

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY CHAIRMAN:

Corporate Resources

Report of
Chairman:

**COUNCILLOR
JOHN GUEST**

Since the last meeting of the Council, there has been one ordinary meeting, two special meetings of the Committee and two meetings of the Organisational Assessment Sub-Committee.

CROS.31/02

The resolution contained in the Minutes will have to be re-visited by the committee because under the 'Best Value' regime it is necessary that we consider externalisation as an alternative to the current arrangements in addition to those options resolved.

CROS.32/02

The committee unanimously decided that we should concentrate on areas where we know we are performing badly, i.e. those in the lower quartile. This would enable us to focus on possible improvements in areas of poor performance.

CROS.38/02

The first special meeting of the Committee, which was a call-in of an individual Portfolio Holder's decision, appeared to put some Members in a bit of a tizzy. Unfortunately, some interpret a call-in as a criticism or related to a disagreement between the Committee and the Executive. I am mindful that these procedures are new and subject to a little tinkering in the future as flaws come to light.

To date, decisions by Portfolio Holders are not supported by references or explanation and this may lead in some cases to misinterpretation. I have been in consultation with the leader of the Council and the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to resolve this.

In this case, the decision was called-in because a private sector venue was chosen before a corporate resource. It is the duty of this Committee to protect the resources it is responsible for. Some Members seemed to think that cost was an issue here: it was not. The Portfolio Holder was merely asked to explain to the Committee the reasons for that particular decision. Those reasons were accepted by the Committee with the proviso that an explanation is given in future in cases where a corporate resource is not considered appropriate. The Portfolio Holder agreed.

It was apparent at the meeting that some members are not familiar with the new constitution of the Council or the function of Overview and Scrutiny. I accept that is only applied to substitute members, but it may indicate a training need.

There was also some criticism of one Member for non-attendance. I must stress that the timetabling of call-ins is planned to accommodate the Portfolio Holder's diary, not the diaries of individual committee Members.

CROS.41/02

This special meeting was a workshop to discuss Members' views on the Corporate Plan. The Committee was pleased to be able to contribute its views on the Plan in general and on 'Celebrating Carlisle' City Vision scheme specifically. All the key priorities were commented upon and are as minuted. The whole workshop was characterised by an air of consensus and agreement between all the Members. It was also agreed that key priority was the most significant priority relating to the future of this City.

Organisational Assessment Best Value Review Sub Committee:

The Sub-Committee is working within a timescale largely dictated by statutory limits for consultation. Despite requests from the Executive to speed up this process, we are legally bound by agreed constraints and unable to comply. However, there are no delays to date and despite conflict within the committee, the programme is running according to its timetable.

COUNCILLOR GUEST

23 April 2002