

## STRATEGY & POLICY COMMITTEE

14 APRIL 1999

Present: Councillors Bettison (Chairman) Mrs Ballin, Bayle, Birch, Good, Jones, Mrs Keene, McCormack, Mills, North, Sargeant, Mrs Shillcock, Wade, Ward, Wheaton and Worrall

Also Present: Councillor Adams

589. **Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 February 1999 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

590. **Urgent Items of Business Under Standing Order No 7**

The Chairman advised that a meeting of the Millennium Sub Committee had been held on 6 April 1999 and that he had agreed to add the Minutes of that meeting to the agenda. Urgent consideration was required as a number of the Sub Committee's recommendations were to be referred on to other committees during the forthcoming cycle of meetings.

591. **Access Advisory Sub Committee**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meetings of the Access Advisory Sub Committee held on 13 January and 10 February 1999, as set out in Appendices A and B hereto, be received.

592. **Audit and Performance Review Committee**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Performance Review Committee held on 17 March 1999, as set out in Appendix C hereto, be received.

593. **Town Centre Sub Committee**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Town Centre Sub Committee held on 17 March 1999, as set out in Appendix D hereto, be received and the recommendations in Minute 13 be adopted.

594. **Finance and Property Sub Committee**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Property Sub Committee held on 24 March 1999, as set out in Appendix E hereto, be received and the recommendations in Minutes 47 and 50 be adopted.

595. **Personnel Sub Committee**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Sub Committee held On 31 March 1999, as set out in Appendix F hereto, be received.

596. **Millennium Sub Committee**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Millennium Sub Committee held on 6 April 1999, as set out in Appendix G hereto, be received and the recommendations therein be adopted.

597. **Quarterly Operations Report (Item 1)**

The Chief Executive presented the Quarterly Operations Report outlining the key activities and performance of the Council during the fourth quarter of the year (January to March).

Three aspects of the report were highlighted for the Committee. The Constitution Advisory Group had continued to meet to examine future political management arrangements under the Modernising Local Government initiative. The draft Local Government (Organisation and Standards) Bill had recently been published along with a Government paper "Local Government - Local Choice". The Government's proposals set out a clear agenda for change and the Council was working to prepare for these changes.

The Council was continuing to develop partnership working with other key partners. For example, the development of the Joint Community Safety Strategy had involved joint working with a range of partners and was now nearing completion. The Council's relationship with the Health Service would be given greater focus through the launch of the Bracknell Primary Care Group on 1 April 1999. Primary Care Group staff had been accommodated in Time Square, which would facilitate closer working with Social Services and other Local Authority services.

Examples of the Council's good practice during the quarter included the selection of the Council's Quality Protects Strategy as one of a small number for special commendation to the Minister.

**RESOLVED** that the Quarterly Operations Report be received.

598. **Capital Programme 1999/2000 – 2001/2002 (Item 2)**

The Committee considered a report on the preparation of the Council's Capital Programme for 1999/2000 – 2001/2002.

As part of the Council's financial and policy planning process, the Committee at its meeting on 16 February, had invited service committees to review their capital spending requirements for inclusion within the Council's three year Capital Programme. Each committee had also reviewed progress on the current approved schemes to determine the specific items for which funding was required to be carried forward into 1999/2000. The report presented each service committee's proposals in order that the Committee could set the Council's Capital Programme. The 1999/2000 Revenue Budget allowed for the £5M of usable capital receipts that were expected to be generated in the year, to be available to fund the Capital Programme. The proposals put forward by service committees exceeded this amount by £3.697M.

The report included advice on options to fund this level of capital expenditure.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the carry-forwards being requested by each service committee be approved as listed in Annex A;
- (ii) capital funding of £8.697M be approved in respect of the new schemes listed in Annexes B – G for inclusion within the Capital Programme for 1999/2000;
- (iii) the schemes listed in Annex H, which attract 100% external financing, be approved for inclusion within the 1999/2000 Capital Programme;
- (iv) the Commitment Budget for 2000/2001 be increased by £0.187M; and
- (v) £0.34M be allocated from the 1999/2000 contingency to reflect the loss of interest arising during the year as a result of the proposed Capital Programme.

599. **Beacon Scheme and Local Government Improvement Project (Item 3)**

In a report from the Chief Executive the Committee was advised of a range of proposed initiatives for Local Government reform and modernisation outlined in the Government's paper "Modernising Local Government: In Touch with the People". It was anticipated that the framework for modernisation would be put in place by a series of legislative steps. The report highlighted issues for the Council in the Beacon Council Scheme and the Local Government Improvement Project.

The Beacon Council Scheme was intended by the Government to enable Councils to innovate and modernise. This second phase of the scheme would be dependent upon legislation but the Government's aim was to create opportunities for Beacon Councils to be given new freedoms and flexibilities. The report described the background and framework of the scheme and the programme for submission of application.

