

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 4 APRIL 2002 AT 2.30 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Ellis (Chairman), Councillors Knapton, J Mallinson and Toole.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor C Rutherford attended the meeting as Chairman of the Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee and took part in debates on Agenda items which cut across the Infrastructure remit but did not vote.

Councillors Firth and Jefferson attended the meeting as observers

COS.54/02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Boaden, S Fisher, Macmillan and Weber.

COS.55/02 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Minutes of the meetings held on 8 and 10 January and 12 February 2002 were signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meetings.

The Minutes of the meetings held on 21 and 26 February and 21 March 2002, copies of which had been circulated, were noted.

COS.56/02 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING DECLARATIONS OF "THE PARTY WHIP")

There were no declarations of interest or declarations of "the party whip" relating to any item on the agenda.

COS.57/02 CALL IN OF DECISIONS

RESOLVED – That it be noted that there were no matters which had been the subject of call in.

COS.58/02 MONITORING OF THE FORWARD PLAN

The Head of Corporate Policy and Strategy presented report TC.65/02 highlighting Forward Plan (1 April 2002 to 31 July 2002) issues which fell within the ambit of this Committee.

He indicated that a report dealing with the Bereavement Services Best Value Fundamental Performance Review would be submitted to this Committee prior to its submission to the

Executive.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

COS.59/02 WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Corporate Policy and Strategy submitted an Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2001/02 which took into account matters scheduled to be dealt with by this Committee.

RESOLVED – That the 2001/02 Work Programme for the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

COS.60/02 COMMUNITY SUPPORT UNIT – SERVICE PLAN 2002/03

The Director of Leisure and Community Development submitted report LCD.10/02 enclosing the draft Service Plan for the Community Support Unit for 2002/03.

The Plan was in draft form at present pending the completion of the Corporate Plan process and some of the detailed performance indicators and actions may require amending in order to reflect any new objectives arising from the Corporate Plan.

He indicated that there were several key issues which were due to emerge during the course of the year which would undoubtedly affect the operation and performance of the Unit, not least being the Organisational Structure and Regeneration Best Value Reviews.

However, the Service Plan gave a clear indication of the scope and value of the Unit's work which, hopefully, would not be diminished as a result of the impending changes.

The Director pointed out that there were currently three vacant posts in the Unit which would affect the Unit's capabilities of achieving Service Plan targets at present.

The Director then answered Members' questions regarding the Service Plan document.

RESOLVED – That the Service Plan for 2002/03 in respect of the Community Support Unit be noted.

COS.61/02 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

COMMITTEES 2001/02

The Head of Corporate Policy and Strategy submitted a draft Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for 2001/02 for comment prior to its submission to the City Council in accordance with the requirements of the Constitution.

RESOLVED – That the draft Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for 2001/02 be accepted so far as this Committee is concerned.

COS.62/02 CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

The City Solicitor and Secretary submitted report TC.57/02 setting out a number of

proposed housekeeping amendments to the Council's Constitution upon which the views of the Executive and this Committee were being sought prior to its submission to the City Council meeting on 30 April 2002.

With regard to paragraph 3.1 to Appendix 1 of the Report dealing with the duration of meetings, a Member considered that Rule 9 of the Council Procedure Rules, providing that a meeting will automatically adjourn after 3 hours unless the majority of Members present vote for the meeting to continue, should not be changed.

Members supported the need for a more fundamental review of the Council's Constitution to be carried out later in 2002 when the outcome of the Organisational Structure Review was known.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be accepted so far as this Committee is concerned and referred to the Executive with the Member's comments regarding Rule 9 of the Council Procedure Rules.

(2) That the Executive be recommended to identify an appropriate timescale in which to undertake a full review of the City Council's Constitution with a view to recommendations being made to the Annual Council meeting in May 2003.

COS.63/02 CORPORATE PLAN WORKSHOP

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive submitted report TC.67/02 providing a background to, and summarising the outcome of, the recent Corporate Planning Workshop. The views of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees were being sought with regard to various City Vision priorities which were considered appropriate for the Council to include in the Corporate Plan.

The Chairman indicated that discussion on certain of the priorities which were under the remit of this Committee had been dealt with at the Workshop but that the City Vision Theme of "Health and Wellbeing" had still to be considered at Member level. The Committee agreed to concentrate on this Theme at this meeting.

