

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 2004 AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT: Councillor Guest (Chairman); Councillors Bradley, Glover, Jefferson, Joscelyne, Quilter, Prest and Styth.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Firth (Policy, Performance Management, Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder) and Councillor Mrs Geddes (Corporate Resources Portfolio Holder) attended part of the meeting.

CROS.156/04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Bradley declared a personal interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct on Minute CROS.160/04 (Budget 2005/06 – Summary of New Revenue Spending Proposals) as it related to the Concessionary Fares Scheme. Councillor Bradley remained in the meeting but took no part in discussions on the Concessionary Fares Scheme bid.

Councillor Glover declared a personal interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct on Minute CROS.160/04 (Budget 2005/06 – Summary of New Revenue Spending Proposals) and Minute CROS.161/04 (Budget 2005/06 – Summary of Savings and Additional Income Proposals) relating to his employment with Supporting People. Councillor Glover remained in the meeting and took part in discussions on various parts of these reports.

Councillor Jefferson declared a personal interest in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct on Minute CROS.160/04 (Budget 2005/06 – Summary of New Revenue Spending Proposals) and Minute CROS.161/04 (Budget 2005/06 – Summary of Savings and Additional Income Proposals) as he was a County Councillor. Councillor Jefferson remained in the meeting and took part in discussions on various parts of these reports.

CROS.157/04 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2003/04 – AUDIT ISSUES

Pursuant to Minute C169/04(vii), the Head of Finance reported (FS.39/04) that the Council had on 3rd August 2004 approved the Authority's draft 2003/04 Statement of Accounts subject to audit. She informed Members that the audit had now been completed and she reported on issues which had been raised during the audit. The Head of Finance circulated at the meeting a copy of a revised SAS.610 report from the Audit Commission and detailed the amendments in that report, as compared to the report circulated with the papers for the meeting. The Head of Finance also reminded Members that the role of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee was to approve the SAS.610 Statement which had to be approved before the auditors would issue their audit certificate and formal opinion on the Council's

accounts. The role of the City Council was to approve the original statements for submission to audit with the Head of Finance reporting back any material amendments to Council following the conclusion of the audit. The Head of Finance added that the Statement of Accounts had to be published by the statutory deadline which this year was 30th November 2004.

The Head of Finance set out the details of the unadjusted mis-statements, which the Audit Commission had identified in the final financial statements, which the Council had decided not to adjust, which would be corrected where appropriate in the 2004/05 financial statements. The Head of Finance added that the total impact on reserves of the adjustments would be a credit to the bottom line of £43,961.

Members, in considering the report, noted that the changes in the revised Audit Commission letter which had been circulated at the meeting reflected a change of emphasis, and related to the supporting working papers and audit information.

The Head of Finance commented that the Audit Commission were working towards carrying out an audit of each local Authority's accounts quickly and, in order to be able to achieve that, the information and working papers needed to be presented to the Auditors in a standard way. In response to further questions, the Head of Finance, stated that the Council were making progress in working towards the format which the Audit Commission required but, because of the precise way in which the auditors required the information to be presented, the Council, together with other authorities, were having some difficulty in fully achieving that.

Members further commented that they would have welcomed the opportunity to question a representative from the Audit Commission on their SAS.610 Report and were disappointed that a representative was not present at the meeting. Members also questioned how the Council might address for future years the difficulties which had been experienced in signing off the accounts in the current year. The Head of Finance reminded Members that the delay in signing off the Authority's 2002/03 accounts had hindered the commencement of the close down of the 2003/04 accounts but, as the Council had complied with the deadline this year, then it should help the Authority to comply with the timetable in 2004/05. She stated, however, that it was a difficult timetable to achieve and she added that the timetable for next year showed that there was a requirement for meetings towards the end of July and end of October and at the present time there were no Council meetings currently scheduled for those dates. She added that she would discuss the matter further with the District Auditor to try and resolve the various issues surrounding the timetable for the closure of accounts.

Members felt that it might be appropriate to identify when the deadlines were for completing the 2004/05 Statement of Accounts at an early stage and schedule meetings in the civic calendar on the latest date which would allow the Head of Finance and District Auditor to meet the statutory dates so that Members were aware at the earliest possible stage of likely meeting dates.

Members also noted that the amended SAS.610 Report of the Audit Commission was one of three reports which had been circulated to Members immediately prior to the meeting and felt that this made it difficult for Members to carry out effective scrutiny of items.

RESOLVED - (1) That the Audit Commission's SAS.610 Statement (amended) as circulated at the meeting be approved.

(2) That the adjustments required to the 2003/04 Statement of Accounts as detailed in Appendix 3 to the Audit Commission's SAS.610 Statement, to be reported to full Council on 23rd November 2004, be approved.

(3) That the Council's Executive Director inform the Audit Commission that the Council's Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee were disappointed that a representative of the Audit Commission had not been able to attend the meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 22 November to present their SAS.610 Report and to answer Member's queries on the report.

(4) That the Head of Finance discuss further with the District Auditor proposals for improving the process for approving the Audit Commission's SAS.610 Statement and the Council's final accounts for 2004/05 including the arranging, if necessary, of planned special meetings of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the City Council to approve the issues requiring approval in order to meet the statutory deadlines for the publication of accounts.

CROS.158/04 REFERENCE FROM THE EXECUTIVE – BUDGET PROCESS

Minute EX.199/04 of the Executive on 11 October 2004 was submitted in response to a reference from this Committee to become involved in the Budget at an early stage.

The Executive had noted the resolution of this Committee and advised that consultation would commence in the current cycle of meetings.

Members referred to the fact that, as a result of the Executive holding a special meeting to deal with the initial consideration of the Budget, Overview and Scrutiny meetings had needed to be re-arranged and this Committee was now considering the budget reports prior to the Community and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Members considered that this Committee should, as planned, meet last so that input from the service Overview and Scrutiny Committees can be taken into account when scrutinising the budget as last year.

RESOLVED – That the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be requested to ensure that the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee meets after the Community and Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committees in future years when considering the initial budget proposals.

CROS.159/04 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 as submitted to this meeting.

The Head of Finance reported that the Government announcement on the Rate Support Grant settlement was now expected during the week commencing 6 December 2004.

A Member referred to the Gershon Review, in particular the fact that the achievement of 2.5% efficiency savings need to be directed to front-line services. A Member sought clarification as to how this would work in practice.

The Head of Finance understood that it would be up to Local Authorities to demonstrate how funding redirected from efficiency savings to front-line services had improved those services. This would be an audited process, although no guidelines had yet been received from the District Auditor as to how this would be monitored.

RESOLVED – That the report of the Head of Finance be noted.

CROS.160/04 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 20 revenue bids for recurring expenditure and 9 revenue bids for non-recurring expenditure were submitted.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager reported that the Executive had added the following additional non-recurring 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 bids for recurring expenditure as follows:-

R1 Pensions Fund Deficit

The Head of Finance reported that the outcome of the triennial review of the Pension Fund was expected to be available in December 2004, with new rates operative from 1 April 2005. The bid represented a best estimate of what the position for the City Council might be in terms of increased contributions, although the formal Actuarial valuation would enable a more accurate estimate of costs to be identified.

The Committee requested to be kept up to date on this issue and noted the bid.

R2 Rating Revaluation

The Head of Property Services reported that the Uniform Business Rates system would be re-valued with effect from 1 April 2005 and the bid estimated the effect of the revaluation on the rateable value of properties owned by the City Council.

The Committee noted this bid.

R3 Single Status/Job Evaluation

Members sought clarification on the level of expenditure of £1m in 2007/08.

The Head of Member Support and Employee Services reported that a Local Pay Review incorporating single status/job evaluation or equivalent was a requirement of a recent national pay agreement. Experience elsewhere suggested that the outcome of a job evaluation/single status exercise would be to add between 3% and 6% on payroll costs. The £1m bid for 2007/08 represented 6% of payroll and therefore the maximum needed. The Executive had yet to consider arrangements for such a single status/job evaluation exercise.

The Committee noted this bid.

R4 Benefits Overpayments

The Head of Revenues and Benefits Services reported that this bid was in relation to a reduction in income as a result of changes to Housing Benefit Regulations which would significantly reduce the amount of small overpayments incurred by pensioners which would otherwise be recovered.

The Committee noted this bid.

