

## **INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**THURSDAY 1 NOVEMBER 2001 AT 2.00 PM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Rutherford C (Chairman), Councillors Mrs Bowman, Mrs Crookdake, Dodd, Hodgson B, Hodgson TG, Mrs Mallinson and Weedall.

**ALSO**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mrs Bradley, Fisher L, Glover, Ms Martlew and Prest G attended the meeting as observers.

### **IOS.4/01 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **IOS.5/01 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING DECLARATIONS OF "THE PARTY WHIP")**

Councillor T G Hodgson declared a non-pecuniary interest in accordance with the National Code of Local Government Conduct in the item of business relating to Review of Charges 2002/03 – Economic Development Department Service Areas with particular regard to Carlisle Enterprise Centre.

### **IOS.6/01 CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS**

The Chairman welcomed Members to the first meeting of the Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **IOS.7/01 CALL IN OF DECISIONS**

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

### **IOS.8/01 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee, in setting a programme of work, considered the following:

#### **(a) References by the Executive to Overview and Scrutiny as consultees:**

- (i) Revenue Budgets 2002/03 to 2004/05

The City Treasurer presented Financial Memo 2001/02 No.77 summarising the likely cost of supporting current service levels and the potential resources available to the Council over the three year period to 2004/05, together with a range of issues which would impact on the provision of services and the level of Council Tax over that period.

The City Treasurer, Director of Environment and Development, and Economic

Development Manager then responded to Members' questions.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

(ii) Executive Budget Principles

The City Treasurer presented the Executive Budget Principles which would inform the formulation of the budget for 2002/03, and which would be further refined as the budget process progressed. He then responded to Members' questions.

In considering the matter, Members felt that it would be helpful if future reports contained more detail that could be geared towards individual portfolios.

RESOLVED – That the Executive Budget Principles be noted.

(iii) Review of Charges 2002/03 – Economic Development Unit Service Areas

Councillor T G Hodgson, having declared a non-pecuniary interest left the room during consideration of this item of business.

The Economic Development Manager presented a joint report with the City Treasurer (Financial Memo 2001/02 No.94 and EDU.43/01) which reviewed charges in three service areas within the Economic Development Unit, namely the Enterprise Centre, the Brampton Business and Tele-Centre and the Tourist Information Centre at the Old Town Hall.

He outlined the existing charging policy for each, together with the extent to which income targets were being met in each area of service and made recommendations for changes for 2002/03.

With regard to the Assembly Room at the Old Town Hall, a Member commented that the wider marketing of the Room should be investigated and suggested that the Tourism Manager be invited to attend the next meeting of this Committee.

A Member added that the facilities at the Assembly Room were not as good as they could be and requested that a further report be submitted and that the Portfolio Holder be invited to the next meeting.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Head of Economic Development be requested to submit a further report detailing possible improvements which could be made to the Assembly Room to increase income potential, together with relevant costings.

(3) That Councillor Firth, Portfolio Holder for Economic Prosperity be invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee.

(iv) Department of Environment and Development Charges Review 2002/03

The Director of Environment and Development presented a joint report with the City Treasurer (EN.164/01 and Financial Memo 2001/02 No.93) concerning proposed charges for the Department of Environment and Development in 2002-03.

The Director outlined the various options open for consideration and responded to

Members' questions.

A Member questioned the effect which the intended implementation of decriminalised parking enforcement in November 2001 and the improvements to the Cecil Street car park would have on revenue and requested that the situation be reviewed in the light thereof.

Members expressed support for the introduction of car parking charges on Sundays and requested that that option be investigated further.

RESOLVED – (1) That the proposed charges as detailed in report EN.164/01 and Financial Memo 2001/02 No.93 be endorsed, with the exception of the increase in pest control charges.

(2) That the Executive be requested to consider the introduction of car parking charges on Sundays as detailed at Option 5 of the report.

(v) New Spending Bids 2002/03

The City Treasurer submitted Financial Memo 2001/02 No.91 concerning new spending bids for 2002/03. He outlined the respective bids commenting that, in spite of the Executive Budget Principles, savings equivalent to the bids had not yet been identified.