The Local Government Improvement Project, overseen by the newly created Improvement and Development Agency, was based on a team of Local Government practitioners spending up to a week in individual Councils for the purpose of undertaking a diagnostic appraisal "Health check". Provisional contact had been made with the Improvement and Development Agency who had indicated their interest in Bracknell Forest participating in one of the early phase of visits. It was recommended that the Council should invite the Local Government Improvement Project Team to review the Council in 1999.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) an application for Beacon status be submitted this year; and
- (ii) the Council participate in the Local Government Improvement Project in the summer of 1999.

600. **Service Plan 1999/2000 (Item 4)**

The Committee considered a report on the production of the Council's Annual Service Plan. Each Committee had agreed its Service Plan for 1999/2000 during the current cycle of meetings. The Service Plan was one of the key ways in which the Council ensured that resources were directed towards Members' priorities, with progress on the implementation of overall strategies and policies reported to each committee on a quarterly basis. The report presented the Strategy and Policy Committee's own Service Plan and drew together the policy objectives that had been agreed by service committees for overall approval.

The Committee's own Service Plan represented the actions to be taken in 1999/2000 towards achieving the Medium Term Objectives agreed by the Committee in November 1998, along with new priorities that had since been identified. The Plan also presented the central Departments detailed operational service levels, performance targets and indicators. Progress against the agreed performance targets and service levels would be monitored and reported to the Committee at each meeting in the Quarterly Operations Report.

Many of the objectives agreed by each service committee related to specific service issues. However a number of common themes and priorities underpinned the work of all the committees reflecting the broad shared agenda of the whole Council. These included:

- (i) protecting and enhancing the environment;
- (ii) health and well-being;
- (iii) lifelong learning;
- (iv) contributing to the economic prosperity of the Borough and supporting Town Centre regeneration;
- (v) community safety; and
- (vi) improving service standards.

Particular attention was drawn to the need to develop comprehensive consultation processes to enable the Council to work closely with Borough residents and build on work to target and focus on key groups such as the elderly and young people.

**RESOLVED** that

- (i) the Strategy and Policy Committee's Service Plan outlined in Annex A of the report be agreed; and
- (ii) the policy objectives submitted by other service committees shown in Annex B of the report be agreed and included in the Council's overall Service Plan for 1999/2000.

601. **Bracknell Forest Draft Community Safety Strategy (Item 5)**

The Head of Policy Development presented the draft Community Safety Strategy which had been produced with a range of partner organisations and particularly Thames Valley Police. The Crime and Disorder Act placed a duty upon Local Authorities and the Police to formulate and implement a Community Safety Strategy for the Borough for the next three years. At its meeting on 15 July 1998, the Committee had established a Member Focus Group to oversee the development of the Community Safety Strategy. The report described the process by which the

Strategy had been prepared. With the Committee's approval the draft Strategy would be presented to the meeting of the Strategy Group to be held on 15 April. It was anticipated that the Strategy would be launched on 30 April 1999. The members of the Focus Group had recommended that all members of the Council be invited to the launch.

**RESOLVED** that

- (i) the draft Strategy, attached as Annex A to the report, be endorsed; and
- (ii) all members be invited to the launch of the Strategy, and that such attendance be classified as an approved duty for the purpose of the Scheme of Members' Allowances.

**602. Construction Related and other Consultancy Services (Item 6)**

The Director of Planning and Transportation presented a report containing the recommendations of the Planning and Transportation Committee in respect of the future provision of construction related and other consultancy services. A number of the functions undertaken by the Planning and Transportation Department fell within the definition of services set out under Compulsory Competitive Tendering regulations. In addition, a significant proportion of highways, transportation and planning consultancy services were currently undertaken by Babtie Public Services under the contract that the Council had inherited from Berkshire County Council. The report proposed a strategy for the provision of these consultancy services, in particular for when the Babtie contract expired at the end of March 2000. The report advocated a mixed approach to the provision of such services reflecting the principles of best value and risk sharing.

**RESOLVED** that the following recommendations of the Planning and Transportation Committee be endorsed:

- (i) the proposed strategy for dealing with service delivery as set out in the report be adopted;
- (iii) tenders be invited for the two specific term contracts as set out in para 4.4.1, with the contracts being for a period of five years extendable for a further two years;
- (iv) advertisements be placed in accordance with Standing Orders 69 and 70 in order to establish a select list of tenderers; and
- (v) not less than five nor more than seven external service providers be invited to tender subject to there being sufficient suitable candidates, with tenders being assessed on the basis of both financial and quality submissions.

