# INFRASTRUCTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (SPECIAL)

## WEDNESDAY 1 DECEMBER 2004 AT 10.00 AM

- PRESENT: Councillor Mallinson (Chairman), Councillors Allison, Bradley (as substitute for Councillor Im Thurn), Crookdake, Dodd, Martlew, Rutherford C and Stockdale
- ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Mrs Bowman (Economic Prosperity Portfolio Holder) and Councillor Firth (Policy, Performance Management, Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder).

## IOS.127/04 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Im Thurn and the Acting Town Clerk and Chief Executive and the Executive Director (J Gooding) advised that they may have to leave the meeting early and submitted their apologies.

#### IOS.128/04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs Mallinson declared the following interests in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct:

(a) A personal interest in respect of any reference to the Citizens Advice Bureau. Her interest was in respect of the fact that her husband is Chairman of the Citizens Advice Bureau.

(b) A personal interest on the Review of Grass Cutting as part of the New Revenue Spending Proposals item. Her interest was in respect of the fact that she is a City Council appointed Member of the Carlisle Housing Association Board.

(c) A personal interest in any reference to Cumbria County Council. Her interest was in respect of the fact that she is a Member of Cumbria County Council.

Councillor Dodd declared a personal interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of the Review of Grass Cutting as part of the New Revenue Spending Proposals item. The interest related to the fact that he is a City Council appointed Member of the Carlisle Housing Association Board. Councillors Bradley, Martlew and C Rutherford declared personal interests in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of Enhancing the Concessionary Fares Scheme as part of the New Revenue Spending Proposals item. Councillors Bradley and Martlew's interests were in respect of the fact that they are Concessionary Fares passholders. Councillor C Rutherford stated that her interest was in respect of the fact that her husband is a railcard holder.

Councillor Allinson declared a personal interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct in respect of the Review of Grass Cutting as part of the New Revenue Spending Proposals item. His interest was in respect of the fact that he is the Chairman of Cummersdale Parish Council, which is a customer of the Grass Cutting Service.

## IOS.129/04 GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET 2005/06 - 2007/08

The Head of Finance submitted report FS.31/04 providing an update on the General Fund Revenue Budget 2005/06 to 2007/08 considering:

(a) The revised base revenue estimates for 2004/05 together with the estimates for 2005/06.

(b) An update of the Government's spending review for 2004 and other key budget considerations.

(c) A reminder of the projected deficit to be funded for the three year period, before the consideration of savings and new bids, in order to give some context to Members when considering the savings and new spending proposals elsewhere on the Agenda.

The Head of Finance reported that the Government announcement on the Revenue Support Grant settlement was expected on 2 December 2004. In response a Member's question about the Government using an incorrect formula in the previous year and clawing back money from Authorities, the Head of Finance advised that the Council had been notified of the initial claw back of £14,000. She advised that the Government, on an annual basis, adjusts previous year's entitlements and that this clawback would be accommodated.

In response to a question about the Gershon Review, the Head of Finance advised that this would not affect the 2005/06 budgetary process being undertaken by the Committee today. However, the Council would have to show that it was looking at re-directing resources and at finding efficiency savings. A seminar for Members on the Gershon Review would be held in January 2005 and a plan would have to be submitted to the Government by April 2005.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted, pending the outcome of the Revenue Support Grant Settlement.

#### ISO.130/04 BUDGET 2005/06 – SUMMARY OF NEW REVENUE SPENDING PROPOSALS

The Head of Finance submitted report FS.30/04 summarising requests for new revenue spending to be considered as part of the 2005/06 budget process. Details of individual revenue bids for recurring expenditure and nonrecurring expenditure were submitted.

The Executive on 15 November 2004 had added the following additional nonrecurring bids for funding in 2005/06 for consideration as part of the budget process:

Additional Street Lighting - £40,000 Additional Litter Bins - £20,000

The Committee gave consideration to the following bids which fell within the remit of this Committee:

#### (a) R16 – Enhancing Concessionary Fares Scheme

The Head of Revenues and Benefits Services reported that this bid was in respect of Enhancements to the Concessionary Fares Scheme to take effect from 1 April 2005. In support of the bid he presented report RB.8/04 setting out the success of the pilot scheme, the poor return on the consultation exercise and costed options for Enhancing the Concessionary Fares Scheme. He explained that to provide a 60% fare concession would have an additional cost of £70,000 and enhancing to 70% fares concession would have an additional cost of £195,000. Introducing a free Christmas and New Year travel concession on an annual basis would cost £75,000 per annum at current fare rates.

