

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

23rd February, 2005

Members Present:-
Councillor Clifford
Councillor Mrs Johnson
Councillor Mutton
Councillor Patton
Councillor Ridge (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Sawdon (Chair)

Cabinet Members Present:-
Councillor Matchet (Cabinet Member (Health and Housing))
Councillor Ridley (Cabinet Member (Corporate and Customer Services))

Employees Present:-
S. Bennett (Legal and Democratic Services Directorate)
J. Bolton (Director of Social Services and Housing)
C. Edwards (City Development Directorate)
A. Howitt (City Development Directorate)
J. McGuigan (Director of City Development)
S. Rudge (Social Services and Housing Directorate)
M. Sockett (City Services Directorate)
C. Steele (Legal and Democratic Services Directorate)

115. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd February, 2005, were signed as a true record.

The Committee clarified that the reference in Minute 103 to "capital loan repayment costs" related to the repayment costs associated with the loan taken out by the City Council when they entered into partnership with No Ordinary Hotel (Minute 123/04 below also refers).

116. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the item of business indicated below on the grounds that that item involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of that Act, in particular those paragraphs of Part I of that Schedule as indicated:-

Minute No.	Subject	Relevant Paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A
123	Coombe Abbey – Income/Expenditure at the Park	7 and 9

117. **The Future of the Council's Housing List**

Further to Minute 84, the Committee considered a report of the Head of Housing Policy and Services which had previously been considered by the Cabinet (their Minute 138/04 refers) and which had been called in by Councillors Clifford, Harrison and Mulhall and by Councillors Nellist, McKay and Mrs. Stone.

The report sought "in principle" agreement to the proposal that the Council no longer maintained a housing register and explored in depth with the Housing Associations in the City alternative ways for achieving that, with a report to be submitted in the Summer of 2005 following detailed investigations and negotiations. The report indicated that from the service user perspective, the current arrangements were poor and were expensive for the City Council. Change would allow development of service areas that were weak and should result in savings in both the medium and long term.

Members questioned the officers and Cabinet Members extensively on the proposals and raised the following areas of concern:-

- The issue regarding eligibility for those in debt – to be negotiated with Housing Associations to ensure flexibility. Welfare/debt advisors to be consulted as part of the process.
- Where the administrative premises should be located to be further investigated.
- The need for the introduction of a simple mechanism for Councillors to get deemed consent to enable them to deal with constituents' problems.
- The issue of who would administer the scheme.
- The need for trust and integrity.

The Cabinet Member undertook to take into account the issues raised above during the negotiations with the Housing Associations.

RESOLVED that in light of the above, the Committee concur with the decision of the Cabinet.

118. **Call-Ins – Stage 1**

The Committee noted that no call-ins had been received this week.

119. **Petition – Footway Between 215 and 315 Lentons Lane**

Further to Minute 88/04, Councillor Foster, Cabinet Member (City Services) attended the meeting and discussed the issues of scheme prioritisation and schemes included in the Highways Maintenance Programme for a particular year but then not carried out.

The Committee noted that the Annual Highway Maintenance Programme, which would be considered by Cabinet in March 2005, would be transparent regarding why schemes had been chosen to be in the Programme and would give clear reasons if a

scheme which had been identified for inclusion in the Programme did not take place. The Committee also noted that a new Highway Asset Management Plan was likely to be available in 12 months time and that this would also help the situation.

The Cabinet Member acknowledged the Committee's concerns regarding schemes that were identified in the Programme to be carried out during a particular year and which then did not take place and the difficulties that then exist trying to explain this to constituents. The Cabinet Member indicated that such schemes which slipped were likely to be a priority for the next year's Programme. He also indicated that where a scheme did not take place in the expected year, then the reasons for this should be reported to the relevant Ward Councillors, Cabinet Member and Shadow Cabinet Member.

120. **Members Broadband**

Councillor Ridley, Cabinet Member (Corporate and Customer Services) attended the meeting and indicated that he would be considering a report at his meeting on 10th March, 2005, relating to "Empowering Members Project and Broadband Connection".

Councillor Patton requested that he be provided with information regarding how many Councillors and officers currently have Broadband and Councillor Ridley undertook to provide this information to Councillor Patton.

The Committee outlined a number of problems experienced by themselves and other members regarding this issue and Councillor Ridley indicated that he would take these issues on board.

121. **Review Topics – Coventry Transport Museum**

Further to Minute 82/04, the Committee considered a report which had been considered by the former Resources and Social Justice Policy Co-ordinating Committee on 25th October, 1995 relating to the "Future for the Museum of British Road Transport". The Committee noted that it had not been possible to locate other reports relating to this issue.

The Committee registered their concern and dissatisfaction that there had not been a coherent strategy in place to deal with asbestos and questioned the Director of City Development on lessons to be learnt from the difficulties experienced at the Transport Museum and how those lessons would ensure that future projects did not experience the same difficulties.

The Committee also gave consideration to potential difficulties resulting from a cocktail of funding being provided to finance such projects and noted that there were management processes and tool kits now in place to deal with such issues.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Committee register their concern and dissatisfaction that there had not been a coherent strategy in place to deal with asbestos at the Coventry Transport Museum.
- (2) That a comparison be provided between what went wrong with the Transport Museum and how things were being done differently with the

Belgrade and Swanswell projects and that this report be considered by the Committee within two months.

122. Outstanding Issues

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services that identified those issues on which further reports had been requested in order that Members could monitor progress.

RESOLVED that a briefing note regarding the understated kilometres referred to in the Highway Maintenance Strategy be considered on 9th March, in conjunction with the call-in relating to that item.

123. Timing of Future Meetings

RESOLVED that future meetings of the Committee commence at 1.00 p.m. instead of 1.15 p.m. except for the meeting on 23rd March, 2005, which will commence at 12.30 p.m.

124. Coombe Abbey – Income/Expenditure at the Park

Further to Minute 103/04, the Committee considered a report of the Director of City Development which provided details on expenditure for each of the budget headings in City Development with regard to Coombe Abbey Country Park.

The Committee questioned the employees on aspects of the report, particularly in relation to the shop at the Country Park, field hire charges and grounds maintenance. The Committee also gave consideration to the outstanding information requested in relation to the capital loan repayment costs (Minute 115/04 above also refers).

RESOLVED that the Director of City Development be requested to circulate a briefing note to all members of the Committee on the capital loan repayment costs associated with the loan taken out by the City Council when they went into partnership with No Ordinary Hotel.