



FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the OPEN section of the meeting of the FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE held on Monday 10th February 2003 at 7.30 p.m. at the Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB

PRESENT: Councillor Toby Eckersley (Chair)
Councillor Lisa Rajan (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Fiona Colley, Stephen Flannery Jonathan Hunt,
Alison Moise, Gavin O'Brien and Andy Simmons.

ALSO PRESENT Councillor James Gurling (Executive Member for Service Delivery)

ALSO PRESENT: Robert Bollen – Corporate Strategy Officer
Rachel Prosser – Borough Solicitor's Office
Katherine Maddock-Lyon – Consultant, Corporate IT
Zbish Przekop – Head of Information Technology
Marie-Helen Baneth – P.A Consulting
Fitzroy Williams – Constitutional Support Officer

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for lateness were received on behalf of Councillor James Gurling.

CONFIRMATION OF VOTING MEMBERS

The Members listed as being present were confirmed as the Voting Members

NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS AS URGENT

The Chair accepted the following items as late and urgent for consideration of the Customer Service Centre.

- Replacement of the Chairs note and statement of Wandsworth's Customer Call Centre position.
- Major contracts up for Re-negotiation 2003/04 (first draft).
- Best Value Review Programme.
- Southwark Council's ICT infrastructure February 2003.
- Capital bid for e-Government.
- Briefing Note to Finance & General Purposes Scrutiny Sub-Committee (10.02.2003) from Borough Solicitor and Secretary. (Closed paper)

DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

There were none.

RECORDING OF MEMBERS' VOTES

Council Procedure Rule 1.17(5) allows a Member to record her/his vote in respect of any motions and amendments. Such requests are detailed in the following Minutes. Should a Member's vote be recorded in respect to an amendment, a copy of the amendment may be found in the Minute File and is available for public inspection.

The Sub-Committee considered the items set out on the agenda, a copy of which has been incorporated in the Minute File. Each of the following paragraphs relates to the item bearing the same number on the agenda.

MINUTES

RESOLVED:

1. That the Minutes of the meeting held on 4th February 2003 be agreed and signed as a correct record of proceedings.

The Chair informed the Sub-Committee that the written answers in respect of the oral answers given by the Executive Member for Finance would be attached to the 4th February 2003 minutes.

54. CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE (see pages 1-11)

The Sub-Committee noted the replacement item a, "Chairs note and statement from Wandsworth Council on Customer Call Centres".

The Sub-Committee noted the paper submitted from the Assistant Chief Executive, Improvement & Development outlining the responses to questions raised at the meeting 21st January 2003 regarding customer call centres.

The Head of Information Technology circulated two papers :-

- Capital bid for e-Government
- Southwark Council's ICT infrastructure February 2003.

The officers briefed members on the background to the Capital Bid for e-Government and then showed that Southwark needed to invest in its ICT infrastructure as this had been an area of under investment identified by Southwark's CPA. A model of the Capital bid was presented to Members, Southwark is presently at the bottom of the diagrammatic pyramid which shows required investment in e-Government and in turn would need to plan investment over a number of years to reach the top of the Pyramid.

Investment would be needed for the following:-

- Re-cabling
- Document Management
- Record Management
- Upgrades for the next two years
- Telephone network
- Integrated voice messaging

The officer reported that there were benefits of an integrated voice and data network with new telephony hardware such as reduced call charges and improved data service to accompany voice connections.

Officers informed Members that any contract between the Council and the Call Centre Partner was likely to be in the region of 10 to 12 years in length.

The officer reported that Southwark needed to utilise new technology; this would allow applications to run across the Council, which in turn would increase departmental sharing of information. It was reported that there was a high level of obsolescence of equipment, and that this was likely to increase over the next couple of years.

The officer informed Members that £2 million would be required from the general fund.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Sub-Committee invites the Executive to undertake further work to look at how much of the Capital costs of upgrading the Council's IT infrastructure, both generally and for the purposes of Customer Service Centre, can be met from prospective CSC partners.
2. The Sub-Committee recommends that as early as possible the Executive should seek clarification on what should form the basis of a business case for a local authority implementing a customer service centre.
3. The Sub Committee recommends that the Executive produce a schedule of work setting out what needs to be done to reach the stage where a business case can be produced.
4. That the Sub-Committee invites the Executive to satisfy itself at the earliest opportunity that the business case for the Customer Service Centre is sound.

These recommendations were arrived at after a vote, with the chair using his casting vote in favour of the above recommendations.

