

sc220206

**SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE****22nd February, 2006**

- Members Present:- Councillor Clifford (Substitute for Councillor Patton)  
Councillor Mrs. Dixon  
Councillor Duggins  
Councillor Field  
Councillor Mutton  
Councillor Ridge  
Councillor Sawdon (Chair)  
Councillor Williams
- Cabinet Members Present:- Councillor Arrowsmith (Cabinet Member (Urban Regeneration and Regional Planning))  
Councillor Matchet (Cabinet Member (Health and Housing))
- Other Members Present:- Councillor Charley  
Councillor Gazey  
Councillor Mrs. Griffin  
Councillor Mrs. Johnson  
Councillor Nellist
- By Invitation:- H. Farrand (Whitefriars Housing Group)  
I. Ketner (Whitefriars Housing Group)
- Employees Present:- C. Hinde (Director of Legal and Democratic Services)  
R. Hughes (Head of Corporate Policy)  
S. Rudge (Community Services Directorate)  
C. Steele (Chief Executive's Directorate)  
A. Townsend (Legal and Democratic Services Directorate)
- Apologies:- Councillor Patton

**195. Call-ins (Stage 1)**

The Committee noted that no call-ins had been received yet this week. The deadlines for call-ins for Cabinet and Cabinet Member decisions made during the week commencing 13th February, 2006, was 9.00 a.m. on Friday, 24th February 2006. Any call-ins received after this meeting and before the deadline would be considered for validity by the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee in consultation with the Director of Legal and Democratic Services (Paragraph 5.4.5.25.4 of the City Council's Constitution refers).

**196. DRAFT Children and Young Peoples' Plan**

Further to Minute 172/05, the Committee noted that Scrutiny Board 2 (Children's Services, Supported Community Services and Health and Housing) had considered the above report which had been called in by Councillors Gazey, Mrs. Harper and

Mrs. Williams, at their meeting on 2nd February 2006 (their Minute 82/05 refers) and had resolved to concur with the decision of the Cabinet.

#### 197. **Consultation Paper on Planning Gain Supplement**

Further to minute 183/05, the Committee considered a report of the Director of City Development which had previously been considered by the Cabinet (their Minute 207/05 refers) and was the subject of two call-ins, the first by Councillors Gazey, Mrs. Griffin and Mrs. Maskell, and a second by Councillors Mutton, Duggins and Batten. The validity of the second call-in had been confirmed by the Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee in consultation with the Director of Legal and Democratic Services (Paragraph 5.4.5.25.4 of the City Council's Constitution refers).

The report responded to a joint consultation published by H.M. Treasury and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister relating to changes to the planning system aimed at ensuring that developers meet the costs of providing infrastructure necessary to serve their development and how Local Authorities manage the process of change, in particular, proposals for a tariff approach towards infrastructures contributions. The report recommended that Cabinet indicate in the consultation response that they do not support the proposals outlined and that they believed they would not meet the intended objectives of encouraging development and/or facilitate in provision of infrastructure.

The Cabinet Member briefly explained that the current system of Section 106 Agreements gave the City Council flexibility in how the money was spent and ensured that the funds were used for schemes associated with the development, money paid as the proposed planning gain supplement would go straight to the Treasury and there was no guarantee if/how much of this would come back to the Authority.

The Members calling in the report and the Committee questioned the Cabinet Member and Officer on aspects of the report, in particular, the effect on SMEs, the proposal to hold planning gain supplement funds centrally and the procedure for determining whether Consultation papers were technical in nature. With regard the procedure for determining if a consultation was technical in nature, the Committee noted that a report had been considered by the Standards Committee and was due to be considered by the City Council on 11th April, 2006 which set out an amended procedure for consultation documents. With regard to SMEs, it was noted that the consultation document contained an impact assessment which indicated the SMEs would be consulted with on the proposals, in addition the Cabinet Office had set out a Code of Practice for all Government Consultations which ensured that all interested parties were consulted.

