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**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE  
INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
HELD ON 22 JANUARY 2004**

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**IOS.17/04 SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES BEST VALUE REVIEW**

In the absence of Ms Mooney, Executive Director, the Local Plans and Conservation Manager presented report CE.30/03 updating Members on the development of the Supporting Communities Best Value Review Improvement Plan.

He also introduced Ms Lynda Hassall, Sure Start Carlisle South Manager who was in attendance at the meeting.

The Review Team had met on 15 December 2003, the main remit of that meeting being to progress the Improvement Plan in terms of taking forward the key issues. Mr Hardman drew attention to the completed Plan, a copy of which was appended to the report, together with some of the general points which had informed the drawing together of the Plan.

He explained that the Review Team felt it would be valuable to commission external support to address certain elements of the Improvement Plan identified under the general heading of 'Partnerships'. Though the Review Team felt able to undertake some of that work, colleagues were aware of the benefits of external and objective input and that there were areas of the Plan which clearly needed such support, notably the development of Performance Indicators (Key Issue 11) and Policy Development (Key Issue 8).

Funding was available to undertake that work and it was proposed that the timescale therefor be from March – September 2004. Subject to approval by Members, the Team would begin to identify possible organisations to carry out the work. A Brief had been compiled and was appended to the report. The Team was mindful of the Council's Best Value Policy in terms of commissioning external work and that would be complied with throughout the commissioning process.

The Review Team would then undertake the performance monitoring of the work and reports would be submitted to this Committee, the first possibly in the form of a presentation.

Members then raised the following main issues to which Mr Hardman and Ms Hassall responded:

- (a) It was anticipated that completion of the Review would result in the clarification and formalisation of the Council's role and how it should perform in partnership working.

- (b) The Supporting Communities Best Value Review Team would be responsible for implementing certain elements of the Improvement Plan and would work to progress those issues. Ms Mooney, in her capacity as lead Officer, would continue to monitor that work and progress achieved towards the Improvement Plan.
- (c) The capacity of Council staff to deliver 'extra' services as a result of the Council's partnership working required to be considered and risk managed and costed accordingly. Whilst the mechanisms to achieve that for new partnerships could be considered at an early stage, further consideration would be required as regards existing partnership work.
- (d) A Regeneration Strategy and/or Framework was required which made all the strategic links between all Council polices. The Head of Economic and Community Development would take the lead on development of that key issue.
- (e) Members stressed the need to ensure that the Project Brief given to the Consultants was very tightly focussed. This would ensure that the Council obtained value for money from the research commissioned.
- (f) It was conceivable that when engaged in partnership working a change of financial or political input or representation could occur from another body on that partnership, which could potentially affect the work of the partnership.

At Sure Start, any organisation or person changing on the partnership were reminded of the existing Partnership Agreement. That format could be fed through all partnerships to reduce such risk and included in the establishment of a policy on the Council's Partnership Role.

A Member made the point that comments from all agencies would be welcomed to help improve the process and move matters forward.

Members asked that a monitoring report on the Improvement Plan be submitted in six months time or earlier if it became apparent that any issues were not progressing according to expectation.

RESOLVED – (1) That this Committee approves –

- (a) The further development of the Improvement Plan and the performance monitoring arrangements contained therein, subject to the issues raised above;
  - (b) The commissioning of external support to progress a number of key issues identified within the Improvement Plan, utilising the funding allocated for Best Value Reviews.
- (2) That the Executive Director be requested to submit a monitoring report on the Improvement Plan to this Committee in six months time or earlier should it become apparent that any issues were not progressing according to expectation.