5. That the legal advice given under the closed session be noted with regards to purchasing the Westminster Template.
6. That the progress on the Customer Service Centre be thoroughly reviewed by the Executive during June 2003 and revisited by this Sub-Committee after the Executive has considered this item.
7. The Sub-Committee requested that officers provide an update on the Service Centre for June meeting.
8. The Sub-Committee noted the Chair's report back regarding

the recent visit to the Westminster Call Centre.

9. The Sub-Committee noted the Assistant Chief Executive's report on the visit to Westminster Call Centre.
10. That the Assistant Chief Executive provide a one page summary on Housing repairs issues including the Best Value Review and the Environmental first steps to a Corporate Customer Service Centre for information within the next 10 days.
11. The Sub-Committee noted the officers detailed breakdown of the information contained on the Service Centre costs for year 1.

BRIEFING NOTE FROM THE BOROUGH SOLICITOR & SECRETARY

It was moved, seconded and:-

RESOLVED: That under Section 100a of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 10.4, category 9 of the access to information Procedure rules.

The legal officer provided the Sub-Committee with a briefing note from the Borough Solicitor and Secretary, which was circulated to all members of the Sub-Committee. Members were informed that officers were investigating options for joint working, the paper was noted.

55. WORK PROGRAMME (see pages 12-15)

District Auditor's Letter

The Sub-Committee noted that the District Auditor's letter would be considered at the Executive on the 25th February 2003. Members agreed to invite the District Auditor, the Executive Member for Finance and Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to attend the next meeting of the Sub-Committee scheduled for 18th March 2003.

The Sub-Committee requested that the papers be circulated to Members in good time to enable members to identify topics and prepare any questions.

Major Contracts up for Re-Negotiation 2003/04 (First Draft)

The Sub-Committee noted the “Award of Insurance Contract excluding Property” and decided to consider this item at the next scheduled meeting on the 18.03.2003. Members expressed an interest in looking at ways claims were handled and to look at complaints. Members requested that Keith Brown (Chief Finance Officer) and Eric Brodie (Internal Audit) be invited to the meeting to consider the following key points of the contract:-

- Costs
- Excess
- Financial Aspects
- Engagement of claims handling agent

Members requested a complete list of main contracts likely to be let over the next 6 months and requested that this information be included on the work programme.

Best Value Review of Voluntary Sector Grants

The Sub-Committee agreed to consider this item at the meeting scheduled for 22nd April 2003. Member requested that Nathalie Hadjifotiou (Head of Social Inclusion) and Mike Carroll (Best Value Manager) be invited to the meeting when considering this item.

Executive Scrutiny Session

The Sub-Committee agreed to interview Councillor Gurling (Executive Member for Service Delivery) at the meeting scheduled for 22nd April 2003 regarding the Council's Performance Management Framework.

Scrutiny Training

The Sub-Committee had already informed the Executive in its resolution on 4th February 2003 of its wish to begin the budget scrutiny process earlier in 2003/04. To help members in this process officers have agreed to prepare budget scrutiny training for the Sub-Committee to take place in June 2003.

Officers reported that further training would be provided for members considering budgets issues.

RESOLVED:

1. That the District Auditor's letter and report be circulated to all Members of the Finance & General Purposes Scrutiny Sub-Committee, as soon as available.
2. That Mr Derek Elliot (District Auditor's) be invited to attend the meeting of the 18th March 2003 to discuss the annual audit letter and that Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee be invited to attend this meeting
3. That the Sub-Committee receives any relevant agenda and minutes arising from the Executive discussions on the 25.02.2003 on the District Auditor's Management letter.
4. That Eric Brodie and Keith Brown/Alan Layton be invited to attend the meeting on the 18th March 2003 when the Sub-Committee considers the Insurance contract, and the Sub-Committee requests a report from Eric Brodie on contract re-negotiation.

5. The Sub-Committee encourages members to raise advance written questions for the Executive Review session scheduled for 22nd April 2003 meeting. Co-ordination of questions to be addressed through Corporate Strategy Unit/ Constitutional Support Unit. Officers to produce report setting out written questions and any prior responses from the Executive Member for Service Delivery
6. That Nathalie Hadjifotiou and Mike Carrol be invited to attend the meeting scheduled for 22nd April 2003 when the Sub-Committee considers the update on Best value Review of Voluntary Sector Grants. Officers to commission report on the progress from Mike Carroll.
7. The Sub-Committee noted that officers would be providing relevant budget training for members during June 2003.

The meeting ended at 10.28 p.m.

CHAIR:

DATE: