

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting – 16 September 2002

Present: Dr Scott (Chairman)
Mr Binns, Mr Henry, Mr Mountford, Mr Smith and Mr Tilbey

Also present: Dr Kennedy (Chairman of the Council)

Apologies for absence: Mr Cooper and Mr Houdret

10. MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on 22 May 2002 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

11. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Mr Mountford be appointed as Vice-Chairman.

12. APPOINTMENT OF EXECUTIVE SUB-COMMITTEE

Mr Henry requested clarification on the duties of an Executive Sub-Committee. The Chairman assured him that the Executive Committee would only deal with urgent matters or issues the main Committee had delegated to the Sub-Committee. However, no final decision would be taken without reference to the full Committee.

RESOLVED that Dr Scott, Mr Mountford, Mr Smith and Mr Henry be appointed to the Executive Sub-Committee

13. CCTV IN SOUTH BUCKS DISTRICT - AN EVALUATION OF THE CURRENT POSITION

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Services on a review of CCTV in the District and establishing criteria for considering Council support for future CCTV proposals.

The report detailed the background, the current CCTV systems in the South Bucks District - Beaconsfield, Burnham and others and noted that the policy implication arising from this review of CCTV were set out in paragraph 4 of the report.

It concluded that: -

- (a) the Beaconsfield CCTV system had only recently begun operation. Close monitoring of its impact on District and local crime figures, and future Thames Valley Police's surveys on public safety, were expected to demonstrate the benefits of the system.
- (b) the future improvements to the Burnham CCTV system would need to be considered in the light of its impending review.
- (c) any requests for funding future CCTV proposals would need to be assessed and prioritised as part of the Council's normal budget setting processes.
- (d) the criteria, as set out in Appendix A, should be used as the basis for assessing future bids to the Council.

RESOLVED to recommend to the Portfolio Holder that: -

- (1) Burnham Parish Council be requested to commence its review of CCTV now in order that the Cabinet can consider the findings and any resultant bid;
- (2) the Cabinet be requested to approve and adopt the criteria for support of CCTV bids as set out in Appendix A of the report.

14. DEVELOPMENT CONTROL STAFFING

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Services reviewing further the effect on the Council's development control function of staffing changes undertaken at the beginning of 2002, with particular reference to planning enforcement.

The report detailed the background and noted that the Environment Portfolio Holder had brought the matter before Cabinet on 29 October 2001 to review the position of two frozen posts within the Development Control Unit. The Cabinet decision had been called in and considered by the Environment and Housing Review Panel

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on 21 November 2001. As a result, the Panel had broadly accepted the decision to fill the posts subject to conditions and further scrutiny after six months.

Members noted that, in particular, there had been problems with recruitment and that the unit had only been brought up to its agreed strength at the end of July 2002 and that interim working arrangements had to be employed during the interviewing period. They also noted that the financial savings accruing from the frozen Enforcement Officer post would continue to the benefit of the overall cost of the Development Control service.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) the vacant scale 5 Enforcement Officer post continues to be frozen, but retained on the Development Control's Unit establishment;
- (2) the position be kept under review by the Service Head, such that any future adverse consequences are brought to the attention of the Members;

15. **BEST VALUE REVIEWS - UPDATED REVIEW MANUAL**

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive informing Members of the new Best Value Review Toolkit, which was available to all Members and Officers involved or interested in Best Value.

Members noted that the booklet had: -

- been renamed – “Improving Services - Best Value Toolkit”.
- reduced in size and content.
- introduced guidance - aimed at the new political arrangements and updated legislation.

RESOLVED that Improving Services - Best Value Toolkit be distributed to all those members and Officers involved or interested in Best Value Reviews.

16. **BEST VALUE REVIEWS**

(a) **Nominations and Timetabling of Best Value Reviews 2002/03.**

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Chief Executive updating Members on the programme of the Best Value Reviews for 2002/03 and to finalise the nomination for membership of each Best Value Review Group.

The report detailed the background noting in particular, that:-

- (i) there were three reviews planned during 2002/2003 -
 - (a) Revenues and Benefits
 - (b) Refuse Collection, Recycling and Street Cleaning
 - (c) Sustainability (cross cutting review examining conservation, Health promotion, environmental improvement and Energy conservation).
- (ii) each Best Value Group would consist of four Members plus relevant officers - Head of Service under Review, Best Value Officer and Democratic Services Officer.
- (iii) the four Members would be politically balanced with two Members from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and two other Members of the Council, which would be finalised as soon as possible.

Members noted that there were various events which had a significant impact on the start dates and consequently the completion dates for each review, especially as the Best Value Performance Plan reporting date requirements had been changed from March to June.

The Committee noted that the requirement for authorities to review all their functions in a five-year cycle had been revoked in Statutory Instrument 305/2002, to enable authorities to focus on reviews in the light of local priorities and to take a proportionate approach in the context of weaknesses and opportunities for improvement.

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) the Best Value of Refuse Collection, Recycling and Street Cleansing be commenced on 10 October 2002 at 5.00 p.m.

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- (2) the Best Value reviews of Revenues and Benefits be delayed until February 2003, once the vacant posts of Director of Resources and Head of Financial Services had been filled.
- (3) Sustainability issues be examined within each review, using the generic questions issued by SOLACE, rather than as a separate cross cutting review.
- (4) the deadlines for each review report be extended past the end of the financial year.
- (5) Membership of the Best Value Groups be finalised.

(b) **Feedback from Parish Councillors on Independent External Scrutiny on Best Value Reviews**

Members noted that only three replies had been received to date and that two names had been put forward.

RESOLVED that the Assistant Chief Executive write another letter to Parish Councils asking them to put forward an appropriate name, who may not be a Member of the Parish Council, to be an Independent External Member on the District Council's Best Value Reviews.

(c) **Final Report from the Best Value Inspectors of the Review on Information and Communications Technology - Audit Commission September 2002**

The Committee received the report on the Best Value Review of Information and Communication from the Audit Commission and noted that the final assessment was recorded as a 'Fair Service that has promising prospects for improvement'.

Members noted that the Improvement Plan had already been revisited with reference to the actions and time scales and would now be taken forward.

17. **PROGRESS BETWEEN MEETINGS**

The Committee noted the contents of letter which had been sent to Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee by the Assistant Chief Executive, on behalf of the Chairman, which detailed the work which had been carried out and was ongoing since the last meeting and gave a brief summary of the comments he had received.

18. **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chairman identified a number of issues that could be possible topics for future consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- the relationship between the Joint Staff Consultative Group and the Personnel Committee
- the Council's Constitution
- how items are placed under Part II
- performance of the Police at local level

19. **FUTURE MEETING**

RESOLVED that the next two meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be held on:
- Monday 9 December 2002 - when the budget would be discussed
- Monday 10 March 2003
both at 5.30 p.m.

20. **TERMINATION OF MEETING**

The meeting having commenced at 5.30 p.m. terminated at 6.37 p.m.