

STRATEGY AND POLICY COMMITTEE
16 JULY 1997

Present: Councillor Bettison (Chairman)
Councillors Adams, Angell, Mrs Ballin, Bayle, Birch
Jones, Mrs Keene, McCormack, Mills, North, Sargeant,
Wade, Ward and Wheaton

County Councillor Mrs Williams

Apology for Absence was received from Councillor Good

161. Berkshire County Council - Co-opted Membership.

The Committee noted that County Councillor Dr L A Murray had been appointed to attend meetings of the Committee as a non voting co-opted member. On behalf of the Committee the Chairman extended a welcome to County Councillor Mrs Williams who was attending the meeting as a substitute.

162. Urgent Action Taken Under Delegated Powers.

The Committee received and noted details of urgent action taken under delegated powers in relation to the following matters:-

- (i) Repair work to Time Square.
- (ii) Amalgamation of James Elliman First and Middle Schools, Slough.

163. Town Centre Sub Committee.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings of the Town Centre Sub Committee held on 20 May and 17 June 1997, as set out in Appendices A and B hereto be received and that the recommendations in minutes 2 (Terms of Reference), 4 (Appointment of Focus Group) and 7 (Extension of Exclusivity Period) be adopted.

164. Audit, Performance and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Audit, Performance and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 June 1997, as set out at Appendix C hereto, be received and that the recommendation at minute 2 (Terms of Reference) be adopted.

165. Access Committee.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Access Committee held on 7 July 1997, as set out at Appendix D hereto be received.

The Committee further noted that whilst the minutes reflected discussion at the Access Committee, such discussions should not be taken as an accurate reflection of Council policies.

166. **Unitary Structures Sub Committee.**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Unitary Structures Sub Committee held on 8 July 1997, as set at Appendix E hereto, be received.

167. **Finance & Property Sub Committee.**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance & Property Sub Committee held on 8 July 1997, as set out in Appendix F hereto, be received and that the recommendations contained in minutes 5 (Main Frame Business Study) and 6 (Design and Print Section - Unitary Investment Plan) be adopted.

168. **Personnel Sub Committee.**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Sub Committee held on 10 July 1997, as set out at Appendix G hereto, be received.

169. **Health Related Matters. (Item 1)**

The Committee received a report by the Borough Environmental Services Officer outlining the contribution that the Council makes to ensuring the health and well-being of its residents, the changing nature of that contribution as a Unitary Authority and the developing relationships between the Council and the Berkshire Health Authority and the various NHS Trusts. The Committee were reminded of the major workshop hosted by the Council in March 1997 to explore ways of improving cooperation and joint planning of health related matters and were advised of a report by the Chief Executive of the Berkshire Health Authority dealing with the need to review the joint planning & working arrangements between the various agencies and organisations involved.

RESOLVED that

- (i) Council notes the report prepared by the Chief Executive of the Berkshire Health Authority and looks forward to playing a positive part in developing relationships which are aimed at providing significant improvements to the health and well being of Bracknell residents;
- (ii) Council, in partnership with Bracknell CVS, seeks to compile and publish a directory of all organisations within the Borough which play a part in health related matters; and
- (iii) Council supports a campaign aimed at ensuring that patients understand the significance of medication prescribed for them and complete their course of treatment.

170. **Communications Plan for the Transitional Year. (Item 2)**

The Chief Executive presented a detailed communications plan for the transitional year May 1997 - April 1998 aimed at avoiding public confusion at a time of major change in the

provision of local services and achieving communication of clear and concise information about the role and activities of the new Authority.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the overall strategy and communications plan for the transitional year as set in the report submitted be adopted;
- (ii) the draft budget for the transitional work plan amounting to £68,000 be approved;
- (iii) a Focus Group be established with the time limited task of designing a new corporate identity and logo and bringing forward proposals for a plan of implementation;
- (iv) that Councillors Birch, Flood and North together with two other Members to be nominated by the minority party and appropriate Officers, be appointed to serve on the Focus Group.

171. **Representation on Outside Bodies. (Item 3)**

The Borough Administrator advised the Committee that the Council had been invited to put forward an additional nomination to serve on the East Berkshire Community Health Council until 31 March 1998 and to appoint one Member and one Officer representative to the Standing Conference on Archives in Berkshire.

