

STRATEGY AND POLICY COMMITTEE
14 JULY 1999

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

Apologies for absence were received from:
Councillors Good and Mills

183 Substitute Members

The Committee noted the attendance of the following substitute members appointed under Standing Order No 38:

Councillor Fawcett for Councillor Good
Councillor Harrison for Councillor Mills

184 Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 April 1999 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

185 Health Panel

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meetings of the Health Panel held on 20 May and 8 July 1999, as set out in Appendices A and G respectively hereto, be received and that the recommendations in Minute Nos 3, 8 and 12 be adopted.

186 Audit & Performance Review Committee

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Audit & Performance Review Committee held on 2 June 1999, as set out in Appendix B hereto, be received.

187 Access Advisory Sub Committee

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Access Advisory Sub Committee held on 3 June 1999, as set out in Appendix C hereto, be received.

188 Personnel Sub Committee

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 16 June 1999, as set out in Appendix D hereto, be received.

189 **Finance & Property Sub Committee**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Finance & Property Sub Committee held on 28 June 1999, as set out in Appendix E hereto, be received.

190 **Millennium Sub Committee**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Millennium Sub Committee held on 5 July 1999, as set out in Appendix F hereto, be received and the recommendation in Minute No 3 be adopted.

191 **Quarterly Operations Report**

The Chief Executive introduced the Quarterly Operations Report, which outlined the key activities and performance of the Council during the first quarter of the year (April-June). The report described significant progress which had been made in several areas during what had been a very busy quarter.

The Chief Executive specifically drew the Committee's attention to the encouraging results of the recent public satisfaction survey, which had been reported to Members on 21 June. He also commented on the positive findings of the Local Government Improvement Programme (LGIP) Team. The Team had spent a week conducting a peer review of the Council against the benchmark of the "fully effective council". They had found the Council to be a well managed authority and had particularly commented on the commitment and flexibility of the Council's staff. Members discussed the LGIP Team's recommendations to help the Council improve its performance in the future. It was noted that the information provided by these exercises gave the Council important foundations for future direction and developments.

RESOLVED that the Quarterly Operations Report be accepted.

192 **Provisional Out-turn 1999 and Commitment Budget 2000/01-2002/03**

The Director of Corporate Services introduced a report on the latest projected out-turn expenditure position for the year 1998/99, highlighting issues that were likely to impact upon the Council's budget in future years. The Provisional Out-turn figure was £72.624m compared with the approved budget of £77.524m. Reasons for variances from the approved budget within individual service committees had been reported throughout the year in the Quarterly Operations Reports. The major variations on the budgets which were not included within a specific committee were detailed in the report.

The Committee went on to consider the budget strategy for 2000/01 and beyond, based on the consideration which had been given by each service committee to their Commitment Budget, an analysis of resource levels and a projection of SSA levels over the next three years. Based on current available information, the funding gap between the base budget and SSA was projected to close over the next two years. However it was noted that this projection specifically excluded any service developments. If these continued at the level identified in the past two years this would show an underlying funding gap of around £2.5m-£3.5m in 2000/01. A further

significant factor was the potential result of the Government's proposal to introduce Resource Accounting to the Housing Revenue Account. The councils, including Bracknell Forest, who were in a negative subsidy position, could be significantly affected. Potentially, the entire amount of negative subsidy could be lost to the General Fund. This was currently budgeted at £6.4m. If the change was implemented as currently proposed, this would significantly increase the funding gap in future years. The report outlined a budget strategy which recognised these factors.

Arising from the recommendations of the Millennium Sub Committee it was further proposed to establish a special reserve to provide funds for the programme of activities developed by the Sub Committee.

RESOLVED that

- (i) The Provisional Out-turn Expenditure for 1998/99 of £72.624m be noted;
- (ii) Budget carry forwards of £0.351m, requested by service committees, be approved as outlined in Annex A to the report;
- (iii) The Commitment Budget for the period 2000/01-2002/03 be noted;
- (iv) The proposed Budget Strategy set out in Section 10 of the report be supported; and
- (v) The establishment of a special reserve of £62,000 be approved for Millennium celebrations and that this reserve be set aside from the available General Reserves at 31 March 1999.

