

CORPORATE RESOURCES
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (SPECIAL)
WEDNESDAY 13 AUGUST 2003 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Guest (Chairman), Councillors Bain, Bradley, Dodd (substitute for Councillor Joscelyne), Jefferson, J Mallinson, McDevitt (substitute for Councillor Stothard) and Styth.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors Mrs E Mallinson (Chairman of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee) and Mrs C Rutherford (Chairman of the Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee) had been invited to attend the meeting to represent their respective Overview and Scrutiny Committees in respect of the discussion on CROS.93/03 and later invited to remain for the rest of the Agenda.

Councillor Geddes attended part of the meeting as Corporate Resources Portfolio Holder.

CROS.90/03 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Joscelyne and Stothard.

CROS.91/03 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors E Mallinson and J Mallinson declared a personal interest in respect of any issues relating to Minute CROS.93/03 (General Fund Provisional Outturn 2002/03 - Carry Forward and Bid Requests) relating to any budget issues dealing with Housing Benefit.

Councillors Dodd, E Mallinson and Styth declared a personal interest as Members of Carlisle Housing Association Board in respect of Minute

CROS.93/03 (General Fund Provisional Outturn 2002/03 - Carry Forward and Bid Requests)

CROS.92/03 WORK PROGRAMME – DISCUSSION WITH PORTFOLIO

HOLDERS

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager submitted apologies from Councillor Firth, Policy, Performance Management, Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder, and Councillor Mitchelson, Leader and Promoting Carlisle Portfolio Holder. Councillor Geddes, Corporate Resources Portfolio Holder, was present at the meeting.

Councillor Mitchelson had forwarded a briefing note on Local Public Service Agreements which the Committee decided to consider as a separate item later in the Agenda (Minute CROS.94/03 refers).

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager reported to the Committee that he had omitted to tender Councillor Geddes' apologies to the last meeting of this Committee.

Councillor Geddes reported on matters within her Portfolio which would be submitted to this Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consultation in the forthcoming months :

- a. Diversity Policy – Aspects relating to Staff and Member Training and
E Government.
- b. Customer Information Unit - Details of the IEG 3 Statements would be submitted to the 16 October 2003 meeting of this Committee.
- c. Customer Contact Best Value Review Action Plan – A progress report would be submitted to the 4 September 2003 meeting of this Committee.
- d. Municipal Maintenance Best Value Action Plan – A progress report would be submitted to the 16 October 2003 meeting of this Committee.
- e. Disability Discrimination Act - A report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Some of the service delivery issues would address the Disability Discrimination Act when the services are delivered in the Customer Contact Centre.

The Head of Customer and Information Services reported that the development of the IT Strategy was dependent upon an Information Strategy being in place. This was contingent upon the appointment of an Information Officer and this post would be going out to recruitment in the next month.

Councillor Geddes further reported that the Action Plan produced as a result of the recent review of the City Council's Investors in People status had now been produced and was available for this Committee to consider if the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee requested it to do so.

RESOLVED – (1) That Councillor Geddes be thanked for attending the meeting and for her helpful input.

2. That it would be helpful if Portfolio Holders provided written submissions on forthcoming issues and policy proposals within their Portfolio areas to be circulated with the papers for Overview and Scrutiny meetings.
3. That Councillor Firth be invited to attend the next meeting of this Committee.
4. That the Overview and Scrutiny Manager be requested, in consultation with the Chairman, to include the Investors in People Action Plan on a future Agenda for consideration.

CROS.93/03 GENERAL FUND PROVISIONAL OUTTURN
2002/03 –

CARRY FORWARD AND BID REQUESTS

Councillors Dodd, E Mallinson, J Mallinson and Styth, having declared personal interests, remained in the meeting and took part in the Committee's deliberations.

The Head of Finance submitted Report FS.28/03 summarising those 2002/03 carry forward requests and additional bids as previously considered by the Executive on 7 July 2003 and which had not been approved at that meeting.

Carry forward requests totalled £1,010,629 (Category B) and £226,790 (Category C) and were all non-recurring requests to be funded from budgets approved in 2002/03 and had no impact of an ongoing nature.

There was one bid for a non-recurring item of £15,000 in respect of an IT Business System for the Member and Employee Services Business Unit. This could be financed from the surplus generated in 2002/03 and there were no financial implications of an on-going nature.

In addition, there were recurring bids totalling £242,300 which could be financed through a virement from additional recurring income to a maximum of £200,000 identified in 2003/04, achieved as a result of improved debt recovery procedures for Housing Benefit overpayments. However, if all recurring bids were approved there would be a deficit of £42,300 requiring supplementary funding. Also, funding would not be available for other budget priorities or deficits identified during the budget process.