**603. Town Centre Management Strategy (Item 7)**

The Committee received a report on a strategy to promote the vitality and viability of Bracknell Town Centre. The Town Centre Sub Committee on 17 March 1999 had received a detailed report on the approach being taken to promote Bracknell Town Centre in the period leading up to the impending redevelopment. In approving this

approach the Sub Committee had recommended that funding be released from the Section 106 monies held to enhance the Town Centre. The report described a number of initiatives requiring funding and proposed that future expenditure of the remaining Section 106 monies be dealt with by the Town Centre Sub Committee.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the £480,000 secured to promote the vitality and viability of the pedestrianised area of Bracknell Town Centre be released to underpin the development of a Town Centre Management Strategy;
- (ii) expenditure on the specific projects identified in para 4.5 be met from these monies; and
- (iii) all future expenditure from these monies be dealt with by the Town Centre Sub Committee.

**604. Town Centre Partnership Joint Focus Group (Item 8)**

The Committee considered a report proposing the establishment of a Joint Focus Group involving Borough and Parish Councillors to consider the local community implications of the Borough Council's partnership with Legal and General for the redevelopment of Bracknell Town Centre.

In view of the wide ranging implications of the Bracknell Town Centre Redevelopment Project for the local communities throughout the Borough, a need had been identified for a forum in which Parish and Borough Councillors could discuss the needs of their communities in respect of the development. In a tabled motion the Leaders of the two party groups represented on the Council set out proposals for the establishment of a joint focus group for this purpose.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) a Focus Group of seven Borough Councillors and seven Parish Councillors be established to consider the local community implications of the Borough Council's partnership with Legal and General for the redevelopment of Bracknell Town Centre, including transport links;
- (ii) Bracknell Town Council be invited to appoint two Councillors and all other Parish and Town Councils be invited to appoint one Councillor to the Focus Group; and
- (iii) the Borough Council seats on the Focus Group be allocated on the basis of one Councillor from each of the Parish areas and two from the Bracknell Town Council area.

**605. Legal Services – Strategy for Fundamental Review (Item 9)**

The Director of Corporate Services presented a report proposing a strategy for determining the future provision of legal services to the Council. The report had been prepared as part of the Council's strategy to undertake a series of fundamental reviews of services that would have been subject to compulsory competitive tendering (CCT).

The strategy ultimately to be adopted for the provision of legal services would depend upon whether or not CCT was abolished according to the timescale published in the Local Government Bill. At this juncture it appeared probable that it would be repealed prior to April 2000 and therefore the strategy should be formulated on the assumption that the requirements of Best Value legislation would apply. However, the Committee was advised that it would be prudent to have in place an alternative strategy which would come into place to protect the Council's position in the event of amendments to the Bill or a delay in its enactment having the effect of leaving CCT on the statute books until April 2000.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) a 'benchmarking' exercise to compare the cost of legal services be undertaken and reported to the Committee in September;
- (ii) in the event of the local Government Bill repealing the CCT legislation prior to April 2000 a fundamental review of legal services be conducted in accordance with the Best Value legislation and as detailed in Section 6 of this report; and
- (iii) in the event of the CCT legislation not being repealed on or before April 2000 those legal services contained in Option 2 set out in Annex A to this report be the package put out to CCT.

**606. Smartcard Development – Focus Group (Item 10)**

The Head of Policy Development presented a report recommending the establishment of a Member Focus Group to oversee development of the Council's Smartcard initiative. At its meeting on 6 January 1999 the Committee had agreed to undertake feasibility studies to review the possibility of a loyalty card system and the possibility of using Smartcards for the Borough Council's new library system. It was proposed to establish a Member/Officer Smartcard Focus Group, to oversee progress, and participate in the process of identifying a partner for future development work. An advert had been placed in the European Journal inviting expressions of interest. Final decisions on a proposed partner would be the responsibility of the Committee and given the tendering programme and the need for speed of decision making, the Committee noted that it might be necessary to call a special meeting of the Committee at the appropriate time.

**RESOLVED** that

- (i) a focus group of members (3:2) and appropriate officers be established with immediate effect to oversee the development of the Smartcard initiative; and
- (ii) in accordance with the terms of Standing Order 67, the requirements of Standing Order 66 relating to the invitation of competitive tenders be waived in view of the specialised nature of the services required and the need to develop the specification in association with the supplier.

607. **Draft Local Government (Organisation and Standards) Bill (Item 11)**

The Head of Policy Development presented a report highlighting the key issues within the Government's recently published consultation paper "Local Leadership – Local Choice" which included the draft Local Government (Organisation and Standards) Bill as an appendix. The paper emphasised the Government's commitment to modernising Local Government. Although there was no specific timetable for implementation, it was clear that the Borough Council would need to begin work now on the full implications and issues raised by the paper so that it was well placed to determine any future structures in a timely and comprehensive manner.

**RESOLVED** that

- (i) the contents of the report be noted; and
- (ii) the consultation paper and draft Bill be referred to the Constitution Advisory Group for consideration as part of their work to develop new structures and processes for the Borough Council.