193 Capital Programme Update (Item 3)

The Committee was advised that each year the Council entered into a number of agreements under Section 106 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 by which developers made a contribution towards the cost of providing facilities and infrastructure that may be required as a result of their development. The Director of Corporate Services reported on the funding received during 1998/99 and the application of these resources. Approval was sought for the release of Section 106 resources for a number of schemes to be undertaken during 1999/2000. The report also reviewed the arrangements for dealing with developers' contributions within the Council's Capital Programme in future years.

RESOLVED that

- (i) The schemes identified in Annexe A of the minutes be added to the Council's Capital Programme;
- (ii) £1.65m be released from existing Section 106 receipts to fund the capital schemes identified in Annex A; and
- (iii) Interest earned on Section 106 receipts be retained within the General Fund.

194 **The Edge Programme – Progress July 1999 (Item 4)**

The Head of Policy Development presented a report on progress in the development of the Council's multi-application Smartcard initiative, now known as 'The Edge Programme'. The focus of work to date had been on undertaking the feasibility study for the loyalty card and looking to secure the most appropriate ICT managed service partner to develop and support this initiative in the longer term. The report highlighted options for the future and sought agreement to launch the first phase of The Edge Programme (the loyalty card) later in the year. The report described the immaturity of the current market in Smartcard applications and the procedure which was being followed in the selection of a long term partner to work with the Council in developing and delivering a long term sustainable solution.

Preparations had been made to launch the first phase of the programme in the form of 'The Edge' loyalty card. In the first instance the card would be issued as a show card, without Smartcard capability. This exercise would be used to establish the brand name and to test basic application procedures. It would minimise risk and initial costs to the Council by enabling more time to develop a long term solution with the Council's chosen partner and to facilitate the future convergence and integration of all systems. The Committee noted the exceptional response of Town Centre retailers in offering discounts to card holders. Members expressed the hope that appropriate discounts on Council services would be included at the earliest possible stage. The Committee also discussed the name of the loyalty card and it was agreed that the Focus Group would give further consideration to this matter.

RESOLVED that

- (i) The first phase of The Edge Programme (the loyalty card) be launched in September this year; and
- (ii) Members of the Smartcard Focus Group can if appropriate participate in reference site visits and receive presentations from potential managed service providers and that this be deemed to be an approved duty for the purposes of Members allowances.

195 **Konver II Programme (Item 5)**

The Chief Executive reported on an opportunity to secure Konver II European funding. The Konver II Programme aimed to promote the diversification of economic activities in an area previously dependent upon defence sector or military bases, by creating complimentary economic activities. The Council had recently sought Konver II funding and, as a result of a bidding process, had now received approval for a grant of £520,000. At this stage the grant was non site-specific and was subject to a revised submission from the Council. The report therefore outlined the steps which needed to be taken in order to secure the Konver II funding.

RESOLVED that

- (i) The Chief executive be authorised, in consultation with the Chairman, to re-submit the Konver II Programme bid within the timescale required; and

- (ii) The further development and implementation of the Konver II project be delegated to the Finance & Property Sub Committee, taking advice from the Director of Planning & Transportation.

196 Service Level Agreements (Item 6)

The Director of Corporate Services reported on progress to date with the introduction of Service Level Agreements between internal support services and front line departments. This work had been included within the Committee's Service Plan for 1999/2000. The report set out a framework for implementing Service Level Agreements, focusing initially on the Corporate Services Department. With the approval of the Committee, the approach was to be extended in due course to all service areas which provided support services to front-line departments. A standard format for Service Level Agreements had been developed in line with the principles described in the report. The proposed arrangements also addressed service quality and performance measurement requirements.

RESOLVED that

- (i) The framework for developing Service Level Agreements outlined in the report be agreed;
- (ii) Service Level Agreements be introduced for the Corporate Services Department from October 1999; and
- (iii) Service Level Agreements be introduced for other support services from April 2000.