R5 Artefacts Storage – Shaddon Mill Lease

The Head of Property Services reported that the City Council had a short term lease on Shaddon Mill for artefacts storage and the bid was for alternative accommodation once the Lease expires.

The Committee noted the bid.

R6 Joint Neighbourhood Forums

Dr Gooding, Executive Director, reported that this bid of £25,000 was the City Council's contribution for awarding grants through Joint Neighbourhood Forums should they be introduced.

Members sought clarification as to whether this funding was in addition to the normal Grants for Leisure Budget and whether the current budget would also be distributed through Joint Neighbourhood Forums.

Dr Gooding reported that the £25,000 bid was new money in addition to the existing Grants for Leisure Budget.

Councillor Geddes, Corporate Resources Portfolio Holder, reported that it was her understanding that the £25,000 was a new bid for area working. A percentage of existing Grants Budget would be retained centrally as some applications would be Carlisle wide initiatives. This mirrored the way grants were distributed by the County Council Neighbourhood Forums.

The Committee supported this bid which they classed as a priority.

R7 Talkin Tarn Estate Transfer

This bid was in respect of the Revenue costs estimate in the Talkin Tarn business case as part of the transfer of the estate to the City Council which was to be considered by the City Council on 23 November 2004.

The Committee noted this bid.

R8 Heysham Park

Mr Gray reported that this bid was in respect of maintenance costs for the upkeep of Heysham Park.

The Committee considered that a contribution should be sought from the housing developer and the Housing Association, as both will benefit from improvements being made to Heysham Park.

The Committee noted this bid.

R9 Advice Agencies

The Head of Economic and Community Development reported that this bid was in respect of reinstating £60,000 savings which had originally been requested to be made across the Advice Services' budgets.

The Committee supported this bid.

R10 Broadband for Members

The Head of Customer and Information Services reported that this bid was in respect of providing Members with broadband access and would be subject to a successful pilot scheme being initiated.

The Committee noted this bid.

R11 New Information Systems

The Head of Customer and Information Services reported that this bid was in respect of a number of new information systems required for projects and initiatives in the forthcoming year. Some of the funding may come from Implementing Electronic Government sources but there was likely to be some revenue implications.

The Committee noted this bid.

R12 Occupational Health

The Head of Member Support and Employee Services reported that this bid would enable the City Council to provide a pro-active occupational health service for the Authority.

The Committee noted and supported this bid.

R13 Administrative Support, Member Support and Employee Services Business Unit

The Head of Member Support and Employee Services reported that this bid was in respect of administrative support for this Business Unit to ensure that there were adequate administrative resources as funding for certain temporary posts would cease at the end of the current financial year.

The Committee noted and supported this bid.

R14 Training and Development

The Head of Member Support and Employee Services reported that this bid was to enable the City Council to continue its Member and Officer training and development programmes. He explained that investigations had been made into sources of external funding through the Learning and Skills Council. However, they were unable to provide assistance as their focus was on smaller employers.

A Member asked whether the Head of Member Support and Employee Services could collaborate with the City's Universities who may be able to provide training for Members and Officers in return for the City Council providing placements for students.

The Head of Member Support and Employee Services was asked to investigate this suggestion.

The Committee noted the bid.

R15 Emergency Planning/Civil Contingencies

The Head of Member Support and Employee Services reported that this bid was in respect of funding needed to comply with changes to be introduced by the Government to emergency planning procedures at a local level. It was understood that funding for implementation was to be provided from the Government on a 60%/40% County/District Council split. The bid had been included in the Budget process as the extent of the Government funding was not yet known.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager reported that the new requirements were entirely in addition to the duties he currently performed on emergency planning on behalf of the City Council. Discussions would need to take place with the County Council over the split of duties between the County and City Councils when further details were received from the Government.

The Committee recognised the need for a bid to be made but considered it important for an agreement to be reached with the County Council over the split of duties and to identify the level of financial resources to be made available by the Government before any of the posts which are the subject of the bid are filled.

The Committee noted the bid with the above comments.

R16 Concessionary Fares – Enhancement to Scheme

The Head of Revenues and Benefits Services reported that this bid was in respect of enhancement to the Concessionary Fares Scheme to take effect from 1 April 2005.