**RESOLVED that the Committee concur with the decision of the Cabinet.**

#### 198. **Whitefriars Housing Group**

The Chair welcomed Howard Farrand and Inge Ketner to the meeting and briefly outlined the issues to be covered; two areas had previously been identified for discussion:-

- The closure of the Whitefriars' local office serving the St. Michaels' Ward.
- Changes in the criteria for inclusion on the Whitefriars' Housing Register.

Howard Farrand briefly explained the process that Whitefriars had been through that had led to the closure of some of the area offices, with regard to the office located in the St. Michaels' Ward, this had been a 'hybrid office' which was technically not open to the public but had informally helped people who had called there. The Whitefriars' Board had taken the decision that the organisation should focus on providing a quality service from a number of strategically placed offices serving the entire city, these were located in Little Park Street, Willenhall, Torrington Avenue and Bell Green, as a result the smaller hybrid offices were eventually closed. The Committee noted that two thirds of the work came into the organisation by telephone and that customers could use any of the offices, for example a Bell Green resident could access services via the City Centre office. After the closure of the St. Michaels' office a surgery system had been established, since January this had seen a total of five users.

Shortly after the rationalisation of the offices had been completed a user survey had taken place which had shown that customers believed the service to be the same or better than it had been prior to the change. The Committee noted that Whitefriars aimed to work in a modern way, meeting relevant quality standards.

The Committee were concerned that they received no advance warning of changes to be made by Whitefriars in their wards, they felt that if they were consulted they would be in the position to foresee potential problems and were able to provide useful input.

Inge Ketner gave a brief background to the changes in the criteria for inclusion on the Whitefriars Housing Register, these stemmed from the organisation's move to charitable status to obtain tax gains. The Committee briefly considered the series of tests which would be applied to new applicants and noted that a study had been carried out over the previous months lettings, which had established that over 90% of applicants met the necessitive circumstances tests to be applied; the Committee noted that the other housing associations that the City Council dealt with had charitable status. In order for Whitefriars to finally achieve charitable status some final approvals were required from the City Council which were currently outstanding, the Director of Legal and Democratic Services reported that a meeting was due to take place this week on this matter and that, from the City Council's point of view, some issues remained outstanding. It was anticipated that a report on this issues would be presented to the meeting of the City Council on 11th April, 2006.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (1) that the Officers be requested to liaise with Whitefriars to develop proposals to disseminate broad policy development as well as ward related proposals to Elected Members of the City Council with a report back to this Committee on 22nd March, 2006.**
- (2) that an update on the progress with the City Council's approvals required for the Whitefriars transfer to charitable status be made to this Committee on 8th March, 2006.**

**199. Report Back on the Work of Outside Bodies – Whitefriars Housing Group**

The Committee considered a report of Councillor Charley which set out details of the work of Whitefriars Housing Group over the previous 12 months and included

attendance records for the City Council representatives at the various boards/committees within the Group.

**RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee recommends that the City Council continue to appoint to Whitefriars Housing Group.**

**200. University Square – Priory Street Access Feasibility**

Further to minute 170/05 The Cabinet Member (Urban Regeneration and Regional Planning) briefly explained that since this Committee has considered a report on the access to University Square for coaches (Minute 87/05 refers) he had requested some additional work be carried out . He had been concerned that the report was asking the City Council to spend money to benefit only the Cathedral rather than the City as a whole and believed that visitors to the Cathedral should be encouraged to visit other attractions within the City.

**RESOLVED that the Officer be requested to attend the meeting on 1st March, 2006, to discuss progress with this issue.**

**201. Outstanding Issues**

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

**202. Work Programme 2005/06**

The Committee considered and noted the work programme of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee for 2005/2006.

The Committee gave consideration to a briefing note which set out additions to the work programme of Scrutiny Boards 2 and 3:-

- RESPECT agenda/action plan (Scrutiny Board 2)
- Commercial Property Portfolio Review – Interim Report (Scrutiny Board 3)

**RESOLVED that the two items outlined above be added to the Work Programme for the Scrutiny Board identified.**