The Head of Revenues and Benefit Services then advised Members that the Executive on 8 November 2004 (EX.208/04) had agreed that a Free Travel Concession for Concessionary pass holders be arranged for a three week period commencing 12 December 2004 to be funded from the sum of £51,000 vired from the Housing Benefit Efficiency Savings.

In response to a question about this free Christmas period, the Head of Revenues and Benefits Services advised that he had not looked into the costs of expanding this to other groups such as job seekers, students or people in rural areas rather than giving free travel to existing holders.

Members referred to the consultation exercise with pensioners which had been run as a part of the 2004/05 budget consultation exercise and the disappointing response. The Head of Revenues and Benefit Services advised that there had been further consultations as part of the Citizens Panel and the results of this consultation would be available in December 2004.

Members expressed concern that they were being asked to consider the budgetary implications without the results of this further consultation exercise.

Members felt that it was difficult to make a decision on the options for enhancing the Concessionary Fares Scheme without these results.

Members were also very concerned that the Executive had made a decision on free travel over the Christmas period for 2004 without any consideration or scrutiny of this matter by this Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED – That in light of the further consultation being carried out on the Concessionary Fares Scheme, the results of which should be available within this month, the matter should be deferred to the meeting of the Committee on 20 January 2005. The Head of Revenues and Benefits Services should submit to that meeting the results of the consultation exercise and costings for extending the Concessionary Fares Scheme to other groups.

## (b) R17 – Abandoned Vehicles

The Head of Commercial and Technical Services reported that this bid was in respect of additional resources to implement a more pro active approach to dealing with abandoned vehicles. He suggested that in light of the fact that this Committee would be looking at the issue of Abandoned Vehicles at a meeting on 9 December 2004, the budget bid could be considered as part of that meeting.

RESOLVED – That the bid in relation to Abandoned Vehicles be considered as part of the meeting on 9 December 2004 when the overall issue of Abandoned Vehicles would be considered.

## (c) R18 – Review of Grass Cutting

The Head of Commercial and Technical Services reported that this bid was in respect of improving the grass cutting specification and weed control arrangements. In support of the bid, he submitted report CTS.16/04 reviewing the background, identifying the problem areas and presenting several options for 2005 and beyond to improve the grass cutting service. The Executive on 8 November 2004 (EX.210/04) had considered the options and agreed to amend the service to respond to weather conditions and service pressures but had limited it to fifteen cuts per year and had referred the matter to this Committee for comments.

Members expressed concern that this was the first they had seen of the Grass Cutting Review Report, although Members over the past few months had continually raised issues regarding the grass cutting and weed control service provided by the City Council. They were particularly concerned that the Committee were being consulted on budgetary matters without having had any input to the Review on grass cutting. Members felt that the Committee should have an opportunity to scrutinise the detail of the Review report and the option proposed by the Executive before being asked to consider the budgetary bid. The Committee had not called-in the Decision made by the Executive but they argued that the use of call-in in this instance would have been an inefficient and expensive way of doing Council business when the Committee should be consulted and involved throughout with reviews of this nature.

RESOLVED – That the Review of Grass Cutting bid be deferred until the meeting of this Committee on 2 December 2004 when there would be full scrutiny of the Review of Grass Cutting and the new Revenue spending proposals.

## (d) R19 – Recycling/Waste Minimisation

The Head of Commercial and Technical Services reported that this bid was to improve and develop recycling services and begin to introduce greater controls for domestic waste collections. In support of the bid he presented Report CTS.18/04 providing an update on the Council's achievements in recycling and waste management and future challenges and suggesting a range of measures to increase re-cycling and minimise the value of domestic waste land fill.

