

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

23rd April, 2008

Scrutiny Co-ordination
Committee and
Substitute Members

Present:-

Councillor Arrowsmith (Chair)
Councillor Crookes (Substitute for Councillor Ms. Hunter)
Councillor Duggins
Councillor Lee
Councillor Maton
Councillor Mutton
Councillor Ridge
Councillor Williams

Co-opted

Member Present:-

Councillor Clifford

Other Scrutiny

Member Present:-

Councillor Harvard

Employees Present:-

N. Clews (City Development Directorate)
J. McGuigan (Director of City Development)
C. Steele (Chief Executive's Directorate)
A. Townsend (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)

Apologies:-

Councillor Ms. Hunter

212. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

213. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd April, 2008, were signed as a true record.

214. Call-Ins Stage 1

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 14th April, 2008, was 9.00 a.m. on Friday 25th April, 2008. 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 Customer and Workforce Services (Paragraph 5.4.5.25.4 of the City Council's Constitution refers).

215. Paragon Park Redevelopment and Proposed Relocation of European Metals Recycling (EMR)

With reference to Minute 72/07 and a site visit that had taken place earlier that day, the Committee considered a briefing note of the Head of Property Management that provided the Committee with an update on the position with alternative sites for the relocation of European Metals Recycling (EMR) as opposed to the site already identified at Oban Road.

As previously requested by this Committee, Officers had investigated alternative sites at Blackstock Road and Ibstock Road, both of which had been visited by the Committee that morning. The acquisition of the Blackstock Road site was financially prohibitive and the Ibstock Road site had recently been acquired as a going concern and was not available for redevelopment. The Committee noted that Secland Group, the current occupiers of Oban Road who did not enjoy security of tenure, were actively pursuing relocation opportunities in Coventry. A further search for alternative sites in the area identified by EMR had been undertaken however no suitable alternative had been found. The Officers explained that should they relocate to Oban Road, EMR were unlikely to occupy the entire site, it was likely an area around the secondary gate into the site would not be required. The officers acknowledged that the Oban Road site produced methane and indicated that the safe operation of the site would need to be demonstrated as part of any planning application for the site.

Members questioned the Officers on aspects of the matter, in particular:-

- The relocation of Secland Group. The Officer explained that Secland Group had no security of tenure on the site. It was understood that agents acting for Secland were working to actively pursue relocation options for their client.
- Levels of gas on the site. The Officer indicated that the developers had undertaken a desk top environmental study on the site, a further detailed study would be required to support any planning application.
- The transfer of EMR to Blackhorse Road. The Committee acknowledged that this was currently financially prohibitive and that the current owners of the Blackhorse Road site had aspirations for the area. It was suggested that the City Council might be able to assist negotiations in this area to allow EMR to relocate to the site. The officers were doubtful that the City Council would be able to offer much practical help with the matter as the site was in private ownership and lay outside the City boundary.
- The impact on jobs of the proposals. The initial report to Cabinet had suggested that the changes were neutral in terms of the number of jobs on the site, however, it had since been established that additional jobs associated with the Oban Road site over and above those directly employed by Secland. The officers confirmed that in terms of direct jobs, the proposals were neutral, as 12 jobs were relocated from the EMR site to the Oban Road site which itself employed 12 people. It was accepted that there were other jobs linked with the Secland operation, for example drivers that rented space there; the figures included in the Cabinet report were those provided by the two organisations concerned.
- Screening to the site. The Committee pointed out that it was proposed to erect acoustic screening around the Oban Road site should EMR relocate there and suggested that as an alternative, EMR could retain their existing operation on Stoney Stanton Road and the screening be installed to that site. The Officers

explained that the Paragon Park planning permission and planning policy for the area stipulated that EMR should be relocated; the Paragon Park Developer had already been approached to ensure they could not be encouraged to retain the EMR facility on the existing site before the proposals to relocate to Oban Road were brought forward.

- The CPO process, in particular whether, if a site was compulsorily purchased, the City Council was legally required to find an alternative. The Officers explained that the provision of an alternative site would reduce the level of CPO compensation payable. The extinguishment of a business due to non-availability of an alternative site would mean significantly more compensation would be payable.
- The funding gap between what the owners of the Blackhorse Road site were asking for the land and what Paragon were prepared to pay to relocate EMR and if this could be funded by the City Council if the level was below the compensation level if the business were to be extinguished. The officers indicated that whilst they did not have specific costs, they had an idea of the order and magnitude of the sums involved and did not believe that the funding gap was surmountable.
- There were concerns that the search for an alternative site for EMR had been excessively narrow in its search area. The Committee believed that if the search area were extended it was likely that an alternative site could be found. The officers confirmed that EMR had indicated that their locational requirements were that any site was located in the north of the City, close to main roads. Much of EMR's trade was in light goods from local traders, the majority of whom were located in the north of the City.
- Planning matters. The Committee were concerned that the proposals relating to Oban Road had not yet been discussed with planning officers. There was concern that it was possible that when the proposals went through the planning process, they could be turned down and a further site would need to be found. Members believed it should be possible to identify a less controversial site without the problems associated with Oban Road

The Committee, whilst supportive of the proposed Paragon Park development and Cabinet's decision to pursue a CPO for the land currently occupied by European Metals Recycling, were concerned that the proposed location site at Oban Road was unsuitable for the following reasons:-

- its proximity to houses
- its environmental impact
- the potential loss of employment
- the negative effect on the regeneration of the area

RESOLVED, that the Committee recommend that the Cabinet:-

- (1) Disregard the relocation of EMR to Oban Road as an option.**
- (2) Request officers to examine alternative relocation sites.**

216. Report Back on the Work of Outside Bodies – Hillfields Action Plan Partnership Board

The Committee considered a report of the Cabinet Member (City Development), that detailed the work of the Hillfields Action Plan Partnership Board over the previous 12 months and included attendance records for the City Council's nominees at meetings of the Partnership Board.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee recommend that the City Council continue to nominate to the Hillfields Action Plan Partnership Board.

217. Report Back on the Work of Outside Bodies – Sure Start South East Partnership Board

The Committee considered a report of Councillor Chater that detailed the work of the Sure Start South East Partnership Board over the previous 12 months and included attendance records for the City Council's nominee at meetings of the Partnership Board.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee recommend that the City Council continue to nominate to Sure Sstart South East Partnership Board.

218. Report Back on the Work of Outside Bodies – Coventry Voluntary Service Council

The Committee considered a report of Councillor Matchet that detailed the work of the Coventry Voluntary Service Council over the previous 12 months and included attendance records for the City Council's nominees at meetings of the organisation. The Committee were concerned that the number of meetings held over the previous 12 months appeared to be low and that the reports submitted gave no details of the grants available to the organisation.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) **That the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee recommends that the City Council continue to nominate to the Coventry Voluntary Service Council.**
- (2) **That officers be requested to follow up those issues identified above.**

219. Outstanding Issues

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

220. Work Programme 2007-2008

The Committee considered and noted the work programme for the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee for the 2007/2008 Municipal Year and in particular those issues which remain to be allocated and which would roll forward to the next Municipal Year for consideration when the work programme for the Committee is established.

221. Other Business

There were no other items of public or private business.