

Report of the
CORPORATE RESOURCES
O & S COMMITTEE

Chairman

Cllr. B. O. Earp

At the meeting of the Corporate Resources O & S Committee on the 26th July 2007 concern was expressed regarding the composition of the Group that will review the Scrutiny Protocol for Carlisle Renaissance to ensure that it is cross-party. The Group at its meeting on the 6th September 2007 will discuss and develop a programme for Carlisle Renaissance to be taken through the scrutiny process.

Cllr Boaden, Cllr Allison, Cllr Mrs Clarke and Cllr Mrs Styth were nominated to represent the Committee on the Performance Monitoring Task and Finish Group.

Members also agreed a one-off workshop on Emergency Planning to take place at 2p.m. on Thursday, 30th August 2007.

The quarterly report of the Council's Corporate Risk register evoked a number of questions and the Committee resolved:

1. That thanks be conveyed to members of the Senior Management Team and other Officers for the considerable work undertaken by them in response to the unitary debate.
2. That they look forward to scrutinising Shared Services at future meetings.
3. That in order to undertake more positive scrutiny of Carlisle Renaissance up-to-date information be supplied.
4. That the flood risk be retained on the register.

Members then considered the Quarterly Progress Report for Carlisle Renaissance and questions were answered by the Corporate Director for Carlisle Renaissance. The Committee wished to be involved in Policy engagement on Carlisle Renaissance with in depth scrutiny being undertaken by the relevant O & S Committee. The Director was asked to give consideration to areas of deprivation within the City, and to ascertain whether improvements could be achieved through Renaissance.

Referring to the Asset Management Plan – Surplus Assets, which Members had asked for more detail at the previous meeting; the Property Service Manager answered their questions and explained the way valuations were estimated and by whom. Clarification of the process adopted in moving assets into the "Disposal Box", when the land had previously been protected from development, still needed to be investigated. Members wished to be closely involved in scrutiny of disposal issues given the stated intention to move to a Local Asset Vehicle. A list of the powers delegated to Officers regarding disposal of assets was also requested.

The Partial Exemption re. V.A.T. (Feedback from Tenants) was held in Part A and Part B. The need to charge V.A.T. on all the Council's commercial rents, and the reason why this needs to be implemented at the earliest opportunity, was given by the Director of Corporate Services. However, Members were extremely

concerned how this would affect those businesses that are not registered for V.A.T. and the potential hardship that could occur. Members accepted the need for steps to be taken to ensure that the limit of V.A.T. the Council could recover on services, classed as exempt activities, should not be breached. They requested the Executive to investigate ways by which assistance may be provided to tenants demonstrating financial hardship as a result of such a decision, and stressed the need for proper long-term corporate planning.

Following the decision of the Executive on the 30th July 2007 regarding V.A.T. – Partial Exemptions, there was a “Call-in”. A Special Meeting of the Corporate Resources O & S Committee was held on the 17th August 2007 on account of “the decision provided no detail of the basis for determining that businesses are suffering financial hardship and thereby does not allow businesses to establish whether they will qualify for relief from V.A.T. imposition”. Although strong arguments were put forward to refer the decision back to the Executive, the danger of the implications caused by delay and the effect this would cause to meeting the Government’s limits meant there was a tied vote within the Committee. I, therefore, as Chairman used my second casting vote to prevent the decision being referred back to the Executive, thus enabling the matter to take effect from the date of this Special Meeting.

Cllr B. O. Earp
Chairman, Corporate Resources O & S Committee
23rd August 2007