

PRINCIPAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 February 2006

Attendance:

Councillors:

Allgood (Chairman) (P)

Beckett (P)
Bidgood (P)
Cook (P)
Clohosey (P)
Chamberlain (P)

Davies (P)
Lipscomb
Mitchell (P)
Stallard (P)
Steel

Deputy Members:

Councillor Bennetts (Standing Deputy for Councillor Steel)

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillor Hammerton

812. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Lipscomb, Steel and Deputy Member Councillor Hollingbery.

813. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman reported on the progress of the Scrutiny Capacity Building Programme as managed by South East Employers. He advised that a DVD had been produced to assist in raising the profile of overview and scrutiny and that a framework of performance indicators for scrutiny had also been devised. The Chairman proposed that an informal meeting be arranged to discuss how these could be meaningfully used by the Council.

814. **MINUTES**

The Chief Executive advised that Cabinet had acknowledged the Committee's discussion of the Communication Strategy (Report PS201 refers) and concern that production of an on-line newsletter for Parish Councils be progressed as soon as possible. He reported that the first edition was due later this month.

It was also confirmed that following the Committee's consideration of the Corporate Strategy 2006/09 (Report CAB1185 refers), Cabinet had noted the Committee's comments regarding reductions in public transport subsidy. However, Cabinet considered that with regard to bus services funded by the County Council, no word changes should be made to the City Council's own Strategy.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meetings of the Committee held on 16 January 2006 be approved and adopted (less exempt minutes).

815. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no questions asked or statements made.

816. **HAMPSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE – PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE**

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr House, Deputy Chief Fire Officer (Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service).

Mr House outlined to the Committee the proposals for changes to the delivery of the Fire and Rescue service across the district.

Mr House explained that Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service was statutorily required by Government to produce a three year Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), itself reviewed annually and produced in consultation with staff, stakeholder groups and the public. The plan sets out how the service was to be delivered County-wide and was reflective of changes following corporate planning linked in with the management of risk. In summary, the service was now delivered with a greater emphasis on preventative measures (such as advice giving), and enforcement. Mr House suggested that this more modern approach had removed some of the more prescriptive standards that had been in place since the Second World War. These had generally not been reflective of demographic and social changes since this time.

Response targets were now more focused with associated risks and the standard was to respond to 80 % of incidents within eight minutes. In summary, the IRMP had looked to review the location of station staff and equipment in Hampshire to maintain these standards as well as to efficiently and effectively manage risk.

Mr House explained specific changes to the delivery of the service throughout Hampshire and answered a number of questions:

- The Waterlooville station had, until recently, been totally staffed by part time retained officers. However, in recent years, some full time staff had been based here mainly due to an increase in incidents caused by anti social behaviour. These officers had been tasked to drive down the call rate proactively by an education programme in schools and identify potential risk sites. Following some success of community based initiatives, the IRMP had concluded that the Station could revert back to operating with part time retained staff, although two full time officers would remain initially to continue the successful community work. Mr House explained that the current 'full time' crew basis was 9am – 6pm Monday to Friday with part time retained staff on call outside of these hours. Therefore, in conclusion, the changes proposed to revert to permanent part-time crewing by retained officers would result in minimal changes to response times (one to two minutes. Mr House confirmed that there were sufficient personnel at Waterlooville to crew two appliances.
- Over the long-term the service would also continue to develop, in partnership, objectives to establish community wardens to include a wider remit of fire prevention. A pilot was proposed for Waterlooville.

- Mr House advised that the IRMP was under constant review and, for example, should an alarming rise in calls be observed in a particular area, this would be resourced appropriately. Furthermore, any proposed changes following reviews were statutorily required to have a 12 week consultation period with stakeholders (including the Council) and residents. Councils could also raise any suggestions that they may have with the Service at any time.
- Responding to a question, Mr House explained that North Walls Fire Station in Winchester was currently staffed by part-time retained staff. A proposal had been discussed for the possibility to make the station 'full-time' through shift working. Furthermore, the vehicle and equipment workshop at outdated facilities in Winnall may be moved to the Service's headquarters at Eastleigh. In this event, the Winnall site could provide a replacement fire station for Winchester which would be at a better geographic location and which would be suitable for full-time crewing.
- It was confirmed that the Service takes into account all road closures etc and deals with these as appropriate so as to lessen any negative impact upon response times.
- Mr House explained that the staffing of a station by part time staff had minimal impact overall upon response time.
- Following a question regarding the proposals for a major development of up to 3,000 homes close to Waterlooville, Mr House reminded Members that the IRMP was under constant review and that this would take account of changes as they happened. He also reported that emergency appliances could move fairly quickly through areas gridlocked by traffic.
- Mr House confirmed that the proposals did not include rationalisation of staff, rather for a redeployment of resources to ensure management of risk and delivery of corporate objectives to residents.
- Mr House advised that Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service was currently not under any specific budgetary pressure from Government and as a precepting authority, it operated under the usual budget constraints of a public body.