The Committee noted the bid.

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.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager reported that the Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee was shortly to undertake a subject review of abandoned vehicles.

The Committee noted and supported this bid.

R18 Review of Grass Cutting

The Head of Commercial and Technical Services reported that this bid was in respect of improving the current grass cutting specification and weed control arrangements.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager reported that this issue had been considered by both the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee and both had been supportive of this initiative.

The Committee supported this bid as a priority.

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 collection.

A Member asked whether Eden District Council would be providing partnership funding for this initiative.

The Head of Commercial and Technical Services indicated that Eden District Council's position was not clear at this stage, although it was possible for the City Council to introduce this initiative on its own should this be necessary.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager reported that the Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered recycling/waste minimisation issues and were keen to see the Government targets met. This bid would help to achieve this aim.

The Committee noted this bid.

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.

Members asked whether City Centre businesses contributed towards marketing initiatives in the City Centre.

The Head of Economic and Community Development confirmed that contributions towards marketing initiatives were made by City Centre businesses and also the North West Development Agency and Cumbria Tourist Board. In addition, a number of private sector sponsorships had promoted City Centre marketing initiatives.

A Member expressed concern over the poor standard of some marketing attractions in the City Centre, in particular, certain small commercial activities and the funfair facilities. A Member also questioned why more use was not made of the bandstand in the City Centre.

The Head of Economic and Community Development undertook to raise these issues with Council colleagues and City Centre partners.

The Committee noted the bid.

The Committee then considered the following non-recurring revenue expenditure bids:

NR1 Local Plan Enquiry

The Head of Planning Services reported that this bid was in respect of the cost of hosting the Local Plan Enquiry into the Carlisle District Local Plan 2001 – 2016 during the summer/early autumn 2005.

The Committee noted this bid.

NR2 Rural Support and Longtown Market Town Initiative

The Head of Economic and Community Development reported that this bid would extend the arrangements for the temporary Rural Support Officer to be employed full time to cover for the secondment of the previous post holder to the Longtown Market Town Initiative. This arrangement, which was due to end in September 2005, was now expected to continue to 31 March 2008.

The Committee noted the bid.

NR3 Tullie House Base Budget

Mr Gray reported that this bid was for additional revenue support for Tullie House as the income targets were not being met.

A Member recalled that, at the time the Millennium Gallery had opened, it had been the intention to promote Tullie House as an events venue. The Member suggested this as an option to provide additional income.

The Committee noted the bid with the comment above.

NR4 Continuation of the Local Strategic Partnership Officer Funding

The Head of Strategy and Performance reported that the current joint funding arrangements with Eden District Council for a Local Strategic Partnership Officer expired in December 2005 and the bid was to continue the funding for a further 18 months until the end of March 2007 when the future of the post would be reviewed.

She confirmed that the current postholder had left and that the work was being performed on a part-time basis by an Officer of Eden District Council.

A Member questioned the need for a full-time Officer and whether it was now an appropriate time to review the post, rather than in 2007.

The Committee noted the bid and requested the Executive to review the post of Local Strategic Partnership Officer prior to the end of the current financial year with the bid being limited to 2005/06.

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 commissions from Carlisle Conference Group Members.

Members noted that, in the current financial year, £5,000 had been allocated from the tourism budget for marketing in recognition of the priority status now attached to business tourism development. The bid did, however, increase budgets for Conference development by 75%.

A Member asked whether the Cumbria Tourist Board could assist in Conference development in Carlisle and promote Carlisle as a destination for short breaks.

The Head of Economic and Community Development reported that the Cumbria Tourist Board had assisted in these areas but had also to deal with similar competing demands from other parts of the County. It was considered important for the Council to ensure sufficient resources were put in these areas of work.

The Committee asked that this bid be brought to the attention of the Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Committee for further detailed scrutiny.

NR6 Events Budget (Pop to the Park Concert 2005)

The Head of Economic & Community Development reported that this bid would enable a Pop to the Park Concert to be held in 2005, building on the success of the 2004 event.

The Committee noted the bid.

NR7 Integrated Service Delivery – Area Working

The Head of Commercial and 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, grounds maintenance, etc.

The Committee noted the bid.

