

**STRATEGY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** 17 March 2014  
5.00pm - 7.10 pm

**Present:** Councillors Pitt (Chair), Cantrill (Vice-Chair), Ashton, Benstead, Boyce, Herbert, Owers and Rosenstiel

Leader of the Council: Councillor Bick

Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Resources: Councillor Smith

**Officers Present:**

Chief Executive: Antoinette Jackson

Director of Customer and Community Services: Liz Bisset

Director of Environment: Simon Payne

Director of Business Transformation: Ray Ward

Head of Revenues and Benefits: Alison Cole

Head of Property Services: Dave Prinsep

Safer Communities Section Manager: Lynda Kilkelly

Benefit Manager: Naomi Armstrong

Local Taxation Manager: Kevin Jay

Strategy and Partnerships Manager: David Kidston

NRPS Coordinator: Maria Lambrou

Committee Manager: Glenn Burgess

<b>FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL</b>
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**14/22/SR Apologies for absence**

No apologies were received.

**14/23/SR Declarations of interest**

No interests were declared.

**14/24/SR Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meetings held on 20 January 2014 and 7 February 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**14/25/SR Public Questions**

None were received.

**14/26/SR Customer Services and Resources Portfolio Plan 2014/15**

**Matter for Decision:** To consider the draft Customer Services and Resources Portfolio Plan 2014-15. The Plan sets out the strategic objectives for the portfolio for the year ahead, describes the context in which the portfolio is being delivered and details the activities required to deliver the outcomes and the vision.

**Decision of the Executive Councillor:**

The Executive Councillor resolved to:

- i. Approve the Customer Services and Resources Portfolio Plan 2014-15.

**Reasons for the Decision:** As set out in the officer's report

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** As set out in the officer's report

**Scrutiny Considerations:**

The Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Resources introduced the Portfolio Plan for 2014/15.

In response to member's questions the Director of Business Transformation said the following:

- i. A Transformation Programme Office manages the interplay between multiple projects; identifying the work required and aligning it against the Council's budget and policy framework.
- ii. With regard to Service Reviews, support was currently being provided for ICT Strategy, shared Legal Services and the merging of Waste Services. A full list of current and future Service Reviews was included in the Council's Budget Setting Report (BSR).

In response to member's questions the Chief Executive said the following:

- iii. A significant work programme was in place to manage the implementation of Individual Electoral Registration (IER). The Electoral Services Manager had met with 22 of the 30 Colleges in the City to discuss the implications of IER on the student population, and was also involved in national debate on the issue.
- iv. Would be happy to provide a more detailed briefing on request.

Councillor Rosenstiel emphasised that, whilst a good dialogue had been established with the Colleges, IER would be a major and costly piece of work for the Council.

In response to member's questions the Head of Revenues and Benefits said the following:

- v. Provided an update about the migration of housing benefit to universal credit, along with the uncertainty in relation to timetable for housing benefit and pension credit.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the recommendation and endorsed it by 4 votes to 0.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

**Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted):**

Not applicable.

**14/27/SR Discretionary Housing Payment & Welfare Reform Transitional Funding Update Report**

**Matter for Decision:** The report provided an update on the use of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP), current DHP funding and new additional funding to help with the housing needs of those affected by housing benefit reforms.

**Decision of the Executive Councillor:**

The Executive Councillor resolved to:

- i. Acknowledge the impact of the welfare reforms and the support given to tenants affected by the changes.
- ii. Approve the carry forward to 2014/15 of the unspent additional contribution (see 3.12 of the officer's report).
- iii. Approve the transfer of additional contribution allocation for 2014/15 to the DHP budget from the DCLG homeless prevention fund (see 3.13 of the officer's report).

**Reasons for the Decision:** As set out in the officer's report

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** As set out in the officer's report

**Scrutiny Considerations:**

The committee received a report from the Head of Revenues and Benefits. A minor typographical error was highlighted under 4.2 of the officer's report. The government contribution for Cambridge City Council was £182,516 (not £185,516 as noted in the report).

In response to member's questions the Head of Revenues and Benefits and the Director of Customer and Community Services said the following:

- i. Under 3.9 of the officer's report the '136 other reasons' for awarding DHP could include:
  - A child about to reach the age of 16.
  - Foster carers with disabled children.
  - People looking to move house or take in a lodger.
- ii. As the Government's award can vary from year to year it was difficult for Local Authorities to commit to longer term DHP awards. The City Council did however recognise that for some residents their circumstances were unlikely to change from year to year (i.e. disabled residents). A simplified review process had therefore been implemented for these cases.
- iii. 19 DHP awards had been made for moving to alternative accommodation, and officers were currently looking at ways to speed up the process.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits agreed to provide the following information to the committee outside of the meeting:

- The number of people that had moved to alternative accommodation outside of the city, if this was available.
- The number of people that had applied and been unsuccessful.
- The number of people that were seeking mutual exchanges.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the recommendations and endorsed them unanimously.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

**Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted):**

Not applicable.

**14/28/SR NDR Retail Relief Policy**

**Matter for Decision:** Adoption of a policy to award “Retail Relief” in accordance with the Discretionary Rate Relief powers as contained within Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended) for the years 2014-15 and 2015-16.

