

sc270906

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE**27th September, 2006**

Members Present:-	Councillor Asif Councillor Bains (Substitute for Councillor Patton) Councillor Crookes (Substitute for Councillor Sawdon) Councillor Duggins Councillor Lee Councillor Mutton Councillor Ridge (Chair) Councillor Williams
Co-opted Member Present:-	Councillor Clifford
Cabinet Member Present:-	Councillor Ridley (Cabinet Member (Culture, Leisure and Libraries))
Other Members Present:-	Councillor Mrs. Dixon Councillor M. Noonan Councillor Mrs. Waters
Employees Present:-	A. Davey (Community Services Directorate) D. Elliott (City Development Directorate) C. Hinde (Director of Legal and Democratic Services) R. Hughes (Head of Corporate Policy) J. Stanway (Community Services Directorate) K. Smith (Finance and ICT Directorate) C. Wanley (Finance and ICT Directorate) C. West (Finance and ICT Directorate)
Apologies:-	Councillor Patton Councillor Sawdon

64. Oak Farm Play Area, Binley – Petition

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community Services, which had been previously considered by the Cabinet Member (Culture, Leisure and Libraries) (their Minute 06/06 refers) and had been called in by Councillors Mrs. Dixon, M. Noonan and Mrs. Waters. The validity of the 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 4.5.25.4 of the City Council's Constitution refers).

The report responded to a petition bearing 302 signatures, requesting the City Council to remove the newly constructed play area at Brinklow Road open space (known locally as Oak Farm Play Area) which had been presented to Council on 27th June, 2006, by Councillor Mrs. Dixon. The Cabinet Member explained that he had considered the petition carefully and had taken the decision to retain the play area as a

strategic facility whilst working with other City Council and third party services to address the anti-social behaviour experienced at the site. He highlighted that the City Council were investing in play areas in the city in order to promote play and physical activity amongst children and young people. The Cabinet Member also indicated that he was not convinced that the removal of the play area would stop the anti-social behaviour.

Councillor Mrs. Dixon indicated that a Dispersal Order was in place on this area that was due to expire the following day and would not be renewed. She was concerned that groups of youths from nearby areas, where Dispersal Orders were in place, may drift and congregate at the play area. She suggested that measures should be in place to monitor and police play areas to prevent disaffected youths from using them and so preventing the people they were intended for from using them.

The Committee and Members calling in the decision questioned the Cabinet Member and officer on aspects of the report, in particular proposals to monitor the site, the potential to install CCTV at the site, and the recent introduction of youth facilities in Willenhall and a proposal for similar in Binley which could be used by Oak Farm residents.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Committee concur with the decisions of the Cabinet Member.**
- (2) That the Committee request that the report to the Cabinet Member in six months time on the outcome of the measures taken in dealing with anti-social behaviour at the site also be submitted to this Committee.**

65. Call-In Stage 1

The Chair reported on the following call-in that had been received:-

66. Appointment of External Legal Advisors – Equal Pay Claim

The report had been called in by Councillors Maton, Patton and Skipper.

The reason for the call-in was, "The report is asking for retrospective approval since payment to Eversheds has exceeded £100,000 – to find out why this level of expenditure was not anticipated and so avoid the need for retrospective action and to understand if this expenditure is value for money since the report gives minimal financial information – importantly no idea of the potential savings that could result from having this expertise in place. To understand if appointing in-house staff in anticipation of the requirement for dealing with this situation would have been a more cost effective option."

The Committee noted that the deadline for call-ins for Cabinet and Cabinet Member decisions made during the week commencing 18th September, 2006, was 9.00 a.m. on Friday 29th September, 2006. Any further call-ins received after this meeting and before that 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 4.5.25.4 of the City Council's Constitution refers).

RESOLVED that the call-in detailed above be considered in detail by the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee at their meeting on 1st November, 2006 and that the relevant Cabinet Member be requested to attend.

66. Swanswell Initiative – Cygnet Court and Orwell Court

Further to Minute5/06, the Committee received an update on the plans to ensure that the tenants of Cygnet and Orwell Courts who would be effected by the Swanswell Initiative, were adequately housed in the area and that suitable properties had been secured for them prior to them vacating their existing properties in line with the Council's resolution.

The Committee noted that the Public Local Inquiry for the acquisition of the Cygnet and Orwell Court flats had taken place in July, 2006, the Secretary of State had since approved the Compulsory Purchase Order. Since then work had concentrated on the development of appropriate relocation packages for the tenants of the building. The Committee noted that the Phase 2 construction works of the City College must commence in January, 2007 and noted the situation with the relocation of the residents of the flats. It was further noted that the planning application for the site on the corner of Ragland Street and Canterbury Street had still not been submitted due to a dispute with a student housing scheme on an adjacent site. The officers were confident that this had now been resolved and a planning application would be submitted in the next four days. The flats would be larger and more eco-friendly but unfortunately not available in time for residents to move directly into this facility.

The Committee were pleased that officers and Elected Members had worked well together to resolve the situation with residents without affecting the progress of the learning village although they were disappointed that a planning application had still not been submitted for the replacement building on Ragland Street.

RESOLVED that the Officer be requested to attend the meeting on 11th October, 2006, to provide a further update.

67. Building Schools for the Future: Readiness to Deliver

The Committee considered and noted a joint report that sought approval to the submission of an application for inclusion in Wave 4 of the Building Schools for the Future Programme under which all secondary schools in the City would be refurbished or rebuilt as appropriate. The Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee or his nominee was due to attend the meeting of the Cabinet on 3rd October, 2006, for consideration of this item in order to agree the reason for urgency so that the application could be submitted before the Government deadline and that call-in would not apply.

The Committee questioned the officer on aspects of the report. In particular the funding gap, the process for bringing schemes forward and the potential for Elected Members to become involved in this process, the operation of the PFI schemes, the proposal to delegate authority to approve any changes to the submission to the Director of Children, Learning and Young People and the Cabinet Member (Children, Learning and Young People), the life of the buildings and specification and the change in demographics of the city.

The Committee discussed the reasons for urgency and associated issues and confirmed that they were satisfied with the reason for urgency although they reiterated their concerns that reports to Cabinet and Cabinet Member meetings should be submitted within timescales that would allow the report to go through the full political management process.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Chair or nominee be requested to attend the meeting of Cabinet on 3rd October, 2006 to agree the reasons for urgency and that call-in would not apply.**
- (2) That the Committee recommend that paragraph 2.2 be amended to read "..... to approve any *minor* changes to the submission....."**

68. Review of Serco Contract – Appointment of Task and Finish Group

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Corporate Policy that set out proposals for the establishment of a Task and Finish Group comprised of interested members of Scrutiny to review the Serco IT Contract. The existing Serco contract was due to expire at the end of March, 2009, although there was an option for a two year extension period from April 2009 to April 2011 subject to performance. It was proposed that the Group would review the Serco contract, consider future targets and performance measures and make recommendations to the Cabinet. It was further proposed that Lynda Bonner, IT Manager at the London Borough of Enfield, be invited to take part in the review as an independent external advisor.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That a task and finish group be established to review the Serco IT Contract and that officers be requested to contact the political groups to obtain nominations to the group.**
- (2) That the Scoping Document included as an appendix to the document submitted for review be approved.**
- (3) That the Task and Finish Group be requested to appoint the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Group from within the membership.**

69. Outstanding Issues

The Committee noted that there were currently no outstanding issues.

70. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Work Programme 2006/2007

The Committee considered and noted the Work Programme for 2006/2007 including some amendments advised by the officer.