Members of the Committee then considered the various priorities and made comments as follows:-

(a) Key priority – *"Ensure health improvement, reducing health inequalities and improving health care is focused at a local level wherever possible; ensure that health information and advice is easily accessible and of a high standard.*

In particular we will focus on:

reducing infant mortality;

increasing life expectancy;

tackling child poverty;

targeting smoking;

tackling teenage pregnancy;

promoting health pregnancy."

Members noted that the Carlisle Local Health Group had been set up as a means of developing partnerships and identifying those organisations which would play a role in the health improvement agenda. The Committee was supportive of this initiative and the move towards delivering joint agendas in relation to health issues. The key priorities focused on NHS targets and could be expanded to include factors upon which the Local Authority could make a significant impact.

(b) Key priority – *"Exploit and promote the potential toward a fresh healthy food from community organisations."*

Members noted that the City Council currently worked with local communities to promote Food Co-operatives and that there were now approximately 20 operating in the district. It was noted that the North Cumbria Health Action Zone had led on Food Co-operatives and the City Council had supported groups to ensure that they could sustain their operations. Members considered that the Council should continue its enabling role for community groups interested in setting up Food Co-operatives.

(c) Key priority – *"Support action to prevent drug misuse and promote drug rehabilitation."*

Members considered that the Council's involvement in these issues should be to the extent to which they impinge upon community safety, crime and disorder and housing issues. The Council should have a secondary supportive role rather than a lead role in drug issues, being involved in partnerships with other agencies at a strategic level.

(d) Key priority – *"Combat the causes and effects of poverty on the health of our communities."*

Members considered that the outcome of the Best Value Review on Regeneration would give guidance on this issue.

(e) Key priority – *"Support and expand the Farmers Markets."*

Members considered that the Council's role as an enabler in allowing Farmers Markets to operate in the City Centre should continue.

Members also considered that the Council should have a lobbying role in attempting to get local shops and supermarkets to stock and sell local produce. It was reported that a supply chain project was ongoing as part of the Local Strategic Partnership and Members were supportive of this initiative.

(f) Key priority – *"Encourage healthier life styles via partnership health, fitness and sports programmes for all."*

Members noted that the Council's Sports and Recreation Strategy was being reviewed and would include a preventative approach to health issues. The Council was involved in a clinical exercise practitioner pilot working with the Primary Care Trust to promote health programmes for people who have had major health problems with a referral process through GPs. Members considered that there was a role for the Council's Leisure Centre and Community Centres, particularly in the rural area, to promote these initiatives.

(g) Key priority – *"Support independent living for elderly residents and other vulnerable*

sections of the community wherever possible."

Members pointed out that Carlisle had an ageing population which placed an ever increasing strain on care services. The City Council should be supportive of new models on care services and their possible introduction in partnership with other bodies. The Council had a mix of roles in this issue but particularly as a strategic enabler.

(h) Key priority – "*Ensure all residents have access to leisure, sports and cultural opportunities.*"

Members considered that the City Council had a key role to play as a provider of such services. It was also noted that the Council was developing a Cultural Strategy which could inform the Corporate Plan.

RESOLVED – That the above comments be referred to the Executive at their meeting on 15 April 2002.

COS.64/02 IMPLEMENTING AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

The Director of Housing submitted report H.25/02 setting out a draft Equal Opportunities Policy for the Authority. The report also contained a proposed Race Equality Scheme which, under statute, the City Council must publish by 31 May 2002.

Members noted the statutory requirement for a Race Equality Scheme to be in place by 31 May 2002 and expressed concern that a draft Equal Opportunities Policy was being presented in the same report, rather than being the subject of a separate report.

The Director of Housing indicated that the Equal Opportunity Policy was a working document at this stage. An Officer Equalities Working Group had been set up to develop the Policy through the various levels set under the Equality Standard for Local Government.

Members went on to consider the Equal Opportunities Policy and Race Equality Scheme in detail, making the following comments:-

Equal Opportunities Policy

- (a) Page 10 – paragraph 1.2 – remove all references to particular groups.
- (b) Page 13 – paragraph 3.1 – in the third line replace "Director of Housing" with "nominated Chief Officer".
- (c) Page 15 – first paragraph – insert "taking into account" before "various" in the third line.
- (d) Page 15 – first bullet point – consideration should be given to deleting this paragraph and references to McPherson in the report.
- (e) Page 15 – fourth bullet point – in the penultimate line add "all" before "different".
- (f) Page 15 – fifth bullet point – in the second line delete "various racial" and insert "all".

