

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

16th November, 2005

Members Present:- Councillor Clifford (Substitute for Councillor Duggins)
Councillor Mrs. Dixon
Councillor Mrs. Lacy (Substitute for Councillor Patton)
Councillor Lee (Substitute for Councillor Williams)
Councillor Ridge
Councillor Sawdon

Other Scrutiny Board
Members Present:- Councillor Gazey
Councillor Mrs. Harper
Councillor Nellist

Employees Present:- D. Elliott (City Development Directorate)
A. French (Finance and ICT Directorate)
C. Hinde (Director of Legal and Democratic Services)
J. McGuigan (Director of City Development)
J. Stanway (Community Services Directorate)
C. Steele (Legal and Democratic Services Directorate)
A. Townsend (Legal and Democratic Services Directorate)

Apologies:- Councillor Duggins
Councillor Field
Councillor Patton
Councillor Williams

113. 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 part of the item of business contained in Minute 115/05 below relating to "Swanswell Initiative – Land Disposal to City College" on the grounds that the item involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of that Act, in particular Paragraphs 7 and 9 of that Schedule.

114. Call-Ins Stage 1

The Committee noted that no Cabinet/Cabinet Member meetings had been held during the previous week and that there were, therefore, no decisions open to call-in.

115. Swanswell Initiative – Land Disposal to City College

Further to Minute 111/05, the Committee received an update on the plans to ensure that the tenants of Cygnet and Orwell Courts, which will be affected by the Swanswell initiative, are adequately rehoused in the area, if they wish to stay there, and that their properties are replaced before they are moved to vacate their existing properties. The Committee noted that the City Development Directorate were working closely with colleagues in Housing, Orbit Housing (the landlord of the affected properties), Whitefriars

and other social landlords to secure suitable housing for the displaced tenants, whether this be existing or new build. The Committee emphasised that they wished to ensure that the housing was suitable and that it was made available before the tenants' properties are demolished; they felt that where residents wished to relocate together within the area then this should be supported.

The Officers explained that Orbit Housing and the City Council were in the process of consulting with individual tenants to assess their needs/wants and to develop individual solutions, Orbit Housing were offering occupants the opportunity to take up vacant accommodation in the area if they wished to. Members were concerned that this was not in the spirit of the agreement made at the Council meeting on 1st November, 2005, and were concerned that tenants, who may be vulnerable, may accept unsuitable accommodation in the belief that they may otherwise become homeless. Members suggested that, as well as the one to one consultation that was taking place it might be appropriate to meet with tenants as a group, or offer the use of advisors/community advocates and/or ward councillors to help establish both individual and collective requirements. Members requested that the Officers provide a short report to the meeting on 14th December, 2005, outlining the outcome of the consultation process to date.

The Officers indicated that they were working with colleagues in the Housing Department to establish the feasibility of five sites in and around the area which had been identified as potential locations for dedicated new build replacement accommodation. Officers emphasised the need to undertake the feasibility work before discussing the potential site with the affected tenants in order to ensure that the proposals were realistic and the tenants were not given false hope. Members emphasised the need to balance this against the need to ensure that the tenants were aware of all options so that they had the full picture when making decisions on housing association offers. The Committee requested that the Officers submit a short report on the progress with the feasibility study to the meeting on 30th November, 2005.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Officers be requested to submit an update on the feasibility study for the five sites identified as potential locations for dedicated new build to the meeting of this Committee on 30th November, 2005.**
- (2) That the officers be requested to provide a short progress report on the consultation process with tenants for the meeting of this Committee on 14th December, 2005.**

116. Electronic Document Management System

Further to Minute 32/05 the Committee considered a report of the Director of Finance and ICT that sought approval for the proposed record management policy for the City Council and associated organisational framework together with a proposed approach for implementing a corporate electronic data record management solution. The report responded to the recommendations made by this Committee as part of the review of the Museum of British Road Transport which requested Officers to examine current practices relating to the permanent retention of documents (including survey reports and particularly legal documents) connected with key projects, with a view to revising them to ensure that such documents are retained permanently.

The Officer briefly explained that the proposed policy would make it easier to locate information, this was increasingly important due to the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts as well as saving space. The Committee noted that three electronic document management initiatives were currently taking place in Housing Benefit and Local Tax, which had enabled the vacation of a complete floor of Spire House; Planning where 35 metre square of floor space had been released and Human Resources, where 56.5 metre square of floor space had been released. The Officer confirmed that files stored in electronic formats would be backed up with copies held off site.

The Committee went on to consider the funding for the initiative, £0.7m had been allocated to the project in the Coventry Direct Capital Budget which had been approved by Cabinet in February 2005. There was some concern that this level of funding may not be sufficient, particularly when considered against previous costs to introduce an electronic document management system to Housing Benefit. The Officer explained that it was hoped that implementation costs would be reduced as the team that had worked to introduce the scheme to Housing Benefit had now transferred to Customer and Business Services, the use of an in-house team was cheaper than engaging external support. Work was under way to look at the most cost effective way of scanning/back scanning, once this work was completed a further report would be drafted. The officer acknowledged that it may not be possible to achieve back scanning ambitions within the £0.7m budget. The Committee suggested that the Cabinet may wish to consider allocating a contingency budget to the project.

The Committee questioned the officer on aspects of the report, in particular space savings associated with the initiative, the potential to delete files and associated audit trails. The Committee briefly considered the potential for space saving and recommended that the Cabinet consider initiating an exercise to identify potential savings associated with the proposals.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee recommend to Cabinet:-

- (1) That consideration be given to the allocation of a contingency budget to the project.**
- (2) That consideration be given to initiating an exercise to identify potential savings associated with the proposals.**

117. Outstanding Issues

The Committee noted that all previous outstanding issues have now been discharged.

118. Work Programme 2005/2006

The Committee considered and noted the work programme for the Scrutiny Co-Ordination Committee for the year 2005/2006. It was noted that a response to the Government's consultation paper regarding the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005 was scheduled to come to this Committee at the meeting on 7th December, 2005.

119. **West Midlands Fire Service – Arrangements for Night Time Cover**

Further to Minute 112/05, the Chair tabled a letter received from Mr. R. Holland that detailed response times associated with the five incidents attended in the West Midlands by appliances from Warwickshire. Members were concerned that on two occasions precise times were not available as the appliances had not booked in their attendance on arrival.

RESOLVED that Officers be requested to write to the Fire Service highlighting the importance of time recording so that decisions may be made on evidence rather than hearsay.