<u>**SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE**</u>

3rd December, 2008

Scrutiny Co-ordination
Committee Members
Present: -   Councillor Andrews (Substitute for Councillor Charley)
                     Councillor Arrowsmith
                     Councillor Clifford
                     Councillor Duggins
                     Councillor Maton
                     Councillor Mutton
                     Councillor Ridge (Chair)
                     Councillor Smith (Substitute for Councillor Crookes)

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

Employees Present: - S. Brake (Community Services Directorate)
                     L. Bull (Community Services Directorate)
                     U. Patel (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)
                     C. Steele (Chief Executive's Directorate)
                     J. Teahan (Community Services Directorate)
                     A. West (Chief Executive's Directorate)

Apologies: -   Councillor Charley
                     Councillor Crookes (Deputy Chair)

97.   **Declarations of Interest**

       There were no declarations of interest.

98.   **Minutes**

       The minutes of the meetings held on 15th, 22nd and 29th October and 5th
       November, 2008 were signed as true records.

99.   **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 24th November, 2008, was
       9.00 a.m. on Friday, 5th December, 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).

100.   **Use of Technology and Fees and Charges**

       The Committee considered a report back on the effects of Fees and Charges and
       the use of ICT within Cultural Services. The report dealt with the Fees and

Charges element of this.

As part of the consideration of the Cultural Services inspection report, the Committee asked for an update on the effects of the changes to fees and charges and the use of ICT within Culture, Leisure and Libraries.

As a starting point the level of income received at Period 7 this year was compared with the same amount last year. This indicated that in overall terms £542,000 had been received in 2008/09 so far compared with £503,000 at the same time last year. However, several of these income streams were not directly related to fees and charges.

There were other factors that needed to be considered besides fees and charges that could influence the income levels such as the weather, timing of holidays and seasonal variations. This made it difficult to formulate pure comparisons during the year due to slightly offsetting timescales as to when income appeared within the accounts.

Service areas were asked to look in more detail at their income taking account of the current level of income compared with the same time last year where income was prone to fees and charges changes. They were asked to consider complaints and any operational issues that had arisen and any loss of activity/participation. The main effect for each area was detailed within the briefing note.

The briefing note indicated that libraries received a considerable number of complaints at the time of the introduction of the new charges. These were in relation to adult book fines, talking book charges, DVDs, CDs, photocopying and faxes. Appendix 1 of the briefing note showed a breakdown from the libraries on the differences in income received at the end of the Financial Period 7 and at the same time last year.

Appendix 2 of the briefing note dealt with parks. The Committee acknowledged that all parks income was affected to one degree or another by weather conditions as they were outdoor activities and were affected by seasonal variations. Weather conditions still remained the most important single factor in deciding whether or not people used the facilities. For this reason it would be very difficult to draw out significant trends and apportion these accurately to either an increase in the cost to the user or the prevailing weather conditions. Furthermore, it should be noted that two Easters in the last financial year would have also impacted participation figures.

The Committee noted that charges in relation to Arts and Heritage were now part of the Coventry Heritage and Arts Trust and subject to market conditions and as such were outside the scope of this analysis.

The Committee questioned the Cabinet Member and officers present on aspects of the report, particularly in relation to how many people accessed the services, whether they were from Coventry and the extent of joint working being undertaken to encourage young people to access services.

RESOLVED that a further briefing note be submitted in six months time incorporating information on how many people used the services, where

they were from and the income generated. Similar information on the Coventry Arts Trust and the Motor Museum also be included in the briefing note.

101. **ICT within Culture Leisure and Libraries**

The Committee considered a report back which dealt with the ICT element of the effects of Fees and Charges and the use of ICT within Cultural Services. The Committee were informed of the following different systems and databases:

Peoplelink was a database available via the internet managed by the Libraries and Information Services as part of their information role and was supported by organisations from across the city and beyond.

Community Information provided information to help people solve problems in their everyday lives. For example, where to go for debt counselling, what leisure opportunities were available to them, what benefits were available etc. Community information was varied, continually changing and useful at the point that it was needed.

PeopleLink was developed as a responsive and flexible service to meet these needs i.e., to provide a:

- user friendly information and signposting service to make links between people and appropriate local organisations/services and other information held within and outside libraries.
- system which could easily be updated/maintained and expanded.
- responsive and flexible computerised database to meet the range of needs/enquiries through keyword, area, language and access search capabilities.

Peoplelink Community Information Service had been widely available on www.opin.org.uk since 2000 and there were currently 1061 organisations on the Peoplelink database of local organisations and services in Coventry or who served Coventry. Peoplelink/OPIN would be relaunched on a new web platform in early 2009 which would further its accessibility. It would also link into the new Coventry PCT Health Hub website.

The People's Network was the public part of the roll-out of Government's National Grid for learning which also provided access to computers in schools and ICT training for teachers and library staff. There was a current decline in usage; however, this could be attributable mainly to a number of libraries having faulty computers which were in the process of being replaced.

TALIS software package provided Library Management Information Systems to both the public and academic libraries and Coventry benefited from the partnership which by providing pilot testing of new products achieves significant discount on new packages and software releases. It would also provide the platform for the web version of Peoplelink.

The self service system available in some libraries was a radio frequency ID based system (FRID) which would allow a much simpler self serve option and would allow for other facilities such as book sorting and stock control.

The Committee noted that investigation into developing a cultural portal for city cultural activity and marketing continued and work was progressing well.

Coventry Active was a data base that was available via the internet for providers to indicate what they provided and for people to search for activities and events.

The report also detailed the introduction and overall aims of the hand-held technology being used in the parks project. The efficiencies to be gained by utilising mobile technology in terms of services being provided were becoming more apparent. The Parks Service intention was to develop a system for effectively recording and monitoring electronic data which would utilise hand held technology. The report detailed what the project aims were and how they would be achieved.

Due to a number of reasons, the roll out of hand-helds had been delayed due to technical expertise having left the City Council. There had also been technical difficulties, which had meant that officers were unable to progress the management functionality of the reporting facility of the various quality performance reports. The Committee noted that the problems were gradually being resolved.

The use of this technology would also feed into the joint review of Grounds Maintenance with Culture, Leisure and Libraries, City Services and Coventry Direct.

The Committee questioned the Cabinet Member and officers present on aspects of the report, particularly in relation to accessing the portals, especially the planning portal and the use of handhelds and remote working and who managed the different services etc. In addition, there was an issue with the wider usage of IT, remote working and the different systems not being compatible.

It was reported that initial work on this undertaken by the Head of ICT indicated that because of the complexity of the different services provided, i.e. social care and fly tipping, this did not allow for a 'one-system fits all' technology to be installed. However, it was pleasing to hear that the services were heading in right direction.

RESOLVED:

(1) **That a further briefing note detailing progress on the use of ICT within Cultural Services be submitted to Committee in six months time.**

(2) **That the Head of ICT be requested to provide information on the different systems being piloted by Culture, Leisure and Libraries such as remote working, hand-held and portable technology.**

102. **Outstanding Issues**

There were currently no outstanding issues.

103.   **Work Programme 2008/09**

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

RESOLVED:

(1)   **That the Revenue and Capital Pre-Budget report be deleted from January 2009 as it was due to be considered at the meeting scheduled for December 2008.**

(2)   **That VFM report be deleted from December 2008 as the Committee's comments had already been forwarded to the Cabinet Member (Finance & Value for Money) for consideration.**

104.   **Meeting Evaluation**

The Committee briefly discussed the meeting to evaluate its effectiveness. Members commented that the meeting was fine.

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

There were no other items of public business.