

CORPORATE RESOURCES
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 13 JUNE 2002 AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Guest (Chairman), Councillors Bain, Mrs Bowman, Mrs Bradley, Jefferson, Joscelyne, Mallinson (J) and Mrs Styth

ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Mrs Fisher, Fisher (L) and Mrs Geddes were also in attendance

CROS.66/02 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

CROS.67/02 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

CROS.68/02 AGENDA

The Chairman reported that the informal workshop for Members to review and prioritise potential topics for subject/inquiry reviews which had been arranged to take place at the conclusion of the meeting had been cancelled and would now take place following the Special Meeting of the Corporate Resource Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 28 June 2002.

CROS.69/02 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 28 February, 7 March and 3 April 2002 were signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meetings.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2002 were circulated.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes be received.

CROS.70/02 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS

There were no items of call-in.

CROS.71/02 WORK PROGRAMME

A copy of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme was circulated. The Head of Corporate Policy and Strategy commented on consideration which was being given to the monitoring of Performance Indicators which appeared in the lower quartiles and suggested that a report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee on the monitoring and reporting arrangements in respect of Performance Indicators in the lower quartiles.

He reminded Members that it had been agreed that the workshop to Review and Prioritise Potential Topics for Subject/Inquiry Reviews to be undertaken by the Committee during the forthcoming year would now be held following the Special Meeting of the Committee on 28 June.

He further added that whilst the Financial Services' Service Plan was to be considered later in the current meeting the Service Plan for the Revenues Section would be dealt with at the next meeting of the Committee.

In response to Members questions the Head of Corporate Policy and Strategy Unit commented that a report on Proposals to Monitor and Report on the Corporate Plan objectives and Council Management objectives would be submitted to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Work Programme identify the relevant Portfolio Holder in addition to the Lead Officer.

CROS.72/02 FORWARD PLAN – ITEMS RELEVANT TO THE CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive reported (TC.100/02) on issues within the ambit of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee which were included in the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions for the period 1 June – 30 September 2002.

Members in considering the report noted the item relating to the Carlisle Northern Development Route. The Director of Environment and Development informed Members that the issues in that key decision were matters relating to the City Council's role as land owner. However he informed Members that the scheme for the Northern Development Route had been submitted to Government for PFI/Business Plan approval and a decision was expected from the Government Department within the next few months.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CROS.73/02 CUSTOMER CONTACT BEST VALUE REVIEW

Pursuant to Minute CROS.55/02 the Head of Information Technology presented Financial Memo 2002/03 No. 21 on Progress of the Project Management Team in the Customer Care Best Value Review.

The Head of Information Technology drew Members attention to the results of the consultation group with external customers and which had supported the view that whilst

performing well in some areas, overall the Council's current Customer Contact Service was not performing well and needed reformed. The Head of IT also summarised for Members the responses which has been received to the consultation draft Customer Contact Policy and recommended that further consultation be carried out with the general public with regards to the Customer Contact Policy.

With regards to the possible location of a central Customer Contact Centre, the Head of IT informed Members that the practical issues and costs of using the Civic Centre or alternatives would be presented, along with the final Customer Contact Model, to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Head of IT also circulated a draft detailed Customer Contact Model. He informed Members that the model brought together the various elements of the service which had been reviewed and showed the weaknesses which had been highlighted and how they would be addressed. It also set out, in outline, how the service might be delivered in the future. He informed Members that consultation on the model would be undertaken and the final draft report, which would contain budget details, would be submitted to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Head of IT further drew Members attention to the key solutions for implementation and the comments which had been received from Members with regards to the priorities for implementation. He noted Members comments that the costings on the detailed service proposals had not been included in the current report and confirmed that those costs would be submitted as part of the Review Team's final report.

Members discussed the report and in particular the service proposals in some detail and felt that Officers should be given authority to proceed with those items included within the service proposals which had none or minimal costs attached.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive acknowledged that some of the issues would have little or no cost attached but some aspects of the service proposals contained either significant cultural issues, or significant cost implications and there would be a report back to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on those items. He added that overall the outcome of the Customer Contact Review was consistent with both the Council's Implementing Electronic Government statement and the Organisational Review and he suggested that should approval be given to the detailed service proposals which had little or no cost by the Executive then the Corporate Management Team could apportion responsibility for proceeding on those items.

