

**SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE****21st February, 2007**

- Members Present:-  
 Councillor Bains  
 Councillor Crookes (substitute for Councillor Asif)  
 Councillor Duggins  
 Councillor Lee  
 Councillor Mutton  
 Councillor Ridge (Deputy Chair)  
 Councillor Sawdon (Chair)  
 Councillor Williams
- Co-opted Member Present:-  
 Councillor Clifford
- Other Scrutiny Member Present:-  
 Councillor Batten  
 Councillor Maton  
 Councillor Mrs Waters
- Cabinet Members Present:-  
 Councillor Arrowsmith (Cabinet Member (Urban Regeneration and Regional Planning))  
 Councillor Noonan (Cabinet Member (Community Services))  
 Councillor Ridley (Cabinet Member (Culture, Leisure and Libraries))
- Employees Present:-  
 J. Bolton (Director of Community Services)  
 L. Bull (Community Services Directorate)  
 G. Carey (Legal and Democratic Services Directorate)  
 A. Davey (Community Services Directorate)  
 F. Haywood (Community Services Directorate)  
 R. Hughes (Head of Corporate Policy)  
 R. Innes (Community Services Directorate)  
 J. Jardine (Chief Executive's Directorate)  
 S. Rudge (Community Services Directorate)  
 J. Staunton (City Development Directorate)  
 A. Townsend (Legal and Democratic Services Directorate)  
 R. Waterhouse (Community Services Directorate)
- Apologies:-  
 Councillor Asif

**194. Proposed Changes to Car Park Charges**

The Committee considered a joint report which had previously been considered by the Cabinet (their Minute 173/06 refers) and had been called in by Councillors Maton, Batten and Patton. 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 sought approval for revised car parking charges from 1st June, 2007 and set out details of work underway to develop a longer term car parking strategy.

The Members calling in the report and the Committee questioned the Cabinet Member and officer on aspects of the report, in particular, the inflation rate that was quoted within the report in October, 2005 and why the Retail Price Index (RIP) was used rather than the Consumer Price Index (CPI); the formula used to set the car parking charges and in particular whether a model was utilised to assess the impact of those changes; the concerns of CV One regarding the impact of the proposed increases and competition from out of town centres offering free parking; and, the impact of new facilities, for example IKEA, on demand for car parking.

The Cabinet Member indicated that the formula for setting car park charges was historic and based on income targets, he indicated that there would shortly be a wide ranging review of car parking in the City Centre which would include the charging strategy. The Committee noted that in some instances, car parking prices had reduced and that season ticket prices had remained stable. The officer explained how the pricing levels had been set to strike a balance between long-stay and short-stay car parking, CV One had suggested that a City Centre of the size of Coventry should be targeting a three to four hour dwell time and parking levels had been set with this in mind. Charges for season tickets had remained unchanged so as to not adversely affect measures to generate jobs within the City Centre, although it was noted that a balance needed to be found between long-stay car parking and the promotion of the use of public transport.

The Cabinet Member acknowledged that car parking policy was an integral part of the redevelopment of the City Centre and indicated that discussions were ongoing with private operators to replace facilities that had recently been lost to development sites. The Committee were disappointed that the formula for setting car parking charges did not take account of the actual cost to run the car park and so it was not clear whether a surplus or loss was made on the operation. It was agreed that it was important for this information to be made available for the review referred to earlier.

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

195. **Call-ins Stage One**

The Committee noted that no call-ins had been received yet that week. The deadline for call-ins for Cabinet and Cabinet Member decisions made during the week commencing 12th February, 2007, was 9.00 am on Friday 23rd February, 2007. Any 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 5.4.5.25.4) of the City Council's Constitution refers.

196. **Disabled Facilities Grants**

With reference to Minute 106/06, the Committee considered and noted a report of the Director of Community Services that was scheduled to be considered by the Cabinet Member (Community Services) at her meeting on 20th March, 2007. In October, 2006, the Cabinet Member (Community Services) had received a report relating to measures to be put in place to reduce the waiting time for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG); the report had been called in and was subsequently considered by this Committee.

The Committee noted that the wait time for DGF assessment had reduced from 52 weeks in October, 2006, to 36 weeks as at February, 2007. The officers highlighted that every individual on the waiting list had a care package in place and this would continue until any adaptation required was in place.

