

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

15th October, 2008

Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Members

Present: - Councillor Arrowsmith
Councillor Charley
Councillor Clifford
Councillor Crookes (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Duggins
Councillor Maton
Councillor Mutton
Councillor Ridge (Chair)

Cabinet Member

Present: - Councillor Sawdon (Culture, Leisure and Libraries) (for item 3)

Employees Present: -

P. Barnett (Chief Executive's Directorate)
S. Brake (Community Services Directorate)
A. Davey (Community Services Directorate)
J. Jardine (Chief Executive's Directorate)
S. Morrison (City Services Directorate)
D. Parfitt (Chief Executive's Directorate)
J. Parry (Chief Executive's Directorate)
U. Patel (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)
H. Shankster (Chief Executive's Directorate)
C. Steele (Chief Executive's Directorate)
A. Vaughan (City Services Directorate)
J. Venn (Chief Executive's Directorate)
L. Wroe (City Development Directorate)

In Attendance: - M. Kitts (PriceWaterhouseCoopers)

64. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

65. **Consideration of Call Ins – Stage 2: Green Space Strategy**

The Committee considered a report of the Acting Director of Community Services which sought endorsement of the 'Coventry Green Space Strategy' following consultation with stakeholders and the public. The report had previously been considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 23rd September, 2008 (their Minute 79/08 refers) and had been called in by Councillors Skipper, Mutton and McNicholas.

The reason for the call in was to "To understand in greater detail the contributions to be made to the delivery of this corporate strategy by City Development and City Services. Also to understand better how this proposed strategy will build upon the existing Green Space Strategy adopted by Council in 1994".

The City Council needed a Green Space Strategy in order to maximise the use of public open space, and to meet the requirements and aspirations of the community through a measured, consistent strategic approach. It was based on guidelines outlined in Planning Policy Guidance and would help to inform policies and proposals of the City Council along with city-wide projects including those for the future growth of the city, and provide clarity for development proposals. The Strategy provided a framework for setting the priorities for investment and management action.

The Committee questioned the Cabinet Member and Officers on aspects of the report, particularly in relation to whether any progress had been made on identifying whose responsibility each piece of grassed land was; how planning could legitimately be used to stop the over development of certain parts of the city to protect and maintain green space. Also the strategy did not report on the maintenance of land owned by Culture and Leisure.

It was reported that at present, responsibility for the land was split between Culture and Leisure and City Services and that Coventry Direct struggled to direct the query to an appropriate service area. This would be progressed so that all the land would fall under one area and a seamless service could be provided.

The Committee noted that the Strategy action plan would be incorporated within operational plans in a number of Directorates and progress would be reported through the Corporate Framework. An annual progress report would be delivered to the Environment Theme Group of the Coventry Partnership.

In terms of timescales, it was noted that work had already commenced and that a project plan would be in place before Christmas 2008 and that it would take 12 months after this for any progress to be noted. Culture and Leisure would be leading on this with support from City Services, City Development Directorate and relevant officers from other Directorates.

RESOLVED that a further report be submitted in three months time detailing progress.

66. Consideration of Call Ins – Stage 1

The Committee noted that the deadline for call-ins for Cabinet and Cabinet Member decisions made during the week commencing 6th October 2008, was 9.00 a.m. on Friday, 17th October, 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 4.5.25.4 of the City Council's Constitution refers).

67. Household Survey

The Committee received and noted a presentation by the Corporate Policy and Research Manager which detailed the results of a Coventry Partnership Household Survey undertaken December 2007/Januray 2008. The survey was the fifth Annual Quality of Life Survey by Partnership undertaken in Coventry. Approximately 1200 face to face interviews were carried out with a representative

sample. A copy of the presentation slides were tabled at the meeting.

The key findings showed that there was overall satisfaction with the neighbourhood as a place to live and this had risen steadily over 5 years. There was a strong continuous narrowing of the gap between priority neighbourhoods and the rest of the City. In addition, the results showed that environmental behaviours of the respondents had improved over 5 years, however, healthy lifestyles remained unchanged.

The Committee noted that the results could be used to have a more targeted approach to particular issues and would be used to inform service delivery and policy. In addition, separate consultation was being undertaken with school children which would provide a wealth of additional information and add another dimension to the data already collected.

The Committee questioned the officers present on aspects of the presentation, particularly in relation to whether the survey results could be broken down by age, location, priority neighbourhoods etc. It was noted that more detailed information was available within the ten Sustainable Community Strategy Themed reports and there was also a Strategic Overview report which could be accessed at the following web address <http://www.coventrypartnership.com/PIFdocuments>.

It was noted that further analysis of the household survey data could also be undertaken by the Council's Corporate Research Team on request. For more information please contact Helen Shankster or Kirsti Larsen.

68. Value for Money Partnership Progress Report

In August 2007, the Cabinet approved the use of the Financial Advisory Framework Contract to engage PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) as the Council's strategic advisory partner, in order to create a Value for Money Partnership, to help the Council to deliver service improvements and cost reductions, in line with the Government's national agenda, local policy priorities and the Council's medium term financial position. The report set out the progress that had been made since the partnership was created on 15th October 2007.