**Decision of the Executive Councillor:**

The Executive Councillor resolved to:

- i. Adopt the Retail Relief policy (appendix A of the officer’s report) for qualifying businesses in occupation of retail premises which have a rateable value of £50,000 or less, for the financial years 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 and 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 only.
- ii. Delegate authority to the Head of Revenues and Benefits to award the “Retail Relief” where a ratepayer demonstrates their entitlement.

**Reasons for the Decision:** As set out in the officer’s report

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** As set out in the officer’s report

**Scrutiny Considerations:**

The committee received a report from the Head of Revenues and Benefits.

In response to member's questions the Head of Revenues and Benefits said the following:

- i. The 'Retail Relief' awarded by the Council would be fully reimbursed by the Government if made in accordance with the Government Guidance.
- ii. State Aid would apply when granting 'Retail Relief' and ratepayers would be required to complete a declaration to confirm that they would not exceed state aid limits through the granting of this relief.
- iii. Franchises would be eligible subject to not exceeding state aid thresholds.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the recommendations and endorsed them unanimously.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

**Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted):**

Not applicable.

**14/29/SR Disposal of Site K1, Orchard Park**

**Matter for Decision:** Approval of the conditional disposal of Site K1 to an enabling development partner and delegated authority to the Head of Property Services to accept an offer for the site.

**Decision of the Executive Councillor:**

The Executive Councillor resolved to:

- i. Approve the conditional disposal of Site K1 as set out in paragraph 3.8 of the officer's report.

- ii. Delegate authority to the Head of Property Services in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Resources, the Chair and Opposition Spokesperson for Strategy and Resources Committee to accept an offer for Site K1, Orchard Park.

**Reasons for the Decision:** As set out in the officer's report

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** As set out in the officer's report

**Scrutiny Considerations:**

The committee received a report from the Head of Property Services.

In response to member's questions the Head of Property Services said the following:

- i. Extensive marketing of the scheme had been undertaken resulting in 36 very committed cohousing members. The waiting list had now been closed.
- ii. Not all of the 36 cohousing members interested in Site K1 were based in the Cambridge area.
- iii. 37 units were currently proposed but this could rise.
- iv. The completed units would be sold to cohousing members by way of a long lease and this would be managed by a resident's management company or similar.
- v. A formal governance structure was in place and managed by the cohousing group themselves. Meetings are held every 2 weeks to discuss how the scheme will operate.
- vi. Due to the VAT implications the Council had to involve a Development Partner.
- vii. Potential Developer Partners would benefit from having a readymade pool of buyers already committed to the scheme.
- viii. The Development Partner would have to work to a design brief agreed by the cohousing group.
- ix. Cohousing members were required to pay an initial £100 for an expression of interest and this rose to £250 from September 2013. Moving forward they would pay relevant deposits etc as part of the usual processes for buying a house 'off plan'.
- x. Whilst the site would be initially marketed at offers above £3m the market would determine its final price.

- xi. Extensive marketing and a two stage selection process would ensure the best Development Partner is appointed.

The Executive Councillor, supported by Councillor Cantrill, emphasised that whilst the Council would seek to maximise the revenue from this site, other considerations such as the need to build a cohesive community would be a factor.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the recommendations and endorsed them unanimously.

The Executive Councillor approved the recommendation.

**Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Executive Councillor (and any Dispensations Granted):**

Not applicable.

**14/30/SR Strategy Portfolio Plan 2014/15**

**Matter for Decision:** To consider the draft Strategy Portfolio Plan 2014-15. The Plan sets out the strategic objectives for the portfolio for the year ahead, describes the context in which the portfolio is being delivered and details the activities required to deliver the outcomes and the vision.

**Decision of the Leader:**

The Leader resolved to:

- i. Approve the Strategy Portfolio Plan 2014-15.

**Reasons for the Decision:** As set out in the officer's report

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** As set out in the officer's report

**Scrutiny Considerations:**

The Leader introduced the Portfolio Plan for 2014/15.



The Scrutiny Committee considered the recommendation and endorsed it by 4 votes to 0.

The Leader approved the recommendation.

**Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Leader (and any Dispensations Granted):**

Not applicable.

**14/31/SR Single Equalities Scheme Annual Report 2013 - 2014**

**Matter for Decision:** The Single Equality Scheme Annual Report reports on progress against actions for the second year of the scheme (2013/14); highlights some additional achievements during the year; and proposes a number of actions for the third year of the scheme (2014/15)

**Decision of the Leader:**

The Leader resolved to:

- i. Note the progress and achievements during the second year of the City Council's Single Equality Scheme.
- ii. Approve the actions for the third year of the City Council's Single Equality Scheme (as set out in Appendix A of the officer's report).
- iii. Approve the proposed amendment of the Terms of Reference for the Equalities Panel to reflect the role of the panel in reviewing and quality assuring Equality Impacts Assessments.

**Reasons for the Decision:** As set out in the officer's report

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** As set out in the officer's report

**Scrutiny Considerations:**

The committee received a report from the Strategy and Partnerships Manager.