The Executive on 8 November 2004 (EX.211/04) had agreed that the budgetary implications of developing waste minimisation be considered as part of the 2005/06 budget process.

Members again expressed concern that although this Committee had continually asked for sight of any reports on waste minimisation and recycling and had requested the opportunity to be involved in scrutinising this matter, the report was being submitted to them late on as part of the budgetary process. Again they emphasised the importance of Overview and Scrutiny Committees being fully involved in reviews of this kind.

The Chairman highlighted the important role of Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Committees in being able to be involved in pre-agenda planning when it came to reviews of this nature.

RESOLVED – That the decision on the Waste Management Bid be deferred to the meeting on 2 December 2004 in order to allow the Committee adequate time to fully scrutinise the report on the Waste Management Review and the new spending proposals. The Committee would reserve the right to undertake more detailed scrutiny of this Waste Minimisation Review as necessary.

## (e) R20 – City Centre Promotions

The Head of Economic and Community Development reported that this bid would enable the City Centre Marketing Initiative to continue to build on its existing work and successes. The bid would enable the funding to be in place on a more permanent basis which would enable Officers to plan in advance and to draw on more match funding. Officers had been successful in securing significant match funding towards a package of around £100,000 for the 2004 Christmas Festival costs and year after year they were continuing to promote Carlisle as a destination to come to for Christmas.

The Head of Economic & Community Development clarified that the bid was for £20,000 and not £25,000 as set out in the report.

The Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee had expressed concern about some of the attractions within the city centre, but the Head of Economic & Community Development commented that it was about balancing the income from attractions with the attractions themselves.

A Member commented that the Evening & Night Time Economy Task Group had been looking at how they could encourage shops, cafes and other businesses to stay open later into the early evening and this could be encouraged by events being put on in the city centre. The Member asked if this could be taken on board and considered. The Head of Economic and Community Development replied that she could look at this matter and another Member added that a candlelight procession was being held after the normal trading hours.

In response to a question about whether the Council should pursue a City Centre Management initiative, the Head of Economic & Community Development advised that the Government was promoting the US developed Business Improvement Districts (BID) where businesses paid an additional levy to fund the regeneration of cities and officers were keeping an eye on how the pilot schemes were developing elsewhere. Reports could be brought back to the Committee on the success of BID Pilot schemes and how this could relate to Carlisle.

RESOLVED - (1) That the bid for £20,000 for City Centre promotions be supported and officers congratulated in securing match funding for the Christmas Festival and lights.

(2) That the Head of Economic & Community Development would submit further reports to future meetings of this Committee on pilot schemes for Business Improvement Districts.

#### (f) NR1 – Local Plan Inquiry

The Head of Planning Services reported that this non-recurring bid was in respect of the cost of hosting the Local Plan Inquiry into the Carlisle District Local Plan 2001-2016 during Summer / early Autumn 2005. The bid was for a total of £100,000.

RESOLVED – That the bid for £100,000 in respect of the Local Plan Inquiry be supported as a priority.

## (g) NR5 – Conference Development

The Head of Economic & Community Development reported that this bid was to provide an assistant for the Conference Officer on a one-year contract for 2005/06 to a maximum of £10,000 and an increase in the marketing budget with £7,500 being provided by the City Council to supplement £10,000 generated through contributions from Carlisle Conference Group members.

The Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee had considered this bid and had requested that it be brought to the attention of this Committee for further detailed scrutiny. In response to this request, the Head of Economic & Community Development provided further information on what the additional funding would provide. It would be used to extend advertising of the conference development facilities which Carlisle offers into yellow pages in other cities. In addition it would allow attendance at one other national venue show and would allow further work on selling Carlisle as a venue to potential conference organisers.

In response to questions about the funding from Carlisle Conference Group, the Head of Economic & Community Development advised that it is collected through annual subscriptions which are paid by Group members. In response to suggestions that the contributions could be increased, the Head of Economic & Community Development advised that the Group itself agrees an annual subscription and discussions are held on raising this, but there is a balance between keeping members in the Group and increasing subscriptions.