The VfM Partnership was established to help to meet the internal and external challenges being faced by the City Council, in common with many other local authorities. It was acknowledged that the Council would not be able to free up sufficient capacity internally to undertake the work which was needed to contribute to the Council's overall approach to delivering service improvement and efficiencies and reduce spending, while at the same time managing service proactively and dealing with existing change projects. Management Board had identified that the creation of the Partnership would help to embed value for money thinking throughout the Council, and by enabling Council managers to develop new skills, ensure the delivery of effective, efficient and economic services in the future as part of the Council' normal business.

The purpose of the VfM Partnership was clearly identified at the outset and was to enable the Council to achieve the following outcomes:

- "Specific service improvements to meet the changing needs of its

customers, and the future demand for its services,

- sustainable efficiencies and cost reductions to meet the financial challenges it faces,
- ensure members and officers benefit from external challenge and experience from outside the authority, and
- give staff the opportunity to learn new skills".

In order to determine how the Partnership should be organised and managed, and which projects should be pursued, governance arrangements had been put in place, which included the establishment of a Programme Board, a project management framework, including a business case methodology to determine which projects should proceed to implementation, and a Programme Management Office. A Partnership Charter was developed which included guiding principles for the selection and development of proposals under the Value for Money Partnership.

To date, the Programme Board had commissioned work to be carried out on seven reviews, these being Services for Young People; Procurement; Operational /Support Services; Fees and Charges; Debt Management and Income Collection; VAT and Children's Transport. The report included a brief summary of each review.

Both the City Council and PwC had recognised that the health of the partnership was critical to the success of their relationship, and were working on the basis that the Partnership extended beyond simple commercial arrangement on a Review-by-Review basis. Given the number of dimensions to the Partnership, a balanced scorecard had been established using "Financial", "Customer", "Internal" and "Learning and Innovation" as four areas in which performance could be measured. The report provided a brief summary of these. Essentially the scorecard was established to ensure that the partnership was beneficial for both parties financially, commercially and ensure client satisfaction.

In addition, the partnership work to date identified a number of key Council-wide themes which were emerging and which would need to be developed as the work of the Partnership continued. These included:

- a. The importance of corporate standards being established and applied across the Council,
- b. The need to develop a Council wide organisational delivery plan, which linked together the Council's key strategies, in terms of methods of working, operational property, facilities management, human resources and IT, and which would set the vision for organisational development over the medium term.
- c. The continued search for new ways of working which would both improve services to customers and reduce costs.

PricewaterhouseCoopers had been invited to comment on the success of the

partnership from their perspective; these were detailed within Appendix 2 of the report. PwC commented that they were "pleased with the progress made in partnership on some key areas such Services to Young People, Procurement, Debt Management, VAT and Fees and Charges". In addition, they were "pleased that the fees being charged by them were significantly exceeded by the anticipated benefits from the work delivered". "The Partnership had made good progress in establishing robust programme and performance management arrangements and around the delivery of the review reports and updates to the Programme Board". Furthermore, they anticipated that the partnership would play a key role in *supporting* the need to secure savings and efficiencies to deliver a sustainable budget position. PricewaterhouseCoopers also identified some areas for improvement.

The Committee questioned the officers present on aspects of the report and also raised a number of concerns including the following:

- whether the objective of the Value of Money Partnership was primarily to improve services or to save money.
- What arrangements were in place for paying PricewaterhouseCoopers, in particular the point at which payments would be made.
- Whether the partnership's governance arrangements were robust.
- Whether sustainable improvements in services could be achieved by the work of the Partnership, in addition to "quick wins".

Councillor Ridge, Chair of the Committee agreed to meet with relevant officers outside of the meeting to gain assurance about the payment process, the robustness of the governance arrangements and the achievement of some of the savings identified. Following this meeting, any proposals for submission to Cabinet would be emailed round for the Committee's approval.

RESOLVED that the report be noted subject to the outcome of the meeting with the officers.

69. **Scrutiny Boards' 2007/2008 Annual Report to Council**

The Committee considered the draft Annual Report prior to its consideration by the City Council. The Annual Report was drafted as per the requirements of the Council's Constitution, which stated "Scrutiny Boards must report annually to inform Council of their work and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate". The Committee was requested to consider the latest working draft and suggest any amendments.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Boards' 2007/2008 Annual Report be approved for submission to the City Council on 28th October 2008.

70. **Outstanding Issues**

There were currently no outstanding issues.

71. **Work Programme 2008/09**

The Committee considered and noted their Work Programme for the 2008/09 Municipal Year.

72. **Meeting Evaluation**

The Committee briefly discussed the meeting to evaluate its effectiveness. Members made a number of comments most notably that documents/copies of presentations should be made available to members prior to meetings.

73. **Other Urgent Items of Public Business**

There were no other items of public business.