In response to member's questions the Chief Executive said the following:

- i. As part of the process of looking at shared services Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) would be undertaken to identify any potential issues. Checks and balances would also be in place to ensure the Council's overall policy objectives were maintained in any shared service arrangements.

In response to member's questions the Strategy and Partnerships Manager said the following:

- i. Whilst the report was specifically responding to the protected characteristics as set out in the Equalities Act, there was a recognition of the impact of socioeconomic factors. It was suggested that this could be set out more clearly in future reports.
- ii. A wider range of information would be discussed at Equality Panel meetings.

In response to member's questions the Chief Executive and the Director of Customer and Community Services said the following:

- i. Whilst the report was specifically responding to the protected characteristics as set out in the Equalities Act, there was a recognition of the issues around discrimination against the travelling community.
- ii. Cambridge City Council's Children and Young People's Participation Service (ChYpPS) had undertaken work with the travelling community and this had featured heavily in last year's report.
- iii. The travelling community had been involved in previous Black History Month and the Holocaust Memorial Day events.
- iv. Detailed work had been undertaken by the Head of Strategic Housing on identifying traveler's pitches. This information could be provided to the committee outside of the meeting.
- v. Agreed to review the work currently undertaken with the travelling community.
- vi. As the Corn Exchange would not become a Trust until March 2015 Councillors would be involved with the Trust Working Group to ensure the equalities ethos of the Council was maintained.

In response to comments made by the committee the Leader of the Council said the following:

- i. Equalities work had been mainstreamed across all departments to ensure that it was engrained into everything the Council did.
- ii. Culturally the City had achieved a lot with regards to equalities.
- iii. When investigating shared services it was important to ensure that the City Council's good work on equalities influenced others ways of working.
- iv. Supported a review of the work currently being undertaken with the travelling community.
- v. Protected characteristics are sometimes the factors driving socioeconomic disadvantage.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the recommendations and endorsed them unanimously.

The Leader approved the recommendation.

**Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Leader (and any Dispensations Granted):**

Not applicable.

**14/32/SR Cambridge Community Safety Plan 2014-17**

**Matter for Decision:** The draft 3 year Cambridge Community Safety Plan 2014-17 (Year One) was presented to the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee for consideration and comment.

**Decision of the Leader:**

The Leader resolved to:

- i. Endorse the proposed priorities as set out in section 3.3 of the officer's report.

**Reasons for the Decision:** As set out in the officer's report

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** As set out in the officer's report

**Scrutiny Considerations:**

The committee received a report from the Director of Customer and Community Services.

The committee made the following comments on the report

- i. Welcomed the inclusion of domestic abuse as a Tactical Priority.

In response to member's questions the Director of Customer and Community Services said the following:

- ii. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had previously questioned the role of Community Safety Partnerships, but through on-going discussions with stakeholders, he was now better informed as to their benefits.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the recommendation and endorsed it unanimously.

The Leader approved the recommendation.

**Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Leader (and any Dispensations Granted):**

Not applicable

**14/33/SR Neighbourhood Resolution Panel Scheme**

**Matter for Decision:** To note progress on the Neighbourhood Resolution Panel Scheme (NRPS) and agree recommendations for further development of the scheme.

**Decision of the Leader:**

The Leader resolved to:

- ii. Note the Neighbourhood Resolution Panel Scheme (NRPS) Progress Report (Appendix 1 of the officer's report) which sets out progress since July 2012 with regard to the establishment of the NRPS.
- iii. Endorse progress made and the recommendations for further development of the scheme

**Reasons for the Decision:** As set out in the officer's report

**Any alternative options considered and rejected:** As set out in the officer's report

**Scrutiny Considerations:**

The committee received a report from the Safer Communities Section Manager and the NRPS Coordinator.

In response to member's questions the Safer Communities Section Manager and the NRPS Coordinator said the following:

- i. Whilst the initial setting up of NRPS had been very time consuming and was still in its early stages of development, a robust scheme was now in place.
- ii. The scheme was dependent on an active group of volunteers and at present numbers were limited.
- iii. Whilst it was hoped that each referral could be turned around within 6 weeks, this was dependent on the level of support that each party needed.
- iv. A 6 week NRPS turnaround was much quicker than if the issue had been processed by the Police or the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Team.
- v. The scheme began to process referrals in July 2013 and to date there had been 10 referrals.
- vi. Once the scheme was more established it was expected to deal with up to 3 per month.
- vii. A further aim of the scheme was to reduce reoffending and this was being achieved.

The Leader spoke strongly in support of NRPS and emphasised that the objective of the scheme was to bring about a culture change in dealing with first time offenders which was never likely to happen overnight. The NRPS Coordinator had worked closely with the Police at every level to promote the scheme and they were now on board and supportive of the scheme.

The Scrutiny Committee considered the recommendations and endorsed them by 4 votes to 0.

The Leader approved the recommendation.

**Conflicts of Interest Declared by the Leader (and any Dispensations Granted):**

Not applicable.

The meeting ended at 7.10 pm

**CHAIR**