Members noted the proposal to use the Lowther Street entrance for all staff, deliveries, collections, etc, thereby keeping the Rickergate entrance for customers only which would help to identify the Council's customers and Members expressed some concern with regards to security and the health and safety of City Council staff, particularly women, leaving the building in the dark.

Members further commented that apart from the issue of staff being separated from customers using the front door, there was no customer focal point on the ground floor of the Civic Centre or staff to welcome customers. There were also a substantial amount of staff movement within the Civic Centre foyer, and together with the use of the foyer for deliveries it was felt that steps could be taken to improve the environment for customers entering the Civic Centre. A Member noted the additional costs which might arise from the proposal.

The Head of IT further commented on the Cumbria Information Hub which could be a significant partner in delivering joint services between the District Councils and the County Council. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive commented on the Cumbria Information Hub and the Connecting Cumbria Initiative which were two different partnerships aimed at delivering joined up services between the District Councils and the County Council and between the various District Council within the County. The Town Clerk and Chief Executive also commented on the requirement for back office services to be developed and to integrate with front-of-house customer friendly services.

In response to Members comments the Town Clerk and Chief Executive added that the Executive would need to consider ways of prioritising the detailed service proposals from the available budget and approve those elements which were achievable as part of the Council's budget in the current year and phase the remaining costs over future years and that could be addressed as part of the Review Team's Action Plan.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the further results from the consultation exercise on the current service.

(2) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the work which had been carried out and the results of the consultation on the draft Customer Contact Policy.

(3) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the work which was being carried out to identify locations for a Customer Contact Centre, both within the Civic Centre and outside the Civic Centre.

(4) That the Committee note the Customer Contact Model as circulated to the Committee and use it as a basis for consultation including the focus group of external customers referred to in Paragraph 1.5 of Financial Memo 2002/03 No. 21 as one of the consultees.

(5) That the progress which had been made on including partner organisations and the various options available be noted.

(6) That the timetable for the review be noted.

(7) That it be noted that a draft final report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1 August 2002.

(8) That the detailed service proposals as attached to the report at Appendix D be noted.

(9) The Executive be requested to consider the detailed service proposals and request CMT to carry out any of those proposals which had nil or minimum cost prior to the outcome of the final report.

(10) Those detailed service proposals which did have significant costs or which involved a cultural/policy change be dealt with as part of the Action Plan contained in the Review Team's final report.

CROS.74/02 MEMBERS TELEPHONE ALLOWANCES

The City Treasurer presented Financial Memo 2002/03 No. 20 regarding Members Telephone Allowances.

The City Treasurer reminded Members that the sum of £200 currently included within

Members Annual Allowance was specifically designated towards telephone rental costs. He added however that Members circumstances and usage of telephones differed widely and there was no direct relationship between the allowance paid to Members and the costs of individual Member's telephone usage.

The City Treasurer proposed that in future the level of telephone allowance should be more closely aligned to the actual costs incurred and proposed that the Council should pay for a Featurenet line to be installed solely for Council business in Members homes. The Council would pay also for all calls on that line and that under the Members Allowance Scheme there would be no telephone allowance included as part of the Basic Members Allowance.

He set out for Members the estimated annual revenue costs to the Council of the scheme which after taking account of the reduction in the level of Members allowance would result in a total additional cost to the Council of £5,200 per annum. He added that in addition there would be a one-off installation cost of £99 per Member (maximum £5,148) and suggested that the funding for the proposal could be found from an underspend on Democratic Representation Budget with the one-off installation charge being met from a carry forward of the underspend on the Democratic Process Budget for 2001/02. The City Treasurer further added that it was recommended that the Council should not operate a split scheme with the changes being applied universally to all Members without permitting any Members to remain on the current scheme.

The City Treasurer added that the Independent Remuneration Panel Chairman had been consulted and was in agreement with the proposals in that Telephone allowances were not within the statutory remit of the Panel and he was content that the issue was one for the Council to deal with.

