

**POLICY & RESOURCES and ENVIRONMENT &
TRANSPORT SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of a MEETING held at COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE on WEDNESDAY, 20TH SEPTEMBER, 2000.

PRESENT: Mrs. V.C.S. Landell Mills (Chairman), Mrs. L.C.S. Bennett, Mr. A.G. Peach, Mrs. P. Rugg, Mrs. M.S.N. Taylor and Mr. D.J. Willmott.

23. **Apologies** An apology for absence was received from Mrs. L.P. Morris.

24. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Resolved: To confirm and sign the minutes of the Sub-Committee meeting held on 28th July, 2000.

25. **Chairman's Announcements** The Chairman introduced and welcomed to the meeting:-

- (1) Frances Taylor and Stephanie Snape from the University of Birmingham who were visiting Wiltshire as part of their review of the County Council's scrutiny arrangements, and
- (2) David Tomlinson, Principal and Managing Director of Keystone Projects Ltd. and the County Council's external consultant on the Property Management Best Value Review.

26. **Capital Programme: Slippage 1999/2000** (Sub. Min. 18/2000) The Sub-Committee received a report by the Director of Corporate Services which set out the comments on the Sub-Committee's draft recommendations on capital programme slippage made by officers involved in the capital programme process.

On considering the officer comments,

Resolved: To agree the following recommendations to the Policy & Resources Committee:-

- (1) *To recognise the term "slippage" is a very broad description and that a degree of financial slippage may always occur.*
- (2) *Not to recommend the setting of an annual slippage target, but through active management of the programme to reduce the slippage of projects to as near as possible to zero.*

- (3) *To ask the Wiltshire and Swindon Partnership Panel if they have examples of a set of simple and practical guidelines on joint working on capital projects, and if not to consider establishing such guidelines with the District Councils, Police, Health and Fire Authorities, which should include:-*
- (i) *the need to check the project management qualifications of appointees in any joint project where the County Council is a significant but junior partner, or someone else is supplying the project manager.*
 - (ii) *in similar circumstances, the need for the Project Manager to report directly to members or an agreed panel of officers at periodic intervals to raise awareness of difficulties, delays and to give emphasis to partnership working.*
- (4) *To support the decision of the Policy & Resources Committee to delegate to the Deputy County Treasurer, as Chairman of the Corporate Capital Group, authority to approve changes in cashflows on schemes that are already in the capital programme.*
- (5) *To support the increased use of the Design and Build approach used by the Environmental Services Department as likely to reduce project slippage in future years.*
- (6) *To recommend the further tightening of the process of assessing potential capital projects. Assessments should include the revenue and capital costs of continuing with current unsatisfactory buildings; the impact on service delivery (both user and staff impacts); the likelihood of the scheme being able to proceed in the year in question (risk identification and assessment). Detailed aspects of scheme assessment include:-*
- (a) *Striking an appropriate balance between the costs of pre-construction surveys of sites, and the risk of unforeseen site costs due to problems that may emerge during construction.*
 - (b) *the prospect of purchasing suitable and affordable sites to be checked before potential schemes are included in the first year of the Capital Programme.*
 - (c) *the completion of public consultation on potential schemes before the scheme is accepted into the first year of the Capital Programme, wherever possible, so that time is not taken up in the year in which the scheme is accepted into the Programme on this pre-construction activity.*
- (7) *Integration of Monitoring Systems:*
- (a) *To implement a monthly capital monitoring reporting system to the Policy & Resources Committee (in the same way that revenue is monitored), starting in July each year. Capital monitoring reports to be shared with all members of the County Council.*

- (b) *To support the proposal that the Corporate Capital (Officer) Group has an overview monitoring role in monitoring and actively managing the Capital Programme throughout the year, including more flexibility to alter the Programme to replace schemes that slip to such an extent that they are unlikely to progress in the year in question.*
 - (c) *To recommend that capital projects are monitored continuously, and that the information is made available on the Intranet, to assist in the Programme's active management.*
 - (d) *To recommend that service department management teams receive regular capital monitoring reports on the schemes for which their committee has responsibility along with revenue monitoring reports.*
- (9) *Not to seek at this stage membership of the officers Corporate Capital Group.*

27. **Best Value Review: Property Management (Stages 3 & 4)** The Sub-Committee received a report by the Director of Environmental Services which advised members of the new purpose and outline specification for a future property management service. It also suggested actions to be undertaken to determine future service delivery options.

The Sub-Committee noted that there was a £65 million backlog of maintenance work outstanding of which £50 million related to school buildings; it was anticipated that monies would be forthcoming from the Department for Education & Employment to help pay for school building maintenance.

The Sub-Committee also received a paper by Mr David Tomlinson of Keystone Projects Ltd., the County Council's external consultant on this Review, which set out the brief for the Best Value External Challenge.

Resolved:

- (1) *To agree the new purpose defined in paragraphs 5 & 6 of the Director's report for the Property Management Service.*
- (2) *To agree the new outline service specifications for the four main areas of property management, as set out in Appendix A of the Director's report.*
- (3) *To approve the outline action plan, as set out in Appendix D of the Director's report, for the remaining stages of the Best Value Review that identified the steps to be taken, and the timetable, for determining future service delivery arrangements.*
- (4) *To highlight the need for special attention being given to maintenance, access and the environmental impact of buildings in Stages 5 and 6 of the Best Value Review.*

- (5) *To create an opportunity for members of the Sub-Committee to see for themselves, at first hand, the maintenance situation by visiting some County Council buildings.*

28. **Rural Transport** Consideration was given to a report by the Director of Environmental Services in response to a request from the Sub-Committee at its meeting on 21st June, 2000. The report focussed on issues surrounding the rural transport access problem and the effect this had on people's lives, and how well the Council's current public transport strategies were dealing with the issues involved.

