

AUDIT AND RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 1 April 2004 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Caborn (Chairman); Councillors Ashford, Mrs Blacklock, Davis, Gill, Mrs Knight, Pratt and Mrs Sawdon.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Crowther (Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Strategic Leadership)

1055. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Ashford declared a personal interest in respect of item 16 of the agenda for the Executive meeting of 5 April 2004, regarding Kenilworth Town Centre.

1056. **PROGRESS REPORT ON ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN AND ASSOCIATED WORK**

The Committee considered a report from the Asset Management Steering Group providing an update on progress of implementing the Asset Management Plan and associated work. The report also informed Members of the current situation with regard to matters relating to potential disposals, acquisitions and possible development.

During discussion of the report, the Committee requested that information should be circulated regarding grant applications for Spencer's Yard.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

1057. **INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY AND PLAN 2004/05 – 2006/07**

The Committee considered a report from Finance regarding the proposed Internal Audit Strategy and Plan for the period between 2004 and 2007. This was an important element in providing the required independent and objective opinion to the organisation on its control environment.

The role of Internal Audit was to examine, evaluate and report on the adequacy of the control arrangements as a contribution to the proper, economic, efficient and effective use of resources. The proposed Strategy would deliver this assurance over the next three years and would meet the requirements of the Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government which had been published recently by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

RECOMMENDED that the Internal Audit Strategy and Plan be approved.

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1058. RESOURCES ELEMENT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

The Committee considered a report from the Strategic Director and Chief Financial Officer, setting out the current view of officers against the resources component which would be assessed by the external auditors as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). The report contained an analysis of the scoring for the resources element of the CPA.

With regard to the indicator concerning governance arrangements, the Committee felt that it would be beneficial for Members of the Council to receive further training regarding the various issues contained under this heading. Overall, the Committee believed that the assessment reflected a promising position in terms of the CPA.

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted.

1059. REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE WORK OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

The Committee considered a report from the Corporate Management Team and the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees regarding

methods of improving the effectiveness of the work of the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Members of the Committees had expressed concern about the effectiveness of how the scrutiny function operated within the Council. This was despite having notable successes and undertaking some good investigative and policy work.

A survey had been carried out with Members and the results were reported to the meeting. Some of the concerns which had been expressed were set out in the report, including the ability of the Committees to influence the Executive, and the amount of time spent examining the agenda items which limited the ability of the Committees to undertake other work.

It had also been suggested that either the Environment or Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committees should change their dates of meetings, so that one of them met on the same evening as the Audit and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This would assist with security arrangements and make it a little easier for substitutes to be appointed when Members of the Committee were unavailable.

The Peer Assessment, which was currently being carried out had made reference to the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and it was likely that the Assessor's report would comment on this issue.

The Committee suggested that the Executive could request the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to carry out more work for them in support of their decision making process, and also to assist with formulating policy.

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The Chairman reported that all the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees would be meeting again on 29 April 2004, to develop the comments and proposals which had been made.

RECOMMENDED that the position be noted.

1060. END OF TERM REPORT FOR 2003/04 AND WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2004/05

The Committee considered a report from the Strategic Director and Chief Financial Officer setting out details of the matters which had been considered during the past year by the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees, and outlining a draft work plan for the Committee during the coming year.

In addition to the topics contained within the draft work plan, the Committee suggested a number of additional items, as follows:-

(a) Finance strategies:

The Strategic Director would be preparing a financial strategy for consideration by the Executive, possibly in June, and it was suggested that its preparation could be explained to a small group of Committee Members. This was agreed and Councillors Davis, Gill, Mrs Knight and Pratt were appointed to this sub-group.

(b) Contracts:

It was agreed to set up a sub-group to consider the contracts drafted by Legal Services.

(c) The Cultural Quarter:

It was agreed to set up a sub-group to consider the Cultural Quarter in detail once the report had been prepared for the Executive's consideration.

(d) Court Street:

A sub-group could be established to consider the Court Street project.

It was agreed that once the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees had been agreed by the Annual Council Meeting on 12 May 2004, the various policies within the remits of the relevant Portfolio Holders should be circulated to the Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to enable them to focus specifically on the various policies within their remit.

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RECOMMENDED that

(1) the report be noted and that the work plan, incorporating the comments made at the meeting, be approved, and

(2) the membership of the sub groups referred to in (b) to (d) above be considered by the newly appointed Committee.

1061. EXECUTIVE MEETING – MONDAY, 8 MARCH 2004

The Committee considered the minutes of the Executive meeting held on Monday, 8 March 2004, which came within its remit.

RECOMMENDED that the minutes be noted.

1062. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS AND REPORTS)

The Committee considered the items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on 5 April 2004, which came within its remit. As a result, the following comments were made for forwarding to the Executive:

Item Number 8 – Key Principles for the Introduction of Decimalisation of On Street Parking

The Committee supported the recommendations in the report subject to assurances being given that any surplus of income over expenditure would be used for the purposes of enforcement, improving car parks and transport.

Item Number 12 – Hill Close Garden Trust Heritage Lottery Fund Application

The Committee supported the recommendations subject to:

- (a) a review of the financial contributions being carried out annually; and
- (b) a review of the finances of the Trust being carried out in 2006/07 to substantiate the need for financial support.

1063. PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within paragraph 9 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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1064. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS AND REPORTS)

The Committee considered the confidential items and reports which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on 5 April 2004 which came within its remit. As a result, the following comments were made for forwarding to the Executive:-

Item Number 16 – Kenilworth Town Centre

The Committee supported the recommendations subject to a robust financial model being produced to explore the financial implications for the Council.

Item Number 17 – Kenilworth Town Centre

The Committee supported the recommendations subject to a robust financial model being produced to explore the financial implications for the Council and to full consultations being carried out.

(The meeting ended at 8.25 pm)

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