197 Constitution Advisory Group – Consultation Arrangements (Item 7)

The Chief Executive presented a report on the latest developments within the work of the Constitution Advisory Group. The Group had commissioned a programme of research and information gathering to inform the process of considering future constitutional models for the Council. It was currently intended that the Constitution Advisory Group would present its considered recommendations to the next meeting of the Committee in October. It was therefore essential that some form of consultation was undertaken so that the views of the public could be fully reflected in any recommendations at that stage.

The Committee noted that discussions nationally had resulted in the suggestion of further models in addition to the three options outlined in the Government's paper. The Committee endorsed the view that the Constitution Advisory Group should include the full range of potential models within its discussions.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the progress to date be noted; and
- (ii) the Chief Executive be authorised, in consultation with the Constitution Advisory Group, to undertake appropriate consultation over the summer.

198 Corporate Community Safety Initiatives (Item 8)

The Head of Policy Development advised the Committee that, as part of this year's budget, the sum of £85,000 had been identified for corporate community safety initiatives in response to the Crime & Disorder Act. The report requested expenditure against this budget in respect of the establishment of the Council's Youth Support Team and other priorities identified within the Community Safety Strategy.

RESOLVED that

- (i) The costs of the establishment of the Council's Youth Support Team in 1999/2000 (currently estimated at £62,000) be met from this budget in this financial year;
- (ii) The Community Safety Strategy Group identifies priorities within the Community Safety Strategy which could be met from the balance of funds available in the financial year 1999/2000; and
- (iii) The Chief Executive be given delegated authority to authorise expenditure against the balance of funds remaining to meet priorities identified in the Community safety Strategy.

199 Framework for Voluntary Sector Relationships (Item 9)

The Head of Policy Development introduced a report proposing a guiding framework for departments, Officers, Members and the voluntary sector to provide comprehensive information on all matters concerning the Council's voluntary sector grant giving. The framework had been discussed and endorsed by the Voluntary Sector Issues Focus Group at its meeting on 30 June 1999. It was intended that the guide would contribute towards a seamless service for local organisations seeking grant aid and would ensure a corporate approach to all voluntary sector organisations.

The report also presented draft guidelines for Members and Officers appointed to represent the Council on a range of outside bodies.

RESOLVED that

- (i) The framework for Voluntary Sector Grant Aid, attached as Annex 1 to the report, be approved; and
- (ii) Approval be given to the Member and Officer Guidelines - Representation on Outside Bodies, attached as Annex 2 to the report.

200 Scheme of Delegation (Item 10)

The Director of Corporate Services advised the Committee that in March 1999 the Council had adopted a new Scheme of Council and Committee Management. Currently the scheme comprised two volumes dealing with Member arrangements and general management arrangements respectively. The scheme also envisaged that there should be a third volume setting out specific delegations to Officers for the day to day management of the Council. The report sought the approval of the

Committee for that part of volume 3 which would relate to matters falling within the terms of reference of the Committee. Attention was also drawn to the need to delete paragraph 2.2(e)(i) of volume 2 of the Scheme, which provided for delegated powers to always be exercised in the name of the Director. This provision was not considered necessary in all cases.

RECOMMENDED that

- (i) The delegations set out in Annexe B to the Minutes be approved for inclusion in Volume 3 of the Scheme of Council and Committee Management; and
- (ii) Paragraph 2.2(e)(i) should be deleted from Volume 2 of the Scheme of Council and Committee Management.

201 Development Programmes for Elected Members (Item 11)

The Director of Corporate Services reported that there had been considerable discussion at national level recently about the need for structured development and training programmes specifically designed to enable Members to fulfil their own aspirations and to deal with the underlying themes of the modernisation agenda. The Government's White Paper 'Local Leadership – Local Choice' invited councils to reassess their arrangements for training both newly elected and serving Councillors. A number of initiatives were currently being promoted through the recently created Improvement Development Agency. In addition other training opportunities were available. A full report on training for Members following the May 2000 elections would be presented to the Committee in due course. Pending that, the report dealt with three shorter term, inter-related initiatives and invited the Committee's support and participation.