In conclusion of the discussion, the Chairman thanked Mr House for his attendance.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the presentation be noted.

817. BUDGET MONITORING OVERVIEW TO DECEMBER 2005
(Report CAB1173 refers)

The City Secretary and Solicitor reported that Cabinet had previously considered this report at its meeting on 7 February 2006 and had agreed to the recommendations as set out.

The Director of Finance reported that there was an error in the report. The start of the second sentence of paragraph 3.2 on page 2 should be amended as follows:

'To the end of October...' should read, '*To the end of December...*'

Responding to a question, the Director advised that any underspend on the revenue budget would automatically go to Reserves, although there was a process for Directors to seek approval for a carry forward where necessary. Approvals were linked to specific projects or work programmes.

RESOLVED:

That the current position for the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme for 2005/06 be noted.

818. **ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION POLICY**
(Report ST48 refers)

The Committee noted that this report had been included in error on the agenda and was scheduled for consideration at the meeting to be held on 27 March 2006. The Report had been considered by the Standards Committee at its meeting on 6 February 2006 and their detailed comments would be included in the next report.

RESOLVED:

That the report be withdrawn from the agenda for the reasons given above.

819. **POLICY AND PERFORMANCE DIVISION BUSINESS PLANS**
(Report PS212 refers)

Responding to questions, the Chief Executive confirmed that the 'Who's Accountable?' column in the draft Policy Business Plan (as set out as Appendix 1 to the report) was to be completed in due course.

Following discussion, Members requested that there should be improvements to clarity in some explanations given in the document. Corrections were made to the target date (July 2006) for the update to the Procurement Strategy and 'Selling the Council' Guide.

Members referred to the key service priority to create a greater awareness of the role and work of partnerships. The Chief Executive suggested that proposals to formalise the reporting of their work to Cabinet would assist with this.

The Committee also agreed that Members should be given further feedback following the successful initiatives regarding youth democracy.

The Committee referred to the draft Performance Business Plan, as set out as Appendix 2 to the report. The Chief Executive clarified that the CPA process was still ongoing and that some new elements to the assessment had been added. Members were also reminded of the successful partnership working examples of the Council regarding the Internal Audit Manager and the Procurement Officer.

Members referred to the Council's complaints procedures and it was suggested that the Chief Executive investigate whether having a Councillor as a 'complaints champion' may add value and be of potential benefit to residents. The Chief Executive pointed out that the public had the opportunity to ask Members to become involved in different roles e.g. Ward Councillor, Portfolio Holder or Scrutiny Chairman. The current arrangements were flexible and worked well.

RESOLVED:

1. That the content of the draft Policy and Performance Business Plans, be noted and the following comments be considered in the preparation of the final text:

a) That Members be regularly updated with the progress of the Local Strategic Partnership, and other partnerships.

b) That Members be kept updated with the revisions to the CPA process and of any other imminent external inspection of the Council.

820. **MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANELS**

The Committee considered the minutes of the following meetings:

- (i) Environment Scrutiny Panel held 25 January 2006
(Report PS218 refers)
- (ii) Local Economy Scrutiny Panel held 26 January 2006
(Report PS219 refers)
- (iii) Social Issues Scrutiny Panel held 30 January 2006
(Report PS220 refers)
- (iv) Resources Scrutiny Panel held 31 January 2006
(Report PS221 refers)

The City Secretary and Solicitor advised that the minutes of the above Scrutiny Panels were also to be considered at the meeting of Cabinet on 1 March 2006.

During consideration of the minutes of the Environment Scrutiny Panel, Members supported the recommendations of the Open Space Funds Informal Scrutiny Group and recommended their endorsement by Cabinet. The Chairman suggested that the report be featured as a press release as soon as practicable.