NR8 Housing Strategy 2005-2010

Ms Connolly, Interim Executive Director, reported that this bid was in respect of the revenue implications following the implementation of the Housing Strategy.

The Overview & Scrutiny Manager reported that the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee had considered reports on the Housing Strategy and were supportive of additional resources being made available.

The Committee noted the bid.

Street Lighting and Litter Bins

The Overview & Scrutiny Manager reported that the Executive had decided to consider non-recurring bids of £40,000 for additional street lighting and £20,000 for additional litter bins as part of the 2005/06 budget process.

The Committee supported these bids which were considered to be a priority.

In considering the above, background reports had been circulated to Members of the Committee as follows:-

RB8/04 - Concessionary Fares Scheme;
CTS16/04 – Grass Cutting Review;
CTS18/04 - Waste Minimisation Review;
PS21/04, PS22/04 & PS24A/04 – Talkin Tarn;

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the report of the Head of Finance be noted.
- (2) That the recurring revenue expenditure bids be noted and supported where indicated, subject to:
 - a) the bids in respect of grant funding for Joint Neighbourhood Forums, grass cutting standards, additional street lighting and additional litter bins are identified as priority bids by this Committee.
 - b) That further discussions should take place with the County Council when the funding position for emergency planning/civil contingencies becomes clear, in order that the split of duties between the Authorities can be agreed and the available expenditure clarified before any action is taken to appoint additional staff.
- (3) That the non-recurring revenue expenditure bids be noted, subject to:
 - a) with regard to bid NR4 – Local Strategic Partnership Officer, the Executive be requested to review the post of Local Strategic Partnership Officer prior to the end of the current financial year with the bid being limited to 2005/06.
 - b) The Infrastructure Overview & Scrutiny Committee be requested to undertake further detailed scrutiny of the financial commitment required for NR5 - Conference Development Pilot.
- (4) That the background reports be noted.

**CROS.161/04 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 were considered by the Committee as follows:

S1 – Increase salary turnover savings to 3% of the salary budget

The Committee noted this saving.

S2 – Best Value budget

The Head of Strategy and Performance reported that this saving would reduce the Best Value budget from £13,000 to £5,000.

A Member expressed some reservations as to whether this saving was sensible.

The Committee noted this saving.

S3 – Communications / Publications

The Head of Strategy & Performance reported that this saving was for £7,000 should the Council no longer produce hard copies of the Carlisle A-Z which in future would be made available by electronic means.

The Committee noted this saving.

S4 – Shopwatch / Pubwatch

The Head of Commercial & Technical Services reported that this was £20,000 additional income to be raised through charging organisers of the Pubwatch and Shopwatch Schemes for the operation of the CCTV control room.

The Committee noted this additional income proposal.

S5 – 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 Control budgets.

The Committee noted this saving.

S6 – GIS Staffing

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

The Committee noted this saving.

S7 – City Council Elections 2005/06

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services reported that this was a one-off saving of £71,000 for 2005/06, as there are no City Council elections in May 2005.

The Committee noted the saving.

The Committee also noted savings in respect of the following:

- Rent reviews
- Rheged
- IT purchasing review
- Audit fees

The Overview & Scrutiny Manager further reported that the Executive had requested Officers to find further savings for consideration as part of the 2005/06 budget process. The Committee would be able to scrutinise any further proposals during the formal Budget consultation process in January 2005.

RESOLVED – 1. That the report of the Head of Finance detailing savings and additional income proposals be noted.

2. That it is noted that the Executive had asked Officers to find further savings for consideration as part of the 2005/06 budget process and which would be scrutinised by this Committee during the formal Budget consultation process in January 2005.

CROS.162/04 CHARGES REVIEW – LICENSING

The Licensing Manager submitted Report EP.73/04 setting out the Charges Review undertaken in respect of the licensing functions of the Environmental Protection Services Business Unit, which had been accepted by the Licensing and Regulatory Panel at their meeting on 20 October 2004.

RESOLVED – That the Licensing Charges Review be noted.

CROS.163/04 CHARGES REVIEW – LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

The Head of Legal & Democratic Services submitted Report LDS.47/04 setting out options for fees and charges for areas falling within the responsibility of the Legal & Democratic Services Business Unit.