RESOLVED that

- (i) The Committee authorise the continued participation of up to four Members in the National Councillor Development Initiative;
- (ii) The Committee approve the participation of one majority party Member and one minority party Member in the 1999/2000 Democratic Leadership Programme; and
- (iii) Officers be authorised to proceed to draw up an appropriate programme of Member Workshops during the period September 1999-January 2000 and an induction programme for new Members following the Borough elections in May 2000.

202 Appointment to Outside Bodies (Item 12)

The Committee noted that appointments of Members to serve on outside bodies for the Municipal Year 1999-2000 had been made at the Annual Council meeting held on 5 May 1999. As a result of new or changed arrangements, it had been necessary to make a number of further appointments and these had been dealt with under delegated powers in accordance with the procedure for urgent decisions.

RESOLVED that the Committee note the following appointments of Members to serve on outside bodies for the remainder of the current Municipal Year:

Berkshire Pension Fund & Advisory Panel	Councillor Thompson
South East England Regional Assembly	Councillors Mrs Ballin and Councillor Bettison (Reserve)
Thames Forest Area Community/Police Consultative group	Councillor Mrs Hayes and Councillor Thompson (Reserve) and the Community Safety Officer

203 **References from Other Committees (Item 13)**

The Committee considered and determined references from the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 15 June 1999 and the Education Committee meeting held on 30 June 1999, as follows.

LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE

(1) Request for contribution to start-up costs The Downshire Golf Course Business Plan

RESOLVED that approval be given to:

- (i) Additional capital resources of £87,000 to purchase the necessary plant and equipment, as detailed in Appendix 3 of the Business Plan;
- (ii) The purchase of £70,000 of stock from the Council's cash reserves to enable the golf shop to operate; and
- (iii) The utilisation of this Council's share of the balances remaining in the Joint Golf Course Committee renewals Fund to purchase plant and equipment, as detailed in Appendix 3 of the Business Plan.

(2) Request for release of Section 106 funding: Westmorland Drive Open Space.

RESOLVED that a further £63,233 of Section 106 funds be released to cover the estimated shortfall in funding for the design and construction of a pavilion at the open space located at Westmorland Drive.

(3) Request for Section 106 funding and approval of an investment facility: Brownlow Memorial Hall

RESOLVED that

- (i) £90,687 be allocated from Section 106 Agreement funding, as detailed in Annex A of the report, for the improvements to the Brownlow Memorial Hall;
- (ii) An investment of up to £300,000 be approved to Warfield Parish Council at a variable interest rate equal to the repo rate plus one eighth of one percent, repayable over a period of 25 years; and

- (iii) The following conditions be agreed:
- (a) The grant and investment may only be utilised for the projects detailed in the report, subject to the Director of Leisure Services being given delegated authority to agree minor variations;
 - (b) The project is begun by 31 March 2001;
 - (c) Any other conditions proposed by the Borough Solicitor or Borough Finance Officer to protect the Council's interest.

(4) Request for Section 106 funding: Lily Hill Park

RESOLVED that Section 106 funding of £22,158 be released for expenditure n lily Hill Park.

(5) Request for release of commuted payments: new Open Spaces

RESOLVED that the commuted maintenance sums held by the Finance & Property Sub Committee to cover the additional costs of parks and open spaces be released, with £68,720 to be added to the Leisure Services Revenue Budget for these costs in 1999/2000.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

(1) Future funding arrangements for Rhos-y-Gwaliau

RESOLVED that, in principle and subject to annual confirmation, funding should continue for the next five years to 31 March 2004 within the Education budget, subject to the Rhos-y-Gwaliau trust producing an agreeable business plan and exit strategy which would show how this support would taper out towards self sufficiency during this period.