RESOLVED that

- (i) Councillor J C Thompson be nominated for consideration by Berkshire County Council as a County nominated representative on the East Berkshire Community Health Council;
- (ii) Councillor Mrs Hayes and Mrs H Tranter (Leisure Department) be appointed to represent the Council on the Standing Conference on Archives in Berkshire for the remainder of the municipal year; and
- (iii) attendances at the above meetings be classified as an approved duty for the purposes of the Scheme Of Members Allowances.

172. **Release of Set Aside Capital Receipts. (Item 4)**

The Borough Finance Officer reported receipt of a consultation paper setting out the government's proposals for the release of Set Aside Capital Receipts for housing purposes. The Committee noted that the proposed basis for allocation of resources resulted in an entitlement of £80,000 for the Borough.

RESOLVED that subject to the Council being allocated a supplementary credit approval, a scheme be prepared for inclusion within the Housing Investment Programme submission due in September.

173. **Multicultural Event - European Year Against Racism. (Item 5)**

The Chief Executive submitted a details of an application by the Indian Community Association Berkshire for financial assistance towards a family fun-day to be held on 27 July

1997 at South Hill Park and aimed at celebrating ethnic diversity as well as highlighting the European Year Against Racism, Xenophobia and Anti-Semitism. Details of the proposed event were submitted and the Committee noted that this was intended to be a partnership event supported by the Borough Council, South Hill Park Arts Centre and County Council together with the local Indian community.

RESOLVED that

- (i) That the Borough Council gives its support to the European Year Against Racism and also endorses the family fun-day event as proposed by the Indian Community Association, Bracknell (ICAB).
- (ii) That a grant of £750 be made to ICAB, and Berkshire County Council be asked to consider making a matched contribution of £750.

174. Electoral Boundary Reviews and Related Matters. (Item 6)

The Borough Administrator submitted a report advising the Committee of a number of outstanding electoral issues which had previously been raised with the Local Government Commission for England and which further drew attention to the distortions to the pattern of elector representation which had taken place in recent years as a result of population growth.

RESOLVED that the Electoral Review Steering Group be requested to consider and make recommendations for dealing with the current electoral issues and anomalies outlined in the report submitted.

175. Voluntary Sector Issues in the Run-Up to Unitary Status. (Item 7)

The Committee received a report by the Chief Executive which identified the need to review arrangements for grant aid within the development of a new relationship between the Borough Council and voluntary sector in the run-up to unitary status. The Committee noted that a number of concerns had been expressed by local voluntary organisations regarding the future arrangements for grant aid by the Unitary Authority.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the report be noted and that a Focus Group be established on voluntary sector issues comprised of five Members together with appropriate Officers to consider a review of the Council's grant processes and make proposals for a corporate strategy for grant administration within the Authority; and
- (ii) Councillors Angell, Bayle, Bettison, McCormack and North be appointed to serve on the Focus Group.

176. Standing Order 50 - Designation of Deputy Leader of Council. (Item 8)

The Committee noted that with the substantial increase in workload and responsibilities arising from unitary status including the increasing number of meetings with Outside Bodies, it would be appropriate to formally designate a position of Deputy Leader of the Council.

RECOMMENDED that Standing Order 50 be amended by the addition of a further paragraph as follows:

- (2) A member nominated by a political group having an overall majority of members on the Council as Deputy Leader of that Group shall be designated “Deputy Leader of the Council”. The designated member shall be recognised as acting on behalf of the majority group in the absence of the Leader of that Group.

177. Education Appeals Committees. (Item 9)

The Borough Administrator reported on the requirement for the Council to establish a system of Education Appeals Committees to consider appeals from parents in respect of school admission and school exclusions and further reported on the detailed arrangements proposed including the requirement for formal training of all parties involved. The Committee noted that there were potential difficulties in the recruitment of people to serve on Appeals Committees having regard to the need for Committee Members to have had no prior involvement with appellants.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the Borough Administrator be designated as Clerk to the Appeals Committee.
- (ii) the Clerk to the Appeals Committee be requested to seek nominations for members of the Appeals Committees from members of the Council and from Bracknell Forest Schools and to report back to a future meeting of the Committee.
- (iii) the Borough Administrator advertise for the appointment of Lay Members for Education Appeals Committees.
- (iv) in continuation of existing practice, members of Appeals Committees be eligible for Attendance Allowance and Travelling and Subsistence Allowances on the same basis as the Members Allowances Scheme prevailing at the time.