A number of individual reports giving details of the background to the various carry forward and bid requests were also submitted, together with the decisions of the Executive which had considered this matter on 4 August 2003.

The Committee noted that these matters, including those seeking redirection of resources, had not originally been planned to come to Overview and Scrutiny and asked the Head of Finance to ensure that such reports were directed to this Committee as a matter of course in the future.

The Committee then considered in detail the individual reports as follows:-

a. Property Services

The Head of Property Services submitted Report PS.7/03 seeking a carry forward of existing salary underspends, which totalled £70,000 for the Unit in 2002/03, and a priority call on the proposed new recruitment and retention fund in order to regrade existing staff and vacant posts in the Property Services Business Unit.

The carry forward request had been supported by the Executive.

Members noted the particular difficulties being experienced in recruiting and retaining Officers in the Property Services Business Unit in the light of competition, not only from other Local Authorities, but also the private sector.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations in the report be supported.

b. Legal and Democratic Services

A report from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (LDS.44/03) was submitted containing details of committed expenditure and carry forward items requested in respect of the Legal and Democratic Services Business Unit.

The carry forward requests had been supported by the Executive.

RESOLVED – That the carry forward requests be supported.

c. Revenues and Benefits Services

The Head of Revenues and Benefits Services submitted Report RB.12/03 detailing carry forward requests in respect of committed expenditure (Category B) and uncommitted expenditure (Category C).

In supporting these carry forward requests, Members particularly wished for action to be taken as soon as possible to provide air conditioning to improve airflow to the Benefits Office. This had been included as a Category C carry forward request.

The Head of Commercial and Technical Services reported that there was an ongoing review of Civic Centre accommodation, and that it may be prudent to await the outcome of his review before air conditioning was provided. He undertook to investigate a temporary solution.

The carry forward requests had been supported by the Executive.

RESOLVED – (1) That the carry forward requests be supported.

2. That the Head of Commercial and Technical Services be requested to submit a report to City Council with regard to the carry forward of £17,500 to improve air flow to the Benefits Office outlining health and safety and risk management issues for staff arising from current working conditions and how these may be overcome as quickly as possible.

a. Environmental Protection Services

The Head of Environmental Protection Services submitted Report EPS.49/03 which identified items of committed and uncommitted expenditure, together with carry forward requests and a recurring funding bid (£30,000) in respect of staffing and an operational budget to support the continued delivery of the Council's retained housing functions.

The carry forward requests and the recurring funding bid had been supported by the Executive.

Referring to the recurring bid of £30,000 to enable the continued delivery of the Council's retained housing functions, a Member expressed dissatisfaction that this funding requirement had not been addressed at the time of transfer of the housing stock to Carlisle Housing Association. Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee had commented on some impacts caused by lack of adequate resources.

Members also noted that there was currently no budget for the provision of litter bins. The Head of Environmental Protection Services reported that a bid for funding in 2003/04 for the

provision of litter bins would be considered by the Executive as part of the budget process.

RESOLVED – That the carry forward requests and recurring funding bid be supported.

(e) Commercial and Technical Services

The Head of Commercial and Technical Services submitted Report CTS.19/03 summarising carry forward requests in respect of budgets within the Commercial and Technical Services Business Unit.

The carry forward requests had been supported by the Executive.

RESOLVED – That the carry forward requests be supported.

(f) Financial Services

The Head of Finance submitted Report FS.27/03 giving details of carry forward requests in respect of the Financial Services Business Unit.

The carry forward requests had been supported by the Executive.

RESOLVED – (1) That the carry forward requests, which all related to issues which the Committee had previously commented upon, be supported.

(2) That this Committee considers that priority should be given to setting up the necessary procedures for making bids against the Risk Management budget.

(g) Member Support and Employee Services

The Head of Member Support and Employee Services submitted Report MS.10/03 which detailed carry forward and recurring bid requests in respect of the Member Support and Employee Services Business Unit.

Whilst the Executive on 4 August 2003 had approved the carry forward requests, the recurring bid requests detailed below had not been approved :

Admin Support to the Member Services & Employee Services

Business Unit £ 20,000

IT Trainer/Consultant £ 36,000

Recruitment and Retention Fund £ 50,000

Human Resources Development £ 50,000

M Mooney, Executive Director, reported that the Executive had decided that the recurring bids should be considered as part of any further bid for resources arising from the outcome of the Investors in People review and the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

With regard to recruitment and retention, the Executive had asked that any Business Unit

Head, in conjunction with the Head of Member and Employee Services, should bring a report to the Executive, if necessary, on any specific case where difficulties were being experienced with recruitment and retention.

With regard to the request for £20,000 recurring funding for administrative support to the Member Support and Employee Services Business Unit, a Member considered that this highlighted the failure to properly identify support costs when the new Business Units were set up.

