
EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 2 DECEMBER 2004

IOS.149/04 PARTNERSHIP POLICY

Councillor Mrs Mallinson, having declared a personal interest, remained within the meeting room taking part in discussion on the matter.

The Policy and Performance Officer presented in detail report SP.43/04 attaching a draft Partnership Policy for the Council. The draft Policy built on the framework presented to this Committee on 29 July and the Executive on 19 July 2004. Comments from both meetings had been addressed in the Policy, as had the outcomes of Ms Baildon's consultation with Stakeholders. The Policy also adopted positive practice identified as part of the Consultant's desktop research.

Copies of Guidance Notes 1 – 6 were tabled for Members' information.

Members' views on the content of the Policy and suggestions for implementation were sought.

Discussion arose, during which various issues were raised, including –

- (i) Members stressed the importance of an appropriate mechanism being identified as regards this Committee's involvement in the review of partnerships. The Overview and Scrutiny Support Officer added that it was important that the Committee looked at partnerships on an exception basis.
- (ii) When the register of partnerships was compiled it should be open to all Members of the City Council.
- (iii) A Member welcomed the Policy which he considered to be a very important piece of work. As regards the reporting mechanism, then he believed that was to do with democratic accountability, which should be a thread running through the paper.
- (iv) Referring to existing partnerships, a Member commented that it made good sense to have a 'light touch' look at them, so long as any lessons to be learnt were drawn out.
- (v) Running and sustaining of partnerships – there was no reference as to what action would be taken when the policies and ability to commit of other partners changed. In response, Mrs Dixon advised that she would address that issue in the Policy paper.

- (vi) A Member questioned the differences between partnerships with the public and private sectors. Ms Mooney, Acting Town Clerk and Chief Executive, replied that the Council would not enter into a partnership unless there was a common good. Should a partnership go wrong then the Council would pull out.
- (vii) A Member questioned the necessity of documenting small scale partnerships. In response, Mrs Dixon advised that a sense of proportion was required. Hopefully people would take a sensible approach in the adoption of the Policy. Ms Mooney added that the reason for the Policy was to open up the scale of Partnerships in which the Council was involved and make that visible. She required to champion the Officers who were involved over and above their working time. It was about protecting Officers' work and making sure something of value was there for all.
- (viii) Members stressed the need to follow the guidelines and for decisions to be taken as to whether Officers required to go to certain meetings. It was important to know if Officers' time was being well spent and that the projects were being moved forward.

RESOLVED – That this Committee recommends to the Executive that –

- (1) The Audit Commission adopted definition of 'partnership' be taken on board.
- (2) All partnership working takes on board the Council's Policies on Diversity and Equality.
- (3) The issue of personal liabilities for Members and Officers be investigated, together with financial liability for the Council.
- (4) Officers should be briefed on Council policy before they attend Partnership meetings and de-briefed thereafter. Feedback on such attendance should be provided.
- (5) Arrangements must be put in place to enable performance monitoring to take place.
- (6) Partnership working must add value and follow the Council's Corporate Plan and priorities. It must also be undertaken for the benefit of the people of Carlisle and surrounding District.
- (7) Exit strategies must be put in place, upon which legal and financial advice was required.
- (8) A clear audit trail must be in place, particularly as regards accountability.
- (9) The role of scrutiny must be clearly defined within the Partnership Policy (operating on an exception basis).
- (10) Guidance Notes 1 – 6 be adopted as good practice for Officers and Members.
- (11) Training must be provided for those people involved in partnership working.