608. **Review of Contract and Financial Regulations (Item 12)**

The Director of Corporate Services presented revised contract regulations and minor amendments to financial regulations for member's consideration. At the time the Scheme of Council and Committee Management was adopted in March 1998, it had been noted that the contract regulations would need to be re-examined and presented to members at a later stage in the light of operational experience. Officers had undertaken a detailed review of the existing contract regulations and the revised contract regulations were attached as an Annex to the report. The review had highlighted the need for a number of relatively minor amendments to be made to the financial regulations, particularly with regard to the scheme of virement. Although the financial regulations had been substantially revised in preparation for unitary status, these additional amendments would ensure consistency with the revised contract regulations.

**RECOMMENDED** that the proposed amendments to Contract and Financial Regulations, as set out in the Annexes to the report, be approved.

***Note: The Contract and Financial Regulations, as amended, have been circulated to the Council under separate cover.***

609. **Calendar of Meetings 1999-2000 (Item 13)**

The Committee considered a report on the draft calendar of meetings for the forthcoming municipal year and the annual review of the Council's committee structure. The Council's Scheme of Management required a report to be brought to the Strategy and Policy Committee prior to the annual Council meeting to review the proposed committee structure for the coming year. A copy of the current Committee Structure was attached as an annex to the report and no change was recommended at this stage. Arising from this recommendation a draft calendar of meetings for 1999/2000 was set out as annex B to the report.

**RESOLVED** that:



- (i) no change be made to the existing committee structure, as set out in Annex A of the report, for the coming year; and
- (ii) the draft calendar of meetings of the Council, Committees and Sub Committees for the following municipal year be adopted as set out in Annex B of the report, subject to further consultation on the date of the Planning Control Sub Committee in August 1999.

**610. Annual Conferences (Item 14)**

The Committee considered a report seeking approval for Members to attend various annual conferences during 1999/2000.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) the attendance of one Member at each of the following annual conferences of Local Authority related bodies be approved:

Association of Councils in the Thames Valley Region  
 Association of Directors of Social Services (2 Members)  
 Chartered Institute of Environmental Health  
 Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants  
 Council of Local Education Authorities  
 Institute of Housing  
 Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management (including service conferences)  
 Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation Association  
 Institute of Trading Standards Administration  
 Institute of Waste Management  
 Local Government Association (3 Members)  
 Local Government Information Unit  
 All local Government Association Annual Service Conferences  
 National Local Government Forum Against Poverty  
 Public Libraries Authorities  
 Royal Town Planning Institute  
 South East Employers  
 Town and Country Planning Summer School (2 Members)

and

- (ii) the conferences listed above be classified as approved duties for the purposes of the Scheme of Members' Allowances.

**611. References From Other Committees (Item 15)**

The Committee received a reference from the meeting of the Public and Environmental Services Committee held on 23 March 1999, in respect of an exception to Contract Standing Order 66 for the extension to the Waste Disposal contract. References were also submitted from the meeting of the Leisure Services Committee held on 8 April 1999, in respect of the release of Section 106 contributions for the Quelm Lane Footpath Cycleway, Warfield; and the Ascot Jubilee Recreation Ground, Goaters Road, North Ascot.

**RESOLVED** that:

- (i) in accordance with Standing Order 63(2)(1) this Committee note that the Public and Environmental Services Committee in approving an extension to the contract for waste disposal until march 2003 without seeking competitive tenders has agreed an exception to Standing Order 66;
- (ii) this Committee release £30,200 from Section 106 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 contributions, to construct a shared footpath cycleway to north of Harvest Ride in the Quelm Park area; and
- (iii) this Committee release funding of £15,000 from Section 106 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 contributions, towards a grant to Winkfield Parish Council for improvements to the pavilion at Ascot Jubilee Recreation ground.

**612. Exclusion of Public and Press**

**RESOLVED** that pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government act 1972, members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the following items which involved the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following categories of Schedule 12A of that Act:

- (8) Amount of expenditure incurred for acquisition of services Annex B to Item 9
- (9) Terms proposed for a contract Item 16

**613. Letting of No.1 Priestwood Square (Item 16)**

*In accordance with Standing Order 25 Councillor Bettison declared a pecuniary interest in this item and withdrew from the meeting for the duration of its consideration.*

**COUNCILLOR BIRCH, VICE CHAIRMAN, IN THE CHAIR**

The Director of Planning and Transportation presented a report seeking authority to let the vacant shop unit at No.1 Priestwood square. The Committee discussed issues relating to the previous negotiations for the lease and sought additional information prior to giving further consideration to the matter.

**RESOLVED** that consideration of this matter be deferred.

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm  
and concluded at 11.40pm

**CHAIRMAN**

