

POLICY & RESOURCES and ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT
SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a MEETING held at COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE on FRIDAY, 24TH NOVEMBER, 2000.

PRESENT: Mr RJ Baddeley, Mrs LCS Bennett, Mrs VCS Landell Mills, Mr AG Peach, Mrs P Rugg, Mrs MSN Taylor and Mr DJ Willmott.

Mr PG Allnatt also attended the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 26.

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40. **Membership of the Sub-Committee** The Director of Corporate Services reported that, at their meetings on 21st November, 2000, the Policy & Resources and the Environment & Transport Committees appointed the following members to serve on the Sub-Committee:-

Conservative (4)

Mr RJ Baddeley
Mr AG Peach
Mrs P Rugg
Mr DJ Willmott

Labour (1)

Mrs MSN Taylor

Liberal Democrat (2)

Mrs LCS Bennett
Mrs VCS Landell Mills

41. **Election of Chairman**

Resolved: To elect Mrs VCS Landell Mills as Chairman of the Sub-Committee.

Mrs VCS Landell Mills in the Chair

42. **Election of Vice-Chairman**

Resolved: To elect Mr DJ Willmott as Vice-Chairman of the Sub-Committee.

43. **Attendance of Non-Members of the Sub-Committee** Members requested some clarification about the validity of non-members attending meetings of Scrutiny Sub-Committees especially if they were members of one of the service committees being scrutinised.

The Chief Executive did not consider this situation to be problematic as non-members could not take part in the proceedings of a meeting unless invited to do so by the

chairman. He offered to arrange for some guidance notes to be prepared for members of both Scrutiny Sub-Committees.

44. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Resolved: To confirm and sign the minutes of the Sub-Committee meeting held on 27th October, 2000, subject to the following corrections:-

Minute No. 38: E-Local Government in Wiltshire Amend resolutions b) and f) to read as follows:-

- “b) To agree that officers continue discussions with Somerset County Council, the South West counties joint e-strategy project and with the Wiltshire District Councils but to delay decisions about committing resources until the outcome of the Invest to Save bids are known in December, 2000.*
- f) To fully investigate partnership working arrangements by other local authorities (e.g. by Liverpool City Council and the Isle of Wight Council) and public sector organisations about developing E-Government Strategy.”*

45. **Best Value Review: Planning Services** The Director of Environmental Services presented a report which:-

- described the current Planning Services,
- recommended the scope of a Best Value Review for Planning Services, and
- sought approval to proceed with the Best Value Review.

The Chief Planner gave a short presentation which set out the nature and provision of the planning service in Wiltshire. The presentation also provided some input, output and outcome measures which compared the service provided by Wiltshire County Council with other authorities.

It was noted that, since Local Government Reorganisation in 1974, there had been a statutorily defined split between County, District and Borough Council planning functions. As a consequence of the distribution of planning services among the various authorities, the Best Value Review of the County Council's Planning Service was complex. Outcomes of this Review would be dependent, to a certain extent, upon actions taken by these other authorities but unfortunately it had not been possible to synchronise the timing for all the Planning Function Best Value Reviews within the Wiltshire area.

Members were of the opinion that a more proactive approach to consultation on planning proposals should be carried out at an early stage of the process particularly with parish councils. Examples were given of previous controversial proposals that would have benefited from the County Council taking the initiative in organising with the local member a public meeting. It was acknowledged, though, that staff numbers placed a constraint on what was possible. A good example was the 'Planning for Real' exercise carried out recently by West Wiltshire District Council whereby local

consultations were carried out on Local Plan proposals prior to them being considered by the District Council. The Waste Local Plan Forum was offered as another example of good practice.

It was considered that more work needed to be carried out to improve the level of active collaboration with local authorities and other public bodies such as the Environment Agency, the Regional Development Agency and the South West Regional Planning Conference. There was some evidence of duplication of effort on some issues, for example the consultation processes, which unfortunately fragmented the overall service. Furthermore, the problem was exacerbated by these bodies setting different priorities and timescales.

Resolved: To agree the proposed scope of the Planning Services Best Value Review to proceed on the previously defined programme for completion by June, 2001, subject to the following provisos:-

- 1) The Sub-Committee expressed concern that this review was not co-ordinated with other, related, reviews by District and Borough Councils, and asked that its concern should be reported to the Wiltshire Local Government Association.*
- 2) The review should consider the scope for improving the consultation process in the widest sense so that the residents of Wiltshire are made aware of current planning issues and are given the opportunity to contribute to the process.*
- 3) The review should examine the role of the local member in planning issues, especially with reference to future political arrangements.*
- 4) The review should fully engage “stakeholders”.*
- 5) The review should examine the scope for wider use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and the Internet, to provide stronger links with national data sets, and also to provide local members and the public with integrated information about planning issues in their areas.*
- 6) An examination should be made of the adequacy of employing only one enforcement officer.*

45. Future Work Programme

Resolved:

- 1) To adopt the following work programme as the basis for the Sub-Committee’s agenda for the meeting due to be held on Friday, 26th January, 2001:-*
 - a) Recycling targets and links to Waste Strategy/Waste Local Plan*
 - b) E’Government*

- c) *Best Value Review: Property Management (Stages 3 & 4) – Members’ Visits to County Council Premises*
- d) *INLOGOV Study – Consultants’ Report*
- 2) *To agree the unavoidable slippage of the following Best Value Review items:-*
 - a) *Stage 4 – Political Structures/Corporate Governance*
 - b) *Stage 4 – Waste Management*
- 3) *To hold meetings of the Sub-Committee on the following dates in March, 2001:-*

Friday, 9th March, 2001 starting at 2.30pm (in place of the meeting scheduled to be held on 2nd March)

Friday, 23rd March, 2001 starting at 10.30am
- 4) *To adopt the following work programme as the basis for the Sub-Committee’s work during March, 2001:-*
 - a) *Best Value Review: Stage 4 – Political Structures/Corporate Governance – interim report*
 - b) *Best Value Review: Stage 4 – Waste Management*
 - c) *Best Value Review: Stage 6 – Property*
 - d) *Best Value Review: Stage 4 – Planning Services*
 - e) *Best Value Review: Stage 4 – County Farms*
 - f) *Rural Transport*

(Duration of meeting: 10.30am – 12.15pm)

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

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