He drew attention to a proposed increase of £3 on local land charge search fees. This was considered justified as Carlisle's search fees were currently the lowest in Cumbria and the increase would bring fees back up to the Cumbrian average.

RESOLVED – That the Charges Review Report be noted.

**CROS.164/04 CHARGES REVIEW – ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

The Head of Economic & Community Development submitted Report ECD.19/04 setting out options for fees and charges for areas falling within the responsibility of the Economic & Community Development Services Business Unit.

RESOLVED – That the Charges Review Report be noted.

CROS.165/04 CHARGES REVIEW 2005/06 – CAR PARK CHARGES

The Head of Commercial & 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 had made detailed proposals for increasing car parking charges in 2005/06 and the decision notice was submitted.

The Chairman questioned the Executive's logic on long stay car parking charges which did not provide a disincentive to short stays on long stay car parks.

A Member questioned whether there had been any consultation with Social Services over staff contract parking charges.

The Head of Commercial & Technical Services reported that there had been initial discussions with Social Services and more detailed consultation was now taking place to resolve this issue.

RESOLVED – That the proposals for car park charges for 2005/06 be noted with the above comments.

**CROS.166/04 CHARGES REVIEW – ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION SERVICES**

Ms Connolly, Executive Director, submitted Report EPS.74/04 setting out options for fees and charges for areas falling within the responsibility of the Environmental Protection Services Business Unit.

RESOLVED – That the Charges Review Report be noted.

**CROS.167/04 CHARGES REVIEW – CULTURE, LEISURE AND
SPORTS SERVICES**

The Head of Culture, Leisure and Sports submitted Report CLS.14/04 setting out options for fees and charges for areas falling within the responsibility of the Culture, Leisure & Sports Business Unit.

RESOLVED – That the Charges Review Report be noted.

CROS.168/04 CHARGES REVIEW – PLANNING SERVICES

The Head of Planning Services submitted Report P.50/04 setting out options for fees and charges for areas falling within the responsibility of the Planning Services Business Unit. Fees for Building Control and Development Control application fees are set nationally.

RESOLVED – That the Charges Review Report be noted.

CROS.169/04 PROVISIONAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2004/05 TO 2007/08

The Head of Finance submitted Report FS.34/04 detailing the revised Capital Programme for 2004/05, together with the proposed method of financing.

The report also summarised the proposed programme for 2005/06 to 2007/08 in the light of the capital bids submitted for consideration and summarised the estimated capital resources available to fund the programme.

Details of 16 capital bids put forward by Officers were submitted.

Members noted that the estimated resources available for capital projects would greatly reduce in the forthcoming years.

The Head of Finance reported that current funding levels were as a result of Right to Buy receipts which would reduce in future years.

Members considered that the big increases in the value of houses in Carlisle should have a positive impact on Right to Buy receipts with a higher revenue coming in.

A Member noted that the cost of delivering the Housing Strategy would be increasing as the Right to Buy income reduced. He questioned whether the Council should be restructuring the delivery of the Housing Strategy so that hostel provision could be taken forward in an appropriate way.

The Head of Finance pointed out that the Housing Strategy was a five-year programme.

The Committee then considered each individual capital bid:

C1 – Customer Service Development

The Head of Customer & Information Services reported that this was a bid of £150,000 to promote change management, business process re-engineering and additional software for other Business Units in relation to customer service development.

A Member asked whether this was likely to be funded through IEG money.

The Head of Customer & Information Services indicated that this would not be the case.

A Member enquired why further business process re-engineering was being undertaken so soon after the major restructuring of the Authority into Business Units.

The Head of Customer & Information Services reported that the bid was to develop the Customer Contact Centre in terms of accommodation, hardware, software and buying in consultancy. Business process re-engineering had been undertaken in respect of Council tax, Licensing and General Collections, but there were other areas still to address.

Dr Gooding, Executive Director, reported that the release of any resources for capital projects for customer service development would be subject to detailed reports to the Executive and the aim was to minimise the use of consultants for business process re-engineering. Capital funding was being earmarked to develop the Customer Contact Centre in the future.

The Committee noted the bid with the comments above.

C2 – City Wi-Fi Initiative

C3 – Broadband for Members,

C4 – ISG Desktop Replacement Programme

C5 - Replacement for IT Business System for Personnel & Payroll

C6 – Replacement Cremators

The above capital bids were noted without debate.