178. Office Accommodation. (Item 10)

The Committee received the reports of the meetings of the Office Accommodation Focus Group held on 13 June and 14 July 1997.

The Committee noted that that the recommendations arising from the first meeting set out the parameters within which the future development of location options should be pursued whilst the recommendations made at the second meeting reflected the proposals for meeting the Council’s requirements in the best possible way and the resulting actions required.

RESOLVED that

- (i) the reports submitted be,
- (ii) the departmental occupancy of each of the available buildings, in broad terms, be confirmed as identified:-

Time Square - Social Services and Housing/Planning and Transportation/I.T. (part)/plus part on one floor for common services and meeting rooms, (noting that some functions of these departments would continue to be operated from the Depot).

Fitzwilliam House - Education/Leisure

Seymour House - Public Environmental Services/Corporate Services - Legal

Easthampstead House - Chief Executive, Policy Unit, Head of Corporate Services, Personnel, I.T., Administration, Finance, Council Chamber, meeting rooms plus, offices for Mayor and Leaders of Majority and Minority Groups

- (iii). consideration be given to an alternative name for Time Square, possibly by way of a competition for suggested names;
- (iv) the Committee authorise the Borough Engineer & Surveyor, in consultation with the Chairman, to accept the lowest tender for internal repairs and works to Time Square;
- (v) the Committee authorise the Borough I.T. Services Manager, in consultation with the Chairman, to accept the most suitable tender received for PABX equipment for Time Square; and in pursuance of the recommendations from the meeting on 13 July, the Borough Engineer & Surveyor be authorised to serve notice of termination the Council's lease at Ocean House; and
- (vi) the Committee release the funding of £687,000 for Time Square, with expenditure against the tenders as detailed above and on orders where the cost is within delegated authority for acceptance, subject to continuing consultation with the Chairman.

179. **Transition Costs Budget. (Item 11)**

The Borough Finance Officer submitted details of the Transition Costs budget and funding arrangements and drew attention to the need for streamlining the process of approval to budget items during the transitional year.

RESOLVED that

- (i) approval be given to the budget of £5,132,000 for transition costs in 1997/98 excluding the purchase of major assets; and
- (ii) the Chief Executive be authorised to approve expenditure within the funded Transition Costs budget.

180. **Budget Strategy and Preparation 1998/99. (Item 12)**

The Borough Finance Officer drew attention to the need for a sound financial strategy to be put in place for the Unitary Authority which would enable the Authority to use its resources to the maximum benefit of the local community and submitted proposals for the preparation of the 1997/98 budget for the Unitary Authority. The Committee noted that the Council's policy was to avoid distortion to the level of services provided to the public and that current relative levels of spending should therefore be maintained at the beginning of the new year.

RESOLVED that Committees be requested to prepare revenue and capital budgets within the following parameters:

Budget to be based on level of services provided in the current year

No allowance in budget for one-off items

Budget to be prepared from a zero base

Contingencies are only provided for by the Strategy and Policy Committee

Budget to be prepared at November 1997 prices

Central Services not to be allocated throughout the budget (except statutory requirements)

Each Committee to demonstrate that there is no growth included

Budget pressures be identified by each Committee in priority order

181. Small Land Sales Policy. (Item 13)

The Committee noted the background to the current policy with regard to applications from owner occupiers to purchase land in the Council's ownership which adjoins their properties and the arrangements made to deal with such applications.

RESOLVED that

- (i) all applications to purchase land adjacent to residential property and within the Borough Council's ownership be considered on the basis of a presumption in favour of the sale but with due regard to the Technical and Environmental implications of such Disposal; and
- (ii) the practice of charging a non returnable fee of £100 be continued.

182. Terms of Reference of Sub Committees Etc. (Item 14)

The Borough Administrator submitted details of the Terms of Reference and operational responsibilities allocated to the Committee at the annual Council meeting and drew attention to the need to clarify and refine the Terms of Reference and delegated functions of the various Sub Committee and Focus Groups appointed at the annual meeting and subsequently.