During consideration of the minutes of the Social Issues Scrutiny Panel, Members also supported the recommendations of the Community Safety Informal Scrutiny Group and recommended their endorsement by Cabinet.

The Committee also approved the establishment by the Resources Scrutiny Panel of an Informal Scrutiny Group to investigate the operation of the Council's Benefits service.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Environment Scrutiny Panel held 25 January 2006, Local Economy Scrutiny Panel held 26 January 2006, Social Issues Scrutiny Panel held 30 January 2006 and Resources Scrutiny Panel held 31 January 2006, be received and recommendations therein endorsed.

821. **CONSIDERATION OF ITEMS UNDER THE COMMITTEE'S POWERS OF CALL-IN**

(i) **DISPOSAL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) LAND: DRAYTON STREET (INCLUDING PROPERTIES 2 & 4 DRAYTON STREET), STANMORE, WINCHESTER (LESS EXEMPT APPENDIX 2)**

(Report CAB1190 refers)

The Committee noted that Cabinet had approved the proposals as set out at its meeting on 18 January 2006.

In respect of this item, Councillor Davies declared a personal and prejudicial interest as he was a member of the board of the Winchester Housing Group who was the Registered Social Landlord involved in the proposal under consideration. He left the room during consideration of the item.

The Director of Communities confirmed that the site was to be transferred on condition that it be utilised for affordable housing provision in perpetuity, subject to the right to staircase to 100% ownership for the three shared ownership properties.

RESOLVED:

That the decision of the meeting of Cabinet held on 7 February 2006 to approve the disposal of the area of land at Drayton Street including the properties 2 & 4 Drayton Street, Stanmore, Winchester, to Winchester Housing Group Limited at a nominal consideration, be not called in for review.

(ii) **DISPOSAL OF HRA LAND: WESLEY ROAD, KINGSWORTHY (LESS EXEMPT APPENDIX 2)**

(Report CAB1199 refers)

The Committee noted that Cabinet had approved the proposals as set out at its meeting on 7 February 2006.

The Director of Communities explained to a Member that the 'unsold' proportion of the capital receipt of the shared equity property was retained by the Housing association, generally, in perpetuity. The City Secretary and Solicitor confirmed that there were instances when the ODPM General Consent required that the tenant be allowed to staircase to 100% of the equity and acquire the freehold. This applied in areas of population greater than 3000. It would affect 2 shared ownership properties in his scheme. It was agreed that this information be included in any future reports with similar proposals.

RESOLVED:

That the decision of the meeting of Cabinet held on 7 February 2006 to approve the disposal of the area of land at Wesley Road, Kings Worthy, to Hyde Housing Association Ltd at a nominal consideration, be not called in for review.

(iii) **DISPOSAL OF HRA LAND: GARAGE COURT, HARWOOD PLACE, KINGS WORTHY (LESS EXEMPT APPENDIX 2)**
(Report CAB1198 refers)

The Committee noted that Cabinet had approved the proposals as set out at its meeting on 7 February 2006.

The Director of Communities confirmed that those tenants of garages to be displaced by the transfer had been found alternative accommodation for their vehicles within the vicinity. The right to staircase to 100% ownership would apply to the two shared ownership properties.

RESOLVED:

That the decision of the meeting of Cabinet held on 7 February 2006 to approve the disposal the area of land at Harwood Place, Kings Worthy, to Hyde Housing Association Limited at a nominal consideration, be not called in for review.

(iv) **PLANNING CONTROL – REQUEST FOR SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE**
(Report CAB1208 refers)

The Committee noted that Cabinet had approved the proposals as set out at its meeting on 7 February 2006.

Following discussion, the Director of Development and Director of Finance suggested that officers would investigate any trends over the last few years (following the cessation of contributions to the planning legal costs reserve) and report back to Cabinet as to whether there was any need for a fixed sum in the annual budget. However, the Committee acknowledged that most instances of costs awarded against the Council remained rare and generally unforeseen.

RESOLVED:

That the decision of the meeting of Cabinet held on 7 February 2006 to approve a supplementary estimate of £94,144 to cover the additional costs incurred by the Planning Division, be not called in for review

(v) **DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT ESTABLISHMENT CHANGES – SUPPLEMENTARY CHANGES**
(Report CAB1212 refers)

The Committee noted that Cabinet had approved the proposals as set out at its meeting on 7 February 2006.

As part of their consideration of the proposals, Members referred to exempt report PER98 – Development Department Establishment Changes. Further details of these discussions are included in the exempt minute.