One of the main thrusts of the funding from this bid would be to attract one major conference event per year and progress on this matter would be reported back to Committee. In response to a Member's question about the capacity of Carlisle in terms of standard of accommodation and the ability to attract major conferences, the Head of Economic & Community Development advised that it would be medium-sized type of conferences that would be targeted.

In response to a question on whether accommodation providers share any of the financial benefits of conferences, the Head of Economic & Community Development advised that each venue would submit a bid to have the conference and were therefore offering competitive rates. The financial benefits should be seen as economic benefits to the city as a whole in that people were spending money in the local economy when they attend conferences.

Members suggested that they should continue to scrutinise conference development and wondered whether this should be done through the regular Performance Monitoring Reports to the Committee or as part of the consideration of tourism. They also suggested that there should be joined-up thinking with the Evening & Night Time Economy Task Group, as there were a number of areas which overlapped. RESOLVED – That the bid for conference development be supported.

## (h) NR7 – Integrated Service Delivery – Area Working

The Head of Commercial & Technical Services reported that this bid was in respect of set up costs and employee training to develop area based teams to deliver front line street scene services such as street cleaning, highway repairs, ground maintenance, etc. He clarified that the bid was for £25,000 and not £30,000 as stated in the papers.

In response to a Member's question, the Head of Commercial & Technical Services advised that the employee training would be multi-disciplinary so that individuals would be multi-skilled and working as part of multi-skilled teams. A Member queried whether these teams would be based within individual areas and whether the same people would work continuously in an area. The Head of Commercial & Technical Services responded that he envisaged that ultimately he would want the teams to be based in the areas in which they worked and that they would be made up of individuals who worked in that area alone, apart from arrangements which needed to be made to cover staff sicknesses, etc. He reported that the workforce and trade unions were supportive in principle of the general idea and they would be kept fully consulted on and involved in issues when the details are progressed.

In response to a question about the funding of the pilot, the Head of Commercial & Technical Services advised that the pilot would be funded from within existing resources and this would be done through reorganising the way the work is done and generating efficiencies. The whole issue would be reviewed at the end of the pilot.

RESOLVED – That the bid of £25,000 for Integrated Service Delivery – Area Working in respect of set up costs and employee training for area-based teams be supported and it be noted that the pilot scheme would be funded from within existing budgets.

#### (i) Additional non-recurring bids – Street Lighting and Litter Bins.

The Executive on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2004 (EX.232/04) had recommended the following additional non-recurring bids for funding in 2005/06:

Additional Street Lighting	£40,000
Additional Litter Bins	£20,000

RESOLVED – That the bids for additional Street Lighting and additional Litter Bins be supported.

#### (i) Budget Issues – Asset Management

A report was submitted by the Head of Property Services (PS.25/04) in relation to a variety of asset management issues.

In response to Member's questions, the Policy, Performance Management, Finance & Resources Portfolio Holder clarified that the £200,000 for improvements at Kingstown Industrial Estate had been approved at the Council meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2004. He further clarified that the £500,000 allocated within this year's Budget to enhance industrial estates had not yet been spent and it was only ever the intention to spend this once the Review of Industrial Estates had taken place.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and the contents noted by the Committee.

# IOS.131/04 BUDGET 2005/06 – SUMMARY OF SAVINGS AND ADDITIONAL INCOME PROPOSALS

The Head of Finance submitted Report FS.33/04 summarising proposals for savings and additional income generation to be considered as part of the 2005/06 Budget process. Proposals for savings / additional income within the remit of this Committee were considered as follows:

## (a) S4 – Pubwatch / Shopwatch

The Head of Commercial & Technical Services reported that this was £20,000 additional income to be raised through charging members of the Pubwatch and Shopwatch schemes for the operation of the CCTV Control Room.

A Member suggested that in addition to the 844 incidents which were reported through the Pubwatch and Shopwatch schemes, other performance indicators could be used to persuade beneficiaries of the schemes to come up with this money. A Member then suggested that it may also be useful to find out the insurance companies' views on the schemes and the impact on premiums, as this would also help to argue for the case for charging.

In response to a Member's question about what would happen if charging for these schemes was not successful, the Head of Finance commented that there was a risk against any income generation and that these are considered and dealt with as part of the budget monitoring procedures to identify any shortfalls.