Race Equality Scheme

- (a) Page 23 – fourth bullet point – replace this paragraph with "Ensuring that when third

party contractors are employed or associations are affiliated to the Council, that they have Equalities policies in operation that are relevant and appropriate to their size, the complexity of their business and the duties they perform for the Council".

(b) Page 24 – paragraph 3.1 – in the last line replace "minority" with "all".

RESOLVED – (1) That the comments on the Equal Opportunities Policy and the Race Equality Scheme be referred to the Executive for consideration.

(2) That it be a recommendation to the Executive that, subject to the Equal Opportunities Policy being approved, the Equality Working Group report directly to the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a regular basis over the phased implementation of the Equal Opportunities Policy, ensuring a semi-independent and transparent self assessment process is established.

COS.65/02 A COMPARISON OF LOCAL AUTHORITY "SMART CARD SCHEMES"

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive submitted report TC.66/02 containing information from other Local Authorities who were developing Smart Card schemes and from which three key points had emerged:-

(a) The need for a well defined "captive" group for pilot purposes (often schools or Universities) so that the progress of the scheme could be easily assessed.

(b) The need for one key function to define the initial purpose of the card.

(c) The need for a "critical mass" of card users which would bring economies of scale and which was particularly important if the card was to be part funded from the private sector.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive reminded Members that current plans were for 12,000 to 15,000 Concessionary Travel Smart Cards to be issued to Carlisle's pensioners and disabled residents during 2002/03 as part of a County wide initiative (excluding Allerdale) to introduce concessionary fares Smart Cards. The cards have capacity for one more use and could be operated as a pilot scheme.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive pointed out that none of the other Local Authorities' Smart Card Schemes had yet gone past the "pilot" stage, there were differences in the types of Smart Cards being used with, to date, no reliable combi card available, and there would be significant implementation costs if a Scheme was introduced. It was clear that the other Schemes being developed were on a much larger scale with many more users than would be the case in Carlisle.

Whilst Members were supportive of the aims of Smart Card technology, they recognised that there would be significant difficulties in introducing a Scheme in Carlisle at present.

RESOLVED – That the Town Clerk and Chief Executive produce a draft final report for the committees approval which recommended that the committee monitor the progress on Smart Card technology and the Schemes being developed in other parts of the country and further report to the Executive periodically.

COS.66/02 CUMBRIA RURAL ACTION ZONE – DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

The Head of Economic Development submitted report TC.69/02 enclosing the consultation draft of the Rural Action Zone document entitled "Cumbria Rural Action Zone – "Next Steps" Strategy.

The document was to be considered by the Cumbria Strategic Partnership on 23 April 2002 and this Committee was being given the opportunity to comment on the document prior to its submission to the Executive on 15 April 2002 when the City Council's formal response would be determined.

The Head of Economic Developed particularly drew Members' attention to the proposal in the consultation document that a Rural Regeneration Company be set up to pursue the Strategy and that it was important for the City Council to press for appropriate representation on this body.

Members made the following comments:-

(a) Page 30 – Table 6.3 – Members considered that the projected gross employment effects were potentially over optimistic.

(b) Page 65 – It was considered that Universities other than the University of Central Lancashire could become involved in learning and skills development within Cumbria.

RESOLVED – That the above comments be forwarded to the Executive.

COS.67/02 NATIONAL COMPARISON OF PERFORMANCE INDICATORS REPORT – 2000/01

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive submitted report TC.14/02 detailing how the City Council's performance over a range of Best Value and Audit Commission National Indicators for 2000/01 compared with a group of other similar Authorities and the national upper and lower quartiles.

Minute EX.58/02 of the Executive of 18 February 2002 was submitted in which the Executive were requesting Overview and Scrutiny Committees to examine performance areas within the lower quartile and invite appropriate Officers to attend their meetings to explain both the position and relevant Action Plans for improvement.

RESOLVED – That the Head of Corporate Policy and Strategy be requested to liaise with relevant Officers with performance areas in the lower quartile and invite them to attend future meetings of this Committee in order to explain the reasons and to agree Improvement Plans.

COS.68/02 PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORT – APRIL TO

DECEMBER 2000/01

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive submitted report TC.15/02 detailing how the City Council has performed against the Best Value and local indicators for the third quarter of

the current year. He indicated that a report on the full year's performance would be available for the next meeting of this Committee.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted and consideration given to the full year's report at the next meeting of this Committee.

(The meeting ended at 5.13 pm)

moh Commin 286 Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee 04 04 02