The Sub-Committee noted that the role of local communities in identifying their transport needs and also in planning and delivering the services would be developed, based on the parish representative network, the community planning process and the work of the Wiltshire Rural Transport Partnership; this Partnership consisted of representatives from the County Council, Swindon Borough Council, the four Wiltshire District Councils, Wiltshire Health Authority, Wiltshire Association of Local Councils and Community First. The Partnership was also examining some non-transport solutions such as the provision of cash dispensers in villages.

It was noted that generally the best results were achieved by building on and improving existing services rather than developing new rural services which at least initially were often poorly patronised.

The Sub-Committee felt that more attention should be given to improving the links between rail and bus services and also to the possibility of developing rural taxi service schemes in certain areas. Co-ordination between statutory authorities and the various interest groups was seen as being of primary importance in building up a satisfactory and well used rural transport system.

Resolved:

- (1) *To note the contents of the Director's report and to request that it be circulated to interested parties.*
- (2) *To highlight the opportunity that our member representatives offer of promoting rural transport issues through the Local Government Association.*
- (3) *To request the Director to present a progress report to the Sub-Committee in March, 2001.*

29. **Training Needs of Members** (Sub. Min. 22(2)/2000) The Sub-Committee received a report by the Director of Corporate Services.

Resolved: *To consider the Director's report in conjunction with the resolution of the Education & Social Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee about resources for scrutiny later in the meeting. (See Minute No. 31)*

30. **Future Work Programme** On considering a report by the Director of Corporate Services,

Resolved:

- (1) *To adopt the work programme as set out below as the basis for the Sub-Committee's work until 31st March, 2001:-*

<i>Meeting Date</i>	<i>Best Value Review Items</i>	<i>Topics Chosen by the Sub-Committee</i>
27 October 2000	Stage 2 - Waste Management Transport	e'government
24 November 2000	Stage 2 – County Farms Stage 2 – Land-Use Planning Stage 4 – Political Structures/ Corporate Governance	e'government
26 January 2001	Stage 4 – Waste Management	Recycling targets and links to Waste Strategy/Waste local Plan
2 March 2001	Stage 6 – Political Structures/ Corporate Governance Stage 6 - Property Stage 4 - Land-Use Planning Stage 4 – County Farms	Rural Transport

- (2) *To confirm the descriptions of the questions at paragraphs 2(a) and (b) of the Director's report as being the questions that Members of the Sub-Committee wanted to ask under the topics of Waste Management and IT Strategy & e'government.*
- (3) *To add "joined up" working between the County Council and the four Wiltshire District Councils as a topic for scrutiny.*

31. **Resources for Scrutiny** The Sub-Committee considered:-

- (1) a report by the Director of Corporate Services on training needs for members (referred to in Minute No.29/200 above), and
- (2) the following resolution made by the Education & Social Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee at their meeting on 6th September, 2000:-

"To recommend the Policy and Resources Committee, via the Policy and Resources and Environment and Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee, to give early consideration to the need for adequate resources to enable the scrutiny function to be more effective, particularly in

- (i) *supporting the work of members of the sub-committees between the meetings on specific topics;*

- (ii) taking a more proactive role, including developing the ideas expressed by members;
- (iii) liaising with the service departments, who should provide a contact officer for members on scrutiny;
- (iv) ensuring that reports highlight the topics to be discussed by the scrutiny sub-committees; and,
- (v) providing training and development opportunities for members and officers so that their skills can be further improved.”

The Chairman reminded members that Frances Taylor and Stephanie Snape were visiting Wiltshire to examine the County Council’s scrutiny arrangements and would be making their recommendations in due course. In particular, they would be looking at training requirements and would be taking note of the views of the two scrutiny sub-committees.

During the ensuing discussions, it was acknowledged that there was a significant training need for both members and officers both in the culture of scrutiny and also in servicing scrutiny committees. Mr. Willmott reported that these views were widely expressed during a seminar on scrutiny arrangements he had recently attended at Warwick. Furthermore, the Sub-Committee viewed with concern the lack of resources to implement the scrutiny function and considered that scrutiny arrangements should be costed as part of the assessment.

Resolved:

To recommend the Policy & Resources Committee, via the Education & Social Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee, to identify the resource needs and to seek the budgetary resources to enable the scrutiny function to be more effective and independent, particularly in

- (1) *supporting the work of members of the sub-committees between the meetings on specific topics;*
- (2) *taking a more proactive role, including developing the ideas expressed by members;*
- (3) *liaising with the service departments, who should provide a contact officer for members on scrutiny;*
- (4) *ensuring that reports highlight the topics to be discussed by the scrutiny sub-committees; and,*
- (5) *providing training and development opportunities for members and officers so that their skills can be further improved, initially with the provision of a training seminar to be held before Christmas.*

(Duration of meeting: 10.30am – 1.10pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Roger Bishton, of the Committee Services Unit, direct line (01225) 713035.

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114/713115.