Members stated that they would welcome the opportunity to work with the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership in relation to these schemes and that consideration should be given to how charging for these schemes is monitored.

RESOLVED - (1) That this additional income proposal be supported and the Committee welcomes the opportunity to work with the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership on the monitoring of this initiative.

(2) That the Head of Commercial and Technical Services monitor insurance companies' views on the Schemes and the impact on premiums.

## (b) S5 – Business Unit Recharges – Building Control Reserve

The Head of Planning Services reported that this was a saving of £13,000 following changes to recharges to the ring fenced building controls budget.

RESOLVED – That this recurring saving of £13,000 be supported.

#### (c) S6 – GIS Staffing

The Head of Planning Services reported that savings of £55,000 could be made from the Geographical Information Systems Manager and Officer posts being funded from the Planning Delivery Grant Budget in 2005/06.

RESOLVED – That this saving of £55,000 be supported.

#### IOS.132/04 CHARGES REVIEW – ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY UNIT DEVELOPMENT

The Head of Economic & Community Development presented Report ECD.19/04 setting out the proposed fees and charges for areas falling within the responsibility of the Economic & Community Development Business Unit. She reported that in conjunction with internal audit, the potential for amended charges in a number of areas of the Unit's operation had been after which some were considered as not being appropriate for increased charges at this time.

The Head of Economic & Community Development then responded to Member's questions on young people, advising that the City Council works closely with the County Council and in partnerships on a number of children and youth services. The services being provided by the City Council are not duplicated by the County Council and if they were not provided by the City Council there would be a gap in service provision, particularly in relation to play schemes. Members commented that some of their wards had benefited from these play schemes.

A Member referred to the Brampton Business and Telecentre and the Enterprise Centre and the reference to a further charging review and she queried the time scales for this review. The Head of Economic and Community Development responded that this review would be carried out in the medium term and she welcomed the Committee's involvement in these reviews. She advised that reports should be submitted to future meetings of the Committee.

RESOLVED – That the charges proposed to generate income of £72,030 as detailed in paragraph 4 of the report be endorsed.

#### IOS.133/04 CHARGES REVIEW – 2005/06 – CAR PARK CHARGES

The Head of Commercial and Technical Services submitted report CTS.15/04 detailing options for the review of car park charges for 2005/06 having regard to income, contribution to the Local Transport Plan for Carlisle and maintaining the economic vitality of the City Centre. The Executive at its meeting on 15 November 2004 (EX.237/04) had made detailed proposals for increasing car parking charges in 2005/06.

A Member referred to the Executive's decision not to reduce the cost of parking on Devonshire Walk as it would displace cars from other car parks. They queried this thinking given that the city was supposed to be short of parking spaces. The Head of Commercial and Technical Services responded that during certain periods of the year and times of the week, there was lack of capacity in car parking. However, a reduction in charges in Devonshire Walk would also have an effect on other car parks and it would mean that people parking in other car parks at a higher cost may move to Devonshire Walk resulting in an overall reduction in income.

Members referred to the call-in meeting of this Committee when there had been consideration of Devonshire Walk car park and a suggestion that costs should be reduced or parking should be free in this car park. In the light of that call-in and the traffic congestion in Carlisle, particularly in the lead up to the Christmas period, Members suggested that the use of Devonshire Walk should be promoted even further. Members made various suggestions regarding proposed charges for the Devonshire Walk car park and after discussion suggested the following charges, which would help to reduce congestion in the city centre:

Up to 3 hours	£1
3 to 4 hours	£2.50
4 to 6 hours	£3
Over six hours	£3

The Policy, Performance Management, Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder advised that it was anticipated that the proposals considered and agreed by the Executive would already result in a reduction in overall income of £30,000 due to cars relocating from other car parks with higher charges. He asked Members how they would recoup an even larger reduction in income as under their proposals there would be more cars re-locating from other car parks.

The Committee proposed that these charges should be introduced for a trial period of three months and the budgetary implications examined after the trial period, as current figures regarding the reduction in overall income were conjecture at this stage.