The City Treasurer, Director of Environment and Development, and Head of Corporate Policy then responded to Members' questions.

RESOLVED – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Executive be advised that it is the view of this Committee that any future reports should include potential savings equivalent to each new spending bid proposed in line with the Executive Budget Principles and that such bids should be more fully detailed.

### **(b) Best Value Reviews**

Consideration was given to a reference from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee concerning the following Best Value Reviews to be undertaken by this Committee:

(i) Regeneration

The Head of Corporate Policy presented report TC.197/01 which summarised the outcomes of the Best Value Review Scoping Panel on the Review and had been circulated by way of a position statement.

In considering the matter a Member stressed that an Action Plan was required and Members needed to know who would take ownership of the Review. The Best Value Officer commented that a Review Team had been established, led by the Head of Community Support, and that if Members so wished a progress report could be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee.

RESOLVED – That the Best Value Officer be requested to submit a progress report to the next meeting of this Committee.

(ii) Concessionary Fares

RESOLVED – That it be noted that this matter would be dealt with in Part B of the Agenda.

**(c) Review of Dog Fouling Policy**

The Chairman commented that, although she recognised that elements of this matter fell under the remit of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee, she felt that because of the waste management/street cleaning/refuse collection implications it was a legitimate policy for this Committee to consider.

The Director of Environment and Development commented that, if the matter was to be included in the Work Programme of this Committee, consideration should commence with a position statement.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee be requested to include the review of Dog Fouling in the Work Programme for this Committee.

(2) That, subject to the above, the Director of Environment and Development be requested to submit a position statement to an early meeting of this Committee.

**(d) Suggestions from Members of the Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee for inclusion in the Work Programme**

A Member commented that Officers appeared to be devoting a great deal of time in an attempt to secure grants to finance works such as drainage which were eventually refused. It was suggested that the issue be forwarded to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee for guidance on whether a review was appropriate.

A Member expressed concern at the potential disruption throughout the City caused by the installation of Cable TV.

The Director of Environment and Development indicated that he would be giving a verbal report on the matter to the Executive on 5 November. He added that he had met with the Company and extensive disruption was likely during the construction process. He added that he would be happy to submit a report on those works and key issues to a future meeting of this Committee.

Councillor Prest, Portfolio Holder for Infrastructure, Environment and Transport was present at the meeting and, at the invitation of the Chairman, commented that he had also been in discussion with the Company who had submitted an application for premises which would be considered by the Development Control Committee the following day. He added that the Company was willing to supply a copy of their work programme and he would keep this Committee informed.

A Member expressed concern as to whether Ward Members would be kept informed since there would inevitably be enquiries from citizens and questioned the impact on the work of the Highway Authority. The Director of Environment and Development commented that the Highway Authority was actively engaged in the process and he undertook to circulate details to Members whose Wards would be affected. The Portfolio Holder added that the Company had details of every Member on the Council and would be making contact. In addition, the Leader was arranging for the Cabling Company to make a presentation to all Members of the City Council.

With regard to the communication of information to Members generally, it was felt that the Executive should be asked to investigate the most effective manner by which Members could be kept informed.

A Member suggested that it would be beneficial if items relating to the Forward Plan and detailing the Committee's work schedule be included on the Agenda of future meetings.

A Member suggested that the relationship between the City Council, the County Council and Capita DBS be clarified and that details of problem areas, contact numbers and monitoring be provided.

RESOLVED – (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee be requested to provide guidance on whether a review of time spent in attempting to secure grant aid to finance works such as drainage was appropriate.

(2) That the Director of Environment and Development be requested to submit a report on the installation of Cable TV in Carlisle to a future meeting of this Committee.

(3) That the Executive be requested to investigate the implementation of a process by which information was communicated to Ward Members, in particular, events/actions affecting their Wards.

(4) That items relating to the Forward Plan and the Committee's current work schedule be included on future Agendas.

(5) That investigation of the relationship between the City Council, the County Council and Capita DBS be included in this Committee's Work Programme.

### **IOS.9/01 LOCAL PLAN ROLL FORWARD**

The Director of Environment and Development submitted report EN.165/01 concerning the review process for the Carlisle District Local Plan.

