

**FINANCE AND PROPERTY SUB COMMITTEE
22 SEPTEMBER 1999**

Present: Councillors Bettison (Chairman), Mrs Ballin, Beadsley, Fawcett,
Mrs Hayes, Jones, Mrs Pile, Wade and Wheaton

Apologies for Absence were received from:
Councillors Egan and Ryan

16. Substitute Members

The Committee noted the attendance of the following substitute members under Standing Order 38:

Councillor Mrs Ballin for Councillor Egan
Councillor Jones for Councillor Ryan

17. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Sub Committee held on 28 June 1999 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18. Voluntary Grants Panel

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Voluntary Grants Panel held on 7 September 1999 be received and the recommendation in Minute 6 be adopted.

19. Quarterly Operations Report (Item 1)

The Director of Corporate Services submitted the Quarterly Operations Report, which set out the main activities of the Corporate Services Department since the last meeting. The Director drew the Sub Committee's attention to the work of the Information Technology section in terms of its Year 2000 compliance activities and the development of a corporate intranet. The work of the Finance Section in closing the accounts, the first set of accounts as a unitary authority, was also highlighted.

RESOLVED that the Quarterly Operations Report be received.

20. Statement of Accounts 1998/99 (Item 2)

The Borough Finance Officer reported that the Council's Statement of Accounts for 1998/99 had to be approved by the end of September and then submitted to audit by the Council's external auditors, KPMG. The Sub Committee was advised of actual out-turn expenditure for 1998/99 of £70.891 million. After taking account of the Housing Revenue Account, the total net expenditure stood at £69.869 million.

The Borough Finance Officer highlighted several factors that had affected out-turn expenditure, in particular, the surplus on the transition budget, which had arisen largely from the sale of Shire Hall. The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions had advised that this sum should be treated as a revenue receipt, which increased the Council's financial flexibility, since revenue reserves could be used for either capital or revenue purposes whereas capital reserves could only be used for capital purposes. A number of items had been incorporated into the Council's balance sheet at 1 April 1998 to reflect the transfer of assets and liabilities from the County Council. The sum of £1.118 million had been received to finance capital schemes inherited from Berkshire County Council. The Sub Committee agreed to finance these capital schemes from the Borough's capital receipts and credit these sums to the Council's revenue reserves, also giving increased financial flexibility.

The Sub Committee considered and approved a number of specific provisions in the accounts for known liabilities. These related to where the timing or the amount of the liability was uncertain. The Sub Committee also approved a sum for 'earmarked' balances. These formed part of the reserves, but had been set aside for specifically identified items of expenditure.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the Statement of Accounts for 1998/99 be approved;
- (ii) the financing from capital receipts of the capital schemes inherited from the County Council to maximise the future financial flexibility afforded by revenue reserves be approved; and
- (iii) the out-turn expenditure for the year be noted and the provisions (£2.219 million) and earmarked balances (£2.978 million) be approved.

21. Web Site Strategy 1999/2002 and Corporate Intranet Development – Progress Update (Item 3)

The Sub Committee considered a report which outlined the progress with two key projects within the Council's Information and Communications Technology Strategy: the development of the web site and the introduction of corporate intranet (a secure electronic network and database which could only be used by people internally within an organisation). The Sub Committee noted that a detailed strategy had been developed outlining how the web site could be developed over the period 1999/2002 to meet a range of opportunities and challenges. The Sub Committee endorsed the draft web site strategy, which included general principles which would guide future web site development; an explanation of how departments would contribute to the site; and a work programme for future development.

The benefits of an intranet would be that information could be kept up to date easily in an electronic form reducing costs of photocopying, printed paper etc whilst at the same time improving service delivery. The Sub Committee endorsed a programme of development for the intranet and to this end agreed that the appointment of an Intranet Systems Administrator to be funded from within the IT development budget.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the draft web site strategy, as set out in Annex A to the report, be endorsed;
- (ii) the proposals for developing the intranet system be noted; and
- (iii) the establishment of a new post of Intranet Systems Administrator be supported in principle, subject to the Strategy and Policy Committee providing additional resources when considering the 2000/01 budget.

22 "Invest to Save Budget" Bid - Co-ordinated Out of Hours Emergency Response (Item 4)

The Sub Committee was advised that the Government had established the "Invest to Save Budget" fund to provide support to projects bringing together two or more public services with the aim of delivering services in an innovative and more efficient fashion.