(2) Projected under and overspend within the Education Capital Programme

RESOLVED that

- (i) Approval be given to the use of the underspend on College Hall to cover the project overspend on the Cranbourne Scheme and the Edgbarrow Scheme; and
- (ii) The offer figure of £41,387 with fees of £4,656 be accepted for the refurbishment of Edgbarrow School Science Laboratory.

204 **Exclusion of Public and Press**

In accordance with Standing Order 25 Councillor Bettison declared a personal interest in the remaining items on the agenda and withdrew from the meeting at this point.

COUNCILLOR BIRCH, VICE-CHAIRMAN, IN THE CHAIR

Arising on a motion to exclude the public and press from the meeting an amendment was moved to delete Item 15 from the motion. On a request for a recorded vote to be taken voting on the amendment was as follows:

For (7): Councillors Bayle, Fawcett, Jones, Mrs Keene, McCormack, Mrs Shillcock and Wheaton

Against (7): Councillors Mrs Ballin, Birch, Harrison, North, Sargeant, Wade and Ward

Abstaining: None

There being an equality of votes, Councillor Birch exercised his casting vote against the amendment which was therefore declared lost. It was thereupon

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 category of Schedule 12A of that Act.

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| (5) | Application for financial assistance | (Item 14) |
| (7) | Business affairs of a third party | (Annex to Item 4, Items 15 and 16) |
| (9) | Terms proposed for a contract | (Item 16) |

205 **1 Priestwood Square (Item 15)**

Consideration was given to a report by the Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services which contained exempt information and dealt with an investigation carried out by the Director of Corporate Services, as a result of a number of concerns raised at the Strategy & Policy Committee meeting on 14 April regarding the tendering arrangements and proposed letting of the shop unit at 1 Priestwood Square. These concerns related to the delay in completing the lease since the decision in October 1997 to accept the highest tender received.

Councillor Bettison returned to the meeting to answer factual questions from the Committee. He then withdrew from the meeting, prior to debate.

A motion in the terms set out below was put to the meeting and carried. In accordance with Standing Order 47, on the request of one quarter of the Members present, the motion was referred to the Council as a recommendation.

RECOMMENDED that

- (i) the Borough Planning Officer's advice be formally obtained in all cases when a change of use is being considered for a vacant Council owned property;

- (ii) where appropriate, planning permission be sought prior to marketing vacant shop units;
- (iii) a Members' training session on the role of planning policies in respect of the development control decisions be arranged in the near future;
- (iv) a local Code of Conduct for Members governing the handling of planning applications be developed by the Planning & Transportation Committee and endorsed by the Standards Committee which should be established as soon as practicable;
- (v) a formal system of monthly reviews by Officers on all prospective leases be introduced to ensure that any protracted negotiations are highlighted and acted upon;
- (vi) before any lease is awarded the highest tender be fully evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:
 company search
 references
 financial standing
 business proposals
 past dealings with the Council
- (vii) that the Chief Executive write to:
 - (a) Councillor Bettison drawing attention to the Committee's view that, for the reasons set out in the report, his involvement in the negotiations has put him in a position where it could be concluded that he has contravened paragraphs 7 and 31 of the National Code of Local Government Conduct; and
 - (b) All Councillors drawing attention to the need to take particular care to comply fully with the National Code of Local Government Conduct in any personal dealings with the Council.

206 **1 Priestwood Square (Item 16)**

RESOLVED that in view of the recommendation to Council of the previous agenda item, this report be referred to the Council for determination.

207 **South Hill Park Grant Application (Item 14)**

The Director of Leisure Services submitted a report regarding the grant application and business plan submitted by South Hill Park Trust in support of a significant development project at the South Hill Park Arts Centre.

RESOLVED that

- (i) a grant of £1m be offered to South Hill Park Trust based on the revised project detailed in the report;

- (ii) the amendments to the revised project must be agreed in advance by the Director of Leisure Services in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Leisure Services Committee; and
- (iii) the grant be released on a phased basis, but not earlier than the Trust's contractual obligation to pay invoices associated with the project.

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm and concluded at 12.05am

CHAIRMAN