C7 – Housing Strategy 2005-2010

A Member noted that a contribution of £300,000 per annum for 5 years in respect of adaptations for the disabled was being proposed and asked whether this was sufficient to meet need.

The Head of Finance confirmed that this bid was new money additional to the existing funding available for DFG. Currently the City Council contribute 40% of the cost with the remaining 60% being funded from Government Grant.

Members noted that the City Council had now assumed responsibility for applications in respect of social housing and that, as there was currently a perception of a huge backlog of disabled grant applications for private properties, whether the City Council's funding level was sufficient.

The Committee asked that the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee investigate this issue in more detail.

C8 – Talkin Tarn Estate Transfer

C9 – Heysham Park

C10 – Bitts Park Play Area

C11 – Hardwick Circus Fountain

C12 – California Road Football Pitch Drainage

C13 – Dale End Road Pitch Drainage

C14 – Fusehill Street Play Area

The above capital bids were noted without debate.

C15 – Retaining Wall between Grahams Croft and the A69
Warwick on Eden

The Head of Property Services reported 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. Discussions with the private individual over contributing towards costs were ongoing.

The Committee noted this capital bid.

C16 – Sheepmount Bridge

The Committee noted this capital bid.

RESOLVED – 1. That the report of the Head of Finance and the detailed bids be noted with comments as above.

2. That the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee be requested to investigate in detail the funding position for disabled adaptations grants.

CROS.170/04 SUSPENSION OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE

It was noted that the meeting had been in progress for 3 hours. It was moved and seconded, and

RESOLVED - That Council Procedure Rule 9 in relation to the duration of meetings be suspended in order that the meeting could continue over the time limit of 3 hours.

CROS.171/04 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT ESTIMATE 2004/05

The Head of Finance submitted Report FS.38/04 summarising the current position on the Housing Revenue Account in respect of both 2003/04 and 2004/05, including the forecast closure of the Housing Revenue Account as at 31 March 2005.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CROS.172/04 RENEWALS RESERVE – PROGRESS REPORT

The Head of Finance submitted Report FS.32/04 concerning the performance review of the renewals reserve undertaken by Internal Audit, the results of which had been reported to this Committee on 12 January 2004. The recommendations following the review were submitted.

The Head of Finance reported that the majority of recommendations had not been completed for the following reasons:

- a) The recommendations involved a considerable amount of detailed work to resolve and unfortunately there were significant pressures arising from other work areas and there had not been resources available to undertake this work.
- b) The level of the renewals reserve required was to be linked to the Information Systems Group recommendations regarding the level of IT, hardware and software that was required for the Authority. The work of this Group had not yet been concluded.
- c) The Head of Finance was currently in discussions with Sector, the City Council's Treasury Management advisers, regarding the issue of options, appraisal and, in particular, decisions on "Lease vs Buy". This work had not been concluded as yet.

Whilst the progression of this piece of work was important, it was not crucial to the budget process or the overall finances of the Authority at the present time. There were sufficient other reserves and balances available to the Authority and it was more important that the renewals reserve was set at an appropriate level to ensure that there was an adequate replacement programme covering all of the Authority's assets.

The Executive had noted the current position and asked the Head of Finance to conclude the recommendations in the Internal Audit report as soon as possible and submit a further report to a future meeting of the Executive.

RESOLVED – That the position be noted.

CROS.173/04 BUDGET OVERVIEW & MONITORING REPORT

The Head of Finance submitted Report FS.28/04 providing an overview of the budgetary position for April to September 2004 summarising the main changes to the budgets between approval in February 2004 and the year to date for both General Fund revenue and capital budgets. The report also provided summary monitoring information for April to September 2004 for all Business Units.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

CROS.174/04 TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2004/05 AND 2005/06

The Head of Finance submitted Report FS.35/04 providing the regular quarterly report on treasury transactions and the interim report on treasury management in 2004/05 as required under the Financial Procedure Rules.

The report also considered the outlook for the City Council's treasury management forecast in 2005/06 with projections to 2007/08 and the requirements of the Prudential Code.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

(The meeting ended at 1:07 pm)