RESOLVED

- (i) that the standard Terms of Reference set out in Annexe 1 of the report submitted be adopted with the exception of item 7;
- (ii) that the responsibilities of the Personnel Sub Committee, Finance & Property Sub Committee, Town Centre Sub Committee and the Audit, Performance and Scrutiny Committee be confirmed as set out in Annexes 3, 4, 5 and 6 respectively subject to responsibility for monitoring and development of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy being assigned to the Personnel Sub Committee and to the proposed variation in the Terms of Reference of the Audit, Performance and Scrutiny referred to in the minutes of the meeting of that Committee held on 26 June 1997.

- (iii) that the Policy and Resources Executive Sub Committee be authorised to act on behalf of the Committee, Finance Sub Committee and the Personnel Sub Committee in all matters delegated to those Committees by the Council where a decision by Members is required before the next scheduled meeting.
- (iv) the Terms of Reference set out below be adopted for the time-limited Focus Groups indicated;

Resource Analysis Focus Group

- (i) to scrutinise the proposed establishment of the Unitary Authority and to make recommendations accordingly;
- (ii) to consider proposals for the early recruitment of selective posts and to advise Officers as considered appropriate;
- (iii) to monitor existing establishment posts with a view to ensuring that all job descriptions make the best use of allocated human resources and to make recommendations accordingly.

Office Accommodation Focus Group

To review the overall departmental office accommodation requirements for the Unitary Authority and to make recommendations concerning the allocation of accommodation to departments.

Town Centre (Traffic Management) Focus Group

To examine traffic management and other issues relating to the proposed Town Centre Retail Development Scheme and to make recommendations to the Town Centre Sub Committee prior to entry into the development agreement.

RECOMMENDED that the responsibilities of the Strategy and Policy Committee adopted at the annual Council meeting be varied as follows:

- 2. To have responsibility for overall policy, strategy, performance management and for ensuring that best value is achieved in all aspects of the Council's services.
- 7 To oversee the development of a comprehensive annual plan including partnership and community involvement in all aspects set out therein including targets for the Council's work for the year.

183. **Items submitted for Information.**

The Committee received the following reports submitted for information only.

Performance Indicators (It was noted that the annual increase in local land searches over the period was 44 per month)	Item 15
Transition Plan: Review of Progress	Item 16

184. **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 Items 17 to 20 which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following categories of Schedule 12A of that Act:

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|------|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| (12) | Information relating to the determination of legal proceedings | Items 17 & 18 |
| (9) | Information concerning property transactions | Items 19 & 20 |

185. **Urgent Action Under Delegated Powers. (Item 17)**

The Committee noted urgent action taken under delegated powers and which was exempt from public disclosure in relation to the following matters:

- (i) Tenders for energy supply.
- (ii) Construction related arbitration and litigation.

186. **Items Submitted for Information.**

The Committee noted the following reports which were submitted for information only.

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|-------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Construction related arbitration and litigation | (Item 18) |
| Property Assets | (Item 19) |

187. **The Tea House. (Item 20)**

Consideration was given to a report by the Borough Engineer & Surveyor which outlined the background to the proposed replacement of the Tea House in Bracknell town centre and the possible temporary relocation of the facility pending resolution of outstanding retail redevelopment properties for the town..

RESOLVED that the Tea House Association be consulted on the proposals contained in the report and, subject to an agreement being reached with the Association, approval be given to the following actions:-

- (i) the Borough Engineer and Surveyor be authorised to enter into a lease, on the basis set out in the report, for a unit in the Broadway to provide a temporary alternative location for the Tea House, with a concurrent sub-lease to the Tea House Association;
- (ii) the appropriate consents be applied for such use;
- (iii) a sum of £2,000 from the capital budget be allocated to the Tea House Association to enable them to undertake fitting out works as appropriate;

- (iv) a further report be brought to Committee regarding the detailed Management arrangements to be put in place following consultation with the Tea House Association; and
- (v) arrangements be put in hand to demolish the existing building once the Association has been satisfactorily relocated.

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm and concluded at 10.05pm

CHAIRMAN