

Councillor Bradnack questioned whether a change in policy would be looked on favourably if the Police raised the issue

The Leader noted that if reasons and evidence were brought before the Council it would be looked into fully. However, the implications of the legislation could prove an issue as Government reports have been produced on Section 30 but not DPPO's

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

The Leader approved the recommendations

The Meeting closed at 7.40pm

**CHAIR**