Members considered that there were real problems within the City Council with recruitment and retention and that the use of Consultants and temporary Agency staff to support the normal work of Officers was both costly and unsatisfactory. Members were disappointed that there were no Executive Members present to explain the Executive's position.

Members considered that the introduction of a Recruitment and Retention Fund should be supported.

Members were also unable to understand how the Executive had supported the Head of Property Services' request for funding to address a recruitment and retention issue, part of which was from a first call on the Recruitment and Retention Fund, given that this Fund had not been approved by the Executive.

RESOLVED - (1) That the carry forward requests and the recurring bid requests be supported.

2. That the Executive be requested to clarify for the City Council on 9 September 2003 the position with regard to funding to address recruitment and retention issues in the Property Services Business Unit, given that approval had not been given to one of the sources of funding.

h. Culture Leisure and Sport Services

The Head of Culture, Leisure and Support Services submitted Report CLS.54/03 providing information on the carry forward items requested in respect of Culture Leisure and Sport Services.

The carry forward requests had been supported by the Executive.

RESOLVED – That the carry forward requests be supported.

i. Economic and Community Development Business Unit

The Head of Economic and Community Development submitted Report ECD.20/03 setting out the carry forward request in respect of Economic and Community Development Services.

The carry forward requests had been supported by the Executive.

RESOLVED – That the carry forward requests be supported.

j. Planning Services Business Unit

The Head of Planning Services submitted Report P.33/03 summarising the 2002/03

carry forward requests in respect of the Planning Services Business Unit.

The carry forward requests had been supported by the Executive.

RESOLVED – That the carry forward requests be supported.

k. Customer and Information Services Business Unit

The Head of Customer and Information Services submitted Report CIS.03/04/02 detailing the carry forward requests in respect of the Customer and Information Services Business Unit.

The carry forward requests had been supported by the Executive.

RESOLVED – That the carry forward requests be supported.

l. Strategic and Performance Services Business Unit

The Head of Strategic and Performance Services submitted a Report identifying items of committed and uncommitted expenditure, and seeking Members consideration of carry forward and a recurring funding bid (£16,300) for administrative support for the Strategy and Performance Business Unit.

The Executive had supported the carry forward requests but not the recurring funding bid for £16,300 for administrative support for this Unit.

Members noted with concern that the recurring bid for administrative support for this Business Unit was required as a result of an oversight when the Business Unit was set up, but recognised that it was important that all Business Units were properly staffed.

Members noted that two Officers in the Policy and Performance Team would require maternity cover in the current financial year, and that funding for such cover must be found from within existing Business Unit budgets. The Committee considered that funding for maternity cover should be from a centrally held budget, and asked the Head of Member and Employee Services to investigate this as a corporate issue.

With regard to democratic engagement issues, Members noted that the Corporate Plan committed the City Council to piloting a citizenship pack for schools and that, as no funding had been earmarked, the project had not been progressed. Members were disappointed that funding had not been put in place for these packs to be produced.

RESOLVED – That the carry forward requests and bid for recurring funding be supported.

m. Administrative Support for Executive Directors

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive submitted Report CE.14/03 seeking the appointment of two Personal Assistants for the Executive Directors to enable them to carry out their role with maximum efficiency. This would be funded through the allocation of £40,000 per year from recurring underspends. The report also sought virement for temporary cover and set

up costs in the sum of £49,700 as a Category B carry forward request.

Members considered that these posts should have been included in the structure of the organisation when the Organisational Review was being undertaken.

Members sought clarification that if these posts were approved, that the outcome of the Organisational Review would continue to be revenue neutral as was reported at the time.

The proposal and funding arrangements had been supported by the Executive.

RESOLVED – 1. That the request for funding for the appointment of two Personal Assistants for the Executive Directors be supported.

2. That clarification be sought from the Executive that if these posts were approved, that the outcome of the Organisational Review would continue to be revenue neutral as was reported at the time.

CROS.94/03 BUDGET OVERVIEW AND MONITORING REPORT –

APRIL TO JUNE 2003

The Head of Finance submitted Report FS.25/03 which had been considered by the Executive on 4 August 2003, providing an overview of the budgetary position for April to June 2003, summarising the main changes to the budgets between approval in February 2003 and the City Council meeting on 15 July 2003, for both General Fund Revenue and Capital Budgets. The report also provided a summary of monitoring information for April to June 2003 for all Business Unit.

The Head of Finance answered Members' questions on the report.

RESOLVED – That the overall budgetary position for the period April – June 2003 as set out in Report FS.25/03 and the fact that the budget had been amended to reflect the Category A carry forward requests, other new bids and capital schemes approved by the Executive on 7 July 2003 be noted.

CROS.95/03 LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENTS

Ms Mooney (Executive Director) presented a briefing note which had been prepared by the Leader on the current position with regard to Local Public Service Agreements (LPSA). A report on the issue would be submitted to the Executive on 29 September 2003.