RESOLVED:

That the decision of the meeting of Cabinet held on 7 February 2006 to approve a supplementary estimate of £94,000 to meet the one-off costs of redundancy and early retirement identified in exempt report PER98, be not called in for review.

822. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (REPORT PS216 REFERS), FEBRUARY 2006 FORWARD PLAN AND ITEMS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION**

The Chairman suggested that Members consider matters to be included in the 2006/07 Scrutiny Work Programme so that the Committee could consider any suggestions made at its next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Work Programme and Forward Plan for February 2006 be noted.

823. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

RESOLVED:

That the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business because it is likely that, if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

<u>Minute Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Description of Exempt Information</u>
824	Disposal Of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Land: Drayton Street (Including Properties 2 & 4 Drayton Street), Stanmore, Winchester (Exempt Appendix 2)	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (other than the authority). (Para 7 to Schedule 12A refers). Any terms proposed or to be proposed by or to the authority in the course of negotiations for a contract for the acquisition or disposal of property or the supply of goods or services. (Para 9 to Schedule 12A refers).
824	Disposal Of HRA Land: Wesley Road, Kingsworthy (Exempt Appendix 2)	Any instructions to counsel and any opinion of counsel (whether or not in connection with any proceedings) and any advice received, information obtained or
824	Disposal Of HRA Land: Garage Court, Harwood Place, Kingsworthy (Exempt Appendix 2)	
825	Exempt Minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 January 2006	
	• 80-82 Sussex Street, Winchester	

- Silver Hill) action to be taken in
 Development) connection with:-
 Landowner's) (a) any legal
 Approval) proceedings by or
 (Report) against the authority, or
 CAB1179,) (b) the determination
 Exempt) of any matter affecting
 Appendix 3) the authority,
) (whether, in either case,
) proceedings have been
) commenced or are in
) contemplation).
) (Para 12 to Schedule
) 12A refers).

- 826 Development) Information relating to a
 Directorate) particular employee,
 Establishment) former employee or
 Changes) applicant to become an
) employee of, or a
) particular office-holder,
) former office-holder or
) applicant to become an
) office-holder under the
) authority. (Para 1 to
) Schedule 12A refers).
)
) Information relating to
) any consultations or
) negotiations, or
) contemplated
) consultations or
) negotiations, in
) connection with any
) labour relations matter
) arising between the
) authority or a Minister
) of the Crown and
) employees of, or office-
) holders under, the
) authority. (Para 11 to
) Schedule 12A refers).

824. **CONSIDERATION OF ITEMS UNDER THE COMMITTEE'S POWERS OF CALL-IN**

- (i) **DISPOSAL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) LAND: DRAYTON STREET (INCLUDING PROPERTIES 2 & 4 DRAYTON STREET), STANMORE, WINCHESTER (LESS EXEMPT APPENDIX 2)**
 (Report CAB1190 refers)

Members noted the information contained within the Exempt Appendix which set out the financial details of the proposed disposal of land.

RESOLVED:

That the information contained in Exempt Appendix 2 to the Report be noted.

- (ii) **DISPOSAL OF HRA LAND: WESLEY ROAD, KINGS WORTHY (LESS EXEMPT APPENDIX 2)**
(Report CAB1199 refers)

Members noted the information contained within the Exempt Appendix which set out the financial details of the proposed disposal of land.

RESOLVED:

That the information contained in Exempt Appendix 2 to the Report be noted.

- (iii) **DISPOSAL OF HRA LAND: GARAGE COURT, HARWOOD PLACE, KINGS WORTHY (LESS EXEMPT APPENDIX 2)**
(Report CAB1198 refers)

Members noted the information contained within the Exempt Appendix which set out the financial details of the proposed disposal of land.

RESOLVED:

That the information contained in Exempt Appendix 2 to the Report be noted.

- (iv) **DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT ESTABLISHMENT CHANGES – SUPPLEMENTARY CHANGES**
(Report CAB1212 refers)

The Committee noted that Cabinet had approved the proposals as set out at its meeting on 7 February 2006.

As part of their consideration of the proposals, Members referred to exempt Report PER98 – Development Department Establishment Changes that set out proposed changes to the establishment within the Development Directorate (detail in exempt minute).

825. **EXEMPT MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the exempt minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 January 2006 be approved and adopted

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.45pm.