197. **Response to a Government Consultation Document Entitled "Disabled Facilities Grant Programme: The Government's Proposals to Improve Programme Delivery Consultation"**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community Services that set out a suggested response to a Government consultation document "Disabled Facilities Grant Programme: The Government's Proposals to Improve Programme Delivery", which had been published in January. The deadline for submission of responses was 13th April 2007.

The officers indicated that they were disappointed that the consultation paper did not address the root cause of the problems experienced with DFGs by this Council. The majority of Disabled Facilities Grants were now given to older people experiencing mobility problems, rather than younger families containing a person with disabilities. This had meant that demand had increased hugely, although the funding regimes did not reflect that change. Many of the people to whom disabled facilities grants were awarded lived in properties with considerable equity, the means test that was applied to grants did not reflect this. The officers explained that the need for adaptations would be greatly reduced if all new housing was constructed to 'lifetime homes' standard; this would facilitate easier movement around the property for those with less mobility.

The Committee questioned the Cabinet Member and officer on aspects of the report, in particular, the capping of the level of grant. The officer explained that, as Coventry was a unitary authority, if an assessment exceeded the maximum level of grant, the excess was funded from Social Services budget, therefore the capping of the grant did not affect this organisation. Members requested that the response be amended so that there should be no upper limit on DFGs and costs for the entire assessment should be grant aided.

**RESOLVED that the Committee's comments be forwarded to the Cabinet on their meeting of 6th March, 2007, and Council at their meeting on 20th March, 2007.**

198. **Oak Farm Play Area, Binley**

Further to Minute 64/06, the Committee considered a report of the Director of Community Services that set out the outcome of monitoring that had taken place at the Oak Farm Play Area to assess levels of anti-social behaviour and respond to residents'

concerns. The report was scheduled to be considered by the Cabinet Member (Culture, Leisure and Libraries), at his meeting on 22nd February, 2007.

The Cabinet Member explained that there had been no formal complaints from residents living in the vicinity of the Play Area over the previous six months either through the City Council's Speak Up system or through the Neighbourhood South office; no complaints had been made directly to the Police Service and their patrols had not been required to deal with any crime or anti-social behaviour incidents at the Play Area. The Cabinet Member explained that the prices had been obtained for a CCTV camera to be located close to the Play Area, which had come back at £32,000 for installation, with ongoing costs of £2,000 for monitoring and BT rental charges. The view had been taken that, at the moment, the installation would not be cost effective, particularly given that no anti-social behaviour had been experienced at the site for the previous six months.

The Cabinet Member acknowledged that the weather over the previous six months had not been good and it was possible that behaviour at the Play Area may change over the coming six months when the weather improved. It was also noted that a Dispersal Order, which had covered the site had expired in January, 2007. It was agreed appropriate that the monitoring of the area continue with a further report to the appropriate Scrutiny Board on the results in October, 2007.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the Committee endorse the report.**
- (2) That a further monitoring report be presented to the relevant Scrutiny Board on levels of anti-social behaviour in October, 2007.**

**199. Charging Strategy**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community Services that set out a proposed charging strategy for Culture, Leisure, Libraries and Adult Education, the Strategy was a framework on which charging reviews would be based in 2007. The Audit Commission publication "The Price is Right – Charging for Public Services" recommended that a planned and strategic approach be taken to the setting of fees and charges. Leisure Services were highlighted as a particular area where this approach could achieve significant opportunities to improve services. The strategy sought not to establish whether the price was right for a particular service, but to ensure charges could be used to their full potential to help the service area more closely meet overall Council objectives and priorities.

The Committee questioned the Cabinet Member and officer on aspects of the report, in particular the difference in price between concession and standard level prices, in particular the level of discount applied to concessionary rates which was not consistent. The officer explained that the charge levels referred to in the report were current levels that demonstrated why the strategy needed to be reviewed, a further report on the proposed charges developed using the strategy contained within this report would come forward early in the new Municipal Year.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (1) That the Committee endorse the report.**
- (2) That the report on the proposed pricing structure be considered by the relevant Scrutiny Board in the new Municipal Year.**

**200. Outstanding Issues**

The Committee considered and noted 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.

**201. Work Programme 2006/2007**

The Committee considered and noted the Work Programme for the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee for the 2006/2007 Municipal Year.