He outlined the background to the Local Plan, commenting that since its adoption a number of revised and new guidance notes had been issued by Central Government, notably PPG3 Housing and PPG25 Development and Flood Risk. Further guidance had also been issued on Government policy such as the Urban and Rural White Papers in 2000. In addition, there existed a hierarchy of planning guidance which developed the regional and strategic context for local development.

The Director drew Members' attention to Appendix 1 to his report which set out the formal stages which had to be followed in reviewing the Local Plan, together with an estimate of the likely timetable at Appendix 2.

He added that the Government had announced a Planning Green Paper to be issued this year which it was envisaged would address many planning issues, including the Development Plan process. The Council would consider a response to the Green Paper in due course, but Officers were of the view that it was unreasonable to delay the review process in anticipation of changes to planning legislation.

The Director commented that he would welcome a process whereby the whole Authority had ownership of the Plan and there may be a training requirement for Members who would take part in the process.

The Portfolio Holder for Infrastructure, Environment and Transport commented that the Development Control Committee was to consider training for its Members which could be inclusive of the Members of this Committee. Members were of the view that it was vital that they received adequate training.

In considering the matter, Members were of the view that initially the Executive should provide a policy steer to guide this Committee through the review stages.

RESOLVED – (1) That the process required to roll forward the Carlisle District Local Plan be noted.

(2) That the Executive be requested to provide a policy steer on the matter.

(3) That Members of this Committee would wish to be included in any planning related training provided by the Authority.

### **IOS.10/01 FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Consideration was given to the start time for future meetings of the Committee and it was agreed that they should commence at 10.00 am.

RESOLVED – That future meetings of the Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee commence at 10.00 am.

### **IOS.11/01 PUBLIC AND PRESS**

RESOLVED – That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Public and Press were excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in the paragraph number (as indicated in brackets against the Minute) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act.

### **IOS.12/01 CONCESSIONARY FARES BEST VALUE REVIEW**

(Public and Press excluded by virtue of paragraph 8)

The City Treasurer submitted Financial Memo 2001/02 No.109 updating Members on progress in respect of the Best Value Review of Concessionary Fares.

The City Treasurer outlined the background to the Review together with actions undertaken during the past six months, in particular, the results of the benchmarking exercise which indicated that the Council's payments to operators were high based on the number of passholders in comparative terms and should be renegotiated.

The first draft of the Best Value Review identified those initiatives which the Council would need to develop to meet the aspirations of concessionary fares passholders and qualifying residents who did not currently hold a pass. In order to avoid raising people's expectations, Members' views were sought on whether the efficiency savings identified should be directed at improving the Scheme or redirected to improving other Council services/reducing the level of Council Tax.

The City Treasurer added that the Officer Best Value Working Group had considered the

initial draft and made a number of suggestions on how it could be taken forward over the next four month period. He then responded to Members' questions.

A Member stressed the importance of having the necessary elements in place, in particular, an Action Plan, Performance Indicators and up-to-date survey information.

She also expressed concern at the low pass take-up by disabled people which required to be looked at further. In addition, the Executive should be asked to consider applying for Chartermark status for the Scheme once identified improvements had been implemented. The Head of Corporate Policy added that a number of initiatives under the Rural White Paper should be looked at.

With regard to the possibility of a voucher or token scheme, it was suggested that Officers contact Eden District Council and South Lakeland District Council who operate such a scheme and report further.

A Member commented on the injustice created by the different schemes adopted in Dumfries and Galloway and here in Carlisle and the City Treasurer undertook to raise the issue with Central Government.

The Best Value Officer reminded Members that the review was limited in scope, but that it may be possible to undertake a wider review in future, building upon the work undertaken by the City Treasurer.

RESOLVED – (1) That progress to date on the Best Value Review of Concessionary Fares be noted.

(2) That further investigations and consultations, including those suggested above, be undertaken with qualifying Carlisle residents on possible improvements that could be made to the Concessionary Fares Scheme.

(3) That the Committee were unable to comment on the redirection of the savings identified during the initial Best Value Review process until potential improvements to the Concessionary Fares Scheme had been investigated and reported back.

[The meeting ended at 4.50 pm]