Local Public Service Agreements had been developed by the Government in 2000. The key idea was for Local Authorities to negotiate with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister an agreement to deliver outcomes across a wide range of key areas of work which reflected a mix of national and local priorities. In return, Local Authorities would receive greater freedom in the means of delivery and some financial incentives to achieve all their goals. The main objection was to agree "stretched" targets over a period of 2-3 years over and above the National and Local Performance Indicators. Pilot Local Public Service Agreements began in late 2000 and the rolling out of the programme began in 2002 for Metropolitan and Unitary Authorities.

The County Council drew up its own Local Public Service Agreement with the ODPM in January 2003 for the period 2003 to 2008. There are 15 targets covering a range of work

areas including Youth Offending, Children in Public Care, Care Leavers, Waste Management and Road Safety.

In April 2003, the City Council was invited, together with the other District Councils to consider their contributions to the County's stretched targets. During these discussions it was proposed that the City Council should have a greater involvement in a number of work areas and suggested ways that the City Council and the County Council could work more closely together in achieving the LPSA outcomes.

One of the target areas (Target 8 'Building Active Communities') relied not just on the District Council's contributions but also the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The aim of the target was to increase opportunities for local people (including young people) to be actively involved in strengthening their communities and to influence local public services through Community Forums.

Detailed discussions had taken place over which organisation should lead on this target. The City Council were of the opinion that the Local Strategic Partnership should lead, whereas the County Council felt that the County should lead through the Area Committee and Neighbourhood Forums. This stance had been confirmed by the Cumbria Branch of the Local Government Association on 26 June 2003. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive had written to the County Council's Chief Executive on 1 July 2003 requesting that this be reconsidered. To date no response had been made by the County although the Lead Officer was making regular contact with the Senior Officers at the County Council.

It was originally intended that the report to the Executive would outline the range of work areas the City Council would be involved in with the County Council, which would significantly contribute to the achievement of the LPSA targets. It was also hoped that the Executive would be asked to approve the City Council's involvement as a partner of the LSP in becoming the lead body on Target 8 'Building Active Communities'.

The position to date, however, did not look hopeful and unless this changed it was likely that the report would outline the above concerns, and for Members of the Executive to be asked to note them and to agree for the Lead Officer on behalf of the Council to pursue this issue with the Government Office North West and the ODPM.

Members raised no objections to the County Council's position in this matter, particularly given the City Council's lack of commitment to introduce area working. Members considered that the City Council and the LSP could make a positive contribution to the aims of Target 8 'Building Active Communities' with the County Council as lead organisation.

It was noted that a final decision on this issue would be made by the Executive at their meeting on 29 September 2003.

RESOLVED – That the Leader's Briefing Note be noted, and the County Council's position in taking the lead role in developing Target 8 (Building Active Communities) be accepted so far as this Committee is concerned.

CROS.96/03 PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED - That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Public and Press were excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information,

as defined in the Paragraph Number (as indicated in brackets against each Minute) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act.

Councillor Jefferson left the meeting.

CROS.97/03 VIADUCT ESTATE DEVELOPMENT

(Not for publication by virtue of Paragraph 7 & 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972)

The Chairman of the Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee stated that this matter had been discussed at the Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee without the benefit of the report, the matter having been picked up by Members from the Forward Plan report. She noted that this Committee had specifically asked to see the report and that the Executive had already considered it. She considered that this was another example of the Executive bypassing the Authority's Overview and Scrutiny function. She then left the meeting.

The Head of Property Services submitted Report PS.6/03 providing Members with details of negotiations and consultation undertaken over the potential freehold sale of land at the lower Viaduct Car Park to Tesco. If the land was sold it was likely to result in Tesco submitting a planning application to the City Council for a 69,000 square foot superstore on the Viaduct Estate. Should it not be agreed to sell the land, then Tesco already had planning permission for a 40,000 square foot superstore at the Viaduct Estate, although to facilitate this development the City Council would still need to sell land to Tesco at the Upper Viaduct.

The report considered the implications for the City Council if the Lower Viaduct Car Park were to be sold. Whilst there would be a major capital receipt there would be loss of income from the Car Park and the need to provide further long stay car parking in the City Centre area.

The report had been considered by the Executive on 4 August 2003 and, in view of the strategic implications of the proposed scheme, the matter had been referred to a full meeting of the City Council for discussion and subsequent decision.

Members of the Committee discussed various aspects of the proposal, expressed a number of concerns, and the Head of Property Services answered Members' questions.

RESOLVED – That the Head of Property Services' Report be noted, and it is further noted that a final decision will be taken at a meeting of the City Council.

(The meeting ended at 4.40 pm)