Members then referred to the Executive's decision that the designation of the Sands Car Park be altered with the 66 spaces nearest the Sands Centre

being retained as a short stay car park and the remaining 210 spaces reverting for long stay use. Members expressed concern that this would go against the Local Transport Plan as it encourages the reduction of long stay parking. The Head of Commercial and Technical Services responded that this was only part of the Local Transport Plan and another key element was the provision of park and ride which had not yet progressed. It was difficult to comply with all the specific aspects of the Local Transport Plan when park and ride was not in place.

Members suggested that the Sands Car Park should remain as a short term car park in order to avoid driver confusion and to comply with the Local Transport Plan.

In response to Members question about how the deficit of £24,000 short fall against projected income for the Sands Centre Car Park is balanced within the budget, the Head of Finance advised that in the overall base budget income shortfalls are balanced against other areas where there have been increases in income over projections.

The Policy, Performance Management, Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder and a number of Members referred to the page 17 of the report headed Summary of Income and they stated that the use of –ves in the variances was confusing. In all other budgetary reports a -ve would mean that the Council had received more than it was expecting but in this instance it meant a shortfall. Members suggested that this should be reviewed.

Members then referred to the Green Travel Plan for Staff/Members and asked for progress on this. The Head of Commercial and Technical Services advised that the Executive had requested that work be done on the Green Travel Plan for City Council staff and Members and that this would take place during the next 12 months.

RESOLVED - (1) That the Executive's proposals on car parks be noted and it be recommended to the Executive that the following amendments be made:

(a) Devonshire Walk Car Park – for a trial period of 3 months the parking charges should be as follows:

Up to 3 hours	£1.00
3hrs to 4 hours	£2.50
4hrs to 6hrs	£3.00
Over 6 hrs	£3.00

(b) That the Sands Car Park should remain as a short stay car park in order to comply with the Local Transport Plan and avoid driver confusion.

(2) That the Executive be asked to progress the development of a Green Travel Plan for City Council staff and Members.

(3) That the Head of Finance produce a protocol for the use of +'s and -'s and minuses in budgetary reports.

#### IOS.134/04 CHARGES REVIEW – ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION SERVICES

The Acting Executive Director (Ms Connolly) presented report EPS.74/04 setting out the options for fees and charges for areas falling within the responsibility of the Environmental Protections Services Business Unit. The Chairman clarified that the areas within the remit of this Committee related to Environmental Protection, Dog Fouling, Food and Pest Control.

In response to a Member's question the Acting Executive Director confirmed that some concessions were still being offered in relation to infestation charges.

In relation to Environmental Protection Act Public Health charges, she confirmed that fees are set nationally and it was estimated that they would rise by the base level of inflation ie 2.5%.

RESOLVED – That the charges proposed in report EPS.70/04 be endorsed.

#### IOS.135/04 CHARGES REVIEW – PLANNING SERVICES

The Head of Planning Services presented report P.50/04 setting out proposed fees and charges for areas falling within the responsibility of the Planning Services Business Unit. He advised that fees for Building Control and Development Control applications are set nationally.

In response to a Members question about how the proposed new portal system could affect charges, the Head of Planning Services advised that this was difficult to assess at this point. He advised that although applications would be received electronically there may still be an necessity for the Planning Services Unit to copy maps to send to some agencies which would not be able to receive them electronically e.g. Parish Councils. The impact in terms of charges would be monitored.

RESOLVED – That the charges outlined in the report be approved.

## IOS.136/04 PROVISIONAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2004/05 TO 2007/08

The Head of Finance presented report FS.33/04 detailing the revised Capital Programme for 2004/05, together with a proposed method of financing. The report summarised the proposed new capital spending proposals, the following of which fell within the remit of this Committee:

# C15 – Retaining wall between Graham's Croft and the A69, Warwick on Eden.

A Member commented that the retaining wall at the above site was collapsing onto the footway, creating a health and safety problem for pedestrians and was in need of rebuilding. The wall was partly owned by the City Council and partly by a private individual and discussions with the private individual over contributing towards costs were ongoing.

RESOLVED – That the new capital spending proposal bid for £37,000 be supported and Officers asked to progress discussions with the private individual over contributing towards costs.

(The meeting ended at 12.25 pm)