The Council had submitted an outline bid for a co-ordinated out of hours response scheme, which would build on and extend the Forestcare service. It would act as a first point of contact for out-of-hours crisis calls which would in turn activate the appropriate response from the Council's own staff or one of the partner organisations such a health services or housing associations. The scheme could eventually lead to potential savings, for example, by allowing people to be discharged earlier than normal from hospital. Whilst partner organisations had indicated their interest in the scheme, no firm commitments for funding had been received.

After an evaluation by the Government of the 474 outline Invest to Save bids, the Council's co-ordinated out of hours emergency response bid had been one of 187 bids which had been invited to bid formally for a total of £230 million, over the next two financial years. However, the Government had changed the emphasis of the funding from capital to revenue. The Council and its partners would be expected to provide at least 25% of the total cost of the project, which for years 1 and 2 was estimated to be £239,405. Funding from the Government would cease from the third year onwards. No firm partnership commitments had been received to date. However, the Sub Committee agreed that a formal bid should be submitted, and the Strategy and Policy Committee should subsequently consider whether to proceed with the scheme when the level of Government support and the likely level of commitment from partner organisations was known.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to finalise the Council's bid for "Invest to Save Budget" funding to implement a co-ordinated out-of-hours emergency response project;
- (ii) the Strategy and Policy Committee be requested to consider whether to proceed with the scheme as part of the budget preparations in the light of:
 - (a) the level of government support available; and
 - (b) the firm responses of partner organisations.

23. **Commerce to Community (Item 5)**

It was reported to the Sub Committee that Commerce to Community had sought a grant of £2,000 to pay for a part time co-ordinator from November 1999. Commerce to Community, a charitable organisation supported by local businesses, acted as a focus for the business community in Bracknell Forest and was linked to the national organisation 'Business in the Community'. As this grant would be made under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, confirmation would be required from the Council.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve a revenue grant of £2,000 for the Commerce to Community Scheme for 1999/2000.

24. **Motor Vehicle Procurement (Item 6)**

The Council, as a Unitary Authority, now operated a fleet of approximately 120 vehicles ranging from small vans to lorries. The Sub Committee was advised that in accordance with the Council's Contract Regulations, each time a new vehicle was purchased it was subject to individual tendering. It was agreed that in future it would be appropriate to enter into a vehicle procurement arrangement, whereby motor dealers, following response to public advertisement, would be invited to state their level of discounts against the manufacturer's list price for particular types of vehicles. The Borough Surveyor could then accept the most economically advantageous tender for each type of vehicle.

RESOLVED that

- (i) tenders for the procurement of motor vehicles be invited, as set out in the report; and
- (ii) the Borough Surveyor be authorised to accept the most economically advantageous tender for each make of vehicle.

25. **Bracknell Sport and Leisure Centre – Athletics Track (Item 7)**

The Director of Corporate Services reported that a trust had been established in 1985 to improve sporting and recreational facilities in the Borough, with the sum of £100,000 being transferred to the Council as trustee. This had provided an athletics track at Bracknell Sport and Leisure Centre. As the athletics track was now reaching the end of its useful life, it was agreed that the remaining £59,000 in the trust should be applied towards the cost of resurfacing the athletics track. In order to use the trust fund a declaration of undertaking was required which would oblige the Council to repay funds to the trust in certain circumstances such as the sale of the asset.

RESOLVED that the Borough Solicitor be authorised to execute a declaration of undertaking, as set out in paragraph 4.2 of the report.

26. Items for Information

The Sub Committee noted the following items submitted for information only:

Year 2000 Progress report (Item 8)
Economic and Monetary Union and the Single Currency (Item 9)
Fare Funding Legislation – Delegation of Budgets to
Schools, Implications for Corporate Services (Item 10)

27. 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.

- (1) Information relating to particular employees (Item 11)
- (7) Information relating to the financial affairs of a third party (Item 12)

28. Payroll Services Review of Staffing (Item 11)

The Director of Corporate Services reported on proposals to reorganise the client side of the payroll service. Under the new structure a new post of Systems Manager, Payroll, supported by two payroll officers, would be established.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the proposals for reorganising the Payroll Section, outlined in the report, be agreed for implementation;
- (ii) post CFB050 be made redundant and the officer concerned dealt with under the Council's Redundancy Handling Procedure; and
- (iii) the new structure take effect from 1 December 1999.

29. Items of Information Containing Exempt Information

The Sub Committee noted the following item, containing exempt information, which had been submitted for information only.

Land adjacent to Manor Farm, Binfield, Compensation Claim (Item 12)

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm and concluded at 9pm.

CHAIRMAN