Members in considering the report noted that the telephone allowance did not cover the cost of telephone rentals and added that those Members who were not currently on Featurenet would not support the introduction of a second line which was a dedicated Featurenet line. Members felt it was unfair that they should be expected to subsidise the Council's progress on e-government. Members also commented that individual Members had not been consulted on the proposal and noted assurance which had previously been given by Officers that no Council Members would be out of pocket with regard to use of Featurenet and felt that an audit should be carried out on the connection of Councillors to the Featurenet system to see that Members were not being penalised or disadvantaged.

The Portfolio Holder for Policy and Performance Management commented that the Members Allowance included provision of £200 for telephone allowance and that the installation of a business line would leave approximately £8 for calls. The installation of Featurenet that was only used for Council business would enable the Council to meet the bill for installation and the quarterly charges. That there would also be no cost in respect of telephone calls to or from Members to the Civic Centre or connection to the Internet or calls between Councillors.

RESOLVED – (1) That the City Treasurer prepare a further report on the issue of Members telephone arrangements and as part of that report carry out a full consultation with all Members of the City Council on the following proposals:

- (i) to provide a telephone allowance, the sum to be determined, and Members be given authority to determine how they choose to use that telephone allowance,
- (ii) that the City Council pay for a Featurenet line to be installed solely for

Council business and pay for all calls on that line for all Members of the City Council,

(iii) that the City Council provide a second telephone line to be installed solely for Council business the telephone service to be of the individual Member's own choosing,

(iv) that Members be allowed to determine their own individual telephone service,

(2) That the City Council does not operate a one size fits all universal telephone scheme for Members,

(3) That the consultation with all Members be deferred until after the Portfolio Holder for Strategy and Performance has been given an opportunity to brief the three Group Leaders and the Group Leaders have been able to raise the matter at a meeting of their own political groups.

CROS.75/02 RISK AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT BEST VALUE REVIEW

Pursuant to Minute CROS.49/02 the Director of Environment and Development reported verbally on progress with the Risk and Safety Management Best Value Review. He informed Members that the Council had appointed Marsh to carry out the competitive element of the review. He added that Marsh would be submitting two reports; one on Health and Safety Executive Summary and the second on Strategic Approach to Risk Management. He added that it was proposed to submit both reports to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CROS.76/02 ORGANISATIONAL ASSESSMENT BEST VALUE REVIEW

SUB-COMMITTEE

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Organisational Assessment Best Value Review Sub-Committee held on Friday, 31 May 2002, a copy of which had been circulated, attached as Appendices A, be received and noted.

CROS.77.02 SERVICE PLAN – FINANCIAL SERVICES

The City Treasurer presented Financial Memo 2002/03 No. 2 setting out the draft Service Plan for the Financial Services Division for 2002/03. He informed Members that the Service Plan was in draft as details of the Performance Indicators and actions might require amendments to reflect the new objectives of the Corporate Plan.

Members in considering the report noted the proposal to investigate and implement a change to the Financial Ledger to provide more flexible financial information by 1 April 2004 and the City Treasurer explained the timetable for the review of options, conclusion and implementation.

RESOLVED – (1) That the details of the Financial Services Service Plan for 2002/03 be received.

(2) The City Treasurer look further at the outcomes of the service as set out in the Service Plan and look to identify target outcomes as opposed to target dates.

CROS.78/02 AUDIT MANAGER'S ANNUAL REPORT 2001/02

The City Treasurer presented Financial Memo 2002/03 No. 19 on the work carried out by Internal Audit for the year 2001/02. He set out for Members the section's achievement against the Audit Plan and added that the team had issued 47 final reports which contained 157 recommendations and he added that all recommendations contained in previous reports had been followed up within the required period.

The City Treasurer drew attention to the impact on the work of the unit, of the number of vacancies within the unit, special investigations, unplanned audits and secondments, all of which had had a significant detrimental effect on the planned work of the Audit Team. He added however the Client Satisfaction Surveys continued to show an above average performance of the unit.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and the progress made on the 2001/2002 Audit Plan be noted.

(The meeting ended at 3.30 pm)